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Poetry into painting: Mallarmé, Picasso and punning

Abstract

This article gives a critical assessment of the relationship between the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé and the Cubist painting and collage of Pablo Picasso. Taking in a range of critical sources that have insisted on Picasso's 'mallarmisme', the article sets out to shift scholarly debate away from its focus on Picasso's punning reference to *Un coup de dés* in a 1912 collage, and its suggestion of a dialogue between poet and painter around high art and its relationship to popular, commercial forms of production. It proposes that we instead focus our attention on the punning structures shared by Mallarmé and Picasso's work more generally – structures which give rise to a sense of simultaneity, or overlaps of meaning, and which ultimately suggest that in engaging with Mallarmé's poetry Picasso was self-consciously reflecting on the notion of painting as a kind of language, with its own syntax.

Keywords: Stéphane Mallarmé, Pablo Picasso, Cubism, text-image relationships, simultaneity, pictorial syntax, linguistic analogy

The 1998 centenary of the death of Stéphane Mallarmé was marked by a flurry of publications on the poet, many of which sought to reassess not just his position within French literary history, but also his broad legacy across various cultural domains, including philosophy, music and dance. There was a feeling that the twentieth century was, in many ways, profoundly Mallarméan: take, for instance, the view of Mary Ann Caws, who in her article 'Mallarmé's

Progeny' tells us that, 'Mallarmé feels modern beyond our wildest imagination; what he gives us is everything that comes after him' (1998: 86). Assessments such as this were supported by rigorous scholarship, but what was missing from collections such as Michael Temple's *Meetings with Mallarmé* and Robert Greer Cohn's *Mallarmé in the Twentieth Century* was a detailed examination of the poet's impact on the visual arts in the century after his death (his interactions with artists of his own period have, of course, been amply investigated). A more substantial study of this impact might consider illustrations of Mallarmé's poetry by Raoul Dufy and Henri Matisse (Mallarmé, 1920 and 1932), as well as relating his poetry and critical writing to the practice of visual artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Robert Motherwell.¹ The focus of this essay, however, will be rather narrower, examining the relationship between Mallarmé's poetry and the Cubist practice of Picasso. This is by no means untouched critical territory, and this essay is conceived partly as an *état présent*, bringing together the various ways in which the Mallarmé-Picasso connection has been argued for and analysed, both by the painter's contemporaries, and more recently by art historians. Having done this, I will then suggest that the debate needs to be relocated so as to take account not only of references to Mallarmé embedded in specific works by Picasso, but of the shared structures which appear in both Mallarmé's poetry and Picasso's painting – structures which may be characterised as pun-like, for reasons that will become clear.

Before embarking on our discussion of the Mallarmé-Picasso connection, it is important to say something about the exact weight of the claim that will be made here. In particular, I do not want to cast the connection between poet and painter as a straightforward, linear case of 'influence', or to suggest that Mallarmé's poetry might have been a necessary or sufficient

condition for Picasso's Cubist work. A Cubism based around punning structures could undoubtedly have come about without Mallarmé: Natasha Staller (2001: 53–55), for instance, has demonstrated the importance of visual and verbal puns from various other sources within Picasso's 'cultures'. Moreover, while I will begin by reviewing some historical evidence for Picasso's contact with Mallarmé, my aim is not merely to clarify a point of art historical detail. What is of most importance here – and what makes this particular encounter between painting and poetry especially interesting, and worthy of critical attention – is the fact that Picasso's putative engagement with Mallarmé's poetic experimentations takes us to the heart of the relationship between visual and verbal languages, raising questions that relate directly to Mallarmé's own ventures into the visual field, and which remain absolutely central to word and image studies today.

