Sounding Nostalgia In Post-World War I Paris

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Abstract
In the years that immediately followed the Armistice of November 11, 1918, Paris was at a turning point in its history: the aftermath of the Great War overlapped with the early stages of what is commonly perceived as a decade of rejuvenation. This transitional period was marked by tension between the preservation (and reconstruction) of a certain prewar heritage and the negation of that heritage through a series of social and cultural innovations. In this dissertation, I examine the intricate role that nostalgia played across various conflicting experiences of sound and music in the cultural institutions and popular media of the city of Paris during that transition to peace, around 1919-1920. I show how artists understood nostalgia as an affective concept and how they employed it as a creative resource that served multiple personal, social, cultural, and national functions. Rather than using the term “nostalgia” as a mere diagnosis of temporal longing, I revert to the capricious definitions of the early twentieth century in order to propose a notion of nostalgia as a set of interconnected forms of longing. Drawing from journalistic and archival sources, histories and theories of nostalgia, and musical and cultural studies of Paris, I interrogate the continuities and discontinuities among the political, economic, and social forces affecting musical nostalgia in the aftermath of a costly, global war. I show that nostalgia was a complex notion engaging a multiplicity of meanings and functions that were experienced and cultivated collectively in a variety of musical activities in the public sphere. Nostalgia not only expressed resistance to change, but also conveyed progress and offered answers to collective debates about postwar memorialization, French national identity, and cultural modernism. The music that I discuss, ranging from concert favorites to unpublished songs, demonstrates that genres and venues usually studied separately were informed by similar struggles in defining their continuing relevance in a new era. This music also sheds light on the interconnectedness of apparently distinct markets for nostalgia and how they intersected with civic life, politics, urbanism and nationalism.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
Music

First Advisor
Jeffrey Kallberg

Keywords
cultural studies, First World War, French music, modernism, nostalgia

This dissertation is available at ScholarlyCommons: https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3399
SOUNDING NOSTALGIA IN POST-WORLD WAR I PARIS

Tristan Paré-Morin

A DISSERTATION

in

Music

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor, Jeffrey Kallberg, and to my dissertation committee, Naomi Waltham-Smith and Kevin M.F. Platt, for their guidance and support over the years. I am also thankful to the University of Pennsylvania music faculty and staff for their interest in my work and for their excellent intellectual and administrative support. I would especially like to thank Timothy Rommen for spearheading dissertation workshops and for allowing me to present my work as it progressed. This dissertation is the result of interactions with dozens of scholars, colleagues, and librarians in the United States and in France. I am grateful for their assistance in my research and for their feedback at its various stages.

My research was facilitated by generous funding from the University of Pennsylvania and by a Chateaubriand Fellowship in the Humanities and Social Sciences. For this financial support, I would like to thank the Department of Music at the University of Pennsylvania and the Institut de recherche sur le patrimoine musical en France at the Université Paris Sorbonne, where Gilles Demonet kindly supported my work.

There are many friends with whom I shared the ups and downs of doctoral life. I am indebted above all to my friends Charlie Shrader and Daniel Shapiro. Their astonishing insight into my clumsy first drafts was as invaluable as their generous friendship. My deepest thanks also to Meagan Mason, a discerning flâneuse and the finest salonnière in Paris. Thanks to Siel Agugliaro, Juan Castrillón, Keisuke Yamada, and Bo kyung Blenda Im for questioning my ideas and challenging my conclusions.

None of this would have been possible without the continuing love and encouragement of my family at every step of this journey. This dissertation is for them in recognition of all the things they did to help me pursue my dreams. Finally, to my wife Jennifer, I owe more than I can express. Her patience during my hours of work late at night, her shared excitement at my evolving ideas, and her unwavering faith in my project were a constant source of motivation and inspiration.
ABSTRACT

SOUNDING NOSTALGIA IN POST-WORLD WAR I PARIS

Tristan Paré-Morin

Jeffrey Kallberg

In the years that immediately followed the Armistice of November 11, 1918, Paris was at a turning point in its history: the aftermath of the Great War overlapped with the early stages of what is commonly perceived as a decade of rejuvenation. This transitional period was marked by tension between the preservation (and reconstruction) of a certain prewar heritage and the negation of that heritage through a series of social and cultural innovations. In this dissertation, I examine the intricate role that nostalgia played across various conflicting experiences of sound and music in the cultural institutions and popular media of the city of Paris during that transition to peace, around 1919-1920. I show how artists understood nostalgia as an affective concept and how they employed it as a creative resource that served multiple personal, social, cultural, and national functions. Rather than using the term “nostalgia” as a mere diagnosis of temporal longing, I revert to the capricious definitions of the early twentieth century in order to propose a notion of nostalgia as a set of interconnected forms of longing. Drawing from journalistic and archival sources, histories and theories of nostalgia, and musical and cultural studies of Paris, I interrogate the continuities and discontinuities among the political, economic, and social forces affecting musical nostalgia in the aftermath of a costly, global war. I show that nostalgia was a complex notion engaging a multiplicity of meanings and functions that were experienced and cultivated collectively in a variety of musical activities in the public sphere. Nostalgia not only expressed resistance to change, but also conveyed progress and offered answers to collective debates about postwar memorialization, French national identity, and cultural modernism. The music that I discuss, ranging from concert favorites to unpublished songs, demonstrates that genres and venues usually studied separately
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One year after the Armistice that ended the Great War was signed on November 11, 1918, two hundred performances had already been played at the Théâtre national de l’Opéra, France’s most prestigious stage. Cultural activities had resumed under the name of elegance. As operagoers could read in the opening pages of their program in January, it was thanks to the “prodigy of elegance” that “in the aftermath of the war, with the ongoing shock of the most tragic upheavals, Paris is able to indulge in the fine recreations of art.”¹ The invitation received by a Mr. Lavedan for the December 16, 1919, dress rehearsal of *Goyescas*, Enrique Granados’s one-act opera, illustrated this elegance with characters taken straight out of the aristocratic pastoralism of a pre-Revolutionary opéra comique (Fig. 0.1). The evening’s program, which also featured the first revival in almost thirty years of Léo Delibes’s ballet *Sylvia*, promised to be a pleasant escape from postwar shock.² But Raoul Laparra, the reviewer for *Le Ménestrel*, the foremost music journal in Paris, was not impressed by either work. He criticized the “excessive timidity” of Granados’s orchestration and the incomprehensible libretto, and he only found good will without apparent results in *Sylvia*. Nonetheless, he was moved by an interlude in *Goyescas* that provided the “nostalgia of Aragon,” a region in northern Spain famous for its *jota*, a folk dance used by Granados. As for the accompanying ballet, Laparra recognized it as “one of the most charming flowers of the French

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
¹ Alfred Capus, “Gazette de l’Opéra,” programme de l’Opéra, Académie national de musique et de danse, no. 1 (1919). “Le mot élégance est celui qui marque le mieux le caractère de cette rentrée. Car l’élégance n’est ni la frivolité, ni l’insouciance ; elle se combine merveilleusement en France, non seulement avec le plaisir, mais encore avec la tristesse et le deuil. Elle élève la joie au-dessus de la vulgariété ; elle met dans la douleur la noblesse des lignes et une sorte d’apaisement. C’est ainsi que Paris est capable, au lendemain de la guerre, dans la secousse encore des plus tragiques bouleversements, de se livrer aux belles récréations de l’art. Tel est le prodige de l’élégance.”
² The dress rehearsal of *Goyescas* was followed by only three performances on December 17, 22, and 26, where the work was accompanied by Antoine Mariotte’s opera *Salomé* (1908) instead of *Sylvia*. 
garden,” whose perfume gave him “nostalgia” for other forgotten works by Delibes that should be brought back to light.\(^3\)

Figure 0.1: Invitation to the dress rehearsal of *Goyescas*, Académie nationale de musique et de danse, December 16, 1919.

Laparra principally derived satisfaction from the feeling of nostalgia triggered by both works. But he used that term with two significantly different implications. His longing to hear music from the past is familiar to us all today, although, unlike us, Laparra did not have the means

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to relieve his nostalgia with easily-accessible audio and video recordings of forgotten works.\textsuperscript{4} On the other hand, feeling nostalgia for a Spanish dance does not match current understandings of the term, since there is no temporal distance nor any sense of loss in the jota. It also does not correspond to the historical meaning of nostalgia, originally a medical term that literally means the “pain of the return home.” Laparra, a Frenchman, did not long to return home to Spain. Yet, he might have dreamt to travel there, as he likely did many times before. As a writer, he was recognized for his expertise on Spanish music, while as a composer, he contributed numerous Spanish pastiches, as in two of his operas, \textit{La Habanera} (1908) and \textit{La Jota} (1911). In that context, Laparra’s “nostalgia of Aragon” expressed a strong desire for the colors of this exotic elsewhere, an escape from the present not via an idealized time, but via a geographical fantasy of otherness that marked his entire creative and intellectual career. These two uses of the word nostalgia within a single review show the malleability of the term in the early twentieth century, when it could be both a temporal and geographic term, and when it could reflect a sense of real loss as well as the eager desire for something different.

However, Laparra’s nostalgia was not triggered solely by music from another time and another place, but also by the sociohistorical context in which the two works were presented. If the reviewer had read any newspapers that morning, he would have seen on the front page a summary of the German response to the compensations demanded by the Allied countries. In his review, Laparra briefly alluded twice to the war and its consequences, in the sentences that immediately precede each of his nostalgic suggestions. Hence, \textit{Sylvia} was an outcome of the nation’s reawakening to its treasures after the “blow” (bourrasque), while one of the themes of the interlude from \textit{Goyescas}, conducted by the son of the “departed” (disparu) composer had a “melancholic charm reminiscent of the expression on the face of Granados.” Nothing more was needed to call to mind the unspoken tragedy of the death of the Spanish composer: on his journey back to Europe in

\textsuperscript{4} As a matter of fact, the two works that Laparra wished to hear again, the operas \textit{Le Roi l’a dit} and \textit{Jean de Nivelle} are still largely inaccessible a century later.
March 1916, after his American trip during which Goyescas received its world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, a torpedo struck his ship, the Sussex. Although the ship did not sink, the panicked composer and his wife tried to escape, throwing themselves in the water where they drowned together. The event was not mentioned in the review, but that was not necessary. In the years following the Armistice, the war, its consequences, and its trauma were omnipresent in the press. There was hardly a page without an allusion to the personal, material, and social damage caused by the war.

In this dissertation, I look at the expression and mediatization of various forms of nostalgia in Paris at a time when the memory of the war and its trauma enveloped most of private and public life. I examine the personal, collective, national, and cultural functions that nostalgia served in that context. Considering the direct impact of the memory of the war on postwar musical cultures, my aim is to decipher the circulation of a plurality of collective nostalgias and to consider the intricate roles they played across various conflicting experiences of sound and music, and across various artistic and social contexts. While this is not a dissertation about the consequences of World War I, rather about the musical cultures that followed it, the war lies in the background of many of my analyses, either directly or indirectly. The war provides the context as I investigate the artistic motivations of musicians and their audiences, how they shaped their relations with the public and the press, how institutions promoted their work, the role that Paris played as a city in the broader diffusion of individual and collective conceptions of nostalgias, and finally, what we can say about the formation of a common nostalgic reimagining of the past through the city’s media and arts.

As numerous scholars have repeated, social or historical disasters often trigger nostalgia on a personal and collective level. Fred Davis, author of one of the first major sociological studies of nostalgia, wrote that nostalgia thrives “on the rude transitions rendered by history, on the

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discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters—in short, those events that cause masses of people to feel uneasy and to wonder whether the world and their being are quite what they always took them to be.”

While nostalgia at times has been seen as a regressive emotion, a “phobic feeling,” or even a “social disease” that erases the gap between the historical past and the experienced present, psychologists and academics now usually agree on recognizing the benefits of nostalgia as a coping mechanism, a sort of safeguard of stability when continuity is threatened. So, when I read that the French chief of architectural services to the minister of education and fine arts wrote at the end of the war that “it is yesterday’s France that shall be reborn tomorrow,” I choose not to dismiss such a statement as expressing a conservative nostalgic longing to go backward and erase the traces of the war, but instead to consider it as a reflection on the paradoxical status of nostalgia as a rebuilding force firmly anchored in the reality of modern life. I refrain here from commenting on the positive or negative interpretations of nostalgia that have been passed on by writers and scholars since the middle of the twentieth century. On the contrary, I attempt to explain the complex interplays between conflicting forms of engagements with the past, present, and future, and with national and geographical otherness.

The period on which I focus, and which I define narrowly (but with some porosity), is the two years that followed the Armistice, 1919-1920. In retrospect, 1920 marks the symbolic beginning of the period of cultural effervescence that historians have traditionally referred to as the Années folles—the “crazy years”—a decade of economic growth characterized (often too narrowly)

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9 Paul Léon, La Renaissance des ruines (Paris: Laurens, 1918), 39. “C’est la France d’hier qui doit renaitre demain.”
10 I should note here that, for convenience, whenever I talk about the postwar era in this dissertation, I mean the immediate postwar years of 1919-1920, unless otherwise noted. It goes without saying that many of the events and tendencies that I discuss extend far beyond the last day of December 1920, and many of the sources I used were written or published several years later.
by a renewal of art forms including jazz, art deco, the talkies, and others. But 1920 is not yet fully representative of that decade: it is a pivotal year, a threshold when national events pertaining to the Great War and commemorating it overlapped with notable cultural novelties. While the war and prewar were still recent enough for their echoes to resonate throughout Paris, they were at the same time distant enough for the population to be ready to turn the page onto a new era. The “craziest” thing about the Années folles—or rather, what makes it such a rich moment for an interdisciplinary research on nostalgia—is probably this congruence of past, present, and future, between continuity and innovation, remembrance and overturning, and Paris’s ambiguous relation to its own heritage and to its place in the world.

Furthermore, while much has been written about the war and the following period, its immediate aftermath has not attracted as much attention, especially in musicology. The work of such musicologists as Jane Fulcher, Barbara Kelly, and Marianne Wheeldon has inspired and informed my research, but even when these scholars write about the immediate postwar years, it is generally within a broader narrative of musical and cultural evolution in the interwar period, in which the memory of the war plays only a secondary role, if any at all. My focus on the transitional period between war and peace allows me to observe with greater precision how conflicting forms of nostalgia emerged around musicians, audiences, and musical institutions. Nostalgia was omnipresent in Paris after the war, and was exclusively attached neither to composers of the older generations, nor to the so-called neoclassical composers invested in the revival of classical forms and stylistic elements. There was no clear delineation between nostalgic musicians and non- (or anti-) nostalgic ones. Everyone was, in a way or another, involved in the construction and reconstruction of the myth of France’s musical tradition while participating in its evolution. The press constantly published reminiscences of the war while it also tried to turn the page by encouraging the renewal of French culture. The younger composers who had narrowly escaped or survived combat had to find their place in a transformed social and urban environment where the past weighed on their shoulders, and where they could feel their responsibility in either upholding
or challenging it. The musicians, listeners, and writers featured in this dissertation were for the most part conscious of these issues, and they discussed them at length in the thousands of pages of musical criticism published in these two postwar years.

To understand how the notion of nostalgia was understood and what were its collective functions in Paris after the war, my study draws mostly on sources that would have been publicly, and for the most part readily, available in Paris in those years. These sources include a vast archive of journalistic evidence that comes from publications as diverse as possible: specialized music journals (*Le Ménestrel*, *Le Monde musical*, *Le Courrier musical*), newspapers about performing arts (chiefly *Comœdia*), magazines about popular song and dance (*Paris qui chante*, *Paris-Danse*), intellectual and literary chronicles (in *Nouvelle Revue française*, *Le Correspondant*), generalist newspapers, and finally concert programs. Since many of these publications were interrupted during the war and only resumed late in 1919, a majority of the most relevant sources I use in this dissertation date from 1920. I supplement these journalistic sources with private ones when they provide important additions or nuances. These private sources, whether subsequently published (memoirs and correspondences) or still unpublished (archival letters), can sometimes shed light on the dynamic relations between private memories and their public circulation, and on how individuals reacted to collective forms of memorialization. Finally, I complete this textual archive with creative works, musical compositions, photographs, and illustrations, which form both the basis of my arguments and their illustration. While some of the musical works have continued to circulate to the present day (with recordings easily available), many others do not seem to have resurfaced since their first publication in 1919-1920.¹¹ My selection is not based on the availability (or renown) of any particular work, or on the scholarly attention it previously attracted. On the contrary, I looked at several hundred musical works performed or published in France in 1919-

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¹¹ At the present time, these publications can only be consulted in library collections. The digitization program of the Bibliothèque nationale de France has made available hundreds of old scores online on its digital platform Gallica. However, at the present time, many of the scores I cite are restricted to on-site consultation or have not yet been digitized.
1920, from which I selected the most interesting to my narrative. Throughout this dissertation, I reject the standard hierarchy between the famous composers and the rest. Although some well-known figures appear in each chapter, I draw attention to lesser-known composers in order to stress the collective sharing of nostalgic ideas among larger communities of artists and audiences rather than phenomena limited to a small selection of privileged individuals who, for a reason or another, rose to the top.

While this dissertation addresses a gap in research about twentieth-century French music, it also reacts to new scholarship on nostalgia, which has expanded tremendously in the past ten to twenty years, especially in the field of media studies. However, historical forms of nostalgia remain misunderstood, including within cultural histories. Besides André Bolzinger, Helmut Illbruck, and Thomas Dodman (scholars who cover the history of nostalgia from its inception in 1688 as a medical disease to the nineteenth century, when scientific connotations gradually disappeared), there are few extensive studies on nostalgia in specific historical moments, including within the field of musicology. There even seems to be a common, yet erroneous understanding that nostalgia started to become a popular cultural phenomenon around 1970. Yet, my archival research clearly shows a growth in the cultural significance of the term right after 1900, when suddenly writers and musicians became interested in thinking about nostalgia and expressing it creatively. The popularity of the concept has continued to grow till the present. Of course, expressions of nostalgia in popular culture existed long before the turn of the twentieth century; but a study of the artistic production that describes itself as “nostalgic” in those years allows us to observe that by the First World War, nostalgia had become an attractive and evocative notion in the popular imagination, thereby acquiring a valorized expressive meaning.

On the other hand, as I explain in chapter 1, current definitions of nostalgia used in modern scholarship do not reflect the plurality of nostalgias that appear in primary sources from 1919-1920.

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12 I discuss this point in more detail at the beginning of chapter 1.
While today nostalgia means a longing for a lost past, either real or imagined, and early modern nostalgia referred to the desire to see one's homeland, a glimpse at the artistic production of the early twentieth century reveals a proliferation of conceptions of nostalgia that differ, and sometimes oppose, those of previous centuries, and, in part, those that are familiar to us today in contemporary media. Therefore, this dissertation offers a new theoretical apparatus that accounts for the diversity of meanings, expressions and representations of nostalgia. With this expanded definition, which emerges from the archive, I am able to pay attention to elements of nostalgia previously unexamined by musicologists, and to reevaluate basic assumptions about longing at the turn of the 1920s. The conclusions that I draw differ from the ones traditionally told by musicologists writing on the period, who tend to see the 1920s as constituting the beginning of a new, modernist era in French music. On the contrary, I show that complex interactions and reconsiderations of the past shaped not only musical innovation, but also national identity. This expanded concept of nostalgia therefore contributes to a reconsideration of the production of historical meaning through creative and mediatic work in the modern era.

The histories and theories of nostalgia, their application to music, and their relevance in the specific context of this dissertation are the focus of the first chapter, “The Sounds of Nostalgia,” which sets the stage for my discussion of nostalgia in the specific case studies discussed in the following chapters. In this chapter, I review the historical conceptions of nostalgia from its origins until the early twentieth century in order to establish a theoretical apparatus that reflects the variety of affects and objects regarded as nostalgic by French artists and writers of the time. Dismissing neither ancient nor current meanings of the term, I insert them into a wider map of nostalgias that features four major paradigms that are better adapted to the complexities of temporal and geographic longings expressed in my sources and exemplified throughout this dissertation. I then discuss nostalgia as a musical expression. As a reaction to the lack of consistency in previous musicological uses of the term, I propose that musical difference is fundamental to a critique of
musical nostalgia. Finally, I examine the centrality of Paris in nostalgic narratives, showing conflicting reactions to historical change in the postwar years.

