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The Cultural Memory of *Le Sacre du printemps*

Archaism and Modernity

In 1986 Hans Robert Jauss, scholar of Romance languages and literature, published a slender volume with the title *Die Epochenschwelle von 1912* (The threshold year of 1912).¹ Essentially it deals with the interpretation of two poems by Guillaume Apollinaire: *Zone* and *Lundi Rue Christine*, both of which originated at the end of 1912. Jauss places them in the context of their day and at the vanguard of aesthetic modernism. As features of this new art he posits the “loss of the anamnesis that ensures identity” and “the experience of the dismemberment of the ego in space and time.”² The former is a crisis of cultural memory – or, to quote *Zone*, “tu en as assez de vivre dans l’antiquité grecque et romaine” (you are tired of living in Graeco–Roman antiquity) – whereas the latter is a crisis of subjectivity, a crisis accompanied by a new aesthetic of simultaneity, of constantly distorting cuts and a-mimetic montages that may incorporate aspects of reality, quotations, and scraps of memory. The “novel obscurity” of the poems does not arise from an “encrypted or ambiguous meaning, but solely from abrupt changes of phenomena, visions, memories, and the subjects that happen to be experiencing them, changes often indicated by nothing more than an unexpected ‘now’.” At the basis is an “aesthetic idea of the world, which allows things from time immemorial to resurface in the wholly new.”³ The closest parallels to Apollinaire’s poetic technique, Jauss continues, are to be found in Cubism (the dissolution of the object in a multiplicity of vantage points), in the collage technique invented by Picasso in 1912, where scraps of everyday life, such as newspaper clippings or other *objets réels*, are glued into the painting, and in the ready-mades (“Fahr-Rad”) that Marcel Duchamp began to create in 1913, where objects

1 Hans Robert Jauss, *Die Epochenschwelle von 1912: Guillaume Apollinaire: “Zone” und “Lundi Rue Christine,”* vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986).

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 10f.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 11f.

from the everyday world are transformed with minimal transposition into objects in the world of art.⁴ According to Michael Hamburger, the year 1912 was also an *annus mirabilis* in German literature and painting.⁵ The same applies to music. “In music history,” Jauss writes, “the fundamental watershed between classical harmony and twelve-tone music (Josef Matthias Hauer, Arnold Schoenberg) – the specific cut to modernist music – falls in the change of eras around 1912.”⁶

But it is “not only our retrospective gaze on what emerged from it” that allows us to recognize the year 1912 as a threshold to a new era and a fresh start of something radically new. On the contrary, “the avant-garde of the time – the Italian Futurists, French Cubists and Orphists, German Expressionists, Anglo-American Imagists, and Russian Cubo-Futurists” – felt and proclaimed it to be a threshold year.⁷ This makes our threshold stand out from others, which are usually *ex post facto* constructs of cultural memory, caesuras in a process of creeping change that eluded contemporary notice. In general, threshold years do not have the status of historic events.⁸ But the same cannot be said of such epoch-making works as Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, Haydn’s op. 33 string quartets, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, or Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet, whose premières or publications caused sensations, pointed art in new directions, kindled debates, and attained the status of historic events. This series also includes, above all else, Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps*, which occasioned an event of the first magnitude at its very première. That said, the turning point must not, of course, be restricted to a single year: Picasso’s *Demoiselles d’Avignon* originated as early as 1907; however the year 1913 has been honored not

4 Ibid., p. 19. See also the exhibition catalog *1912: Ein Jahr im Archiv*, Marbacher Magazin 137–138 (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2012).

5 Michael Hamburger, “1912,” in *Reason and Energy: Studies in German Literature* (London: Routledge, 1957), pp. 213–36.

6 Jauss, *Epochenschwelle* (see note 1), p. 30. See also Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft 6 (Laaber: Laaber, 1980), pp. 328–32, trans. J. Bradford Robinson as *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 390–94; and Hermann Danuser, *Die Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft 7 (Laaber: Laaber, 1984), and “Krisis und Grenzüberschreitung: Arnold Schönbergs Streichquartett op. 10,” in *Werk und Diskurs: Karlheinz Stierle zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Dieter Ingenschay and Helmut Pfeiffer (Munich: Fink, 1999), pp. 355–74.

7 Jauss, *Epochenschwelle* (see note 1), p. 25.

8 See *Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte*, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Ursula Link-Heer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), and *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewusstsein*, ed. Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck, *Poetik und Hermeneutik* 12 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987).

only with a three-volume documentation of phenomena and events in European art and literature,⁹ but also with Felix Philipp Ingold's account of this threshold, by far the most inclusive and, for our purposes, the most salient work of its kind.¹⁰ Virginia Woolf maintained that the moment in which "human character changed, making the modern world possible for art," occurred "in or about December 1910."¹¹ These same years also witnessed the publication of Carl Einstein's book *Negerplastik*, which bridged the gap between archaism and modernity in the visual arts.¹²

It is thus hardly accidental that Thomas Mann, in *Doktor Faustus*, has Adrian Leverkühn's conversation with the devil – the conversation that marked his breakthrough to entirely new realms of composition – take place in 1912. Here the Devil proposes seeking recourse in the primitive and unspoilt as a solution to the crisis seizing the whole of recent music and art: "We offer better still, we offer foremostly the right and true – a thing no longer even classic, dear boy, which we let be experienced, a thing archaic, primal, a thing that has long since ceased to be attempted."¹³ *Le Sacre* is the classic example of a breakthrough to new realms brought about by turning to "a thing archaic, primal."