There are two junctures in Picasso's career where an engagement with Mallarmé appears to find expression in his work. One of these occurs in the 1940s, with a number of sketches of the poet, and a painting, *Ulysse et les sirènes*, which has been read as a painterly transposition of 'A la nue accablante tu'.² Our focus here, however, will be an earlier encounter, the ramifications of which are felt across the breadth of Picasso's Cubist practice in the years running up to the First World War. Within this period, the work that most explicitly announces a connection with Mallarmé is a rather modest-looking, unassuming collage from 1912, entitled 'Bouteille, journal et verre sur une table' (figure 1). As Robert Rosenblum (1973) first pointed out, by pasting a fragment of newspaper, and truncating the original headline 'Un coup de théâtre' so that it reads 'Un coup de thé', Picasso seems to be making a punning reference to Mallarmé's 1897 visual poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, thus bringing his own

dually visual and verbal collage practice into contact with the poet's most important attempt to mobilise the visual resources of the printed text. That this was Picasso's intention is supported by contemporary testimonies suggesting that Picasso was well-versed in Mallarmé's poetry: Maurice Raynal (1922: 52–53) for instance, mentions that Mallarmé figured amongst the books in Picasso's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir (that is, before 1909), while Jaime Sabartés (cited in Daix, 1995: 548) states that the poet was included in Picasso's reading-matter during his early visits to Paris. The exact extent of Picasso's engagement with Mallarmé's poetry has been the subject of a long-running and heated debate, with many critics questioning whether Picasso did actually read Mallarmé – and if he did, whether his French in this period would have been good enough to understand perhaps the most notoriously difficult poet of the French language. L.C. Breunig (1958: 5) notes that Picasso's correspondence from the period attests to an imperfect mastery of the language, but insists that 'a genius is not judged by his orthography', and that Picasso's reading knowledge was good enough to understand Mallarmé. Marshall C. Olds, meanwhile, claims that Picasso 'probably read little Mallarmé', and that his knowledge was second hand and filtered through Max Jacob (Olds, 1998: 170–71). David Cottington (1998: 133) states that the evidence for direct contact with Mallarmé's work is inconclusive, but this does not prevent him from speculating that the 1909 shift in Picasso's style occurred 'as if' in direct reaction to Mallarmé's aesthetic of mystery. William Rubin (1989: 54–55, n. 3) expresses some scepticism, based on Picasso's bad French and statements from Gertrude Stein and Fernande Olivier that Picasso read little, but also acknowledges Raynal's evidence, cited above, noting that he is 'the least biased of our witnesses'. Adam Gopnik and Kirk Varnedoe (1990: 37–38) are perhaps the most sceptical, claiming that, 'Picasso's French was laughable, and the

chances that he had read [*Un coup de dés*], as opposed simply to knowing its title, are slim.’ In relation to the latter claim, there is indeed a question mark over whether or not *Un coup de dés* was widely known prior to its 1914 republication, but there is certainly evidence that the preliminary edition was known to members of the *bande à Picasso*.³ And this is the crux of the matter: even if Picasso cannot be proved to have read (and understood) Mallarmé himself during this period, the painter was surrounded by poets (Apollinaire, Jacob and Salmon), poetry was often recited at the Bateau-Lavoir, and in 1905–6 Picasso frequented Paul Fort’s ‘mardis’, held at the Closerie des Lilas under the auspices of the review *Vers et prose*.⁴ At the very least, then, it seems plausible that Mallarmé would have been recited and discussed in these settings, and that Picasso’s poet friends would have been able to induct him into the intricacies of Mallarmé’s work.

A possible connection between Mallarmé and Picasso was noted as early as 1911 by Ardengo Soffici, who compared the painter’s work to ‘la syntaxe elliptique et les permutations grammaticales de Stéphane Mallarmé’.⁵ The connection subsequently became a commonplace in contemporary criticism of Cubist painting.⁶ For many, the visual arts had been lagging behind in relation to the startling innovations of poetry, and were only just catching up: as the Futurist painter Gino Severini (1916: 467) put it, ‘l’œuvre plastique correspondante à l’œuvre poétique de Mallarmé nous l’avons seulement aujourd’hui.’ The tenor of the comparison varied, however. Severini’s article highlighted the affinities between Mallarmé’s ‘subdivision prismatique de l’idée’ and the ‘divisionnisme de la forme’ achieved by Picasso and Braque (1916: 468–69). Pierre Reverdy meanwhile traced a genetic link between the non-descriptive art of Mallarmé and Rimbaud, and the non-imitative ‘art de conception’ of the Cubists (Reverdy,