The following three chapters each center on a different sphere of musical activity in postwar Paris. In chapter 2, “Media, Myths and Memorials,” I focus on the national myths that shaped musical memorials of the war. Drawing from George Mosse’s concept of the “myth of the war experience” and its legitimizing of the sacredness and national interest of wartime sufferings, I examine public and mediatized musical responses that memorialized the war, the French victory, and its heroes, and how they adopted or rejected the national myths through their use of nostalgia. I conclude with a detailed analysis of the Tombeau de Claude Debussy, a collective homage published in 1920 that comprised ten compositions by as many French and foreign composers (among which were Dukas, Ravel, Satie, Stravinsky, and Bartók). I compare it to a war memorial that challenged the established myths of the war through its heterogeneity, which strayed away from the conventional expressions of nostalgia that war memorials were expected to strive for.

In chapter 3, “Waltzes of Nostalgia,” I examine the changing attitudes toward the waltz, a genre whose rapid transformation into a symbol and product of musical nostalgia was influenced by such circumstances of the war as the restrictions on theatrical and social activities, and the rapprochement between French and American cultures. I show how listeners, dancers, and composers assigned to the genre their own regrets and desires about the fate of the nation, and how they used it to convey moral and political messages. The chapter explores the reengagement with the nation’s cultural history and the ensuing tensions in discourses surrounding the moral and aesthetic value of waltzes in various sites, from the new cosmopolitan dance halls called dancings to the theatrical stages and finishing in the concert halls with a discussion of the reception of Maurice Ravel’s La Valse as representative of the ambiguity between the genre’s decay and its rehabilitation in postwar Paris. Central to this chapter is the notion of “sounds of memory,” which I adapt from Pierre Nora’s lieux de mémoire (sites of memory) as a way to focus on the waltz’s material, symbolic, and functional content, and its interplay of memory and living tradition.
The fourth chapter, “Nostalgic Revolutions, Modernist Renovations,” engages more directly with musicological debates on the nature of neoclassicism as either modernist or nostalgic. Following Theodore Ziolkowski, I discuss classicism as a broader movement inspired by national values of simplicity and order, but not necessarily based on classical themes or forms involving the use of imitation or pastiche. Focusing primarily on the musical and critical work of the young composers known as Les Six, with a special emphasis on the everyday and the popular, I argue that modernism and nostalgia are constantly interwoven, but in ways that defy the common paradigms of nostalgia. Drawing from the Lusophone notion of *saudade*, I propose the notion of “sideways nostalgia” to describe playful forms of longing that conventional forms of nostalgia do not adequately account for. The second half of the chapter looks at the reception of modernist compositions in the concert scene of the period, where prewar music formed the vast majority of the repertoire and where Les Six were largely ignored, and concludes that nostalgia was a guiding force behind both the more conservative and more progressive attitudes.
1 THE SOUNDS OF NOSTALGIA

1.1 DRIFTING NOSTALGIA

1.1.1 Nostalgia resists definition

We live in the age of nostalgia.¹ This is something a French author might have written a hundred years ago after noticing the widespread use of the term “nostalgia” by several writers, journalists, poets, artists, and musicians. Whereas the history of the term until the second half of the nineteenth century had been dominated by scientific and medical uses, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the introduction of nostalgia in new contexts alongside its mediatic and artistic diffusion.² Hence, I catalogued over two dozen musical works (mainly songs and dances arranged for piano) published in France with the title Nostalgie or any of its derivatives between 1896 and 1914 (see Appendix A).³ This number doubled in the years that followed the First World War and has continued to increase to this day.⁴ This musical production that describes itself explicitly as being

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¹ The expression has been used multiple times in scholarly publications, newspapers, blogs, and other popular media, usually to refer to the present time, but sometimes to describe a period in the past.
³ I examined these works at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Département de la musique. My inquiry included the terms “nostalgie” and “nostalgique” (singular and plural) as title of the work (including works published in larger collections). Unfortunately, only a few of these works are currently available digitally on Gallica, the digital library of the BnF.
⁴ I counted about thirty works for the decade following the end of the war (1918-1928) and almost fifty works for each of the following two decades. For comparison, the BnF holds only nine scores titled Nostalgie for the years between 1833 (oldest archived score) and 1895. My inventory does not attempt to be a definitive catalogue of the musical production of “nostalgia” in France since it only takes into account works that were
nostalgic only constitutes a fraction of the artworks on this theme and a tiny part of the discourses on nostalgia during the first two decades of the twentieth century. But it shows that, at the turn of the century, nostalgia had already become an attractive and evocative concept in popular imagination and in artistic creation, thereby acquiring an intensified expressive signification. This transformation, or rather this popular appropriation, happened much earlier than has been suggested by scholars who, informed by scientific writings rather than by popular culture, situate it as late as the middle of the twentieth century or even later. Furthermore, contrarily to the dictionaries of the period, which continued to propose an old and unique definition of “nostalgia” as an “intense desire to see one’s homeland again,” a glance at this artistic production reveals a proliferation of conceptions of nostalgia entirely different, even opposed to the ones of previous centuries and, in part, to those that are familiar to us in contemporary media, most particularly regret for a lost and exalted past. For example, the cover illustrations of two scores published in 1905 and 1906 show no clear references to the past, but also represent unrelated ideas: *La Nostalgie : Naïveté militaire* depicts a shirtless soldier undergoing a medical exam (Fig. 1.1); and *Nostalgie de nègres* presents an African American couple pensively resting on either side of an oversized banjo, the woman in traditional dress posing in front of an equatorial landscape, and the man in a modern sports jacket in front of a cityscape (Fig. 1.2).

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6 See section 1.2.1 (“Nostalgia as *mal du pays*”)

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These illustrations signal neither specific cases of nostalgia nor indications regarding its abundance in French culture in the early twentieth century. However, they raise a fundamental question: what do we mean when we talk about nostalgia? This question has two aspects. First, a historical aspect, which can be reformulated as “what did we mean” by “nostalgia” in the past. A few studies have detailed the evolution of the concept of nostalgia from its medical origins until its psychological interpretations. These historical studies usually draw from the scholarly and philosophical developments that have altered the meaning of the term. They primarily seek to explain its semantic drift, but do not always succeed in untangling the simultaneous presence of antagonistic interpretations of nostalgia in a given period. When paying attention to a varied body

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7 I am not the first one to ask this question. However, the following discussion, inspired by my study of historical sources, differs largely from the answers given elsewhere by scholars who focus on contemporary social phenomena using a temporal conceptualization of nostalgia. See for instance Kalinina, “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Media and Nostalgia?”

8 See the bibliographical note at the beginning of this chapter.
of sources, it often becomes arduous to give a unique answer to the meaning of nostalgia, even when historical dictionaries and theses only offer a single one. The second aspect of the question is conceptual. It involves the interrogation of contemporary conceptualizations that underlie studies of nostalgic experiences that are distant from our present considerations (either temporally, geographically, or culturally). For example, whereas a hundred years ago nostalgia was manifold, overlaying multiple spheres of experience, this multiplicity has since evolved into a more homogeneous concept, where the temporal experience clearly dominates, while other aspects of historical nostalgia, such as its physiological or pathological functions, have practically disappeared from media and popular discourses.9 By joining these historical and conceptual aspects, we can glimpse at a fluid interaction between former (and sometimes obsolete) forms of nostalgia and notions that are more recent and familiar, despite the heterogeneity that this transhistorical interpretation supposes at first sight.

To ask this question now—what is nostalgia?—after the considerable growth of “nostalgia studies” in the past few years, suggests that the term is still subject to semantic instability, even imprecision, as if nostalgia, after all, remains elusive. Yet, we have been warned against such an idea of diffuse nostalgia. Helmut Illbruck, in his critical history of the idea of nostalgia, criticized this contemporary use (or misuse) of the term: “Today, it seems, anything not nouveau can already express nostalgia.” Commenting on fashion’s revisiting of its own past, he adds: “It is debatable whether such ‘nostalgia,’ quotable and recyclable at any place or time, still does express nostalgia.”10 The increased instability around definitions of nostalgia is usually explained as the result of a slow semantic drift that saw the decline of nostalgia as a medical term (as it was originally

9 This does not prevent a conceptualization of contemporary nostalgia as a complex and nuanced feeling, as we can read in a recent issue of Recherches en communication, which invites us to “take into account the deeply ambiguous character of nostalgic tendencies that are turned to the past at the same time as they are opened to the future, linked to regressive desires and a conservative will, but also carriers of reinvention and subversion.” (Sébastien Fevry, Sarah Sepulchre, and Marie Vanoost, “Du rétro au néo, entre nostalgie et réinvention. Discours, objets, usages dans les cultures médiatiques contemporaines. Note introductive,” Recherches en communication, no. 46 (2018): 2.)
10 Illbruck, Nostalgia, 4.
conceived) and its gradual translation into popular discourse. Illbruck explains: “With science’s abandonment of nostalgia as a technical and operative term . . . comes a linguistic tendency toward vagueness, a vagueness as the basis for nostalgia’s seemingly infinite proliferation which . . . continues until today, into the global postmodern, with nostalgia surviving, as a mere simulacrum, even its own death.”

For many scholars, it seems that this “tendency toward vagueness” is a problem that needs to be addressed, that is to say that we should recover a unified sense of the concept as was originally the case. According to this point of view, as long as it remains a vague signifier, nostalgia continues to be inexhaustibly open to reinterpretation and recontextualization, to the risk of becoming a meaningless term, buried under journalistic clichés and familiarly exhausted. Hence, psychologist Krystine Batcho explains that “confusion of different constructs designated by the same term has continued to obstruct progress in empirical research on nostalgia.”

In contrast to Batcho, who asks for “conceptual clarity as a prerequisite for consensus,” other writers propose instead that there has been a paradigm shift between two clear definitions: homesickness and regret over the past. However, this paradigm shift contradicts the varied use of the term that I observed in numerous artistic and mediatic sources. Therefore, I contend that instead of aiming for the consensus of a unique definition to describe a phenomenon

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11 Illbruck, 149. Although this tendency toward vagueness appears to be recent, or at least to have amplified in the past decades with the emergence of new technologies of information, Fred Davis, author of one of the earliest major sociological studies on nostalgia, observed the same issue thirty years before Illbruck: “Once introduced into popular parlance, the process of semantic drift has proved so pronounced that nowadays only a minority of speakers . . . are likely to associate nostalgia with homesickness per se, while almost no one thinks of it as a ‘disease’. (Fred Davis, Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.)

E. B. Daniels also wrote in 1985 that “attempts to pin down nostalgia are akin to chasing a dream, while standing back and allowing the full weight of its historicity, its bodily antecedents to emerge, reveal a phenomenon of incredibly rich and varied horizons.” (E. B. Daniels, “Nostalgia: Experiencing the Elusive,” in Descriptions, ed. Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 79.)


13 It is the case, for example, of Becker, “The Meanings of Nostalgia.” Jean Starobinski, noticing a similar semantic drift with mélancolie (a term existing since the fifth century B.C.E.), warns us not to be fooled by the similarity of the words when the facts they refer to vary greatly: the semantic drift simply infers a “taste for verbal continuity, for using the same words to designate different phenomena.” (Jean Starobinski, Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie des origines à 1900 (Bâle: Geigy, 1960), 9.)
of such semantic, historic, social, and cultural complexity, we must consider the various interpretations of nostalgia as facets that can all inform our discussions and our research.

This dissertation pays close attention to the multiplicity of meanings that nostalgia acquired through its history and applies those findings to a specific historical context—a relatively small geographical and temporal environment—to see how these multiple meanings, usually thought of as chronologically successive, endured simultaneously. Although the story of this dissertation is at first one of music in postwar Paris, it also treats nostalgia as a fleeting and drifting term, idea, and emotion. As Starobinski wrote: “The history of emotions, then, cannot be anything other than the history of those words in which the emotion is expressed.”14 In other words, to study nostalgia in a specific historical context, one cannot avoid probing into the history of this emotion and the ways that it is codified, expressed and comprehended.15 Thus, when looking at the two illustrations above, we should not seek to encompass them within a single definition, whether historical or contemporary. Nor should we dismiss them as antiquated examples unrelated to our current considerations. Rather, we must seek to enrich our perspectives on a phenomenon that affects society in sometimes unexpected and paradoxical ways by embracing all its related manifestations. Therefore, my objective is not that of historians of nostalgia who explain the evolution of the term through its factual, philosophical, literary, or scientific history. What I propose here is rather the idea that there is no linear history of nostalgia. Just as nostalgia sometimes allows us to rewrite our memories, the term itself can be seen as a palimpsest, which is to say that its successive transformations have left traces that have never been completely erased.

Tobias Becker has recently recalled that a history of nostalgia “would need to be more careful in ascribing nostalgia to societies and groups from the outside” and to differentiate between

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15 My research does not constitute a history of emotions per se. Although this chapter traces the history of nostalgia, I do so only in order to develop a musicological approach to music that is critical of, and attentive to that history.
what constitutes nostalgia and what it is not. As such, this proposition seems self-evident, even essential. However, Becker uses it in order to remove from the realm of nostalgia some experiences that were part of it in the past. He explains that the use of the term nostalgia during the 1970s was inadequate considering that the cultural practices of the decade were “quickly expanded far beyond the dictionary definition.” He believes that the concept of “retro” is more appropriate to describe the ironic detachment observed in the cultural products of the period, in particular those inspired by the 1950s. However, Becker cites numerous sources that describe as nostalgic the phenomena of their time, which we could say “from the inside.” If it is true that some examples provided by Becker are closer to retro as we conceive it today, it seems hazardous to reject a concept used in an earlier period when it no longer corresponds to the conceptualization that we have of it nowadays. Rather, I believe that it is profitable to probe more extensively this conceptual divergence in order to reveal other sociological dimensions of nostalgia that may have escaped us because of the term’s continuous semantic drift.

My approach is therefore closer to the one signaled by Stuart Tannock in the 1990s. In “Nostalgia Critique,” Tannock argued for the recognition and discussion of not one nostalgia, but of multiple heterogeneous nostalgias which respond to a “diversity of personal needs and political desires” for different individuals and communities. In short, Tannock sees nostalgia as a “cultural resource or strategy” that is not merely a passive reaction to personal anxiety or existential uncertainty, but an active response whose functions can also be multiple. Thus, in accordance with the recent psychological reconsiderations of the benefits of nostalgia, Tannock urges scholars to reconsider at least some nostalgic narratives “in a positive light, as being progressive or...

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17 Becker, 244.
20 “Invoking the past,” Tannock states, “the nostalgic subject may be involved in escaping or evading, in critiquing, or in mobilizing to overcome the present experience of loss of identity, lack of agency, or absence of community.” (Tannock, 454.)
enabling,” a statement that challenged the generally negative critical response to nostalgia that was still dominant in the 1990s. S. D. Chrostowska shared the same wish for a new critical approach to nostalgia in historical work, a need to “examine nostalgia’s internally structuring role, its historical discursive and rhetorical force in specific critical articulations.” Nostalgic narratives are not mere escapist dreams into imagined pasts, they create personal and collective identities, they enact social structures, and they produce memories.

In this chapter, I develop a theoretical approach to nostalgia that reflects the complexities of the term and that draws from the insight of the scholarship outlined above. Based on the notion of difference at the center of nostalgic experience, I propose four paradigms that embrace nostalgia’s multiplicity of meanings. I then show how these meanings can inform a musicological critique of nostalgia and a historical critique of Paris. Before going any further, however, it is worth highlighting a few crucial moments of the history of nostalgia, from its original medical uses up to the First World War, in order to grasp the various connotations it had accumulated by 1919-1920.

21 Tannock, 456.
22 In recent years, psychologists have been at the forefront of nostalgia studies with systematic and empirical approaches that aim at quantifying the functions of nostalgia as an individual experience. Their consensus, as summarized most recently by Clay Routledge, is to view nostalgia as a positive emotion that helps people cope with their fears of an uncertain future, reassure themselves in the present, and revisit their past in meaningful ways. Even research in the marketing of nostalgia confirms that feelings of nostalgia tend to be beneficial, pleasant, and desirable. This may partially explain why nostalgia came to permeate most spaces of life in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. (For a summary of the most recent trends in psychological studies of nostalgia, see Clay Routledge, Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource (New York: Routledge, 2016).)

For most of the twentieth century, however, nostalgia elicited suspicion and distrust rather than confidence. As late as 1974, Vladimir Jankélévitch apprehended nostalgia as a “phobic feeling . . . the fearful desire to turn around, the desiring fear to take refuge in childhood and timidly re-enter the house of the past.” (Vladimir Jankélévitch, L’Irrevésible et la nostalgie (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 195–96.) Another widely-read study of nostalgia from the subsequent decade, Susan Stewart’s On Longing, presented nostalgia as nothing less than a “social disease,” a utopian ideology that is “hostile to history.” (Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 23.) Both authors justify their apprehension of nostalgia on its erasure of the gap between the historical past and the experienced present. In short, they denigrate nostalgia’s escapist disengagement with history. Such accounts of nostalgia as a positive or negative concept and emotion vary with generations and contexts along a spectrum—there is a certain porousness between the negative and positive aspects of nostalgia even for the authors cited above.

1.1.2 A discursive labyrinth

The story of the origins of nostalgia has often been repeated. In 1688, Johannes Hofer coined the term for his medical dissertation from the Greek roots nostos (return home) and algia (pain). In his dissertation, Hofer described the physical means which cause a person to suffer (and potentially die) from homesickness, henceforth designating as a medical condition what might previously have been considered simply an emotion. For my purposes here, I will focus on only two theses in Hofer that are the points of origin of a subsequent history of semantic drift.

The main thesis found in Hofer is that nostalgia was initially conceived as a disease of geographical displacement from an identifiable primary location—a locatable “home.” In other words, nostalgia corresponded to a specific response to the geography of the world. The symptoms of the disease included loss of appetite, fever, lack of sleep, languor, and death, and did not respond to typical forms of medication. Hofer’s therapy for nostalgia was simple: it could only be cured by an actual return home (although he also recorded cases of patients cured by the mere promise of a return home). The scientific explanations were, however, much more convoluted—after Hofer, a string of doctors of nostalgia suggested biological and natural explanations to the pathological condition, for which the case study par excellence throughout the eighteenth century was that of Swiss soldiers living away from their mountainous homes. The second thesis central to Hofer’s theory concerns the etiology of the disease. Hofer claimed that nostalgia was caused not by a troubled memory, but by an affected imagination forming ideas of the native land in the mind.

26 See Bolzinger, Histoire de la nostalgie, 277–82. Bibliothèque numérique Medic@ hosts a significant number of historical theses on nostalgia: http://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/histoire/medical.
Illbruck summarized it as “an extreme disorder in which a man’s imagination not only overpowers but also distorts his knowledge.”27 As the imagination of the patient became overpowering, it used energy (Hofer spoke of “animal spirits”) which could no longer be used to support other bodily functions, and henceforth caused the symptoms that could lead to the patient’s death. Overall, these two theses encapsulate nostalgia’s early theorization as a debilitating disease of the mind caused by a geographically-driven imagination.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the concept of nostalgia began to drift from denotation of geographical to temporal longing. Immanuel Kant, unlike Hofer a century before, thought homecoming to be impossible—nostalgia’s cure was not the nostos. As Illbruck explains, in Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798), Kant argued that “the place that the nostalgic person yearns for is not so much the actual place but youth itself, the time before the age of maturity which, though irrevocably past, the nostalgic person mistakenly associates with the ‘simple pleasures of life’.”28 For Kant, this recognition of the impossibility of geographical return brought a curing insight: once one accepted that the anticipation of the return home (nostos) was but a delusion, and that the place of youth could not be brought back, homesickness would be cured—the urge to return would disappear. In other words, the “disease of childishness” (as Illbruck called it) was overcome by “stepping into maturity.” Whereas Kant preserved Hofer’s location of nostalgia within the realm of excessive imagination rather than memory, he allowed for the ontological shift of what I have identified as Hofer’s first thesis, substituting for the dominance of place that of time in the cultural imagination of longing. However, Kant’s “disease of childishness” was not caused by a dissatisfaction with the present state, or by an idealization of the past, as later centuries would theorize it, but by an impulsive desire to return to a time of careless and naïve enjoyment of childhood life.