The same years also saw scientists coming to grips with the archaic, a development hardly less novel and groundbreaking than the aesthetic debates, and one that had a lasting impact on the arts.¹⁴ It was in 1912 that the sociologist Émile Durkheim published *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie*

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- 9 *L'Année 1913: les formes esthétiques de l'œuvre d'art à la veille de la première guerre mondiale: travaux et documents inédits*, ed. Liliane Brion-Guerry, vols. 1–3 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971–73).
- 10 Felix Philipp Ingold, *Der große Bruch: Rußland im Epochenjahr 1913: Kultur, Gesellschaft, Politik* (Munich: Beck, 2000). I am grateful to Renate Lachmann for alerting me to this book. See now also Florian Illies, *1913: Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2012).
- 11 Quoted from Jauss, *Epochenschwelle* (see note 1), p. 35. See Michael Köhler, "Postmodernismus: Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Überblick," *Amerikastudien* 22 (1977), pp. 8–18.
- 12 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weissen Bücher, 1915). Many works of a similar stamp by Russian art historians from this period are cited in Ingold, *Der große Bruch* (see note 10), pp. 156–58.
- 13 Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde*, Grosse kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe 10 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer 2007), p. 346, trans. John E. Woods as *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend* (New York: Vintage, 1999), p. 252.
- 14 For the interaction between *fin de siècle* art and science in the discovery of the archaic see Gabriele Brandstetter, "Ritual as Scene and Discourse: Art and Science Around 1900 as Exemplified by *Le Sacre du printemps*," *The World of Music* 40/1 (1998), pp. 37–59, esp. 40–46.

religieuse, where he examined the rituals of Australian aborigines as primeval forms of religion. In 1910 the philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, with his book *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, presented a reconstruction of the archaic mind, a reconstruction that he later expanded in *La Mentalité primitive* (1922). It was in 1913 that Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* appeared in print – another milestone of modernity, in which Freud combined James Frazer's and Robertson Smith's research into archaic religion with his own psychoanalytical studies of mental archaism (the “archaic heritage”). As early as 1909 Arnold van Gennep's *Les Rites de passage* was published, laying the cornerstone for modern research into rituals. Thomas Mann, writing in the Prelude to his *Joseph* tetralogy (1926), later described this dual descent into the depths of time and the psyche as a journey to the underworld. Indeed, both Frazer and Freud referred to Aeneas's underworld journey in their very first pathbreaking works. *The Golden Bough*, as Frazer called his great work (published in two volumes in 1890 and in twelve in 1906–15), is the key that opens the gate to the underworld for Aeneas in the sixth canto of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Freud alludes to the same underworld journey by prefixing a line from the *Aeneid* to the work that introduced his new method of psychoanalysis, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The line reads: “Flectere si nequeo superos Acheronta movebo” (If I cannot influence the gods, I shall move all hell).¹⁵ Carl Gustav Jung was even more thorough than Freud in linking depth psychology with mythology. His decisive book in this direction, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (Psychology of the Unconscious), was published in 1912 and later heavily revised. In the light of psychoanalysis, the unearthing of archaic elements in the mythologies of the European peoples – elements overlaid by Christianity and the Enlightenment – was undertaken as an exploration of the collective unconscious.

T. S. Eliot, in a 1923 review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (published in 1922), referred in retrospect to this specifically modern or modernist turn toward the archaic with the term “mythical method” and interpreted it as a reaction to the widespread aimlessness of an age estranged from its traditions:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. [...] It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. [...] Psychology, ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible

15 Virgil, *Aeneid*, Canto vii:312.

even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method.¹⁶

Long before Joyce, in close temporal and geographical proximity to Stravinsky, Andrey Bely employed the “mythical method” in his novel *Petersburg*, written from 1911 to 1913 at the same time as *Le Sacre du printemps*. In this novel, Renate Lachmann explains,

the myth of Petersburg, the central one of the text, is “reflected” in a plethora of other myths, while the narrative and stylistic levels of the novel are codetermined by a variety of other narrative and stylistic formations.¹⁷

In their own way, Igor Stravinsky, his librettist and set designer Nicholas Roerich, and his choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky employed the same method when they created *Le Sacre du printemps*.

