



Multiples Porträt H.P.Roché,

HENRI-PIERRE ROCHÉ

(1879–1959)

Henri-Pierre Roché was a novelist whose best-known work is *Jules et Jim* (subsequently immortalised in François Truffaut's film of 1961). From his recently published diaries for 1920–21, he seems to have been something of a sexual athlete, and he certainly knew everyone who mattered in artistic Paris in the early 1920s, from Brancusi to the rich American patroness Sybil Harris. His diaries include references to private dinners as well as to those in restaurants, and all the interesting entries relating to Satie in 1920–22 are included together here.

1920

Saturday 30 October: Colonne Concert – performance of Milhaud's *Protée*. – Satie, Auric, Cocteau, the whole group, very serious, except Satie, on sparkling form, who shouts: 'Down with the drunks!' – Protests, uproar.

I leave with Satie – long talk at a nearby café. He takes me to dinner in the place de l'Observatoire. – Talk about Socrates till midnight.

Monday – All Saints' Day – 1 November: Satie midday on the boulevard

12.30 the floor below Derain's studio – business talk with Quinn – we go up, the portrait's finished, good, awkward.

Lunch for all with Satie in the Grill-Room of the place Médicis – my plans for lectures in America on our modern painting begin to take shape – outside Le Balzar with Satie we read and rework the idea for an *Alice in Wonderland* ballet. – Home, quiet evening, work.

Tuesday 9 August: I work on *Alice in Wonderland* for Satie. It bores me, I give up on it: decidedly not for me.

Saturday 19 November: Dinner at Mme Harris's: Yvonne, Brancusi, Satie, Auric, Serge [Ferat] – it's gay and friendly – a certain rivalry between Brancusi and Satie – all the hats and theatrical wigs Mrs Harris bought at the Hôtel Drouot yesterday. – She tries them on: Russian, Spanish, bishops' mitres, etc.

1922

Wednesday 18 January: Dinner at Bigey's: Satie, Auric, Cocteau, Booth. Good talk. Later arrivals Marcelle Meyer, [Pierre] Bertin, [Léopold] Survage, Germaine [Everling], Serge [Ferat]. We dance. Even Satie, who provides an innocent, brilliant caricature of modern dances. Marcelle plays, everything well.

Saturday 28 January: Dinner at Brancusi's, splendid. His famous purée of cold beans with vinegar and garlic. His grilled steak. He's everywhere, cooking, serving, doing everything. There – Syb, Booth, Satie, Serge. There are two violins. Brancusi, Satie and Booth take turns to play duets and tease each other. Our jaws are aching with laughter. A galop for the larger members. Brancusi's agility. Nice people and great men: he and Satie.

Henri-Pierre Roché

Carnets 1920–21 (Marseille, André Dimanche, 1990). 1922 entries supplied by AFS

Arago* – splendid lunch at the 1000 Colonne. – He takes me to the dancer Caryathis's studio to see the dance rehearsals for January† with Cocteau – an interesting and attractive spectacle – Cocteau a great talent, a genius as producer and rehearser – Auric and Milhaud arrive – tea on the ground floor – the carpet, the ices – the dances – Cocteau's white visor with a single eye, invented by him on the spot. Caryathis working flat out.

Tuesday 21 December: Picasso evening at the Ballets Russes – *Pulcinella* – *The Three-Cornered Hat* – *Parade* – superb – the curtain for *Parade* – Satie on the organ to play the two [pedal] notes – his triumph – Cocteau too – bravo! The scenery – the horse – etc.

1921

Friday 7 January: At 7 in the evening Satie comes to collect me and we go to dinner with Mme Harris – just the three of us – a fine American dinner, Louise, the cook, surpassed herself: lobster Newburg, chicken Maryland, ice cream with hot hazelnut sauce, which Satie partakes of after considerable hesitation – long conversation in the dining-room in front of the fire – Satie looks happy, he tells good stories, about his life, about himself, about Franck (César) – the other two have a good chat – I gaze at the fire. – Very handsome and successful brick surround. – They discuss music.

Erik and I on foot as far as Irène Lagut's,‡ not there.

Home at midnight.

Friday 1 July: Lunch with Bigey§ and Satie at Prunier's. She too restless, too enthusiastic or critical about superficial things. She and Satie: two parallel monologues. – But the three of us get on well together: crayfish, clams. – We take her to the gare du Nord. – Then beers with Satie.

Monday 18 July: Midday – Louise Norton on boulevard Arago describes to me her idea for the scenario of a ballet on *Alice in Wonderland* by Satie – a bit complicated.

*Roché lived in an apartment at 99 boulevard Arago, with his mother.

†Of Satie's 'fantaisie sérieuse', *La belle excentrique*, first performed chez Pierre Bertin on 8 January 1921.

‡The stage designer and one-time mistress of Picasso, born in 1893.

§Alias Sybil Harris, also referred to as Big Eyes, Sylla etc.