27 Illbruck, Nostalgia, 56, see also chap. 3. For Illbruck, Hofer’s focus on imagination is the most astonishing part of his dissertation. See Illbruck, 42 and 17.
28 Illbruck, Nostalgia, 127.
Writers in the nineteenth century deployed nostalgia as a popular term for multiple types of yearning. As the “home” and the “return home” drifted into metaphors, nostalgia lost its status as a pathological condition, and became a “desirable and positive longing to indulge in, to compensate for the fear of no longer knowing a place that without any reservations might qualify as ‘home’.” As nostalgia declined as a scientific appellation in the early nineteenth century, it became accessible to a broader population as a vernacular term vague enough to evoke a variety of romantic yearnings, emotional strains, and mental disorders. Joseph von Eichendorff succinctly expressed this newly-found desirability of nostalgia in *Dichter und ihre Gesellen* (1833), writing that the remembrance of youth was a “homesickness without home, this labyrinthine self-torture” (*Heimweh ohne Heimat, diese labyrinthische Selbstquälerei*). In Eichendorff’s phrase, nostalgia is still deprived of its connection with a geographical homeland, while remaining an individually debilitating condition. But the novelty is its potential to be self-inflicted, reversing the agency of nostalgic longing: no longer a physiological reaction laying outside of human agency (Hofer), or else couched in childish impulses (Kant), there was now a conscious turn toward the desirable experiencing of its pathological symptoms (Eichendorff).

The rise of psychology as a new medical discipline in the late nineteenth century coincided with the diminished interest in nostalgia as a physiological disorder. Following two centuries of accounts of nostalgia as a disease, Freud latched onto the remaining traces of nostalgic pathology, making the incurable longing curable again while diverting away from subjective imagination to dig deeper into nostalgia’s psychology of grief and narcissism. Freud did not use the term nostalgia, but his discussion of melancholia in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) provides insight into

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29 Illbruck, 137.
30 Joseph von Eichendorff, *Dichter und ihre Gesellen*, bk. 1, chap. 4. Helmut Illbruck quotes the expression “Heimweh ohne Heimat” in Illbruck, 150. However, the last words (“labyrinthische Selbstquälerei”) suggest that the romantic continues to see nostalgia as a sickness, an emotion from which one suffers. The full passage is: “Das Angedenken meiner eigenen Jugend ist es, was mich herführt, der aufrichtige Schmerz um ein junges, heitres Gemüt, das auf diesem Wege sich immer tiefer und tiefer in der blühenden Öde junger Seelen gar wohl das Heimweh ohne Heimat, diese labyrinthische Selbstquälerei.”
psychological understanding of the connections between past and present at the turn of the twentieth century. Freud distinguished two types of reactions to loss: the healthy one, mourning, led to the acceptance of the impossibility of return of the lost object. The melancholic subject, on the contrary, was unable to accept loss or death, and therefore was unable to move forward in life. In the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition, nostalgia (or melancholia), was therefore understood to incapacitate the subject. I do not want to focus too much on Freud’s understanding of melancholia because by the turn of the century, it was becoming rare to talk of nostalgia as an unequivocally debilitating emotion. Indeed, disputing the Freudian analysis, Linda Austin argues that nineteenth-century psychophysiology “articulated an idea of remembering based in habit and repetition that effectively broke the traditional association of the [nostalgic] ailment with false or hyperbolic memory, melancholia, and protracted mourning.” It was through the passage from imaginative recall of the home infused with emotionality to memory based on abstracted past experiences that nostalgia could finally and decisively lose its pathological power.

By the turn of the twentieth century, both theses in Hofer’s original dissertation had been undermined: nostalgia was no longer conceived as a geographical longing, nor was it thought to be caused by the imagination alone. These previous conceptualizations of nostalgia were subtly transformed into new ones, which dragged latent traces of Hofer’s medical schema from the seventeenth century into subsequent eras. This underpinned the semantic drift that contemporary writers have observed. It is useless—perhaps, even impossible—to try to reconcile various theories

31 Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers often used nostalgia interchangeably with the more common terms of spleen and melancholia. Contrarily to nostalgia, melancholy and spleen are usually described as objectless and diffuse, like a vague sadness or discomfort without any concrete source. Nostalgia is usually thought of in conjunction with a place, time, or object. It is for this reason that nostalgia developed into a consumerist market: due to its specificity, it can be objectified and commodified, or used for political or social empowerment. Some passages cited in this dissertation employ the word “melancholy” as a substitute, or equivalence, to “nostalgia.” Beyond the terms, it is the concept that is worth exploring, especially in these moments of near-indistinction.


of nostalgia by merging them into a single coherent theory. Rather, we should accept their confluence in all its conflict: despite their paradoxical relationship to one another, they establish a connection between the roles of memory and imagination in the construction of personal and collective nostalgic identities, whether empowering or debilitating. Moreover, we must collapse these interconnected yet distinctly historical “stages” of nostalgia into a single theory that is conceptually transhistorical in the manner of a dictionary entry, whereby a historical succession of definitions accrues meaning and inform one another through the simultaneity of their production on the page. Failing to think of nostalgia’s many definitions as interconnected—whether this stratification serves some practical use, or is the result of historiographical neglect, or ignorance—can be detrimental to the understanding and analysis of historical events.

Let me illustrate this with a literary example that exemplifies nostalgia’s semantic drift and the consequences of this drift on the rendering of nostalgic meaning and intent. In an overlooked passage from one of the most widely-read novels in French history, Jules Verne’s Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1869-70), the Canadian harpoonist Ned Land projects his escape from Captain Nemo’s submarine, in which he has been held captive for months. As he anticipates the nautical machine’s approach to Québec City, his hometown, he dreams of its river, but finally realizes the impossibility of his escape, which signals the impossibility of the return home:

*Affronter une mer souvent démontée sur un frêle canot, c’était courir à une perte certaine. Ned Land en convenait lui-même. Aussi rongeait-il son frein, pris d’une furieuse nostalgie que la fuite seule eût pu guérir . . . Le Canadien était évidemment à bout de patience. Sa vigoureuse nature ne pouvait s’accommoder de cet emprisonnement prolongé. Sa physionomie s’altérait de jour en jour. Son caractère devenait de plus en plus sombre. Je sentais ce qu’il devait souffrir, car moi aussi, la nostalgie me prenait.*

To confront an often raging sea in a frail boat was to face certain death. Even Ned Land agreed. So he reined in his terrible homesickness [nostalgie], that only escape could cure. . . . The Canadian was clearly at the end of his tether. His energetic personality could not get used to our extended imprisonment. His physiognomy
was changing from day to day. His personality was getting gloomier and gloomier. I knew how much he was suffering for I too was feeling homesick [nostalgie].

A few chapters later, after the repeatedly failed attempts at escaping from the submarine, Ned Land’s suffering is aggravated:

_‘Je dirai aussi que le Canadien, à bout de forces et de patience, ne paraissait plus. Conseil ne pouvait en tirer un seul mot, et craignait que, dans un accès de délire et sous l’empire d’une nostalgie effrayante, il ne se tuât. Il le surveillait donc avec un dévouement de tous les instants._

I must also say that the Canadian was at the end of his patience and tether, and no longer left his cabin. Conseil could no longer drag a single word out of him, and feared that he might kill himself in a fit of madness or under the effect of devastating homesickness [nostalgie]. He devotedly watched over him every second of the day.

A modern reader of Jules Verne, unaware of the medical dimensions of the early history of nostalgia, might be puzzled by his emphasis on nostalgia as a potentially morbid condition. Likewise, the reader may consider the necessity of a watchman (Conseil) dedicated to preventing someone gripped in the throes of nostalgic ailment from committing suicide to be overdramatic. Indeed, our contemporary idea of nostalgia does not seem potent enough to lead to death. However, Verne’s semantic field—cure, altered physiognomy, suffering, death—is unquestionably connected to the pre-Kantian theory of nostalgia as a pathological condition, one that only a return home (here through the form of an escape) can cure. Yet, Verne turns this homecoming into a Kantian impossibility: the submarine from which no escape is possible becomes an image of complete geographical disconnectedness—a labyrinth without an exit—and, as is the case with most labyrinths, Nemo’s captives are always brought back to the main hall after unsuccessful flights. Their longing for a geographical home becomes a longing for the time when they were not

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35 Verne, _Vingt mille lieues sous les mers_, 1227 (deuxième partie, chap. XXII); Verne, _Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea_, 375.
captives, and therefore a time when they were free from the paralyzing grip of nostalgia. But Verne also reminds us of another stage of nostalgia: one which is self-inflicted, or as Eichendorff wrote, a “labyrinthine self-torture.” Verne does not merely say that Ned Land might die of his nostalgia (as Hofer would have written); rather, he writes—and this is a significant nuance—that he might kill himself.\footnote{Killing the Captain and taking control of the submarine is an impossibility: one cannot escape from the labyrinth by tearing down its walls.} Paradoxically, the world outside of the submarine is a truly perilous space in which Verne’s characters are pitted against nature’s most awesome forces. Yet, it is in the quietness and solitude of the labyrinthine submarine—their labyrinthine nostalgia—that these same characters are in gravest danger.

This is a cautionary tale. If we fail to locate the precise definitions of nostalgia in texts and events—in other words, if we do not consider there to be more than one sort of nostalgia—we risk the sort of fatal misunderstanding that could have befallen Ned Land, should his conseil have not understood that nostalgia can be a terminal condition.

To better inspect this concept of a plural nostalgia, I have chosen to focus this dissertation on a short period of time around 1920, which was characterized by manifold and often contradictory forms of nostalgia. Through close readings of the words of musicians and critics in their full historical complexity—as in the Jules Verne excerpt cited above—I will shed new light on the dimensions of nostalgia that permeated musical life in this particular historical moment. The multiplicity of nostalgias that such an approach requires will at times seem regressive, dated, or downright irrelevant to the current linguistic vagueness surrounding this term; this is to be expected. In subsequent chapters, myriad nostalgias will prove illuminating both to the musical era of the afterwar, and to the very concept of nostalgia itself.

I will now outline a map of nostalgia around four main paradigms that express its many facets while allowing a better understanding of its social structures. I conceive these paradigms as a set of typical and interrelated models of conceptualizations of nostalgia that helps us not to
classify, hierarchize, or historicize its different forms but, on the contrary, to reveal its nuances without falling into the trap of an “infinite” and “vague” nostalgia as apprehended by some scholars. Unlike the conceptual history of the term briefly outlined above, these paradigms must now be conceived as transhistorical, temporally simultaneous, and equally valid ideations. These paradigms are: nostalgia as mal du pays (or homesickness), nostalgia as exoticism, nostalgia as promise, and nostalgia as regret. I use the term “paradigm” here in order to distinguish these four major notions from the numerous modalities that constitute them. As previously mentioned, only two of these paradigms (the mal du pays and the regret of the past) may be found in academic writings on nostalgia—and usually temporally separated from each other, namely that one historically precedes (or has preceded) the other. This distribution of the principal manifestations of nostalgia comes from my in-depth study of literary and musical examples produced in Paris from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, a time when the concept was at a moment of indecision, in which agreement over its definition was lacking, consequence of the rapid and sudden proliferation of the term across various media. Indeed, it is during this period—when the mediatization of public and cultural life increased, when the written press was at its height (a time often nostalgically labeled as its golden age37)—that coincides the first signs of a popularization of nostalgia from which emerge these four principal conceptual paradigms.

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1.2 MAPPING NOSTALGIAS

1.2.1 Nostalgia as *mal du pays*

The first paradigm of nostalgia is the only one still loosely attached to the term’s conceptual origins, which is why I begin with it. Even though by 1920, nostalgia had been used metaphorically for over a century, the dictionaries of the time still defined it as a longing for a geographical home. The *Larousse universel* of 1922 actually printed the same text found in Pierre Larousse’s initial *Nouveau dictionnaire de la langue française* back in 1856, in which nostalgia was defined as a type of melancholia, that is, as a melancholia with an object:


Using the Swiss as an example, this definition even perpetuated stereotypes of geographical (if not racial) nostalgia that were over two centuries old. In practice, however, this *mal du pays* is expressed in a variety of ways that I group here in three main modalities.

Two hundred years after Hofer, the pathological dimension of nostalgia had greatly diminished. However, the *mal du pays* was never a mere longing for home: the *mal* always bore the potential of becoming a *maladie*, an illness that verges toward a pathology of the country. For

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38 Throughout this dissertation, I retain the French expression *mal du pays* instead of the English homesickness. This is not only to retain consistency with the French sources that I use, but also because the idea of the “pays” (country or nation) is much stronger in the literature of the early twentieth century (especially in postwar Paris) than the idea of home.
39 *Larousse universel*, ed. Claude Augé (Paris: Larousse, 1922), s.v. nostalgie. See also *Nouveau dictionnaire de la langue française*, ed. Pierre Larousse (Paris: Larousse, 1856), s.v. nostalgie. All other intermediary editions of the Larousse dictionary reprinted the same definition. The word first entered the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* in its sixth edition of 1835 (tome 2, page 273), with a definition matching almost word for word the 1922 *Larousse*, the only major difference being its use of “maladie” in place of “mélancolie.” In English, the term entered the *OED* in 1770.
40 The 1777 article on nostalgia by Albrecht von Haller in the *Supplément à l’Encyclopédie* (vol. 4, page 60) surveyed Swiss nostalgia at length, apparently for the first time in a French, non-medical dictionary or encyclopedia.
that matter, Émile Littré’s dictionary definition (1873-74) was even more specific in its reference to medical nostalgia as a “withering” of the body:

NOSTALGIE (no-stal-jie), s. f. Terme de médecine. Mal du pays, dépérissement causé par un désir violent de retourner dans sa patrie. In 1924, the Larousse médical illustré offered a more elaborate definition that described some of the symptoms of the mal, including “death within a very short time.” In short, in apparent contradiction to the development of nostalgia outlined in the previous section, its geographic-pathological conceptualization remained the only dictionary definition available at the time.

These pathological representations still resonate in the military, where the remoteness from the country often translates in real physical suffering, for instance during the armed combat of the world wars. For many centuries, this military nostalgia had been portrayed as a kind of weakness or impotence. As Batcho writes: “from the political imperialist perspective, attachment to home is not an admirable value if it interferes with performance far from home.” For instance, the satirical wartime paper La Baïonnette published, in its issue of May 25, 1916, a drawing captioned “Nostalgie,” where an injured soldier tells his commanding officer that he refuses to fight because he has the “mal de terre” (Fig. 1.3), effectively restoring eighteenth-century discussions of military nostalgia.

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41 Dictionnaire de la langue française, ed. Émile Littré (Paris: Hacette, 1883), s.v. nostalgie.
42 Larousse médical illustré, ed. Émile Galtier-Boissière (Paris: Larousse, 1924), s.v. nostalgie.
43 There is one notable exception: the Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle, dir. Pierre Larousse (Paris: Larousse, 1874), tome 11, page 1102, added to the pathological definition a second, figurative one, where the homeland was understood as imaginary: “Aspiration vers quelque état, vers la possession de quelque chose : L’amour est la nostalgie de la patrie céleste. (Toussenel.)”
44 See the interesting record of nostalgia in the trenches during the war of 1914-1918 in Bolzinger, Histoire de la nostalgie, 231–49.
Similar instances of military nostalgia had already found their way into satirical cabaret songs. The 1905 song *La Nostalgie : Naïveté militaire* (lyrics by Félix Clemmenz and music by Octave Lamart; see Fig. 1.1) is an exceptional musical representation of the military definition of nostalgia. Narrating the scene of a military medical exam, the sheet music even included suggestions for costumes (and scoring for cymbals). The singer addresses the audience while wondering what his sickness might be, until the major-doctor responds: “it’s nostalgia!” Surprised, the soldier spends the following three verses panicking about a disease he knows nothing about. The hypochondriac soldier is mocking “nostalgia” as if it was a newly trending phenomenon: “la noc’, j’en ai jamais goûté !” (“I never had nos[talgia],” which could also be heard comically as “I never tried marriage”). Anxious, he doubts he will be able to get married if the illness makes him “impotent.” Interestingly, either to clarify the double-entendre, or perhaps in case the word was
new to the performer, the editor of the sheet music thought it was necessary to print the pronunciation of the term as *nocetalgi*'. At the end of the song, the audience had its laugh, but—perhaps as a parody of the vagueness of this term in popular discourses of the day, or of the fact that it was not yet universally comprehensible among all social classes—it still does not know what nostalgia is. By deriding the soldiers who suffer from the *mal du pays*, this cabaret song reveals a real concern about a distressing feeling whose causes, as well as consequences, remain imprecise and misdiagnosed.  

While this song clearly demonstrates that nostalgia as a military and medical phenomenon persists into the twentieth century, it is in its geographical form, but devoid of its pathological dimension (the *algia*), that nostalgia first became a popular term. The *mal du pays* appropriated the colors of pastoralism in vogue during the industrial revolution and the rural exodus of the nineteenth century. Already in 1811, Pierre-Jean Béranger’s once-famous ballad *La Nostalgie, ou la maladie du pays* (to be sung on a popular *air de la République*) represents well this earliest type of nostalgia. It tells the story of a villager who is assured that he will find gold, care, study, and theater in Paris. As soon as he arrives, the deceived villager begins to long to return to his village, see the mountain where he was born, hear its songs, see its houses, etc. Each of the six verses depict some celebrated feature of Paris (its women, its opera, the Louvre, etc.) that fails to cure the villager of his nostalgia until he finally returns to his village in the last refrain. This poem was set to music at least twice: once in 1833 by Hortense de Beauharnais, wife of Louis Bonaparte and mother of Napoléon III; then in 1841 by Paul Henrion (Fig. 1.4). Both are strophic songs of limited musical interest, although Henrion evokes the countryside with a long drone in the introduction. Another song from the same period (1837), also titled *La Nostalgie (Mal du pays)*, composed by Charles-Henri

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46 In another military parody of nostalgia (*La Nostalgie*, lyrics by Jean Dauras and music by César Fantapié, 1910), the singer-comedian uses his nostalgic diagnostic as an excuse to have fun (“faut me divertir, prendre du plaisir ; si je veux guérir, faut que je rigole”). The piano interlude which follows suddenly falls into a parody of a funeral march, satirizing the tension between nostalgia’s cure and its symptoms.

47 This was the first time the word “nostalgie” was printed in the *Bibliographie de la France*, the complete record of all new French publications initiated in 1811.
Plantade on lyrics by Mr. Justin (Fig. 1.5), tells the same regret for the country following the narrator’s quest for fame and fortune in an unnamed city. The covers of these publications offer variations on the trope of pastoralism: they depict a young man in the foreground either returning to, or dreaming about, his village. In the first case, the alpine village clearly suggests the Swiss mountains, an archetypal location of nostalgic yearning throughout the eighteenth century.

![Image of sheet music covers](image)

Figure 1.4 (left): Alexandre David (illustration), Paul Henrion (music) and Pierre-Jean Béranger (lyrics), *La Nostalgie, ou le Mal du Pays* (Paris: J. Meissonnier, 1841).

Figure 1.5 (right): Pierre-Joseph Challamel (illustration), Charles-Henri Plantade (music) and Mr. Justin (lyrics), *La Nostalgie (Mal du Pays)* (Paris: A. Romaguesi, 1837).