***Le Sacre du printemps* and the Invention of the Primitive**

The reversion to archaism points in diametrically opposite directions. On the one hand, it was a romantic project, gathering together *à la* Herder a nation’s aboriginal songs and customs. On the other, it was a modernist, avant-garde project, rebelling against the soullessness of an age estranged from Nature and enacting an “exit from the disenchanting world”¹⁸ by returning to origins. “Life’s interesting phenomena,” to quote Thomas Mann, “probably always have this Janus face to both the past and the future, are probably always progressive and regressive in one.”¹⁹ “The novelty of contemporary art,” wrote Andrey Bely in 1910, “exists only in the oppressive mass of all things past, a novelty that suddenly gushes to the surface; in the blink of an eye we experience all centuries and all nations; the life of the past passes before our

16 T. S. Eliot, “Ulysses, Order, and Myth,” *The Dial* (November 1923), repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–78, esp. 177f. See also Werner Frick, “Die mythische Methode”: *Komparatistische Studien zur Transformation der griechischen Tragödie im Drama der klassischen Moderne* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998), with discussion of Eliot on pp. 213–23.

17 See Renate Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur: Intertextualität in der russischen Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 88–125, esp. 93, trans. Roy Sellars and Anthony Wall as *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 50–71, esp. 53.

18 Thus the title of a book by Norbert Bolz, a title that precisely sums up the point while referring to something else. See Norbert W. Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt: Philosophischer Extremismus zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1989).

19 Mann, *Doktor Faustus* (see note 13), pp. 282f.; trans., p. 207.

eyes.”²⁰ The romantic aspect is governed by a nostalgic longing for a lost wholeness, whereas the modernist aspect is concerned with the deep alienness and cruelty of the archaic. Both aspects converge in *Le Sacre du printemps*. Roerich’s scenario tends toward the romantic; Stravinsky’s music, radical and at times brutal, tends toward the modernist.²¹

Roerich’s antiquarian interest in Russia’s pagan past – the quest for a true, pre-Christian, “savage” Russia – definitely had a romantic impetus. The most important source he consulted, and recommended to Stravinsky, was Alexander Afanasyev’s three-volume study of the Slavs’ literary attitude toward Nature, *Poëticheskiye vozzreniya slavian na prirodu* (1866–69), which clearly belongs to the romantic tradition.²² It is no accident that Roerich’s combination of neo-paganism and neo-nationalism is reminiscent of similar movements in Germany, especially the Munich Cosmics Circle. The return of pagan cosmotheism at the turn of the century is likewise a response to the crisis of modernity.²³ Here a cure was sought for the “hopeless fragmentation and isolation” of “modern man estranged from the earth,” as it was put by Roerich’s friend, the symbolist Alexander Blok, in an essay with the revealing title *The Poetry of Magic and Spells* (1908).²⁴ Russian neo-primitivism, which reached its zenith in 1913, was concerned with “determining the pre-cultural, pre-artistic point of departure at which nature and culture, life and art, were not separate but united in the collective mythic consciousness.”²⁵

But it is not only the notion of a nostalgically transfigured archaism that dates back to romanticism; so does the notion of an archaism that is alien and cruel. Here the name of Johann Jakob Bachofen must be brought into play.

20 Andrey Bely, *Simvolizm* (Moscow: Musaget, 1910); quoted from Lachmann, *Memory and Literature* (see note 17), p. 87, note 49.

21 Richard Taruskin, in “A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and ‘The Music Itself,’” *Modernism/Modernity* 2/1 (1995), pp. 1–26, lopsidedly stresses the romantic aspect of *Le Sacre* and the project’s continuity with the nineteenth century. He places the true breach in the early 1920s, when Stravinsky fiercely distanced himself from the romantic and folk aspects of ballet and emphasized the modernity of “the music itself.”

22 Far better known is his fairy tale collection *Narodnye russkie skazki* (Moscow, 1855–63), which was translated into German and English and earned Afanasyev the nickname “the Russian Grimm.”

23 Aleida Assmann, “Pan, Paganismus und Jugendstil,” in *Antike Tradition und neuere Philologien: Symposium zu Ehren des 75. Geburtstages von Rudolf Sühnel*, ed. Hans-Joachim Zimmermann (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984), pp. 177–95.

24 See Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra*, 2 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 849.

25 Ingold, *Der große Bruch* (see note 10), pp. 180f.

Bachofen advanced a three-tiered theory of cultural evolution. He called these tiers hetaerism, matriarchy, and patriarchy, or the tellurian, lunar, and solar ages (after earth, moon, and sun). In the earth-bound tellurian phase, “the thought of death reigned over that of procreation and the giving of life.”²⁶ This is where human sacrifice belongs. The Biblical reminiscences of the sacrifice of all firstborn creatures ties in with the spring planting ritual. It was this complex of ideas of the tellurian or chthonian age that gave rise to the death-dance of the sacrificial maiden (an idea which Stravinsky claimed came to him in a sort of trance while working on *L’Oiseau de feu*)²⁷ and especially to Roerich’s elaboration of this idea into a sequence of spring rituals “from pagan Russia.”