1975: 144). Others, however, were not quite so specific: Kahnweiler, the principal art dealer of the Cubists, claimed that they derived from Mallarmé the conviction that ‘la peinture est une écriture’ – on its own, an interesting claim, and one that might have some substance, as we shall see shortly. Alongside this, however, Kahnweiler stated that Mallarmé also encouraged the Cubist painters to freely invent signs, to focus on the painted medium in itself, and to create new realities instead of referring to reality as a given (Kahnweiler, 1963: 219). Not only is it far from clear that such ideas were derived from Mallarmé rather than from other sources, but the wide-ranging nature of Kahnweiler’s claims dilutes them somewhat, suggesting that Mallarmé was a kind of catch-all figure to whom the Cubists might have turned as an emblem of the ideal artist, as opposed to actively engaging with specific aspects of his poetry and transposing these into their painting. Indeed, the label of ‘mallarmisme’ was, on its own, highly ambiguous: it might have implied that Cubist art was intellectual or conceptual, that it was deliberately obscure, or it may have been motivated by a simple desire to increase the cultural prestige of Cubist painting by association.⁷ All of which begs the question: in what, precisely, did the connection between Mallarmé and Picasso consist?

More recent criticism has taken up this question, focusing specifically on Picasso’s 1912 pun on *Un coup de dés* as a clue to a hidden dialogue between the *papiers collés* and Mallarméan aesthetics. Christine Poggi (1992: 146–47) has argued that Picasso’s use of newspaper in such works was ‘a self-conscious, ironic negation of symbolist values’: opening itself up to the detritus of modern life, and incorporating cheap, mass-produced material such as the newspaper, the Cubist *papier collé* railed against Mallarmé’s distinction between the aestheticised, high-art realm of poetry, and the type of commodified language exemplified by

the newspaper. Rosalind Krauss (1992: 281) has modified this view somewhat, arguing that Picasso's collages involved a Mallarméan transformation of the everyday into high art, which showed that the base material of newspaper could 'be made to yield [...] the very qualities Mallarmé condemned it for lacking'. Linda Goddard, meanwhile, has objected that both Poggi and Krauss overlook the affinities between Picasso and Mallarmé because they tend to see the latter as 'the opposing term in a dialectic of high art and popular culture'.⁸ Both, that is, fail to register Mallarmé's insistence on the aesthetic potential of the newspaper, and the fact that *Un coup de dés* may involve an appropriation of its typographical innovations.⁹ Goddard is correct that the common conception of Mallarmé as an ivory-tower poet, cut off from everyday reality and seeking to keep his art free from the taint of commerce, is ill-founded; but the question here is whether or not Picasso himself would have understood this. Would he have been familiar with Mallarmé's texts on the newspaper? If we are on somewhat shaky ground in asserting that Picasso read Mallarmé's poetry, the evidence is even more circumstantial when it comes to his prose texts.¹⁰ Moreover, it seems doubtful even that reading *Un coup de dés* would have allowed the painter to infer Mallarmé's attitude towards the aesthetics of the newspaper. Mallarmé's reception in this period was characterised by two conflicting images: the radical, innovative poet with known anarchist sympathies, versus the cloistered, arcane Symbolist refusing to engage with social or political reality.¹¹ Without further evidence, it is difficult to know which of these images would have been the operative one for Picasso as a reader of Mallarmé's poetry, and whether he would have seen poems such as *Un coup de dés* as a high-art riposte to the commercialised language of the newspaper, or alternatively as a more inclusive attempt to mobilise its expressive resources.

None of this is to say that the 1912 collage ‘Un coup de thé’ does not signal a dialogue with Mallarmé. Yet even if the topic of that dialogue is the relationship between high art and more popular, commercial forms of production, it remains open to question whether Picasso is reacting against Mallarmé, or aligning himself with him.¹² Bearing this in mind, I wish to suggest that we should leave this particular question to one side, and move the debate beyond the *papiers collés*. For even if this 1912 collage is the point at which the connection with Mallarmé is most explicitly announced, there is no reason to think that it applies exclusively to the *papiers collés*; after all, the evidence does suggest that Picasso came into contact with Mallarmé’s poetry much earlier, during the Bateau Lavoir years, and none of the contemporary commentators mentioned earlier reserved the comparison to collage alone. What follows, then, is a broad claim about the ways in which Picasso may have responded to Mallarmé’s poetry through his pictorial practice over the whole of the Cubist period. Taking my cue from Soffici’s 1911 comments on Mallarmé and Picasso’s syntactic affinities, my suggestion is that the painter responded to the poet’s work by adopting from it certain structures that one may think of as overlaps, or alternatively as puns – signs that carry more than one meaning simultaneously. The verbal puns that we encounter in the *papiers collés*, such as ‘Un coup de thé’, are but a counterpoint to this more generalised punning, which is purely visual but nevertheless bears affinities with the structural qualities of Mallarmé’s poetry.