This polarity between urban and country life is simple, perhaps even naïve, but it constitutes an archetype to which artists continuously returned, and which would end up dominating much Parisian nostalgia in the early twentieth century. For example, at the dawn of the new century, the author Louis Mercier, from the Franche-Comté region in eastern France, published his last collection of sonnets titled *Les Nostalgies* (1900), comprising three sections that explore three aspects of nostalgia as understood at the time: temporal nostalgia in “Impressions of
childhood” (Impressions d’enfance), sentimental nostalgia in “First loves” (Primes amours), and geographic nostalgia in “Far from the country” (Loin du pays). This final section includes a “Farewell to Paris” (Adieux à Paris), in which the author expresses his “mal du pays”:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Donc, assez de Paris et des chansons d’Yvette,} \\
\text{Là-bas, bien mieux chez nous gazouille la fauvette,} \\
\text{Et mon chaume est un Louvre aux lustres de maïs!}
\end{align*}
\]

So, enough with Paris and Yvette’s songs, 
Over there, at home, the warbler chirps better, 
And my cottage is a Louvre with corn chandeliers! 49

This desire to return in the rustic nature of the Franche-Comté can be read as a rejection of the materialist and historicist culture of the contemporary urban world, a recurring trope in that era, as we will see in many examples in this dissertation.

Finally, in addition to the geographical return home and to the return to a premodern nature, nostalgia as mal du pays can also manifest itself as a collective return to the sources for a particular ethnic group. This regionalism claims the authenticity of an ethnic tradition that it defends against the threats of modernization and globalization, and from the exodus from the rural areas, which are often perceived as the guardians of the ethnic traditions and of their authenticity. This modality of the mal du pays can be observed in musical and literary works that exhibit traits from regions that have been marginalized by the urban centers. For instance, in 1917—in the middle of the war—the Burgundian composer and musicologist Maurice Emmanuel published his Trente Chansons bourguignonnes du pays de Beaune, preceding it with a long historical study that details the origins of these songs and their particularity. He situates the reader in a context of nostalgic return to the cultural sources of a region unchanged by modernity. Recalling Les Nostalgies of Mercier, Emmanuel mentions that the traveler departing from Paris will be stunned by the “change of scenery,” since at Dijon, “the bell towers ring chimes from Flanders, as in the time of the Dukes,”

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49 Mercier, 45. Yvette Guilbert (1865-1944) was one of the most popular French singers in the late nineteenth century.
and because the songs of Beaune, that have disappeared after the war of 1870, are “songs of old France.”

In sum, we see in these examples that the mal du pays, the geographical paradigm of nostalgia, is much more varied than recognized in historical theses. In fact, even when the pathology of military exile is discarded, nostalgia as a return home remains a widespread and current problem that can be seen as a “quest to know where we are at homme, to whom or to what we belong in a world that steers between mundialization and (g)localization.”

1.2.2 Nostalgia as exoticism

Because dictionary definitions inevitably describe nostalgia as longing for a return, the object of geographical desire is generally interpreted to be the homeland. However, as a consequence of colonial imperialism and its fascination for idealized foreign countries, by the early twentieth century nostalgia could also be detached from its return, becoming instead a turn toward the geographical other, hence forming a second paradigm that fascinated artists and permeated nostalgic discourses. Barbara Cassin, inspired by Jankélévitch, discusses this “double” aspect of

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50 Maurice Emmanuel, “Étude sur les chansons bourguignonnes du pays de Beaune,” in XXX Chansons bourguignonnes du pays de Beaune (Paris: Durand & Cie, 1917), I–II. Christophe Corbier describes Emmanuel’s transcription of these songs: “Il entre sans doute un peu de nostalgie dans sa volonté de conserver ces mélodies bourguignonnes. Lui, le Bourguignon déraciné, le Parisien malgré lui, se plaît à défendre Beaune et Dijon, le patrimoine culturel et les paysages de la Bourgogne, et les manifestations régionales les plus « spontanées », comme ces chansons dont il conserve le texte en patois. . . . En pleine épreuve, alors que la guerre faisait rage, Emmanuel cherchait sans doute un réconfort dans ses souvenirs et dans une tâche qui le détournait des horreurs du conflit tout en lui permettant d'exalter un aspect de la nation française.” (Christophe Corbier, Maurice Emmanuel (Paris: bleu nuit éditeur, 2007), 114–15 and 117.)

nostalgia by signaling the distinction between *Heimweh*, “the desire to return, a closed-off nostalgia, one that goes round in a circle” (or, as Jankélévitch put it, a closed nostalgia that would “shut the emptiness of the absence”\(^{52}\)), and *Sehnsucht*, “an open nostalgia that never ‘re’-turns to itself,” based on an indeterminate object or ideal, therefore one that is unfindable: it’s the pursuit of elsewhere.\(^{53}\) But while Cassin and Jankélévitch still speak of otherness as a return to a transmuted past that is no longer accessible (given the irreversibility of time), I understand the elsewhere as a distant and imagined place that is without relation to the homeland or to the past. This paradigm comprises two modalities, according to the nature of the geographic elsewhere either as a symbol that embodies a personal, social, or cultural ideal, or on the contrary as a real elsewhere, one that is technically accessible, but exoticized and propagating cultural and ethnic stereotypes. I employ the term “exoticism” here rather than “orientalism” in order to avoid the Middle Eastern connotations of the latter. Indeed, in European representations, America is no less exotic than India. However, it is in the sense of Orientalism as theorized by Edward Said that I refer to exoticism, namely a fantasized and dominating representation of otherness produced by the discourses and attitudes of occidental imperialism.\(^{54}\)

We can find examples of the symbolic type in numerous poems and songs that promise the journey toward a better world without the worries of the one left behind. In Léon Pillaut’s *Nostalgie* (1899), the singer dreams of escaping with her lover to the “country of flowers,” the “country of the orange tree,” to never come back. But her exotic fantasy of a better world “without worries and without cries” is nothing but a dream: the lover is absent and the song, which frequently promises a modulation to the relative major, ends in minor with a repetition of the opening material as an illustration of the unattainability of the escapist dream. The cover of the score (Fig. 1.6) resembles

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\(^{52}\) Jankélévitch, *L’Irréversible et la nostalgie*, 283.

\(^{53}\) Barbara Cassin, *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 26. Jankélévitch also explored this dimension of nostalgia when he wrote that one of its conditions was the “consciousness of an elsewhere.” (Jankélévitch, *L’Irréversible et la nostalgie*, 280.)

those of the “mal du pays” songs cited above, but with a contrary message. Rather than depicting a man looking back to his village, we find a dreamy young woman longing to go away. Instead of the familiar homes of the “mal du pays” songs, there is a lone boat sailing away unto an unknown horizon—but the woman will not be part of the journey. This symbolic exotic nostalgia is probably the least complex. Nonetheless, its diffusion shows a certain interest in a benign nostalgia, one that would be simple and tender, closer to a melancholic daydream than to a mal du pays. In some more refined cases, when it implies a promise of renewal attached to a personal or social critique of the present, it can be similar to the third paradigm described below.

Figure 1.6: E. Buval (illustration) and Léon Pillaut (music and lyrics), Nostalgie (Paris: Wast, 1899).

When the geographic elsewhere is a real place, or at least an elsewhere that is explicitly evoked or that has a distinct origin, we find examples of “nostalgia for the Orient” (Fig. 1.7), “nostalgia for Spain,” “nostalgia for Negroes,” and even a “nóst’Algeria.” Examples abound, but no other author of the turn of the twentieth century has probably expressed better this nostalgia than Pierre Loti in his exotic travel narratives. In Vers Ispahan (1904), Loti described a street of the
Iranian city as “a hundred times more nostalgic than the debris from very distant pasts.” Loti was impressed by the dying trees, the slabs overgrown with “funeral grass,” the dried pools, the crumbling ceilings of the few palaces still standing, in short, the portrait of the lost splendors of a decaying civilization suffused with a sense of gloom and inevitable death. Hence, there remains, within exoticism, a sense of return: on the one hand, the Westerner’s Oriental fantasy often evokes a myth of origins relating to the science and culture of Middle Eastern societies; on the other hand, this usage often signifies a longing for the Orient’s own past, conceived as more prosperous, culturally advanced, and politically powerful than its present state.

Figure 1.7: Charles Martin, “Nostalgie d’Orient,” La Vie parisienne, February 26, 1916, 156.

55 Pierre Loti, Vers Ispahan (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1989), 107 (217-18 in the original 1904 edition). It should be noted that in the paragraph on the Tscharbag, Ispahan’s street, Loti uses both mélancolie and nostalgie as synonyms. Pierre Loti’s personal diary was published posthumously with the title Cette éternelle nostalgie.

56 See Said, Orientalism, 35.
Musical examples of exotic nostalgia abound in French music of the early twentieth century, sometimes literally, as in C. d’Ollone’s *Suite orientale* for piano (1921), which includes an aptly-titled movement, “Nostalgia,” but most usually more elusively. I will present several musical examples of exotic nostalgia in the following chapters, but as a starting point to illustrate this paradigm, we can look at Charles Koechlin’s hour-long piano cycle, *Les Heures persanes*, written between 1913 and 1919. Inspired by Loti’s *Vers Ispahan*, it depicts an imaginary two-day journey in Persia. Koechlin, who never went to Persia (despite his extensive travels), was well aware of the nostalgic dimension of this exotic work, using that word to characterize, for instance, the passage of a caravan in the distance, where the slow, repetitive steps of the horses, represented by the repetition of a low open fifth, underlies a series of chromatic arabesques (Fig. 1.8).

![Figure 1.8: Charles Koechlin, Les Heures persanes, Op. 65, no. 2, “La Caravane (rêve, pendant la sieste.)” (Paris: Max Eschig, 1987), m. 12.](image)

Such nostalgia bears many risks. As much as it can encourage exchanges between different cultures, it can also cause a proliferation of racial stereotypes that endanger the concerned nations. Hence, while a piece entitled *Nostalgie de nègres* (see Fig. 1.2) can invite its buyers to appreciate a rich African-American musical heritage, it can also compromise this culture by reducing it to a handful of codified representations and by assimilating a people’s own voice. Indeed, this piece written in 1906 by Robert Vollstedt, a German composer of dance music, partook of the vogue for the *cakewalk*, a dance of African-American inspiration introduced and popularized in France around 1900. Even if the cover of the Parisian edition avoided the caricatures of blackface imagery—perhaps as an invitation to listen to the work as an authentic piece of African American music rather than as a German composer’s reconstruction—it is nothing else than a European representation of the exoticized longing for indigenous Africa to satisfy the French public’s fascination for these kinds of nostalgia.\(^{58}\) Vollstedt’s work introduces a slow coda replete with tremolos and pauses (marked “as in a dream”) to project an idea of musical nostalgia in a European cakewalk. In sum, we see in these examples that, at the turn of the century, the quest for a return to the sources was no longer only represented as a *mal du pays*: it drew from new cultural exchanges and developed under the pressure of imperialism, colonialism, and rising globalization.

### 1.2.3 Nostalgia as promise

The exotic-nostalgic paradigm often alludes to an idealized other in the same manner that longing for home gives rise to a longing for an idealized home. We have already seen an example of this in Léon Pillaut’s *Nostalgie*, where the singer dreams of an exotic world “without worries and without cries.” What we eventually notice in Pillaut’s song is a shift from the geographical escapist reverie

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of exotic nostalgia to a longing for a better world that has no identified spatial location, a world that is either personal or social. In other words, when separated from its geographical tropes, nostalgia can be conceived as a longing for a certain idea of the world, real or imagined. Already in 1832, in the aftermath of the July Revolution of 1830, Pierre Urbain Briet argued that nostalgia could be the longing for a lost political object such as freedom. For Briet, the Revolution had been a moment of “political nostalgia” for freedom, which had been perceived as eroded.\(^59\) Briet thus proposed that moments of political uncertainty, changes of regime, or war were common sources of nostalgia, a proposition that I will discuss further below. Writing at the end of the interwar era, Maurice Sachs remembered that the reaction to the devastation caused by the war was a new period of luxury and pleasure that began in 1921, as well as a period of disorder and internationalism. People felt “the nostalgia for different beings” (la nostalgie d’êtres différents), wrote Sachs; that is, people longed for social and political changes in new, radical ways.\(^60\) For Sachs, the discontentment with the present (and the immediate past—the disaster of the trenches) did not lead to a longing for a lost and irrecoverable past, but for a future that would be “different”—in any possible form—and, hopefully, better.\(^61\)

This nostalgia that looks forward rather than backward can seem counterintuitive. Nevertheless, the promise that nostalgia summons can have concrete beneficial effects on the life of those who experience it, as numerous studies in psychology have showed.\(^62\) This emancipating and creative nostalgia focuses on the operating functions of the feeling, which can promote the pursuit of a social goal, sustain motivation and the pursuit of opportunities for change, or encourage

\(^{59}\) Pierre-Urbain Briet, “Essai sur la nostalgie” (Faculté de Médecine de Paris, 1832). This is how Briet defines nostalgia in his dissertation: “La nostalgie est un ennui profond qui saisit l’homme éloigné d’un ou de plusieurs objets qu’il chérisait, et dont le souvenir, retracé chaque jour à son imagination, lui fait désirer ardemment de se retrouver au milieu de tout ce qui lui donnait des sensations de bonheur.” (Briet, 10.) To retain the pathological dimension of nostalgia, Briet goes as far as mentioning that the death of Benjamin Constant on December 8, 1830, was a consequence of his nostalgia for freedom.


\(^{61}\) Charles Piot argues for a more critical nostalgia for the future, in which the longed-for future is a fantasy that could have been but will never happen. See Charles Piot, Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

\(^{62}\) Clay Routledge summarizes the most recent studies in this field: see Routledge, Nostalgia.
the resolution of personal or social problems. By evoking the past, nostalgic thought serves as a springboard to project oneself into a “different” future to which it can actively contribute. It is this form of nostalgia that drove the musicologist Julien Tiersot at the end of the disaster of 1914-1918. After having mentioned the artistic reactions that followed the social upheavals of previous centuries, Tiersot encouraged artists to use the past to carry out a “renovation” of the world: “It is perhaps permissible to believe that knowledge of the past has made us more aware of the possibilities of the evolution to come. Isn’t history an eternal renewal?”63

On the other hand, considering the power of projection that artists and other public and political figures possess, nostalgia can become a tool of ideological propaganda when it is accompanied by promises of change. After his exhortation to artists to transform the world, Tiersot immediately reminded them that the vitality of French music affirmed itself during the war when German works had been abandoned. The renovation desired by Tiersot was an argument in favor of nationalist preservation and the rejection of the enemy. Indeed, it is likely in part because of that period’s anti-Germanic propaganda that French music veered toward neoclassicism during the postwar years.64 As this dissertation shows, there are numerous similar promises of renewal anchored in a strong sense of national nostalgia for a better world, the “nostalgia for different beings.” It is due to the impact of mass mediatization that the mythicized national history becomes the object of such nostalgia. What can take, at first sight, the appearance of personal reminiscences attains a collective dimension and a ripple effect due to its mediatic circulation.65

65 See Manuel Menke and Christian Schwarzenegger, “Media, Communication and Nostalgia: Finding a Better Tomorrow in the Yesterday?,” Medien & Zeit 31, no. 4 (2016): 2–5. Already in 1979, Fred Davis was writing that “the very objects of collective nostalgia are in themselves media creations from the recent past.” (see Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, 122–24.)
1.2.4 Nostalgia as regret

In contrast with the renewing or progressive conception of nostalgia, in which it is used to affect positive changes for the future, some see it as a call to return to a past state. While both types might be framed as a longing for a better world, the difference is whether that world is an imagined state that must be prospectively constructed, or whether it is retrospectively thought of as once having existed and now disappeared, inspiring regret as a result. In its most extreme state, nostalgia’s regret for loss would be apparent as a form of Freudian melancholia, a state of perpetual and unresolved mourning. Yet, attitudes towards the past can be expressed in various ways. Since the middle of the twentieth century, it is this conceptualization of nostalgia that has dominated not only artistic creations on the theme but also most mediatic as well as scholarly uses of the term. Even though scholars attempt to expose complex variations of this nostalgic feeling according to political, communicative, or social perspectives, the vast majority of these variations relate to the regret of a bygone past. Whether we talk about a golden age, personal or collective memory, commemorative practices, or even about technostalgia, hauntology, post-memory (or prosthetic memory), or mnemonic imagination, nostalgia is triggered by the regret of a loss, even if its functions vary from one case to another.66

One of the most influential insights into the processes of nostalgia remains Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia*. Boym further developed analysis of nostalgia’s relation to the past by distinguishing between two main types: on the one hand, *restorative nostalgia* proposes to rebuild the lost world, to reconstruct the monuments of the past, and to claim a lost perfect unity;

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on the other hand, reflective nostalgia lingers in the memory in full awareness that the desired past is unrecoverable. Whereas the former is typical of many nationalist movements that engage in the “antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths,” the latter tells the relationship between past, present, and future, and “cherishes shattered fragments of memory,” without pretending to reconstruct them. The restoration of the past is akin to the previous paradigm of nostalgia as promise (as we saw with Tiersot), but with Boym, the promise of an idealized world is resolutely anchored in the restitution of ruins of a lost past, not in the idealization of a different future. On the reflective side, musical remembrances of lost love became a common theme in “nostalgia” songs, as in Nostalgie d’amour (lyrics by Gaston Deval and music by Paul Fauchey, 1907). Similarly, memories of childhood were denoted as “Nostalgie,” pointing to the regret for a lost childhood rather than to its playfulness and naivety (as in one of Nicolas Sursock’s Pièces enfantines for piano from 1923). By articulating this double nostalgia, Boym did not intend to present a clear separation between two distinct modalities, but rather to show tendencies within which her stories and studies took place. However, it is the practical aspect of this distinction that has been retained by scholars.

Why then group here in a single paradigm of regret a field of research that has proven so rich and diverse? My intent is not to reduce five decades of research to a single concept—on the contrary, although it is sometimes difficult to navigate the terminological maze of nostalgia (for which epithets and labels abound), this diversity is conducive to the exploration of ideas constantly readjusted to the changing reality of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, by grouping these ideas into one larger paradigm, I wish to draw attention to some neglected aspects of nostalgia, since ignoring the other major lines of research may hinder more thorough scholarly exchanges around subjects whose premises are similar. For example—to return to the French music of the previous century—one can observe that nostalgia expressed in commemorations of the past may be

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67 Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, 41 and 49.
misinterpreted, even distorted, if it is considered only from one perspective, if only elements of the fourth paradigm are considered. This is the case, for instance, of the *Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, which I discuss in chapter 2, a controversial collective homage that refused to express a unified sense of commemorative nostalgia. As I show throughout this dissertation, the diffusion of nostalgia by the media can sometimes render it mute, hidden, repressed, or contradictory. It is by paying more attention to this kind of paradox and to the signs of other paradigms in the mediatization of nostalgic regrets that we can better explain each particular case.

### 1.2.5 Nostalgia as difference

In their simplest forms, the four paradigms of nostalgia can be divided into two types, geographical and temporal, each of which divided in two directions, according to the predominance of memory or imagination, that is, depending on whether the object of the nostalgic feeling comes from a past experience (*mal du pays* or regret) or from an idealized construction (exoticism or promise). This bi-directional dichotomy, while a convenient way to distinguish between different instances of nostalgic expressions, reduces the plurality of nostalgia to distinctive categories that appear disconnected from each other, as they would in a rudimentary graph like this one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>geographical</th>
<th>temporal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>memory</td>
<td>back there</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagination</td>
<td>over there</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reality, I would argue that these paradigms express tendencies that are always interconnected. In most instances of nostalgia (as most of the case studies in this dissertation show), it is possible to discuss the influence of more than one of these paradigms in the formation of the nostalgic object, rather than referring to these paradigms in isolation within a grid.
Their interplay thus constitutes a dynamic map of nostalgic ideas that serve to localize nuanced psychosocial dimensions. Hence, I would consider the four paradigms as two intersecting pairs of opposing ideas, where nostalgia is not located merely at the extreme points, but anywhere within the diagram (Fig. 1.9). In this model, nostalgia is represented as a combination of temporal and geographical elements. This diagram reminds us that the mal du pays always bears an element of regret, and that exoticism carries the seeds of a promise of renewal. It also invites us to contemplate the future hope of the mal du pays or to consider that the mythicized elsewhere can conceal an awareness of the errors of the past while promising changes. Finally, this diagram is not restrained to the limits of this page: we can imagine that it reflects upon itself, enabling the opposite paradigms to overlap with each other. In other words, we can imagine a nostalgia where the homeland is rendered exotic and where the promise of renewal is never entirely distinct from a return to the lost past.