Bachofen reconstructed, or rather imagined, the tellurian phase with much love and empathy, but as a cultural level to be surmounted. A child of his times, he postulated the existence of a dynamic of progress that drives cultural evolution to ever higher levels, from the earthbound to the lunar and finally to the solar. On the other hand, he emphasized the contrary dynamic of regression, with which progress is constantly imperiled. This dangerous tendency to relapse into hetaerism is, he felt, embodied in the figure of Dionysus, a god of ecstasy and sensual pleasure, yet an “affliction” and a regression to the long superseded cultural status of hetaerism. Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), with its portentous interweaving of ritual and music, specifically elevated the cult of Dionysus to the primal scene of Western art, and the archaic to the source of creative renewal.

Cultural evolution and faith in progress were precisely what avant-garde modernists revolted against with their vision of the primitive. Here the archaic and the primitive, for all the emphasis on their profound alienness, are clearly cast in a positive light. For the Russian avant-garde, tellurian archaism, with its cults of death and fertility, was represented by the Scythians, an Asian tribe of mounted nomads. Their existence in present-day Ukraine is well documented from the ninth century BCE to the third century AD by archeological findings, almost all of which stem from burial mounds (*kurgans*), and many of which are breathtakingly precious and beautiful. The Scythians even stirred the imagination of the ancient Greeks. The artistic style of “new barbarism” was called Scythianism (*skivstvo*),²⁸ and its most prominent exponent in music was the young Sergey Prokofiev with his *Scythian*

26 Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Urreligion und antike Symbole*, ed. Carl Albrecht Bernoulli (Leipzig: P. Reclam, 1926), vol. 1, p. 391.

27 Roerich himself, despite his claims to the contrary, cannot be considered the inventor of this motif. He was too beholden to the ideal of archeological authenticity to light on such a romanticized imaginary ritual as the death dance of a chosen maiden.

28 Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 24), p. 855.

Suite (1915). Another ideal of modernist archaism that found expression in Roerich's and Stravinsky's conception of *Le Sacre* is *stikhiya*, a term derived from the Greek *stocheion* (element), meaning primal element (e.g. from the four elements), elemental, or elemental force. Applied to aesthetics, it means "immediacy," that is, presentation instead of representation, enactment instead of narrative. We shall come back to this in the second part of this study in connection with the relation between memory and music. Roerich and Stravinsky were concerned with "an immediate depiction of antiquity without any particular dramatic theme." What they wanted to show was not a story ("there is no plot") but "the mystery of the great upsurge of the creative forces of spring."²⁹ For this reason, any form of narrative pantomime, of the sort that still played such an important role in *L'Oiseau de feu*, was to be expunged from the choreography. In consequence, as Sergey Volkonsky noted, "*Le Sacre du printemps* is not a ballet: it is a ritual, an ancient cultic ceremony."³⁰

But Roerich sought models for his "scenes from pagan Russia" not so much among the Scythians as in folklore, especially from Russia's northern and western peripheries, in Lithuania and White Russia, where more survivals of pagan rituals and customs could be found than in heavily Christianized "Holy Russia" itself. Even today the spring festival (*semik*) and the St. John's Eve festival (*kupala*) are still celebrated with ritual choral dances (*khorovodi*) of the sort that occur in *Le Sacre*.³¹ Originally Roerich and Stravinsky envisaged a St. John's Eve celebration; only later did they switch from summer to spring, when the forces of renewal and procreation awake. In this solar phase, the sun is called Yarilo, from *yarīy* (ardent). Afanasyev describes the essence of the god of this phase as "(a) vernal light and warmth, (b) youthful, impetuous, violently awakening forces, (c) of erotic passion, lasciviousness, and fecundation: ideas inseparable from the manifestations of spring and its terrifying phenomena."³² The age of these customs is verified by medieval chron-

29 Ibid., p. 879.

30 Prince Sergey Volkonsky, "Russkii Balet v Parizhe," *Apollon* 6 (1913); quoted from Ingold, *Der große Bruch* (see note 10), pp. 562–64. Of course Brandstetter, in "Ritual as Scene" (see note 14), is correct to say that *Le Sacre* is concerned, not with the enactment of a ritual, but with its representation. However, as she makes perfectly clear, it by no means takes place in the medium of classical ballet, whose formal language is upended and obliterated in Nijinsky's choreography in order to leave space for the expression of the savage and primitive.

31 *Semik*, from *sem'* (seven), is celebrated seven weeks after Easter, like Whitsuntide or the Jewish *Shavuot*, and is also associated with the cult of the dead. Information kindly supplied by Barbara Conrad-Lütt.

32 Alexander N[ikolayevich] Afanasyev, *Poëticheskiye vozzreniya slavyan na prirodu* (The Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs), 3 vols. (Moscow, 1865–69); quoted from Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 24), p. 882.

icles, which roundly condemn them from an ecclesiastical perspective. These people, we read in the Nestor Chronicle (*Nestorova letopis*) or the Tale of Bygone Years (*Povest vremennikh let*), were

living in the forests like the very beasts [...] there were no marriages among them, but simply games [*igrī*] in between the villages. When the people gathered for games, for dancing, and for all other devilish amusements, the men on these occasions carried off wives for themselves [...].³³

This passage forms the basis of “Jeux des cités rivales” and “Jeu du rapt” in *Le Sacre*, and it describes precisely what Bachofen understood by hetaerism.