When I say that Mallarmé and Picasso’s works are characterised by puns, I do not necessarily mean humorous wordplay – although this is certainly present in both. I refer rather to the basic structure of the pun, where two or more meanings converge onto a single signifier, visual or verbal. Crucially, the structure of a pun is also such that the different meanings to

which it gives rise are not mutually exclusive. A pun demands that we contemplate two different meanings in relation to one another, or that we appreciate the way in which one meaning emerges out of the other: ‘on jouit sémantiquement de l’un par l’autre’, as Barthes puts it (1975: 76). Examples abound in Mallarmé’s work: one might think of the pun on ‘se parer’ and ‘séparer’ in ‘Prose (pour des Esseintes)’, or of the first words of the ‘Sonnet en –x’, ‘Ses pures ongles’ containing ‘c’est pur son’, and thus pointing up the poem’s self-conscious reflection on its own strategies of signification.¹³ Alongside these morphological puns, Mallarmé also leads us down the garden path syntactically, by letting a given word act, or seem to act, as two parts of speech at once; the ‘tu’ in ‘A la nue accablante tu’, which may initially be read as either participle or pronoun, is one notable example of this. This kind of overlapping of meaning – what Malcolm Bowie (1978: 139–40) referred to as ‘overdetermined syntax’ – is compounded in *Un coup de dés*, where the scattered arrangement of text over the page frees up the words to participate in several constellations of sense simultaneously. The most obvious example of this is the title sentence, ‘UN COUP DE DÉS/ JAMAIS/ N’ABOLIRA/ LE HASARD’, whose constituent parts also participate in other structures, but one might also mention ‘SI’, on page 8. This may lead directly on to ‘la lucide et seigneuriale aigrette’, just below on the same double page, but the competing indications of typography also link it to a sequence spread over page 9, producing ‘SI/ C’ÉTAIT/ LE NOMBRE/ CE SERAIT/ LE HASARD’. Alternatively, we might want to take ‘rire que SI’ as a self-contained unit, with ‘SI’ acting here as adverb rather than as conjunction – or indeed to read ‘SI’ as referring to the musical note.

What we find in Picasso’s Cubism is an analogous tendency to produce visual overlaps: points at which different shapes coincide, or where a line or simple shape gives rise to two or

more alternative readings. If we look at an early example (figure 2), done at Horta de Ebro in the summer of 1909, we find multiple perspective accompanied by devices that flout the rules (or the 'syntax') governing unambiguous representation of objects and their spatial relationships.¹⁴ One such device is false attachment, where a line representing the edge of one object coincides with the edge of another that is not actually spatially contiguous, or where intersections of lines indicating the corners of distinct objects coincide. Examples of this occur with the buildings located towards the back of the picture space. At the centre of these, we have a single line denoting the edge of two buildings, and it is not clear which occludes the other. In the region just below this, the line at the intersection of the dark, grey-shaded plane on the left, and the lighter, terracotta-coloured plane on the right, is ambiguous, denoting either a concave or a convex edge. Of course, the spatial ambiguity created by the use of false attachment is also partly dependent on the use of inconsistent shading, with some of the buildings seeming to be in shadow at the front, and others at the side. The effect is that as we look at the painting, objects jostle within the picture space, with planes seeming simultaneously to jump out and recede away, edges to be both concave and convex depending on how the spectator relates them to surrounding elements.