Figure 1.9: Diagram representing the relationships between the four paradigms of nostalgia. The shaded area represents the site of nostalgic expression while the unshaded center represents immediate reality.

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The axes are only there to guide the eye of the reader. In no way do they form a route to which nostalgia is tied.
The zero-point where these elements combine—the center of the circle (unshaded in the figure)—is the point of immediate reality, the here and now from which nostalgia is absent. By “immediate reality,” I mean the present lived without mediation, without intermediary; a present practically detached from connections with the past and the future, which expresses itself as “I am here now,” a phrase that is fundamentally anti-nostalgic. In reality, it is never possible to experience this “immediate reality” since the present is always subject to personal and social mediation. “I am here now” is a declaration of conviction more than a statement of existential presence. It is for this reason that we find in Fredric Jameson what he called “nostalgia for the present,” a reflective present that contemplates itself as an object other to itself.\footnote{Fredric Jameson, \textit{Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 279–96.} We must therefore imagine the point of immediate reality devoid of nostalgia as an abstract concept of the here and now. Whenever an object is encountered and experienced outside the point of immediate reality, the gap between this object and the here and now is expressed as a form of difference which triggers nostalgic longing. This diagram shows the positioning of the self (which can also be a collective self) in relation to the object of desire. Only a complete correspondence between the immediate reality and the object of experience can resist nostalgia—that is, whenever the immediate reality is the (only) object of experience; or, when the subject and object collapse into one. If nostalgia can be likened to a sort of alienation, or at least of estrangement, it is because of this relation of difference. The nostalgic subject is nostalgic because it recognizes a lack in this gap with the object of desire. Nostalgia is the desire to close this gap, this deficit. It is the will to erase the difference between the immediate presence of self and the imagined experience. To be nostalgic is to feel here and now what, by definition, will never be here and now—it is to have the gift of ubiquity, as Jankélévitch wrote:

Nostalgia is a human melancholia made possible by consciousness, which is the consciousness of something else, consciousness of an elsewhere, consciousness of a contrast between past and present, between present and future. This mindful consciousness is the anxiety of the nostalgic. The nostalgic is at the same time here and there, neither here nor there, present and absent, twice present and twice absent; we can therefore say at will that he is multi-present, or that he is nowhere:
here, he is physically present, but he feels absent in spirit of this place where he is bodily present; there, on the contrary, he feels morally present, but he is actually and currently absent from those dear places he once left.\textsuperscript{70}

It is for this reason that, as I will discuss further below, the mediatization of nostalgia (as well as its study) lingers especially on the points of rupture, on the moments of personal, social, or historical discontinuity, which are the sources of this difference. We already saw a concrete example above with Tiersot when he introduced his plea for the renewal of French music in 1920 with a reminder of the social upheavals that marked France since the Revolution.

While this mapping of nostalgia provides for a broader understanding of nostalgyas in the plural, it still does not account for the processes that render it operative in any particular context. Indeed, the paradigms of nostalgia only serve to describe different forms of nostalgic expressions, but it cannot justify them, nor can it elucidate the strategies and practices active in each of their manifestations. The aim of this dissertation is to apply this model to specific examples to gain a better understanding of how specific institutions (political, economic, cultural) contribute to the formation and circulation of various types of nostalgic experiences, and how they also capitalize on them. Those strategies and practices are what I call the \textit{rhetoric of nostalgia}. Fred Davis alluded to such rhetoric in his seminal study of nostalgia (my emphasis):

\begin{quote}
So frequently and uniformly does nostalgic sentiment seem to infuse our aesthetic experience that we can rightly begin to suspect that nostalgia is not only a feeling or mood that is somehow magically evoked by the art object but also \textit{a distinctive aesthetic modality in its own right, a kind of code or patterning of symbolic elements}, which by some obscure mimetic isomorphism comes, much as in language itself, to serve as a substitute for the feeling or mood it aims to arouse.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

Davis proposes that nostalgia is not merely a feeling locatable on a map, but a mechanism or technique apparent to linguistic rhetoric that can manipulate feelings and move the artist’s audiences into a state of longing out of their own volition. In nostalgia’s structure of rhetoric, nostalgia is exposed rather than described. It is something one can choose or avoid, not something

\textsuperscript{70} Jankélévitch, \textit{L'Irréversible et la nostalgie}, 280–81.
\textsuperscript{71} Davis, \textit{Yearning for Yesterday}, 73.
that requires courage to get rid of, as Jankélévitch believed.\textsuperscript{72} When Charles Koechlin wrote in 1925 that his era, and especially its youth, “did not seem to have the strength to surrender to nostalgia,”\textsuperscript{73} he meant the exact opposite of Jankélévitch: courage lies not in the removal of nostalgia but in its acceptance as a valuable tool for composition.

The risk inherent to the rhetoric of nostalgia—especially decades or centuries after the fact—is to misperceive those instances when nostalgia is a genuine feeling and when it is a tactic, a diversion, or an ironical subversion. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century doctors were already aware of this complexity when treating nostalgic soldiers. How could one tell if a soldier was feigning the symptoms of an illness in order to avoid combat, be dismissed from service, and return home?\textsuperscript{74} For doctors, nostalgia was no longer just an illness with a spectrum of symptoms, it was also a tactic for which each case had to be declared sick/not sick. A similar question will be asked of many of the musical examples that I will present in the following pages: how honest, or authentic, is any instance of musical nostalgia? These questions render the whole model of nostalgic paradigms a porous scheme always at risk of dissolution. Yet, they are the necessary origin of a critical viewpoint on nostalgia.

\textsuperscript{72} Jankélévitch, \textit{L'Irréversible et la nostalgie}, 195.
\textsuperscript{74} See Illbruck, \textit{Nostalgia}, 102.
1.3 Sounding Nostalgias

1.3.1 Finding the sound of nostalgia

It is now time to address the main question of this dissertation: what place does nostalgia occupy—and what role does it play—in the sonic and musical life of Paris during the immediate postwar?

Music has long been part of studies of nostalgia, starting from its earliest theories dominated by military medicine up to the most recent psychological studies. For most critics of nostalgia, music is imbued with special significance. For the philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch, music, because of its temporal irreversibility, “exhales the enchantment of the past, the ineffable charm of obsolete things, the perfume of years gone by.”

Likewise, in his history of French nostalgias of the twentieth century, Arthur Conte overturns the (then) longstanding privileging of the visual over the aural as he ponders “whether the ear is not even more aggressed than the eye by the new ways of living—whether one is not more allergic to what it must bear to hear than what it must bear to see. Thus, nostalgia of the ear [nostalgie de l’oreille] is without a doubt the most intense—because sounds compose the main environment.” Conte comes to this conclusion after realizing that, unlike nostalgia for external objects which always remain external to oneself, songs can be “entirely possessed” and remain anchored deep within oneself, affecting us more intensely. Hence, what we long for the most is the musical environment that is no longer: “Not only did we adore Maurice Chevalier, but we could be him,” writes Conte. “Not only did Jean Sablon know how to move us, but we could play at being Jean Sablon.” For Conte, nostalgia is therefore a question of being: what is longed for is not the world external to oneself, but a part of the self itself.

75 Jankélévitch, L’Irréversible et la nostalgie, 150.
No matter how inspiring these sociological critiques of musical nostalgia are, they approach music more like an enigmatic form of individual nostalgia than a serious object of scientific investigation. Neither Jankélévitch nor Conte, despite their positioning of music as an archetypal medium of nostalgia, explore its significance in any more detail.

Some of the most refined empirical research on the connections between music and nostalgia come from psychological studies published in the last decade or so, a handful of which are mentioned in Clay Routledge’s excellent survey of psychological scholarship on nostalgia. Yet, while these psychological studies are more refined in their empirical gathering of data, their conclusions are far from illuminating. For instance, one study found that nostalgia-longing is commonly experienced when participants (32 college students from 20 to 31 years old) listen to music. Another study found a prominence of the term “nostalgia” in music-induced feelings amongst nine primary emotional factors, but again limited itself to participants from homogeneous environments (psychology students; audiences at “a variety of concerts” in Geneva; members of choirs) and homogeneous musical repertoires (in this case, classical music). At best, these individual responses, somewhat tautologically, indicate tendencies within these groups of participants in the identification of emotions in music apparently chosen for its emotional immediacy. In another study mentioned by Routledge, participants (226 undergraduate students in psychology) listened to a selection of 30 popular songs that triggered nostalgic responses whose strength was affected by the participants’ familiarity with the songs and their autobiographical

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77 See Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 40. The only study of music and nostalgia mentioned by Routledge that predates 2008 is Morris B. Holbrook and Robert M. Schindler, “Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, no. 1 (1989): 119–24. The authors conclude that music preferences are developed during the teenage years, but do not refer to nostalgia per se. I believe that the sample of participants (108 selected from only three social associations) and the sample of musical stimuli (28 songs covering the last 75 years) is arguably too small and homogeneous to provide substantial insight into nostalgia.


memories. Although the study found empirical evidence that nostalgia was predicted by personal attributes, the authors themselves acknowledged the limitations of their study: the small sample of songs meant that some participants had no autobiographical memories related to any of them; furthermore, the homogeneous sample of participants precludes generalization of results. In sum, all three studies confirm that individuals can accurately identify (I hesitate to write “feel”) nostalgia in some types of music depending on their personalities. However, none of them provides any insight into the collective experience of musical activities, into musical nostalgia in non-Western contexts and in minority groups, into the impact of gender, age, and socioeconomic background on nostalgia, or even into music itself as opposed to some other media or object. In short, there are two main issues here: on the one hand, empirical research is still limited to personal emotional responses that do not inform us regarding the music itself, and is therefore limited in its adaptability to other projects; on the other hand, sociologists writing about nostalgia refer to music only very succinctly, even when they grant it an extraordinary status.

As a consequence, musicologists have been forced to come up with their own approaches to nostalgia, which are usually adapted to their specific projects with little or no connection to the scholarly work of other disciplines. While musicologists interested in nostalgia provide interesting perspectives on specific topics, their focus on a single composer or work fails to account

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81 As I am finalizing this dissertation, I am informed of the publication of a new book-length psychological study of the relation between music and nostalgia, which I did not have the chance to consult: Sandra Garrido and Jane W. Davidson, *Music, Nostalgia and Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
for the collective contexts of which nostalgia forms a part. In consequence, the musicology of nostalgia remains restricted in scope, its various studies lacking a broader and deeper view of musical nostalgia.

In other words, when musicologists critique nostalgic music, they do not necessarily critique nostalgia itself. One recurring issue is the use of the term “nostalgia” in its contemporary narrow temporal definition, even when it is applied to the music of composers who might have understood it differently. By this, I do not mean that these retroactive uses of a specific conception of “nostalgia” are necessarily useless, but they are often misleading. Take for instance Guillaume Bordry’s article on Berlioz’s nostalgia, where he knowingly classifies under that broad category feelings which, for Berlioz, bore different names. Bordry admits that his article consists in a retrospective diagnosis, “a work of elucidation, construction and subsumption.”

Ryan Kangas is more cautious in his approach to nostalgia in Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, warning the reader—and musicologists of nostalgia—to conceive of nostalgia in clear musical terms rather than vague emotional insinuations:

As a relatively vague mood, nostalgia becomes slippery and often remains indistinguishable from other forms of longing or sentimentality. . . . If it is used to describe an amorphous mood, nostalgia will remain difficult to pin down musically and will continue to be heard both everywhere and nowhere. Only when a conceptual understanding of nostalgia informs the discussion of its possible musical evocations will it become possible to distinguish clearly between what does and what does not sound nostalgic. As a starting point, I will suggest that for a passage to sound convincingly nostalgic, it should offer a musical analogue of nostalgia: the music should not only suggest a yearning mood but should also specifically evoke a past that is somehow irretrievable.

Kangas’s approach is more systematic than Bordry’s, yet his focus on a single work poses the question of its relevance to other repertoires, including those unrelated to childhood or the classical style (or anything outside the paradigmatic trope of nostalgia as a longing for the past).

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83 For instance, a conference titled “Nostalgia and Innovation in Twentieth-Century French Music,” held at Lancaster University in May 2009, featured only a handful of papers (out of two dozen) that were not about a single work or moment in the career of a composer.

84 Bordry, “Berlioz et le chant de la nostalgie,” 5.

Additionally, Kangas’s diagnosis is mostly set on music rather than the composer, implying the presence of “specific” musical markers of nostalgia, which Fred Davis had called “symbolic elements.” But unlike Davis, Kangas falls short of identifying a rhetoric of musical nostalgia, remaining within the realm of descriptive (i.e. analytical) musicology.

Overall, despite growing interest in musicological studies for nostalgia-related topics, no comprehensive interpretation of nostalgia in music has yet been developed. One could argue that the complexity of assigning meaning to musical works renders such comprehensive interpretation at best faulty and inconsistent, at worst outright impossible. That is why the most comprehensive and critical way to approach musical nostalgia is not as a compendium of individual analyses but from a social and collective perspective.

### 1.3.2 Musical nostalgia as musical difference

Remarkably, the most insightful ideas about musical nostalgia do not come from modern-day musicologists but from philosophers of centuries ago. Indeed, I want to propose that revisiting historical discussions of the connections between music and nostalgia can shed new light on current problematics.

The most ubiquitous discussion of the relations between music and nostalgia was prompted by an addendum to the 1710 revised reprint of Hofer’s 1688 dissertation. Hofer noticed that a Swiss “pathologic air,” a cantilena heard in the Alps, was allegedly responsible for the nostalgia epidemic that struck Swiss soldiers serving in France and Belgium. This air—or rather, this variety of improvisatory airs—known as the ranz-des-vaches became one of the most debated topics in the history of nostalgia.\(^\text{86}\) Without going into the details of those debates, it is worth pausing over

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\(^\text{86}\) Helmut Illbruck devotes an entire chapter to the history of the tune. He acknowledges the plurality of tunes that fall under the heading of ranz-des-vaches, mentioning both Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* and Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*, the program of which reads (for the third movement): “One evening in the
Illbruck’s initial thesis in his treatment of the air. Illbruck reacts to Michel Foucault’s argument that the early modern madman is “alienated in analogy,” seeing nothing but resemblances. Instead, Illbruck develops an antithetical view of the early modern madman:

But the early modern nostalgic who suffers his insufferable mania upon hearing the *ranz-des-vaches*. I contend, turns mad for a different reason: he is a madman who, struck by a sudden resemblance and its lure, is yet aware of and alienated in a difference he finds himself unable to express or overcome. If his attack of sudden nostalgia is prompted by the hearing of a particular *ranz-des-vaches* which propels him, through the lure of resemblance, into his imaginative world of private associations, this means also that his nostalgia sends him into an insurmountable difference. And this difference is twofold: it is the difference between his agitated imagination and what it believes to be its corresponding reality, its absent home, but also the difference between the *ranz-des-vaches* he hears, a displaced reproduction or another variety, and that which he truly longs to hear, for him the unique and inimitable original, painfully different and out of reach.  

Illbruck’s proposition rests on the premise that reproduction creates a lure of resemblance. Rather than making possible a recognition of resemblance, reproduction is the condition for an alienating encounter with difference. Because, as Jankélévitch puts it, nostalgia is based on the inevitable irreversibility of time, any reproduction of an object or event, any repetition of a sound, however exact it may seem, is always already a difference. Reproduction alters the original, which is “unique and inimitable” to start with. Illbruck says: “The repetition reinforces not only the song’s powerful impact but also the difference that the displaced repetition is not the original which the repetition hankers—but is powerless—to repeat.” Thus, Illbruck proposes that nostalgia arises from the difference between reality and expectation, the latter founded in either memory or imagination.

Following this proposal, we can now add an important nuance to the model of nostalgia introduced above: it is not a diagram merely representing the positioning of the nostalgic object outside of the center of immediate reality, but the positioning of the self (which can also be a country, he hears in the distance two shepherds playing a *ranz des vaches.*” (“Se trouvant un soir à la campagne, il entend au loin deux pâtres qui dialoguent un ranz des vaches.”) See Illbruck, *Nostalgia*, chap. 4.

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87 Illbruck, 80.
88 Illbruck, 65.
collective self) in relation to the object that forms reality. The alienation that nostalgia causes is that of a relation of difference between these two points.

Illbruck exemplifies his claim with a letter that Goethe wrote to Schiller in 1804:

The Swiss does not feel homesickness because he hears the ranz des vaches at a different place, for that is not blown, as much as I know, at any other place; rather, he feels homesickness because he does not hear it, because his ears are deprived of an adolescent need. 

Goethe is not merely playing with words when he talks of not hearing what he hears. What is not heard when hearing the ranz-des-vaches is its sameness, the ranz as it had originally been heard at a different time and place—the ranz as it was once heard in the center of immediate reality, here and now. Instead of hearing the same, the Swiss hears something else that is both similar enough to the sound of the original to be recognized as resembling it, but also different enough—even if only by the sheer difference within the Swiss himself, who is experiencing the tune from a different spatiotemporal standpoint—to make him long, perhaps subconsciously, for what he is not hearing, an absolute correspondence between the tune and its repetition, which Illbruck describes as “a particularity so singular that it cannot be replaced or reproduced elsewhere, a nostalgia for the distinctive thusness of the original sound.”

Illbruck further contends: “What [the Swiss] may be able to hear when abroad is a mere copy of the original, or a different version and sound. And it is because he hears a mere copy, a paltry simulacrum of the real thing that he longs for the original all the more strongly.”

Although Illbruck does not mention Walter Benjamin, a connection can be traced with the German philosopher, especially with his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” Indeed, for Benjamin, “in even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place. . . . The

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89 Quoted in Illbruck, 81.
90 Illbruck, 82.
91 Illbruck, 81–82.
here and now of the original underlies the concept of its authenticity." Benjamin expresses difference as a lack, one could say a lack of authenticity (in his terms, of “aura”), which is a lack of sameness or of unique identity. Jacques Lacan might say a lack of being: the nostalgic subject is nostalgic because he recognizes the lack of being caused by its separation from the object of origin. Nostalgia is the desire to bridge the gap between the original and its lacking reiteration, to erase the difference between them. In “The Work of Art,” Benjamin is writing about technologies of reproduction in the context of artworks and film, but I believe that his claim can be extended to other kinds of “reproduction,” including musical repetition as a kind of reproduction displaced from the here and now of its original appearance—a reproduction that lacks the aura of authenticity.

A musicology of nostalgia as cultural critique can therefore be formulated as a musicology of difference. Historically, musical difference was the first element that drew composers to write “Nostalgia” works. As early as Henri Cramer’s 1852 “pensée musicale” La Nostalgie (Op. 133), nostalgia has been represented as a contrasting section enclosed in the middle of the piece, forming a simple ternary form (or sometimes, but more rarely at the end as in Nostalgie de nègres). In Cramer’s piano piece, the shift from minor to major mode, the slower tempo, the simpler tune (mostly a repeated note), all add up to a sense of abandon and recovered simplicity. A few years later, in 1858, Adrien Deshayes’s polka-mazurka for piano, La Nostalgie, used a similar approach, even marking the middle section (in the key of the subdominant) “tristamente avec abandon.” These early examples of musicalization of nostalgia portray the same kind of longing that we have seen in the examples above, although the differentiation between here and there, or now and then.

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93 For Heidegger too, a lack can turn into an intimate relation: for Heidegger, homesickness is the absence of relation of dwelling at home. See Illbruck, Nostalgia, 14–15.
94 I paraphrase musicologist Georgia Volioti who wrote that “nostalgia, as cultural critique, broaches this present-past not by nurturing a passive, comforting script of stability but by actively bringing out the interstices of difference and change.” Volioti uses Pierre Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice to compare nostalgia’s difference to the recontextualization of doxas into heterodoxies “by altering the projected orthodoxies’ meaning and their relations with other sign-objects in present-past contexts.” See Volioti, “Reminiscing Grieg,” 200.
is expressed symbolically with simple musical gestures. There is nothing unique in these pieces: thousands of others bear the same simple ternary form with no hint whatsoever at “nostalgia”. Nonetheless, they participate in constructing a musicalization of nostalgia that is based on difference, and therefore can be expressed through form and contrast. As I will show in the following chapters, by the end of the First World War, musical difference of nostalgia was expressed in a variety of ways, some more abstract than others.