Human sacrifices are not known to have taken place in this context. Yury Sokolov mentions the burning of a “ceremonial doll, the dummy,” which can also be “replaced by a tree, a birch. Sometimes, it is true, chiefly in Ukrainia [*sic*], the central role is played by a girl adorned with a garland. Around her choral dances [*khorovod*] are performed, in her honor songs are sung.”³⁴ Afanasyev describes similar customs from White Russia in connection with the St. John’s Eve celebrations:

Among the Byelorussians, with the dawning of St. John’s Day, the peasant girls choose the most beautiful maiden from their midst, strip her naked, and wind her round with fine garlands from head to toe. Then they set off for the forest, where Dzevko-Kupalo (for that is what the chosen maiden is called) must distribute wreaths among her friends, which have been prepared in advance. She sets about this task blindfolded, while around her a merry maidens’ *khorovod* starts up. Auguries are made on the basis of who gets which wreath. A living wreath vouchsafes a rich and happy married life, while a dead, withered one foretells poverty and an unfortunate marriage.³⁵

This passage probably forms the basis of “Les Augures printaniers” and “Glorification de l’élue.”

33 *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, quoted from Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 24), p. 884. The quoted passage, here translated literally, is found in a bilingual edition (Old and New Russian) entitled *Pamyatniki literatury drevney Rusi* (Monuments of Ancient Russian Literature), ed. L[ev] A[leksandrovich] Dmitriev and D[mitriy] S[ergeevich] Likhachev, vol. 1: *XI – nachalo XII veka* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), p. 30. Information kindly supplied by Barbara Conrad-Lütt.

34 Yury M. Sokolov, *Russkiy folklor* (Moscow: Gos. uchebno-pedag. izd., 1938), p. 196, trans. Catherine Ruth Smith as *Russian Folklore* (Detroit: Folklore Associates, 1971), p. 196.

35 Afanasyev, *Poëticheskiye* (see note 32), vol. 3, p. 723; quoted from Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 24), p. 885.

Music and Memory

Music, being a temporal art, maintains a multitude of relations to memory. In our context I wish to single out three of them: 1) the role of memory in the organization of a musical work of art, 2) its forms of reference to the external past, and 3) its subsequent history in cultural memory. Beginning with the first point, any musical work of art of substantial length will develop what we might call its own memory, in that, as the work progresses, it “recalls” its own preceding events in various forms of literal or varied recurrence. The music, as it progresses, constitutes a “memory space” in which events have consequences, motifs undergo destinies, and things are developed and resolved. What we are dealing with here is, of course, always the perception and memory of the listener, not of the music itself; but this is an *implicit* listener, one who is immanent to the work of art and who helps determine its form and structure. This relation to memory applies to all art forms unfolding in time. But it applies to the musical work of art in a different sense than it does to verbal art, for in music the possibilities of semantic reference are largely inapplicable. For this reason music develops forms of self-referentiality unknown to literary art on this scale. Thus the memory metaphor does justice to the musical work of art with respect not only to its temporal dimension, but also to its intrinsic semiosis, i. e. its capacity for generating meaning through references and internal allusions and for fashioning a memory of its own past – a sort of identity, one might say, that generates aesthetic form and unity through the various stages of its development.

The form of memory that Stravinsky preferred to use in *Le Sacre* is that of anticipation, the “announced entrance” of themes and motifs. For example, a motif repeated throughout almost the entire “Les Augures printaniers” is already stated in the preceding Introduction, where it is heard beginning at rehearsal no. 1 and played *pizzicato* by the first violins in bars 8–10 after rehearsal no. 12. Sixteen bars into the next section it is taken up again as an ostinato. Similarly, to cite another example, the characteristic theme in parallel thirds, introduced by the trombones five bars after rehearsal no. 28 (to no. 30), achieves its actual entrance only in the next section (“Rondes printanières”), beginning three bars after rehearsal no. 50, after which it climaxes triumphantly from rehearsal no. 53f. and reverberates in the following section, “Jeux des cités rivales” (rehearsal nos. 60–62 and 64f.). The theme of “Cercles mystérieux des adolescentes” (rehearsal nos. 91ff.) is likewise already heard in the Introduction to Part II, two bars before rehearsal no. 82 (and again at nos. 83, 84, and 89). It is in this nexus of multiple backward references and anticipations that the work’s memory, and hence its identity, takes shape.