In a painting such as *Girl with a mandolin* (Spring 1910), it remains possible to pick out the same kind of overlaps and ambiguities, which result in the planes shifting around under our vision; but as we move further into High Analytic Cubism, it becomes much more difficult to do this. In *L'Accordéoniste* (Summer 1911, figure 3), for instance, forms are exploded, objects seem to all but dissolve into the background, and space seems to be obscured behind a network of lines and shading that only occasionally play a clear denotative role. It is not clear how many

of the pictorial elements present on the canvas might correspond to elements within a represented scene – that is, it is not clear that individual elements have this kind of representational ‘meaning’ at all – and so it is difficult to pick out elements which function in a pun-like way, giving rise to two or more alternative readings. Such paintings are, of course, Mallarméan in other ways: they are based on an aesthetic of analysis and synthesis, whereby the artist fragments the object, and the viewer is challenged to reconstitute it in a way not unlike the imaginative reconstruction demanded of Mallarmé’s readers, to whom the poet gives ‘cette joie délicate de croire qu’ils créent’ (Mallarmé, 2003: 700).

In the *papiers collés* of 1912 onwards, we encounter much more simplified, discrete forms, but overlaps in meaning of a sort structurally similar to those we found in 1909 are still present. Line is, for the most part, eliminated, and punning occurs instead in the form of simple shapes which give rise to a number of readings. For instance, the patterned paper that forms the support for the collage *Guitar and wineglass* (figure 4) may be read either as wallpaper on a vertical surface, or as a tablecloth on a horizontal surface. Meanwhile, the black shape at the bottom of the picture seems to denote both the bottom edge of the guitar, and a separate object – a fruit bowl, perhaps.

The effect of these punning structures, across the various types of Cubist work in which they may be found, is that alternative meanings are made to proliferate. One of the characteristic features of puns is that the meanings to which they give rise are contemplated in relation to one another. As such, although one meaning may be at the forefront of our awareness at a given moment, it never cancels out the alternatives; as Malcolm Bowie pointed out in relation to *Un coup de dés*, alternative meanings always ‘remain present in silent counterpoint’ (Bowie, 1978:

8). Punning therefore provides Mallarmé and Picasso with a means of achieving a multi-layered quality, or a simultaneity – the latter of course being a key concept both in Cubist aesthetic theory, and in the preface to *Un coup de dés*, where the poet talks about attaining ‘une vision simultanée de la Page’ (Mallarmé, 1998: 391).¹⁵ Particularly interesting in this respect is the fact that both poet and painter use the model of music as a way of figuring the concept of simultaneity in their work. Picasso’s attention to musical motifs and his use of sheet music in some of the *papiers collés*, including *Guitar and wineglass* (fig. 4), and Mallarmé’s more explicit theoretical engagement with music as a model for poetry, both bespeak a conception of the work as a network of relationships – a polyphonic, multi-layered, contrapuntal structure. In such works, Picasso pastes onto the picture surface a collection of discrete shapes, isolated from one another by their different colours and patterns; despite this heterogeneous, disjunctive quality, a coherent pictorial meaning emerges out of the carefully determined relationships between elements. This process is figured within the *papier collé* itself in terms of music, understood as a network of relationships – as what Mallarmé called a ‘rythme entre les rapports’.¹⁶ Mallarmé, equally, speaks of poetry as ‘un art d’achever la transposition, au Livre, de la symphonie’ (Mallarmé, 2003: 212), and of *Un coup de dés* as a musical ‘partition’ (1998: 391): its meaning does not consist in the sum of the meanings of each self-contained fragment, but is generated out of the multiple relationships in which the fragments of text stand to one another. In the analogy between poetry and painting, then, music may function as a third term, pointing up the relational basis of meaning in Picasso and Mallarmé’s visual and verbal languages.

Picasso's use of dice in a series of constructions done in 1914 provides a further thematic link, echoing *Un coup de dés* and suggesting a very Mallarméan reflection on the role of chance in artistic creation.¹⁷ One might also want to argue that poet and painter share a focus on the objects of everyday life – although Picasso's favoured domain is the café, while Mallarmé's is the bourgeois interior. Ultimately, though, the substance of the Mallarmé-Picasso connection – what unites the poetry with the full breadth of Picasso's Cubist production, rather than just with isolated works – lies in shared structures: to borrow Yve-Alain Bois's formulation, the affiliation is structural, rather than merely morphological (Bois: 1987: 38). This might permit us to put to rest the objection that Picasso could not possibly have understood Mallarmé, for he did not have to understand all of the poet's *vocabulary*: he just had to understand the basic principles of his *syntax*, to grasp the way in which a Mallarmé poem was put together so as to create effects of simultaneity, with multiple meanings emerging from overlapping signs. This is, moreover, the kind of understanding that one might plausibly gain from discussion with suitably qualified friends, rather than from close individual reading.