1.3.3 **Intramusical nostalgia**

In the musical examples I have discussed so far, I justified the use of the term “nostalgia” through an examination of the music itself. In so doing, I have approached musical nostalgia from an analytical perspective, assuming that music works as a language in its potential to evoke or express nostalgia. I will refer to this as intramusical nostalgia. In short, it recognizes the presence of definite musical characteristics that can be labeled “nostalgic” in a manner similar to the psychological studies mentioned above where the participants identified “nostalgia” as attributes of some musical excerpts. For musicians and musicologists, the presence of identifiable musical characteristics that can be used to evoke nostalgia or provoke it can be very enticing as it allows for in-depth analyses of works. These characteristics are frequently identified by musicologists in a variety of musical contexts.95

**Repetition.** In addition to the presence of characters (in either vocal or non-vocal works) who are themselves nostalgic, one of the most common references to nostalgia in musicological studies is when a melody heard in one context recurs in an altered form later in the same piece or in a following movement. It is easy to interpret this return as a nostalgic recollection since the

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95 In his study of Edward Elgar, Matthew Riley briefly mentions six varieties of nostalgia that can be found in the composer’s music—or any music in that matter. I am expanding his succinct list. See Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, 10.
melody makes the listener experience the musical souvenir as a nostalgic difference based on a temporal gap. Any work in cyclic form, any work having recourse to leitmotifs, or any work using developing variations, is liable to be described as nostalgic or as comprising nostalgic moments, perhaps regardless of the actual musical content of these moments. As we will see in some examples in chapters 2 and 3, referential elements can also be present across different works or different composers to convey intertextual nostalgic feelings.

*Archaism.* Music scholars also refer to nostalgia when describing works that allude to the musical past with archaic gestures: using older forms such as the fugue, instruments such as the harpsichord, or genres such as the concerto grosso. In these cases, the nostalgic difference is also temporal in nature, but on a much larger scale. Leonard B. Meyer identified four ways in which the past has been reused in the arts, all of which can be seen as types of archaism: paraphrase, borrowing, simulation, and modeling.96 In the early twentieth century, archaism was typical of neoclassical works in general, although, as I discuss in chapter 4, neoclassical music was not limited to archaism.

*Enchantment.* The most controversial variety of intramusical nostalgia is what musicologist Matthew Riley has described as “certain moments of magical transformation [where] the music seems to pass across a threshold from a mundane sphere to a yearned-for world of enchantment somewhere ‘beyond’.”97 This vague definition corresponds to the contemporary vagueness of conceptualizations of nostalgia. It relies on vague musical speculation to apply “transient and dreamlike” qualities to non-verbal musical expression. But despite its seemingly arbitrary interpretative aspects, this might remain the most pervasive use of the term in both scholarly and non-scholarly discourses today, where the term is employed in all its ambiguity to describe an equally ambiguous “somewhere beyond.” However, such interpretations should not be

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dismissed so quickly, especially when found in historical sources rather than scholarly discourses. Indeed, in spite of their apparent lack of musical rigor, they inform us of a listener’s intuition, itself potentially providing insight into the musical culture of a group, community, or society. For instance, some might dismiss the “Nostalgia” titles I have used as examples above as mere marketing strategies for which the composer had little or no input. I would argue, on the contrary, that the act of naming, even when a purely mercantile act, is always imbued with significance.

Unsurprisingly, these three attributes of intramusical nostalgia (repetition, archaism, enchantment) are so widespread that they are often employed without further comment. Riley himself does not need more than a few sentences to introduce these varieties, which remain unchallenged and unquestioned throughout his book on Elgar—the composer’s work is critiqued, but the theoretical apparatus used to investigate him is taken for granted.

**Code.** There is yet another way to approach intramusical nostalgia. If the previous considerations can be described as discursive, grasping nostalgia on the scale of a piece, the following are purely syntactic. Earlier in this chapter, when discussing nostalgia as a structure of rhetoric, I cited Fred Davis’s view that “nostalgia is not only a feeling or mood that is somehow magically evoked by the art object but also a distinctive aesthetic modality in its own right, a kind of code or patterning of symbolic elements.”

98 Indeed, if we accept the existence of intramusical nostalgia, we must also accept its availability to composers as a code in its own right. In a 1920 article, Paul Rougonon connected emotions to specific types of sounds, informing us on how this code could have been used in postwar Paris: “Happiness, passion, anger, all excessive feelings and violent sensations, use high-pitched sounds. The low sounds belong to melancholia, sadness, depression.”

99 In a following article, Rougonon specifically described the role of the composer,

98 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 73.
which is to “render these various physiognomies by a skilled use of characteristic rhythms, able to create local color and carry the listener’s spirit to the epoch or the land of the episodes he wishes to depict.”\(^{100}\) Half a century later, Davis argues in favor of this position: “The composer ‘knows’ what kind of a melody will produce a feeling of nostalgia in his listeners. . . . In other words, in its culturally crystalized, symbolically transmuted form nostalgia is as much a device of art as an effect of its exercise.”\(^{101}\) That Davis encases “knows” within scare quotes seems to indicate intuition rather than science. As psychological studies demonstrated, listeners share a kind of intuitive “knowledge” about the musical codes of nostalgia; they will respond nostalgically not because of education or scientific insight into those “codes,” but “through long associative exposure.”\(^{102}\)

Yet, I wonder if we can still talk of intramusical nostalgia when “associative exposure” is responsible for aesthetic modalities. Surely symbolic associations rest on extramusical content. Actually, in order to argue that musical nostalgia constitutes a “code,” one needs to be able to isolate the elements of this code like the syntactical functions of words in a sentence, which is exactly what Davis proposes:

In modern Western music, for example, if one can infer from such “obviously” nostalgic compositions as, to mention but a scant few, Fauré’s *Pavane*, Rachmaninoff’s *Vocalise*, the E Minor Prelude of Chopin, Grieg’s *Homesickness*, Samuel Barber’s *Knoxville Summer of 1915*, the rondo from Beethoven’s *Pastoral Sonata* for piano, and portions of the *Enigma Variations* of Elgar, it would seem that the nostalgic modality involves such conventions as a long legato line in a minor key along with such other elements as slow tempi, much rubato, considerable repetition of cadence, and a wavering pulsation of melody, which in vocal music reaches toward a lullaby-like swaying.\(^{103}\)

As for Jankélévitch, he identifies slow movements as the quintessential characteristic of nostalgic music:

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\(^{100}\) Paul Rougnon, “Études artistiques et philosophiques, II, La Physionomie,” *Le Ménestrel* 82, no. 36 (September 3, 1920): 342. “L’art du compositeur consiste à rendre ces physionomies diverses par un habile emploi des rythmes caractéristiques, capables de créer cette couleur locale qui transporte l’esprit de l’auditeur à l’époque et dans la contrée où se passent les épisodes de l’action qu’il veut peindre.”

\(^{101}\) Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 73–74.

\(^{102}\) Davis, 82.

\(^{103}\) Davis, 83.
Therefore, the nostalgic movement *par excellence*, in sonatas and symphonies, is the slow movement. Contrasting with the Allegro, which has all the joy and alacrity of futuristic hope, the Adagio of regret drags with itself the melancholy of inconsolable memory: when the time of the largo comes, the melodic effusion, not going anywhere, lingers and meditates; after the tumultuous unrest of the opening Allegro and the chases [jeux] of the Scherzo, here is the moment of reverie which the Slavs call Dumka, an elegiac moment conducive to the slow recall of memories and to the gentle sadness of reminiscence.\(^{104}\)

Notwithstanding the fact that some of Davis’s “obviously nostalgic compositions” invite nostalgic listening through their titles (*Pavane, Homescickness, Knoxville Summer of 1915*), it is unclear how such elements as rubato and repetition of cadence are more nostalgic than say, melancholic, or sad, nervous, excited, fearful, etc., or whether it is the combination of multiple “conventions” that create the nostalgic modality. Is nostalgia then just a mere accumulation of these musical traits? Davis himself rejects that notion, concluding instead that nostalgia assumes “conventional expressive forms in the arts” depending on tradition, history, and culture. Thus, Davis insinuates that intramusical nostalgia, after all, does not exist in and by itself, but that it is always an effect of extraneous elements.

### 1.3.4 Extramusical nostalgia

This is where intramusical nostalgia breaches into extramusical nostalgia, a relational theory of musical nostalgia in which—at its most basic—there is nothing in the actual music that causes nostalgia: only the habits of listening are responsible for our emotional responses.\(^{105}\) The origins of this theory can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s reaction to the Swiss nostalgic epidemic of the *ranz-des-vaches* in his *Dictionnaire de musique*. In the article “Musique,” Rousseau

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\(^{104}\) Jankélévitch, *L’Irreversible et la nostalgie*, 171–72. The “melancholy character” of the dumka, originally a sung lament, is attested by John Tyrrell in the *Grove Music Online*.

\(^{105}\) Associationism is occasionally mentioned for its impact on the early development of nostalgia. See Austin, *Nostalgia in Transition*, 16.
completely rejects elements inherent to the music that could justify such nostalgia. For him, only listening habits and memories are responsible for nostalgia:

On chercherait en vain dans cet Air les accens énergiques capables de produire de si étonnants effets. Ces effets, qui n’ont aucun lieu sur les étrangers, ne viennent que de l’habitude, des souvenirs, de mille circonstances qui, retracées par cet Air à ceux qui l’entendent, & leur rappelant leur pays, leurs anciens plaisirs, leur jeunesse, & toutes leurs façons de vivre, excitent en eux une douleur amère d’avoir perdu tout cela. La Musique alors n’agit point précisément comme Musique, mais comme signe mémoratif.

We shall seek in vain to find in this air any energetic accents capable of producing such astonishing effects. These effects, which are void in regard to strangers, come alone from custom, reflections [souvenirs], and a thousand circumstances, which, retrac’d by those who hear them, and recalling the idea of their country, their former pleasures, their youth, and all their joys of life [toutes leurs façons de vivre], excite in them a bitter sorrow for the loss of them. The music does not in this case act precisely as music, but as a memorative sign.106

“Memorative signs” are associations, either personal or collective, which are inscribed through acts of involuntary memory in sounds regardless of their properties.

Hence, Fred Davis, strongly contradicting his observations about “obviously nostalgic compositions,” gives an astonishingly relativist statement on nostalgia: “Almost anything from our past can emerge as an object of nostalgia, provided that we can somehow view it in a pleasant light.”107 Davis refers to the resurgence of interest in objects from the past, for which he finds a lack of intrinsic nostalgic qualities. Anything, given the right conditions, can be turned into an object of nostalgia. In music, it implies that the sounds themselves are not the main contributors of their nostalgic resonance. This is not to say that music itself veers into insignificance, but that one cannot claim to explain musical nostalgia only through the music without first situating it in its extramusical context.

For instance, Matthew Riley’s discussion of Elgar’s varieties of nostalgias includes some extramusical elements, such as biographical events that influence the composition of a musical

107 Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, viii.
work. This biographical meaning can be joined with intramusical signs as in Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and *Lélio, ou Le Retour à la vie*, which include thematic recollections (the *idée fixe*), autobiographical programs, and, in the case of *Lélio*, previously-written pieces, such as excerpts from the composer’s Prix de Rome cantatas.\(^{108}\)

Finally, Riley includes in his varieties of nostalgia later interpretations detached from the composer and his music, as well as independent artistic ventures inspired by it. For instance, contemporary comments about nostalgia in specific pieces become part of their history, although with different value than first-hand accounts. Additionally, the way a piece of music is used (on stage, in a film, etc.) can alter preexisting extramusical associations, or create new ones, which can have lasting impact.

To conclude, I wish to stress the interconnectedness of intra- and extramusical nostalgia. It goes almost without saying that a critical study of nostalgia should always consider both at once. Yet, musicological scholarship tends overly to gravitate toward the intramusical aspects of works as much as it gravitates toward its temporal paradigm. In this dissertation, I focus on the primacy of extramusical elements in the formation of collective expressions of musical nostalgia, but I do so without dismissing intramusical analysis whenever it is relevant. I am proposing to reconsider intramusical nostalgia in light of its extramusical meanings to show that nostalgia arises in the liminal space between the intra- and the extramusical, between the work and its context.

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\(^{108}\) See Bordry, “Berlioz et le chant de la nostalgie,” 17.
1.4 PARISIAN NOSTALGIAS

1.4.1 Discontinuity in postwar Paris

Accounts of post-First World War Paris often portray the war as a threshold moment in the history of the city. Almost without exception, writers and artists saw the declaration of war of 1914 as marking the end of an era, and the Armistice of November 11, 1918, as initiating a new one. Even though there was not yet a prevailing narrative of the past in the early postwar years, the recognition that something had changed was shared ubiquitously. Firsthand commentaries on the prewar versus postwar society depict a culture of difference, rupture and renewal much aligned with the temporal conceptions of nostalgia, pointing in both directions, past and future.

For some, the declaration of war constituted the end of an era that had been lived relatively peacefully since the war of 1870. In his Calligrammes (1918), Guillaume Apollinaire dated his “farewell to an era” to August 31, 1914, the day following the first bombing of Paris. Later histories of Paris would frequently refer to 1914 as an end. Writing during the Second World War, Maurice Sachs (1939) and Paul Morand (1941) both used 1914 as an analogy to express the sense of end: while Morand’s preface to the reedition of 1900 (first published in 1931) described 1914 as the end of a decline into the abyss begun at the turn of the century,110 in Au temps du Bœuf sur le toit, Sachs humorously commented that in comparison to the quick transformations of the postwar, where “everything changes prodigiously,” life had not changed from Louis XVIII to 1914.111 Although these two passages seem to parallel one another, they are actually opposites. Morand

109 “Le 31 du mois d’Août 1914 / Je partis de Deauville un peu avant minuit / Dans la petite auto de Rouveyre / Avec son chauffeur nous étions trois / Nous dîmes adieu à toute une époque” (Guillaume Apollinaire, Calligrammes, in Œuvres poétiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 207.)


111 Sachs, Au temps du Bœuf sur le toit, 13 and 104.
thought of the war as an end, a retrospective look that is inevitably nostalgic. But Maurice Sachs provided a narrative of the war in which it constituted the beginning of a new era, which did not preclude him from turning nostalgic. In *La Décade de l’illusion* (1932), Sachs alluded to three moments of rupture in French history that spanned cycles of nostalgia: the French Revolution, the First World War, and the Great Depression:

> Je sais bien que Talleyrand disait que celui qui n’avait pas connu la France d’avant 1789 n’avait pas connu la douceur de vivre ; que nos parents disaient en 1919 que celui qui n’avait pas connu Paris avant la guerre, ses fiacres à vingt sous l’heure, les Ambassadeurs et Maxim’s n’avait non plus connu la douceur de vivre. Je parlerai de même de la France de 1920, car nous avons tous le préjugé de notre jeunesse, mais, en vérité, autant Paris est mort en 1932, autant il vivait il y a dix ans encore. Aujourd’hui il est tout souvenirs. Autrefois il était tout action.

I have not forgotten Talleyrand’s statement that he who had not known France before 1789 would never realize how gracious life can be; nor our parents’ contentions in 1919 that those who had not known Paris before the war—its fiacres at five cents an hour, its Maxim’s and Les Ambassadeurs—had not known the good things of life. I say the same of the France of 1920, for we all are prejudiced by what was our youth; but in reality Paris was as alive ten years ago as it is dead in 1932. Today all is memories; before, all was action.112

Comments that postwar Paris constituted the beginning of a new era are also discernible everywhere. Already in December 1915, composer Albert Roussel wrote a strikingly perceptive letter to his wife about both the closing of the past and the promise of renewal that the end of the war would eventually bring:

> Tout cela, ce sera maintenant des choses d’avant la guerre, c’est-à-dire des choses qui seront séparées de nous par un mur, un véritable mur. Il va falloir recommencer à vivre sur une nouvelle conception de la vie, ce qui ne veut pas dire que tout ce qui a été fait avant la guerre sera oublié mais que tout ce qui sera fait après devra l’être autrement.

All this will now be prewar things, that is, things that will be separated from us by a wall, a real wall. We will have to start living again on a new conception of life, which does not mean that everything that has been done before the war will be forgotten, but that everything that will be done after will have to be done differently.113

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Music critics of the time were quick to realize this potential of renewal in French music that was formulated right after the war. In his 1924 preface to *Un demi-siècle de musique française*, written during the war and originally published in 1918, Julien Tiersot admitted that postwar art was dissimilar in all regards to that of previous years. More plainly, musicologist René Dumesnil recalled in 1946: “a new era was beginning, we were certain.”

This short list of statements, private or public, could go on for many pages. What they all point to is a new conception that sees the Great War as a major point of rupture. This created a collective recognition of historical difference which is the very condition for the emergence of shared nostalgic thought in Paris in 1920. In his recent study of representations of the Belle Époque, historian Dominique Kalifa arrives at the same conclusion: nostalgia for what would (much later) be known as the Belle Époque was born from the devastation and mourning of France. Kalifa explains this “rupture”:

The bankruptcy of the old world, the major crisis of intelligence and representation, the absolute necessity of inventing new forms to restore hope to a society in ruins. The ending of a war has rarely been so burdened. Everything or almost everything must be rethought because everything has changed; the champions of cultural demobilization proclaim that everything must be transformed. “When, after the war, everyone wanted to return to their place, it became clear that the rhythm of life had changed,” recalls André Warnod in 1930, “the rupture was clear between what existed and what had existed.”

The interlacing of historical ruptures with onsets of nostalgic feelings has often been repeated in studies of nostalgia. Whereas personal discontinuities can trigger personal nostalgias, historical

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114 Julien Tiersot, *Un demi-siècle de musique française, 1870-1919*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1924), 3. I have already discussed above Tiersot’s call for the renovation of the arts based on the premise that the war caused a historical rupture.


discontinuities can bring out a sense of collective nostalgia such as the one borne out of the war, as Fred Davis explains:

In its collective manifestations nostalgia also thrives... on the rude transitions rendered by history, on the discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters—in short, those events that cause masses of people to feel uneasy and to wonder whether the world and their being are quite what they always took them to be.\(^\text{117}\)

With the loss of 1.5 million people (to which should be added 3.4 million injured), and with 7% of its infrastructure destroyed,\(^\text{118}\) France faced the biggest disruption of its history, a trauma that would leave its “natural and built environment an oppressive site (and sight) of memory,” as Romy Golan puts it with a thinly-veiled reference to the notion of lieux de mémoire.\(^\text{119}\) My dissertation attempts to uncover the sounds of memory—les sons de mémoire—of the Great War. Sounds of memory (a concept that I develop in chapter 3) are not only sounds and music that people remembered after the war; they are sonic and musical archives invested with symbolic-nostalgic meaning resulting from the wartime sonic and musical disruptions. Recently, Clay Routledge summarized the findings of dozens of psychological studies of nostalgia by positing that nostalgia, in addition to being “instigated by a range of familiar sights, sounds, and smells that remind us of days gone by” (so-called ‘sensory triggers’), is also “triggered by psychological threat or negative affective states and may thus be a resource people turn to in

\(^{117}\) Davis, \textit{Yearning for Yesterday}, 49. Regina Sweeney documented the development of a “defensive nostalgia for the Belle Époque” through popular music that occurred during the war in France, especially as a reaction against internationalization. I discuss these triggers of nostalgia in the postwar in chapter 3. See Regina M. Sweeney, \textit{Singing Our Way to Victory: French Cultural Politics and Music during the Great War} (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), chap. 8.


\(^{119}\) Romy Golan, \textit{Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix. Pierre Nora coined the concept in \textit{Les Lieux de Mémoire} (1984–1992). In a special issue of \textit{Representations} on memory and counter-memory, Nora gave a succinct introduction to the concept: “Our interest in lieux de mémoire where memory crystallizes and secrets itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory.” (Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: \textit{Les Lieux de Mémoire},” \textit{Representations}, no. 26 (1989): 7.)
order to regulate distress or cope with a number of life’s challenges.”