Precisely this memory-like identity of *Le Sacre* was repudiated by Theodor W. Adorno:

Evading this identity is one of the primary concerns of Stravinsky's technique of archaic musical images. However, precisely because the motif itself is not yet "there," the displaced complexes are incessantly repeated instead of – as Schoenberg would say in his terminology – the consequences being drawn. The concept of dynamic musical form, which has dominated occidental music from the Mannheim school to the contemporary Viennese school, presupposes precisely a motif that is clearly shaped and fixed in its self-identity, however infinitely small it may be. Its dissolution and variation is constituted exclusively through contrast with what is enduringly maintained in memory. Music knows development only to the extent that it knows the solidified, the definite; Stravinsky's regression, which would like to reach back prior to this stage, therefore replaces progress with repetition. [...] Stravinsky is distinguished from the subjective, dynamic principle of varying what has been unambiguously posited by a technique of ever-new beginnings that search futilely for what they in truth cannot reach and could not hold. His music knows nothing of memory and thus nothing of any temporal continuity of duration. Its movement is a sequence of reflex gestures.³⁶

What Adorno has in mind here is something different from what I described above as a form of musical memory. To illustrate this difference, we need only turn to the concepts "remembering, repeating, and working through" that Freud introduced, albeit in a quite different context, for the psychoanalytic treatment of mental disorders.³⁷ In Adorno's estimation, *Le Sacre* is dominated solely by repetition, without remembrance or working through. To him, "Stravinsky's shock music suffers from compulsive repetition."³⁸ "Repetition," the memory-less pulse of irregular rhythms and constantly repeated ostinato "cells," unquestionably plays the predominant role in *Le Sacre*. But there are also themes that unfold over four to eight bars and attain quite distinctive shape – genuine, hummable melodies made memorable by multiple recurrence, sticking in the listener's mind and remaining in the

36 Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949), ed. Rolf Tiedemann, *Gesammelte Schriften* 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 151, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor as *Philosophy of New Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 122.

37 Sigmund Freud, "Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten" (1914), in *Schriften zur Behandlungstechnik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 207–15; English title as given in vol. 12 of the Standard Edition of Freud's writings, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001).

38 Adorno, *Philosophie* (see note 36), p. 163, translation by J. Bradford Robinson, the translator of this chapter.

memory of anyone who experiences *Le Sacre*. But Adorno would subsume these, too, under the heading of “repetition.” What he is vainly seeking, causing him to accuse the piece of “lacking memory,” is obviously the “working through.” What this might mean is made clear in connection with his thesis that Stravinsky spatializes time in *Le Sacre* by “playing *temps espace* against *temps durée*,” a procedure that “makes itself the advocate of rationalization in the sense of an amnesic mensurableness and denumerableness.” Music, he continues, is thereby “degraded to a parasite of painting.” In contrast, music that “absorbs time” is capable of “transition, climactic progression, the distinction between spheres of tension and resolution, of exposition and sequel, of question and answer.”³⁹ The ideal of working through, in the sense of motivic manipulation and developmental variation, projects the ideal of progress into the temporal work of art itself, which is meant to advance not only beyond its historical predecessors, but also beyond its origins in the exposition as the piece proceeds. To Adorno, “working through” meant prioritizing development, that element of classical sonata form that became “the center of the form altogether in Beethoven’s music” until, in Brahms, “there is nothing unthematic left.” Schoenberg, by assimilating the direction of music from Beethoven to Brahms, “can lay claim to the legacy of classical bourgeois music.”⁴⁰ This is how Adorno sees the form in which music absorbs time.

This form of time – developmental time, progressive time – is undoubtedly precisely what Stravinsky sought to obliterate and avoid in *Le Sacre*, with the same liberating rigor that avant-garde painters applied to perspective and avant-garde novelists (*Ulysses*) to narrative.⁴¹ What he aspired to was time as present: “Music,” he wrote in his memoirs,

is the sole domain in which man realises the present. By the imperfection of his nature, man is doomed to submit to the passage of time – to its categories of past and future – without ever being able to give substance, and therefore stability, to the category of the present.⁴²

This accords precisely with the above-mentioned principle of *stikhiya*: production, not representation; enactment, not narration. The willful flatness of modern painting corresponds to the “spatiality” of Stravinsky’s music, with the same effect of spiriting away the subject as the point of reference not only

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 176f.; trans., p. 142f.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–59; trans., p. 46.

41 But see Roman Vlad, who explains the entire work as the unfolding of a single germ-cell, the “ostinato” motif $d\flat-b\flat-e\flat-b\flat$, in “Reihenstrukturen im *Sacre du printemps*,” in *Igor Stravinsky, Musik-Konzepte* 34–35, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1984), pp. 4–64.

42 Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), p. 92.

for perspective, but also for temporal development. In *Le Sacre*, this principle stands out so markedly because it serves the idea of conjuring up the archaic – the “primal” – as vividly as possible.

Herein lies the second form of the relation between music and time. Not only can a work of music recall its own “past,” it can also recall other music. This is where archaism comes into play, namely, in the folk tunes and motifs that Stravinsky quotes, often merely as scraps and fragments, to evoke “pagan Russia” in music. But rather than using them as quotations, he twists, disfigures, and amalgamates them into his music wherever possible to the point of unrecognizability, thereby creating a sort of imaginary folk music.⁴³ The “ostinato motif” mentioned above as an example of repetition, appearing more than a hundred times in “Les Augures printaniers” and already anticipated in the Introduction, manifestly derives, as Roman Vlad has demonstrated, from the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*, which Stravinsky proposed as a national anthem for post-Tsarist, pre-Bolshevik Russia.⁴⁴