Conceived in this way, the Mallarmé-Picasso connection appears to lend some support to structural-linguistic readings of Picasso's Cubism advanced by Bois and Krauss, which take up Kahnweiler's suggestion that the Cubists conceived of painting as 'une écriture' – a symbolic system of representation governed by the same structural properties as verbal language.¹⁸ Indeed, Bois (1992: 217) has suggested that Mallarmé would have been one of the painter's major sources on structural linguistics. It is of course *possible* that Picasso would have been familiar with critical texts such as *Crise de vers*, in which the distinction between arbitrary and motivated signs is evoked (Mallarmé, 2003: 208), but equally, Picasso's awareness of the

properties of verbal language could also have come about through contact with Mallarmé's poetry, which might have brought his attention to the polyvalence of the linguistic sign: the way in which a given sign might give rise to multiple meanings, depending on its context. This in turn – alongside a host of other probable factors – contributed to the development of a Cubism which explored the properties of visual signs, and their relationship to writing.

Of course, even if we can say that Picasso did effectively transpose Mallarmé's punning structures into his painting, this transposition does not add up to a rigorous structural correspondence between painting and poetry. Nor does highlighting the connection between poet and painter allow us to overlook the specificities of visual and verbal media, or the problems associated with the 'linguistic analogy' in painting.¹⁹ Picasso's apparent adoption of certain of Mallarmé's poetic techniques should not be read as a declarative statement to the effect that *painting is essentially like poetry* – such as would effectively confirm structural-linguistic approaches – but rather as an attempt by the painter to think through the extent to which it is possible to talk of a 'language' of images in anything other than a loose sense, and therefore as an apt case study for us as critics, readers and spectators to investigate the same issues. Among the questions raised by the Mallarmé-Picasso connection is the precise extent to which their punning structures are analogous: Mallarmé might lead us down the garden path syntactically – or take steps to make the reader equivocate over the precise role of a word or phrase within a syntactic structure – but he is not, for all that, 'ungrammatical'. Can the same thing be said of Picasso? I have said that his punning structures seem to break the syntactic rules of unambiguous shape representation; but they do not, for all that, appear to descend into nonsense, or to resemble the type of impossible objects and scenes one sees in the engravings of

Escher.²⁰ Bearing that in mind, one might ask, along with Wendy Steiner (1982: 57 and 60) whether any ‘grammar’ of pictures will have the same authority as verbal grammar, and whether pictures will tolerate a greater degree of syntactic deviance. Following on from this, one might also ask at what point it would be appropriate to say that Picasso moves beyond bending the rules of linear perspective, and invents a new language altogether. Is it the case that the various incarnations of Cubism examined here each involve their own syntax, or are they related to one another as different dialects of the same language? This problem of locating the defining boundaries of a pictorial language is one that does not arise when it comes to words: we do not seem to have the same problem saying whether or not something is a sentence of English or French.

The Mallarmé-Picasso connection as I have formulated it here may awaken the spectator of Picasso’s paintings to the quasi-linguistic structures they contain, and thereby to the effects of simultaneity that the painter was trying to achieve, in common with the poet. It highlights the extent to which Mallarmé’s poetry remained relevant for a generation of painters who are often seen as opposed to Symbolist aestheticism, and places Picasso’s Cubism as a pictorial rejoinder to the poet’s own investigations into the relationship between visual and verbal modes of expression. Finally – and perhaps most crucially – Picasso’s painterly response to Mallarmé’s poetic structures does not simply insist on a happy compatibility of visual and verbal modes of expression, or allow the differences between the two to be glossed over. In operating a transposition at the level of syntax rather than morphology (at the level of structure rather than theme), Picasso directs our critical attention to the idea that there is an essential affinity between visual and verbal systems of representation, and in particular that they are

structurally analogous and map onto one another straightforwardly; the idea not simply that what can be ‘said’ in one medium can be ‘said’ in the other, but that visual and verbal meanings are generated through analogous building blocks, combined according to analogous rules. Considering the Mallarmé-Picasso connection from this perspective thus draws us into a wide-ranging debate about text-image relationships, a few of the axes of which are outlined above, and ultimately leaves open to question the coherence of the very notion of inter-arts transposition.