This positing of nostalgia as a reaction to a threat is notable for reversing the historical directionality of the cause-effect relationship: rather than being the cause of distress, nostalgia might be an adaptive “coping mechanism” that serves an important psychological and physical function, namely to “counter negative states.” In other words, psychologists have recently come to conceive of nostalgia as providing continuity that offsets life’s discontinuities. It brings a sense of stability across disconnected temporalities and helps maintain one’s identity through disruptive events.

1.4.2 Continuity in postwar Paris

Not everyone thought of the war as a moment of rupture with the past. Some people actively attempted to preserve the prewar world they knew despite the increased challenge of doing so. As Routledge explained, continuity is often asserted as a “coping mechanism” against cultural change and the new world order.

Arthur Conte’s 1976 portrait of Paris in 1920 begins with a vibrant evocation of the New Year celebrations in the capital, starting at the famed restaurant Maxim’s:

At Maxim’s one could almost still believe this is the first day of January 1900. No detail of the decor has changed. The atmosphere is still crazy. The same gypsies, in the same red jackets, play the same waltzes, quadrilles, and czardas with the same enthusiasm, although from time to time fashion imposes on them a tango, fox-trot, or rag-time... So, Maxim’s 1920 entertains just like Maxim’s 1900.... The walls of Maxim’s are the same; its music too.

That Conte begins his portrait of 1920 Paris—written 56 years after that fact—with an image of continuity in pure “Belle Époque” style is striking for its apparent contradiction to the dominant mood of the day. It also paradoxically harks back to another epochal moment of change, the change

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120 Routledge, Nostalgia, 25.
121 Routledge, 26.
122 See Routledge, chap. 6.
of century to 1900, to stress continuity. Yet, it conveys the desire—especially among the upper classes (those who, for instance, could afford, both economically and socially, to celebrate the New Year at Maxim’s)—to act as if things had not changed. At the Maxim’s celebrations, it seems that only a tango, fox-trot, or ragtime could, from time to time, remind the customers that they were not in 1900 anymore. Nonetheless, as I will show at greater length in chapter 3, playing prewar music after the war had ended (especially the waltz) was significantly more than a performance. It was also an attempt to provide social continuity within particular communities despite signs of the rapid fading away of the prewar culture these groups remembered (and tried to reenact).

Many institutions showed a similar desire to return to life as it was before. Romy Golan mentions the predominance of landscapes in the paintings displayed at the 1919 Salon des Indépendants, while in architecture, regionalism—a traditionalist revival of past styles—surpassed the new modernist trends in importance. Architects rallied over Paul Léon’s motto, “it is yesterday’s France that shall be reborn tomorrow,”124 a paradoxical bridging of past and future temporalities displaying in full the contradictions of nostalgia and its tensions with modernity (a topic further developed in chapter 4).

The desire for continuity seen here does not elude nostalgia in its attempts to circumvent the ruptures of the war. If anything, it rather dwells on it. Because of the intensity of the devastation, the rupture could neither be forgotten nor ignored. To return, to reconstruct, to revive, all indicate that something had been lost, that there was an unbridgeable gap between the dreams of a postwar continuity and the social reality. The performance of 1900 Paris in 1920 was actually an act of restoration: Maxim’s became a lieu de mémoire at the same time that the prewar waltz grew into a son de mémoire.

The real continuity, therefore, was not to return to the past, but to turn the page on it and adopt the transformations in an anti-nostalgic escape from the traumas of wartime. Thus would be

born the Années folles, the “crazy years,” which indulged in the pleasures of Paris as much as they avoided nostalgia. “As soon as the war was over, Paris was taken with madness,” wrote André Warnod. “A brutal cynicism, a desire to enjoy at all costs, shapes an era, with the madness of dancing, the nudity of women, and the desire to make money without working. . . . We rushed to the pleasures with a frantic frenzy.” Dominique Kalifa asserts—in an overly simplistic statement—that the 1920s were not nostalgic: music-halls, revues, even the publication of childhood memories by the prewar cabaret singer Yvette Guilbert, bear no trace of nostalgia.

To summarize, discontinuity and continuity do not form a simple dichotomy in the experience of nostalgia. Nostalgia also necessitates a sense of sociohistorical continuity, even when fostered as a social-rhetorical practice to counter discontinuity. Both continuity and discontinuity contribute to nostalgia to the extent that they often become indistinguishable, feeding on the promises and disruptions of the other. Svetlana Boym aptly wrote: “tradition and revolution incorporate each other and rely on their opposition.” The following chapters will provide many examples of continuous discontinuities and discontinuous continuities in music that play with the listener’s expectations of past, present and future, or rather, of memory, experience and anticipation.


126 Kalifa, La Véritable Histoire de la « Belle Époque », 47. On page 20, Kalifa suggests that nostalgia for the prewar began a decade later: “Mais nulle trace dans les vibrionnantes années 1920 d’une « Belle Époque » identifiée au début du siècle. Les choses se précisent dans la décennie suivante, durant laquelle émerge la nostalgie de l’avant-guerre, et qui constitue une véritable préhistoire de la Belle Époque.” While Kalifa supports his claim with convincing evidence that the “Belle Époque” as a “chrononyme” (a time-name) identified to the period 1900-1914 only appeared later, his reduction of nostalgia for the prewar to the emergence of a Belle Époque signifier is misleading. Nostalgia does not always require decades to pass before it can be expressed. As we have seen already, and will see again and again in the following chapters, nostalgia for the immediate past can be as potent as that for decades ago.

1.4.3 Nostalgia for Paris and its sources

Two questions need further exploration to understand the significance of nostalgia in postwar Paris—but also to avoid essentializing it as a unique moment rather than a defining one. Firstly, how do we account for the centrality of Paris in nostalgic narratives? Secondly, how does the nostalgia of postwar Paris differ from that of previous decades?

To answer the first question, we must first look at the relationships between urbanity and nostalgia. Cities leave traces of the passing of time—or rather, cities gather traces of different times and turn them into a temporally heterogeneous whole. It is no coincidence that Svetlana Boym’s momentous work, *The Future of Nostalgia* is mainly concerned with cities; she describes their post-Soviet era reconstruction as “ideal crossroads between longing and estrangement, memory and freedom, nostalgia and modernity.” More so than non-material artifacts, cities render visible and tangible the discontinuities of time which trigger nostalgia as well as the continuous whole of overlapping histories in which they exist in the present. As such, cities favor a look at the world that is non-chronological, with monuments of various periods existing side by side, alongside construction sites and plans for future developments. “Paris blurs boundaries, pulling place and time, the Opéra-Comique and café-concert, the popular pleasures of two centuries, into a single, complex warp,” writes Adrian Rifkin. Being nostalgic for a city’s past is therefore synonymous to being nostalgic for temporal homogeneity and cohesiveness, a longing to refocus on the center of immediate reality devoid of gaps, interstices and difference.

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128 Boym, 76. See chapter “Archeology of Metropolis”: “The urban renewal taking place in the present is no longer futuristic but nostalgic; the city imagines its future by improvising on its past. . . . There is a pervasive longing for the visible and invisible cities of the past, cities of dreams and memories that influence both the new projects of urban reconstruction and the informal grassroots urban rituals that help us to imagine a more humane public sphere. The city becomes an alternative cosmos for collective identification, recovery of other temporalities and reinvention of tradition.” (Boym, 75–76.)

Tara Isabella Burton, in a short essay for *The American Reader*, vividly expressed the connection between cities and the passing of time:

Nothing evokes melancholy like cities do. . . . The literary experience of urban space is so often the experience of longing, of nostalgia, of alienation, and of loss. For such writers, the city is not merely setting but allegory: a physical embodiment of the irrepeatability of experience and the inevitability of decay.\(^{130}\)

For Burton, cities manifest absence in that they reveal the past that no longer exists. That is why she describes urban space as “a graveyard of memory.” Alternatively, I prefer to see the temporal discontinuities embedded into urban space as living memory of overlapping times.\(^{131}\) Rather than being a “reminder that the was no longer is,” as Burton puts it,\(^ {132}\) cities actually make us realize that the was still is. But because, as with sites of memory, symbolic meaning is attached to urban space through an act a collective construction of the social body, the meaning of cities’ pasts is always fleeting.

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century with Haussmann’s renovations, the urban transformations of Paris affected the process of memorialization of the city’s past on a large scale, which contributed to the making of Paris as a site of nostalgic longing. Many artists—such as Baudelaire, in the oft-quoted poem “Le Cygne”\(^ {133}\)—took to heart or lamented what they perceived as the vanishing traces of the city’s historical past. The “fleeting” existence that Baudelaire so famously perceived at the core of modernity\(^{134}\) became one of the city’s predominant features until the early twentieth century, to the extent that passing events like the 1900 Exposition, intended as

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\(^{131}\) Svetlana Boym writes: “Collective memory can be seen as a playground, not a graveyard of multiple individual recollections.” (Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 54.)

\(^{132}\) Burton, “The Geography of Melancholy.”


\(^{134}\) See Charles Baudelaire’s essay, “The Painter of Modern Life.”
demonstrations of technological progress, were turned into nostalgic moments as soon as they were ended.\textsuperscript{135}

The disappearing sights of the old city were not the only things being mourned; attempts were also made to preserve the sounds of Old Paris for a future that was already nostalgic for itself. For instance, Aimée Boutin has explained how “street criers were remade into nostalgic symbols, revealing both a maladjustment with the present state of society and a longing for imagined better times.”\textsuperscript{136} For Boutin, the circulation of street cries as cultural memory—and commodified objects to be sold as souvenirs—hinted at the disappearance of street peddlers, but it also conveniently discarded the associations between street cries and discord, between conflicts and revolution. It therefore encompassed the whole spectrum of the nostalgic paradigms, from regretting loss of a reimagined past to the promise of an ideal future sans discord.

In these attempts to preserve the past, the city shifted from a lived social space to an imagined urban space, as Robin Walz has explained: no longer referring to “former social classes and professions, and to traditional entertainments, festivals and parades,” the expressions “ancien Paris,” “Paris d’autrefois,” or “Vieux Paris,” became “increasingly detached from this social conception.”\textsuperscript{137} In other words, Walz contends that a “nostalgic Paris pittoresque” was replacing a “Parisian vie populaire.” As we will see in the following chapters, music from the past effected the same shift towards the nostalgic imaginary when encountering and overlapping with new musical styles in an accumulation of temporalities. I will frequently come back to this shift towards the imaginary, symbolic, or metaphoric in the following case studies.

\textsuperscript{135} See Kalifa, \textit{La Véritable Histoire de la « Belle Époque »}, 38. Kalifa quotes Jean Frollo, who wrote, in \textit{Le Figaro} of November 13, 1900: “Longtemps encore après que l’Exposition aura disparu, on évoquera par le souvenir le spectacle de cette cité de merveilles.”


1.4.4 Nostalgia for Paris in 1920

It is clear that Paris, as an urban center in constant evolution, emerged as a site of nostalgia as much as of memory during the nineteenth century. But (to turn to the second question posed above) what makes the immediate postwar period different from other periods, and therefore worth this close examination?

In Charles Rearick’s view, postwar Paris was actually not a moment of heightened nostalgia: he writes that “the old days looked ridiculously out of fashion” because of the “hope for strong postwar recovery and excitement about ‘modern times’.” Furthermore, thoughts of the “good old days” were surpassed by “attention . . . on emotion-charged memories of the war’s ‘heroes’ (generals and poilus), daunting economic problems, and excitingly new and ‘modern’ diversions, such as jazz and the shimmy.”138 Nevertheless, I would argue that these things do not oppose nostalgia and do not avert it.

On the contrary, the day-to-day concerns of the war and postwar brought a collective scale to the expressions of urban nostalgia, where people from various social backgrounds commented on the transformations in the city. The war and its consequences remained palpable to everyone through countless newspaper articles, books and memoirs, memorials, architectural restorations, songs and instrumental pieces, concerts dedicated to war orphans, widows and soldiers, and so forth.

In the immediate afterwar, the memorialization of Paris attained a new sense of urgency. Such is the case of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which commemorated—on a grand national scale—the soldiers who died defending their nation, but also controversially coincided with the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Third Republic. As I will discuss in chapter

138 Charles Rearick, “The Charms of Paris... Yesterday,” Historical Reflections 39, no. 3 (2013): 14. We have also seen that for other scholars, including Dominique Kalifa, nostalgia for the prewar did not begin immediately after the war.
2, similar blends of celebratory and mournful feelings—or, to use the terms of the nostalgia paradigms, of renewal and regret—were common throughout 1919-1920.

For some, the war itself became the source of heightened nostalgic feelings. For instance, Maurice Sachs described the contrast between the soldiers’ suffering in the army, when they “dream only of leaves of absence, hospital, liberation,” and their growing affection for their military days after their return home, when they “look back on the barracks and find its memories dear, made of comradeship, of friendship, of affection.” Sachs claimed that “suffering gives the heart a wound which, healed, becomes a delight.”

Although he was born in 1906, and thus did not see the frontline, he gave voice to the preoccupations of the young generation: having lost everything, jobs, families, and friends, many missed the sense of social unity that the war brought. At the same time, his suggestions that ex-soldiers are nostalgic for their days in the army brings an interesting reversal of nostalgia’s historical associations with military medicine. But in the end, Sachs, as an archetypal flâneur of the interwar, uses his description of military nostalgia to set the stage for an aphorism-like statement about Parisian nostalgia: “The life of Paris seems to me something like a long and more varied military service, for if what memory preserves for us is pleasant, the days when we lived it were cruel.”

The writings of Maurice Sachs about Paris date from the 1930s. They tell us more about his nostalgia for the 1920s than about the nostalgia of 1920 for the 1900s.141 Yet, in a journal entry

139 Sachs, La Décade de l’illusion, 13–14; Sachs, The Decade of Illusion, 3. “Dans les conditions actuelles de notre administration militaire, ce séjour à l’armée [le service militaire] est proprement intolérable. Les soldats n’y rêvent que permissions, hôpital et libération. Ils comptent anxieusement les jours qui les séparent du retour à la vie civile. Ils prennent en haine l’uniforme. Ils souffrent réellement. Et cependant, quand le temps du service a passé, quand on est revenu à ses foyers ou qu’on s’est échappé vers la vie d’homme, on pense souvent à la caserne et les souvenirs en sont doux, de camaraderie, d’amitié, d’affection. Il n’est pas de Français qui ne se rappelle avec quelque émotion les jours où il était habillé de bleu horizon. Cette souffrance, ces obligations appliquent au cœur une blessure qui, guérie, se change en délices.”

140 Sachs, La Décade de l’illusion, 14; Sachs, The Decade of Illusion, 3. “La vie à Paris me semble quelque chose comme un long et plus divers service militaire. Car, si ce que la mémoire nous en conserve est aimable, les jours qu’on y vécut furent cruels.”

141 As quoted above, Sachs mentioned his parents’ nostalgia in 1919 for prewar Paris in a detached way. Only seven years old when the War was declared, his memories of prewar Paris would have been relatively limited.
dated November 4, 1919, but first published twenty years later, he expressed the ambivalence, tensions, struggles, and outright contradictions he noticed in Paris immediately after the war:

Malgré tout ce qu’on a déjà à voir, à faire à Paris, malgré l’évidente passion de s’amuser que montrent quelques-uns, on sent bien qu’il reste un fond de tristesse dans l’air ; les uns ont pris le parti d’essayer de ne plus du tout penser à la guerre, affectés de n’en parler pas, etc., d’autres ont gardé un deuil presque agressif qui leur donne des droits. Et partout l’envie de rire, de faire la fête est freinée par ce lourd sentiment de culpabilité dont on aura de la peine à se débarrasser. Comme après toute victoire, on en est éperdu mais un peu honteux quand il s’agit de laisser les brides à ses passions personnelles au nom de la victoire générale. Cependant le feu couve ; un de ces jours on éclatera de plaisir comme si c’était la chose la plus naturelle du monde.

In spite of all there is to see, all there is to do in Paris, in spite of the evident passion for entertainment shown by some, one feels that there is still sadness in the air; some have chosen to try not to think of the war anymore, to say nothing about it, etc., others have kept an almost aggressive mourning which gives them rights. And everywhere, the desire to laugh and celebrate is hindered by this heavy feeling of guilt that will be hard to get rid of. As after all victory, one is distraught but a little ashamed when it comes to constraining one’s personal passions in the name of general victory. However, the fire smolders: one of these days we will burst with pleasure as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Hence, the war brought a nostalgic vision of Paris that was marked by guilt and mourning as much as pleasure and passion, and in which the war occupied a central place as both an end and a beginning, a cause and an outcome.

While the war as a rupture remains a defining moment in the context of my dissertation, it should not obscure the continuity of nostalgic feelings based on the ongoing urban transformations in the city. For instance, during the early twentieth century, the soundscape of the capital had steadily continued to evolve. Now, rather than regretting the disappearance of sounds (as the previous generations had reminisced about the vanished street criers), it was the accumulation of noise that was at issue. In May 1920, Edith Wharton conjured the soundscape of the city in a personal letter: “Paris is simply awful—a kind of continuous earthquake of motor busses, trams, lorries, taxis & other howling & swooping & colliding engines, with hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens rushing about in them & tumbling out of them at one’s door.” She then contrasted Paris

with the countryside which she longed to return to: “The country—the banlieue even—is divine, &
my humble potager gushes with nightingales.” 143 Perhaps unknowingly, Edith Wharton was
repeating one of the most widespread paradigms in nostalgic evocations of Paris, the mal du pays
felt by foreigners upon entering the French capital, a trope that was already present before the
Haussmannization of Paris, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter.144 In this paradigm,
the quiet countryside could take many forms, real or imagined, or even refer to an idealized image
of a bygone Paris, as in the special issue of La Revue musicale (May 1926) dedicated to Debussy’s
youth, in which Robert Brussel evoked the atmosphere of the young composer’s Paris:

Époque délicieuse: on allait à pied, sans peine et sans encombre; Paris avait
alors un charme, des sons, des nuances, un parfum qu’on ne retrouvera plus et,
dans nos souvenirs, une physionomie toute provinciale. On entendait sur le grès
des pavés le ferraillement monotone des roues, le rythme net du sabot des
chevaux; parfois, après dix heures sonnées, le pas des piétons.

Delightful epoch: one went on foot without difficulty and without encumbrance;
Paris used to have a charm, sounds, nuances, a perfume that will never be found
again, and, in our memories, a very provincial physiognomy. One could hear on
the sandstone of the pavement the monotonous rattle of the wheels, the clear
rhythm of the horses' hooves; sometimes, after ten o’clock, the pedestrians’
footsteps.145

This remembrance of an already post-Haussmannized Paris as having a “provincial physiognomy”
can surprise at first. Yet, it shares with Edith Wharton the same dichotomy between the urban world
soundscape and its rural counterpart, a distinction which had played such an integral part in
nostalgic narratives since its inception. It transforms what is essentially a temporal gap into an
imagined geographical difference.

In the following chapters, I examine musical nostalgia along those historical and critical
routes outlined here. I discuss tacit nostalgias shared collectively in journals and the musical press,

144 Arthur Conte’s 1976 book on Paris in 1920 expands on Edith Wharton’s short description with an
overflow of sonorous nouns, verbs and adjectives: vrombissements, gémissements, magir, rugir, vocifération
homérique, etc. “On ne reconnaît plus du tout le Paris 1900.” (We do not recognize at all the Paris of 1900.)
(Conte, Le 1er janvier 1920, 143.)
145 Robert Brussel, “Claude Debussy et Paul Dukas,” La Revue musicale 7, no. La Jeunesse de Claude
Debussy (May 1, 1926): 92 (my emphasis).
as well as explicit ones used for political purposes. Rather than add to the current vagueness with which the term is frequently employed, I refocus it on a diversity of theoretical, conceptual, and musicological issues, both historical and contemporary, in order to create a new map of musical nostalgia that is more adapted to the complexities of social life while remaining more legible. As Illbruck put it, “it is necessary to conceive of a form of critical nostalgia in touch with its original dimensions, one which aids rather than blanks the seeing of just that which has been lost along the way, in development.”