To evoke the archaic, Stravinsky quoted not only Russian folk songs, presumably from memory, but especially Lithuanian and White Russian melodies from Anton Juskiewicz’s collection, which had presumably been recommended to him by Roerich.⁴⁵ These folk borrowings have been meticulously identified by Richard Taruskin, Peter Hill,⁴⁶ and others and need not be itemized anew here. The interesting point about this use of folk materials is, however, that Stravinsky vigorously repudiated it in later years during his neoclassical period, when he disavowed his Russian works, conceding only that the bassoon melody of the Introduction to *Le Sacre* was borrowed from genuine folk music, in this case Lithuanian.⁴⁷ Evidently he was at pains to avoid any association with Russian neo-paganism and neo-nationalism, much less late-romantic Russian music and its excessive use of folk motifs. Beginning in 1920 he vigorously denied that “Russian paganism” had anything to do with the original idea of *Le Sacre*.⁴⁸ The music came first, he claimed; the pagan setting was secondary. In fact, hardly any other piece of twentieth-century music, unless it be by Stravinsky himself (*Les Noces*), is more deeply

43 Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 114.

44 Vlad, “Reihenstrukturen” (see note 41), pp. 16–18. Vlad quotes the song in Stravinsky’s own piano reduction from his arrangement for wind instruments and percussion (1917).

45 Anton Juskiewicz, *Melodje ludowe litewskie* (Lithuanian Folk Melodies) (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Akademji Umiejętności, 1900).

46 Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 24), pp. 891–966; Hill, *Stravinsky* (see note 43), pp. 35–39.

47 No. 157 in Juskiewicz’s collection (see note 45).

48 See the articles by Stephen Walsh and Paul and Edmund Griffiths in this volume.

and manifestly steeped in the spirit of autochthonous Russian music than *Le Sacre*. Something similar may be said to apply to his entire oeuvre – namely, what one might call its satiation with the memory of a wealth of musical traditions, a quality that connects his Russian period with the neoclassical and every later period in his output. Never has music more permeated by memory been written. Stravinsky, Pierre Boulez recalls, always claimed that “tradition was the crucial thing” for him and that he was “prolonging tradition.”⁴⁹ Here he did not mean tradition in the academic sense, nor in the sense of a particular tradition, such as the Viennese School. What he meant was a comprehensive cultural memory of music that is activated in a fresh light with each new work. This recalls the procedures of Russian Acmeist poetry, as described by Renate Lachmann:

The external texts, once inserted into the given text by means of quotation, allusion, syllepsis, anagram, or some other strategy, establish the heterogeneity of the Acmeist text. This heterogeneity, which also reflects the notion of the texts’ co-presence, breaks open the individual text. In other words, by referring to an external text, the text transcends its own boundaries and opens up to the text of culture, the macrotext. [...] In this way, the Acmeist text develops its own “chronotope,” which dispels historical time and its demarcations.⁵⁰

Just as Osip Mandelstam was driven by a “longing for world culture” (*toska po mirovoy kulture*),⁵¹ Stravinsky was driven by a desire to assimilate “everything he loves and make it his own.”⁵² It is obvious, despite Stravinsky’s statement to the contrary, that the works from *Le Sacre* to *Les Noces* realize a memory space governed by Russian folk art. His son, the painter Théodore Stravinsky, relates this trait to Stravinsky’s experience of exile from 1914 on:

An understandable homesickness probably suffices to explain why Stravinsky, at that time, was so keen on Russian folk art, exploring and exploiting its inexhaustible riches. This folk art was truly dear to his heart.⁵³

49 Pierre Boulez, Paul Sacher, and Oskar Fritz Schuh, “Persönlichkeit und Erscheinung: Gesprächsrunde zum 80. Geburtstag (1962),” in *Igor Strawinsky: Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, ed. Heinrich Lindlar (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 155–64, esp. 159.

50 Renate Lachmann, “Text und Gedächtnis: Bemerkungen zur Kulturosoophie des Akmeismus,” in *Epochenschwellen* (see note 8), pp. 283–99, esp. 287. Acmeism arose in the years around 1910 and ended with the death of Anna Akhmatova in 1966.

51 Lachmann, “Text und Gedächtnis” (see note 50), p. 286.

52 Boulez et al., “Persönlichkeit” (see note 49), p. 159.

53 Théodore Stravinsky, “Von Kindheit und Kriegszeit,” in *Igor Strawinsky*, ed. Lindlar (see note 49), pp. 49–54, esp. 53.

***Le Sacre du printemps* and Cultural Memory**

Third, a work of music has the opportunity to enter the cultural memory of a country, a culture, or even a global cultural community – an ability it shares with all other kinds of art. As far as the importance of a piece of music in cultural memory is concerned, a distinction must be made between canon and repertoire. A piece belongs to a repertoire by virtue of its popularity; but it belongs to a canon through intertextual references in other pieces of music and, especially, through a critical, explanatory, and didactic discourse that evolves around it. Scarcely any work of music, not only of the twentieth century, has been discussed and commented on at greater length than *Le Sacre du printemps*; scarcely any has had a greater impact on other composers; and scarcely any has been accorded the status of a music-historical milestone for such a long time down to the present day.