[6,101 words]

¹ On Mallarmé and Duchamp, see Caws (1981); on Mallarmé and Motherwell, see Perthes (2009: 344–54).

² On this late encounter with Mallarmé, see Olds (1998) and Mendelson (1999); for a first-hand account, see Brassai (1999: 206).

³ Apollinaire, for instance, denied knowing the poem before 1914, but this is contradicted by Reverdy’s testimony that Apollinaire discussed the typography of *Un coup de dés* while the proofs of *Alcools* were being prepared (that is, in late 1912); see Saillet (1997: 166–67). *Un coup de dés* was also brought to the attention of the wider public by the publication of Albert Thibaudet’s *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé: étude littéraire* (1912).

⁴ On the involvement of the *bande à Picasso* in *Vers et prose*, see for instance Olivier (1954: 47) and Shattuck (1968: 263). These and Stein (1960) are among the many sources giving accounts of the close collaboration between painters and poets at the Bateau-Lavoir.

⁵ Ardengo Soffici, in *La Voce*, no. 34 (24 August 1911); cited in Jenny (2002: 109n).

⁶ See, amongst others, Cassou (1920), Raynal (1927: 25–26), Dermée (1919), Delaunay (1957: 96).

⁷ On this ambiguity, see Goddard (2012: 134–46) and Cottington (1998: 133).

⁸ Goddard (2006: 294). On Mallarmé's engagement with the newspaper, see also Arnar (2006).

⁹ See 'La Musique et les lettres' (Mallarmé, 2003: 75).

¹⁰ There is not, to my knowledge, any direct evidence to suggest that Picasso owned or read Mallarmé's prose texts himself, although others in his circle would almost certainly have been familiar with these. Goddard (2006: 294–95) marshals the evidence relating to this, but admits that it is circumstantial.

¹¹ Antliff and Leighten (2001: 130) note that Mallarmé's works were sold alongside anarchist tracts at the *Action d'art* bookshop. On the other hand, David Cottington (1998: 75–76) claims that the 'counter-discursive' aspects of Mallarmé's work tended to be overlooked.

¹² As Krauss admits (1992: 278) 'the dialogical response can of course be either a refutation or an identification'. On the ambivalence of the *papiers collés*, see Cottington (2004: 131–35).

¹³ These puns have been picked out for analysis by Malcolm Bowie (1998: 71) and Roger Pearson (1996: 159) respectively.

¹⁴ My analysis of Cubist pictorial syntax here is heavily indebted to Smith (2004).

¹⁵ The term 'simultaneity' did not gain a broad currency in French art critical discourse until late 1911–early 1912, under the influence of Italian Futurism; yet as Apollinaire (1991: 977) insisted in 'Simultanisme-librettisme' (1914), 'en 1907 déjà, [l'idée de simultanété] préoccupait un Picasso, un Braque, qui s'efforçaient de représenter des figures et des objets sous plusieurs faces à la fois.'

¹⁶ Mallarmé to Edmund Gosse, 10 January 1893, in Mallarmé (1981: 26).

¹⁷ For an examination of these themes in Picasso's work, see Johnson (1977).

¹⁸ Krauss (1992: 262–64); Bois (1992: 173–74). One might note, however, that Bois and Krauss insist on the 1912 *papiers collés* as the point at which Picasso moved from an iconic to a symbolic system of representation; the present analysis undermines this assertion, confirming Bois's suspicion that a 'semiological attitude' is present well before 1912 (1992: 175).

¹⁹ For a summary of criticism of Bois and Krauss's attempts to apply this analogy, see Cottington (2004: 209–13).

²⁰ Smith (2004: 84) suggests that this is because they create a 'seamless ambiguity' – whereas impossible objects tend to contain one ungrammatical element that disrupts an otherwise standard representational syntax.

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