In its significance as a turning point in art and a milestone in modernity, Stravinsky's ballet is comparable only to Picasso's *Demaiselles d'Avignon*. The two works share a common primitivism: the transformation of primeval archaic forms, whether African masks instead of faces in some of Picasso's figures, or, in Stravinsky's case, the predominance of pounding irregular rhythms and the reiteration of what Adorno called "rudimentary pitch sequences." They also share a long gestation, as revealed by the countless sketches that both artists left behind for these works (some eight hundred preliminary studies for Picasso's painting, the invaluable sketches for Stravinsky's score). This long gestation alone shows that both men were intent on making a broad leap, a revolutionary breakthrough, into artistic *terra incognita*.

The decisive factor for the inclusion of *Le Sacre* in the musical canon was, more than anything else, the primacy given to everything new, portentous, and epoch-making – a primacy that forms part of the modern awareness of time, or the "temporal regime of modernity."⁵⁴ Within the purlieu of this specifically modern paradigm, the main interest attaches to forerunners, trailblazers, and innovators – or, to put it another way, it is precisely these aspects to which the works in the canon owe their canonical status. In this light, the scandal unleashed by *Le Sacre* at its première, given at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913, placed the seal of revolutionary innovation on the work and immediately singled it out as epoch-making. Normally the epoch-making status of a work is accorded only *ex post facto* after several decades, as cultural memory begins to take shape.

⁵⁴ See Aleida Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen? Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitregimes der Moderne* (München: Hanser, 2013).

In this connection, it is all the more remarkable that a connoisseur such as Adorno could dismiss *Le Sacre du printemps* – the pinnacle of shocking and unparalleled novelty in music history – as “regressive” and “infantile.”⁵⁵ The case of Adorno perfectly exemplifies the normative claims of modernist theory in the arts, its faith in progress, and the absolute imperative of innovation. His *Philosophy of New Music* falls into two main sections, “Schoenberg and Progress” and “Stravinsky and Restoration” – an antithesis with which Schoenberg himself, as is well known, would have nothing to do. Adorno defines the principle of musical progress, wholly convincingly, in negative terms, namely, as an “index of prohibitions.” Musical progress manifests itself in the criminalization of the outdated. “If all is not deception,” he wrote in his preface of 1948, “this canon now debars the means of tonality, which is to say, the whole of traditional music.”⁵⁶ The outdated is not only excluded *prima facie*, it is virtually made the object of horror and revulsion, or what Julia Kristeva calls “abjection,”⁵⁷ just as Thomas Mann, in his *Joseph* tetralogy, described it as “the superseded” in religion.⁵⁸ In its prosecutorial severity, Adorno’s verdict on what he saw as the musically outdated recalls the Biblical prohibition of graven images. In light of this normative art of religion and its commandments, *Le Sacre*, and especially Stravinsky’s neoclassical œuvre, appear as a relapse into idolatry, as a Dance Around the Golden Calf.⁵⁹ The

55 That said, infantilism is a basic ingredient of Russian neo-primitivism, as Ingold points out: “The ‘youthfulness’ of the archaizing innovators, their insistence on *childlike* freshness and insouciance, as well as their deliberately *childish* forms of expression and behavior: all belong to the group aesthetic of the neo-primitivism that reached the zenith of its artistic evolution in Russia in or around 1913.” Ingold, *Der große Bruch* (see note 10), p. 181.

56 Adorno, *Philosophie* (see note 36), p. 40; trans. p. 32. See Mann, *Doktor Faustus* (see note 13), p. 349; trans. pp. 254f.: “Every better composer bears within him a canon of what is forbidden, of what forbids itself, which by now embraces the very means of tonality, and thus all traditional music.”

57 Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980).

58 Mann explained this conception in a letter: “Certain things were once quite correct and reasonable, but cease being so and become ‘divine idiocy.’ Religiosity essentially resides in *paying attention* to this, to changes in the image of truth and rightness.” Letter of 27 October 1945 to Anni Loewenstein, reproduced in Thomas Mann, *Selbstkommentare: “Joseph und seine Brüder,”* ed. Hans Wysling and Marianne Eich-Fischer (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1999), pp. 292f. Adorno illustrates the same principle using the example of the diminished seventh chord: it is “correct and filled with expression at the beginning of Beethoven’s Sonata opus 111,” but “sounds false in salon music,” where it became the quintessence of musical kitsch. Adorno, *Philosophie* (see note 36), pp. 40f.; trans. p. 41.

59 Schoenberg’s setting of this dance in his opera *Moses und Aron* (1930–32) – another musical invocation of paganism – unmistakably alludes to *Le Sacre*.

magnificent thing about Stravinsky's music resides in the fact that, rather than propping up its novelty with the dogmas and prohibitions of normative modernism, he took the liberty to cast those very prohibitions to the winds. Today, now that this "index of prohibitions" has long faded, *Le Sacre* occupies a central, lasting, and wholly uncontested place in cultural memory as perhaps the most famous work of modernist music.