146 Illbruck, Nostalgia, 224.
2 MEDIA, MYTHS AND MEMORIALS

2.1 THE TRAGIC COINCIDENCE OF DEBUSSY’S FUNERAL

2.1.1 A funeral in wartime

On March 29, 1918, the Good Friday service at the church of Saint-Gervais in Paris was tragically interrupted when a bomb shell fell through the roof of the nave (Fig. 2.1). Caused by “Bertha,” the
German army’s long-distance cannon, the bombing of Saint-Gervais was the deadliest attack against Paris in World War I. 88 civilians died and an additional 68 were injured. The attacks on Paris by the German long-distance cannons had begun on March 23. During the following week, the risk of attack greatly preoccupied the capital, forcing many cultural institutions either to delay or to momentarily interrupt their activities (for example, the Opéra’s revival of Rameau’s *Castor et Pollux*, first performed on March 21, but then postponed until after the Armistice), and urging the municipality to take measures to prevent more civilian casualties.

In such a distressing moment, it is understandable that the death of Claude Debussy on March 25, and his funeral service three days later, were largely overlooked outside of music circles. According to those in attendance, the composer’s funeral on March 28 was attended by no more than fifty people, a very small group in comparison with the “spectacular state funerals” of Camille Saint-Saëns or Gabriel Fauré in 1921 and 1924 respectively. Most of the grievers did not even follow the procession to its end at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, a two-hour walk from Debussy’s house near the Bois de Boulogne on the other side of the city, along deserted streets, in cold weather (the previous night had seen temperatures below freezing), and under the invisible threat of the German cannons.

Because of these circumstances surrounding the death of Debussy, many accounts of the event written in the following days, months, and years, could not disentangle the composer’s final moments from the catastrophe of the war, nor the funeral from the bombing of Paris. In this chapter,

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4 Kelly, 375.
I discuss the role that the conflict and its narratives played in the creation of a myth of Debussy as both victim of the war and national hero, and how these myths affected the enterprises of memorialization of the composer in 1920. Musicologists Barbara Kelly and Marianne Wheeldon have examined the reception of Debussy’s music and the formation of his legacy in the political, aesthetic, and cultural climate of the interwar period. In this chapter, I wish to pay closer attention to the period of transition that marked the return to peace and to the early postwar reception of Debussy by inscribing it within the national, public, and mediated impetus toward memorialization of the war that arose at that time. Memorialization is not an effortless process. As I will highlight, projects of memorials, both on the national scale and related to Debussy, were burdened with constraints, controversies, and compromises. The first two sections of this chapter look at the construction of interrelated myths of the war and of Debussy, and how these myths shaped memories and memorials that oscillated between celebration and mourning. The next two sections explore the various nostalgic and anti-nostalgic meanings inscribed in the Tombeau de Claude Debussy, a musical homage featuring collaborations by ten composers that appeared in the pages of La Revue musicale in December 1920. Whereas Wheeldon wrote about the Tombeau within a broader discussion of the reception of the composer’s late works, I discuss it as a musical parallel to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, inaugurated in the same period, to stress the challenges that musicians and critics faced after the war in reconciling contradictory emotions, narratives, and myths of Debussy.

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2.1.2 Debussy and the “Myth of the War Experience”

Although Barbara Kelly points out that “[Debussy’s] death quickly acquired symbolic meaning,”\(^7\) she devotes only a few paragraphs to the reactions to Debussy’s death in 1918-1920 (quickly moving on to the mid-1920s and 1930s), and so it remains unclear what the nature was of this “symbolic meaning” at the time of the composer’s death, and how it shaped the construction of his legacy in the immediate postwar era, when the consequences of the war and its memorialization were on everyone’s mind. Here I will explore the conjunction between the myth of Debussy that developed from the circumstances of his death and what George Mosse referred to as the “myth of the war experience.”\(^8\)

In *Souvenirs de cinq années (1914-1919)*, a series of articles on music during the war published between October 1919 and January 1920, musicologist Julien Tiersot recounted how narrowly Debussy’s funeral procession avoided the bombing of Saint-Gervais:

\[\text{Vingt-quatre heures après exactement, sur le même parcours, un obus tomba et,}
\]
\[\text{crevant la voûte de l’église Saint-Gervais, ensevelit sous les ruines ceux que le}
\]
\[\text{désir d’entendre les pures harmonies palestriniennes avait attirés dans ce lieu. Si}
\]
\[\text{l’enterrement de Debussy avait été retardé d’un jour et que la trajectoire du}
\]
\[\text{projectile eût été plus courte de quelques mètres, celui-ci, tombant dans la rue,}
\]
\[\text{aurait pu donner en plein milieu du cortège.}
\]

Exactly twenty-four hours later, a shell fell on the same path and, bursting the vault of the church Saint-Gervais, buried under the ruins those who had been attracted to this place by the desire to hear the pure Palestrinian harmonies. If Debussy’s funeral had been delayed by a day and the trajectory of the projectile had been a few meters shorter, this shell, falling in the street, could have hit the heart of the procession.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) Julien Tiersot, “Souvenirs de cinq années (1914-1919),” *Le Ménestrel* 82, no. 3 (January 16, 1920): 24. Tiersot told the same story in the updated second edition of Julien Tiersot, *Un demi-siècle de musique française, 1870-1919*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1924), 228 (the first edition was published shortly before Debussy’s death). In that version, Tiersot mentioned the influence of Palestrina’s music on Debussy. I have not been able to identify the repertoire sung by the choristers on Good Friday in 1918.
Tiersot’s brief account of the funeral is charged with symbolism. By referencing Palestrina, it is possible that Tiersot wanted to draw connections beyond the coincidence of the bombing of Saint-Gervais and Debussy’s funerals—spared by a mere day and a “few meters.” Tiersot was well aware that it was in Saint-Gervais, years before (in 1893, to be exact), that Debussy himself had heard the music of Palestrina, a composer he praised throughout his life, sometimes quite nostalgically as when he preached a return to “ancient times” and the “grand passion” of Palestrina.10 Hence, although the repertoire sung on the tragic Good Friday of 1918 is unknown, Tiersot’s mention of Palestrina was meant to draw a connection with Debussy’s personal involvement with Saint-Gervais and thus show a stronger connection between the two events of March 1918.

For others, the line between Debussy’s death and the war was even thinner. Debussy’s publisher, Jacques Durand, wrote in his Quelques souvenirs d’un éditeur de musique in 1924 that the funerals overlapped with the attacks on Paris:

Nous étions quelques amis à rendre les derniers devoirs à la dépouille de cet enchanteur des sons ; le bombardement ennemi faisait entendre sa voix formidable. En signe de glas, ce fut malheureusement le canon allemand qui retentissait et non celui de la France. Tragique coïncidence pour les funérailles de celui qui fut un compositeur si profondément national.

We were a few friends paying our last respects to the remains of this enchanter of sounds; we could hear the dreadful noise of the bombardment. As for the death knell, it was unfortunately the German cannon that thundered and not France’s. Tragic coincidence for the funeral of a man who was such a deeply national composer.11 Durand’s nationalism is tangible as he laments the lack of proper national funerals for one of France’s greatest composers. He symbolically synchronized the bombing of Paris by the Germans with the composer’s funeral, thus adding an even stronger wartime connotation to his memory of the composer’s death than was present in Tiersot’s earlier account. Moreover, both Durand and Tiersot also mentioned the attendance of representative(s) from the Ministère des Beaux-Arts on

11 Jacques Durand, Quelques souvenirs d’un éditeur de musique (Paris: A. Durand et fils, 1924), 126.
the occasion, but while Tiersot admitted that one could complain about the lack of military homages because of the wartime context, Durand appeared more regretful that France remained silent, asking if the ministry “precisely realized the genius of the artist who was disappearing?”

Even before Tiersot and Durand published their reminiscences, the composer-critic Florent Schmitt connected Debussy’s death even more directly with the catastrophe of the war. In the very opening lines of a commemorative issue of *L’Écho musical* on Debussy, published in November 1919, Schmitt ambiguously suggested that the composer’s death was a consequence of the attacks on Paris:

*La guerre qui, parmi les artistes, anéantit tant de jeunes espoirs, n’aura peut-être pas détruit de génie à qui il restait plus à exprimer que Claude Debussy. Avec l’amertume du regret inconsolable, on peut dire que, malgré son œuvre déjà immense, Debussy avait encore toute la force de créer. Ses dernières grandes compositions d’orchestre, la Mer, Images, Jeux, — celle-ci incompréhensiblement méconnue jusqu’à présent — semblaient l’orienter vers un monde encore insoupçonné. Aussi, bien qu’elle ne fût pas déterminée par la guerre, du moins directement, sa mort peut compter parmi les pires calamités de ces temps affreux. L’âme la plus française, la plus harmonisée dans le parfait équilibre des dons les plus divers, des plus subtils aux plus profonds, s’est tue comme brisée, révoltée des discordances du dedans comme du dehors, du fracas des artilleries comme de la piraterie mercantile et la lâche complicité de ceux qui devaient nous en défendre.*

The war which, among the artists, annihilated so many young talents, perhaps destroyed no genius for whom more remained to be expressed than Claude Debussy. With the bitterness of inconsolable regret, one can say that despite his already immense output, Debussy still had all the strength to create. His last large orchestral compositions, *la Mer, Images, Jeux*—this one incomprehensibly unfamiliar to this day—seemed to direct him towards a still unsuspected world. So, although his death was not influenced by the war, at least not directly, it might count among the worst calamities of these terrible times. His soul was the most French, the most harmonious in its perfect balancing of the most diverse gifts, from the subtlest to the deepest; it died broken, revolted by the discordances from within as from outside, by the roar of artillery, and by mercantilism and the complicity of those who should have defended the nation against it.

Florent Schmitt’s article is symptomatic of what Marianne Wheeldon recognizes as the “collective amnesia” that shaped Debussy’s legacy in the early postwar years, when the composer’s late

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12 Durand, 126. “Lorsque, quelques années après, je devais le conduire au cimetière, un ministre fut présent à la maison mortuaire ; se rendait-il compte exactement du génial artiste qui disparaissait ?”

works—such as his set of wartime sonatas—were “selectively forgotten,” or one could say “erased” from his output. Although \textit{La Mer} (1903-05), \textit{Images} (1905-1912) and \textit{Jeux} (1912-13) are admittedly Debussy’s “last large orchestral works,” the composer’s ultimate stylistic developments at the time of his death are better represented by his non-pictorial and classicizing wartime chamber works. Most striking in Schmitt’s article, however, is how he very nearly presented the composer as a victim of the war, on par with (or even greater than) the young artists who fell on the battlefield. Even though he mentioned that his death was not directly caused by the war, Schmitt suggested the opposite three times in this opening paragraph when he said that “the war . . . destroyed” Debussy, that his death was one of the “worst calamities” of the times, and finally that his soul was “broken, revolted . . . by the roar of artillery.” Hence, Schmitt politicized Debussy’s death by elevating him to the rank of war hero, a truly French spirit who died in revolt against “mercantilism and the complicity of those who should have defended the nation against it.” Turning Debussy into a victim of the war was an important step toward the idealization of his whole life and of his nationalism.

The mythification of Debussy’s death hinged on the incidents it transformed (such as the exact circumstances of his funeral) and the facts it ignored. None of these tributes mentioned, or even alluded to, the real cause of Debussy’s death: a cancer of the rectum that had been diagnosed in November 1915. Throughout 1916 and 1917, Debussy’s illness affected his morale, his activities, and his public appearance. He was becoming nostalgic for his healthy past: “I feel only horrible fatigue and this distaste for activity, a result of my last illness. . . . Where are the beautiful

\footnote{Marianne Wheeldon discusses this in Wheeldon, \textit{Debussy’s Legacy and the Construction of Reputation}, 12.}

\footnote{Sometimes, this juxtaposition of Debussy with the conflict could also be subtler, with no less impact, as when Raymond Bouyer listed Debussy alongside two other composers whose death actually resulted from war actions, writing: “today, the dead are named Debussy, Magnard, Granados…” (les morts, aujourd’hui, s’appellent Debussy, Magnard, Granados…) (Raymond Bouyer, “Petites Notes sans portée, CXC, La Physionomie de la musique au Salon d’Automne,” \textit{Le Ménestrel} 81, no. 8 (December 5, 1919): 66.) This characterization of Debussy’s death as a result of the war persists to this day in academic literature. For instance, in the chronology included in the \textit{Cambridge Companion to Debussy}, we can read: “Dies on 25 March in Paris to the sound of Germany’s bombardment of Paris.” (Simon Trezise, ed., \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Debussy} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xviii.)}

\footnote{See Jensen, \textit{Debussy}, 115.}
months of 1915?”17 Debussy’s illness was no secret to his friends and collaborators; so, their choice to conceal the steady deterioration of his health in his last years and instead persistently focus on a national event that had far-reaching social implications—the bombing of Saint-Gervais—is telling: denied a national funeral on account of the war, Debussy’s death acquired its symbolic meaning as a result of the war. As Kelly recognized: “Debussy’s death at a difficult moment during the war facilitated the transition from avant-garde figurehead to national symbol.”18 This raises more questions about the effect of mediatization in the memorialization of Debussy than it answers. It questions how the media celebrated memories of the war in the years that followed the Armistice, how “private memories were absorbed into a common culture.”19

The need to attribute a higher meaning to death in times of war is at the heart of the “Myth of the War Experience,” a concept that George Mosse developed to explain the dialectic nature of memory in the war experience. In this myth, mourning is mixed with pride as people feel the urge to justify or legitimate the horrors they have suffered by asserting the sacredness and national interest of war, to an extent that some veterans “remembered the security, purpose, and companionship of war.”20 This myth is especially prevalent in collective commemorations of war. As Mosse put it, “Those concerned with the image and the continuing appeal of the nation worked at constructing a myth which would draw the sting from death in war and emphasize the meaningfulness of the fighting and sacrifice.”21 Thus, the myth rearticulated memories that were directed toward the presentation of a positive national heritage. This is what we can observe in the several accounts of Debussy’s death by his peers as they attempted to render the composer a victim and to mythicize the circumstances of his funeral within the confines of French nationalism.

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17 Quoted in Jensen, 117.
21 Mosse, 6–7.
Myths provide a stabilizing structure of meaning for how events are experienced, especially in times of war, when mythical meaning can provide much-needed justification for the sacrifice and mourning that is experienced personally, collectively, and nationally. At the same time, as Roland Barthes maintained, myth is a deformation or distortion of meaning, a departure from the truth of reality. Although it stems from an historical concept, myth “deprives the object of which it speaks of all History,” by which Barthes meant that myth eliminates its own sources, erases the traces of its own history and the choices that went into its formation; in short, it loses the memory that it was once made. For that reason, Barthes saw myth as a sort of rhetorical (or ideological) instrument that absorbs “historical reality” and gives in return a “natural image” of this reality, that is, the appearance of reality, but not reality itself. As a result, myths become part of the social fabric and substitute themselves for history (or rather, become integrated into it). In short, Barthes wrote that the “myth has the task of giving historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal.”

One aspect of myth that neither Mosse nor Barthes articulated, but that we can observe in the funeral narratives quoted above, is that the process of mythification is public, largely constructed by the media, and always amplified by its circulation, which tends to normalize it. As Starobinski remarked, “During the First World War, André Gide noticed that the language of the journalists (who had not been at the front) furnished the clichés which the soldiers returning from the front used to describe their feelings.” Starobinski used this anecdote to stress the importance of language and public discourse in the formation of emotions such as nostalgia. This reciprocity between the soldiers’ stories and the media’s narratives, which feed into each other, indicates that nostalgia, beyond being an emotion or a practice, is a discourse that is exchanged between private

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23 Barthes, 142.
24 Jean Starobinski, “The Idea of Nostalgia,” trans. William S. Kemp, *Diogenes* 14, no. 54 (1966): 82. I, nor the specialists from the Centre d’études gidiennes, have not yet been able to trace the source of Starobinski’s reference in Gide’s vast corpus.
and public interlocutors. This can also be read in parallel with Fred Davis’ discussion of the relation between media and nostalgia, about which he argues that “not only is [nostalgia] propagated on a vast scale by the mass media but the very objects of collective nostalgia are in themselves media creations from the recent past.”25 The media can, and often do, turn recent history into nostalgia by contributing to its diffusion and to the normalization of its narratives. What might start as, or take the appearance of, private reminiscences, reaches the collective level with the help of the media’s “seamless symbolic web linking collective and private nostalgia.”26 But the media do not merely create a channel in which memories can move from the uniqueness of the personal to the normalized structure of the collective; they generate and shape symbols that constitute myths. “As a cynic might put it,” writes Davis, “nostalgia exists of the media, by the media, and for the media.” This is what we observed with Debussy’s funeral, when personal memories of the wartime funeral emerged publicly and spread in various newspapers and books, repeating themselves like a set of symbolic variations, none entirely true, but also none entirely distorted enough to be unrecognizable.

These reactions to Debussy’s funerals can therefore be read as symptomatic of the mythical rewriting of history—which also applies to recent or ongoing events—that reflects the nationalist attitude that prevailed during periods of mourning and remembrance. By emphasizing in public media certain aspects of historical events, such as the proximity of Debussy’s funeral to the bombing of Saint-Gervais, writers turned their souvenirs into mythical stories, promoting a symbiotic meaning to both Debussy’s death and the trauma lived by the Parisians during that fateful week. Saint-Gervais thus became a myth—a slightly distorted reality—that attracted a seemingly unrelated character—Debussy—into its symbolic web.

As discussed by Mosse, this notion of myth is especially pertinent to a discussion of postwar memorials, which, unlike spontaneous memories, are inherently public and deliberately

26 Davis, 124.
constituted. Memorials honor fallen soldiers and other heroic figures by presenting them as ideals and incorporating them into the national myth. In the second half of this chapter, I will discuss the *Tombeau de Claude Debussy* not so much as a collective homage, but rather as a memorial, a tangible and lasting monument shaped by national myths that emerged around the idealized image of a composer whose life was unjustly cut short. But before returning to Debussy, it is important to understand the complexities and tensions that undermine the homogenized vision that myths and memorials tend to display since they are central to the composition and reception of the *Tombeau de Debussy*. Indeed, as I localize the “Myth of the War Experience” in the music and media of the time, I will show its conflicted nature and the inescapable challenges that artists faced in their efforts to contribute to the surge of memorials in the early postwar years. Comparable to the mythification of the sacrifice of soldiers—celebrated for instance with the polemical inauguration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in November 1920—certain sounds (among them the sounds of bells and the *Marseillaise*) acquired new meanings during this period because of their recurring use as markers of nostalgic sentiments within a nationalist framework. Thus, the following section will help situate the memorial to Debussy within a larger context of national and musical memorialization of the war and of the past.

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27 Memorials are a prime example of what Pierre Nora called *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter.
2.2 SHARING MYTHS AND SHAPING MEMORIALS

2.2.1 “Under the Triumph, we laid a tomb”

The Armistice of November 11, 1918, marked the beginning of a long transition toward peace that was rich in symbols, myths, stories, histories, and memories. For the next two years, the war remained one of the most discussed topics in the press, with a continuous flow of publications of all kinds remembering the war and accounting for its human and material losses. References to the war—either direct or passing—could be found in practically every issue of every magazine and newspapers until the early 1920s, including in the musical press. There is no single “Myth of the War Experience” that unites all of these publications. On the contrary, the question of how the war should be remembered remained divisive, especially in light of the ongoing peace negotiations at Versailles, which spanned the first half of 1919 and whose lengthy negotiations and lack of consensus undermined the sense of victory in public opinion. On the second anniversary of the Armistice, one journalist could summarize the diplomatic climate since the end of the war by describing it as “this troubled and vacillating period when the leaders of the victorious nations seek, without much success, to impose on the world the peace of the law, justice and independence of the people.” The journalist then asked, showing a distrust in the political institutions: “How many such anniversaries will we see before a true, lasting, solid, universal peace is reborn in this upset world?”

Despite the French military victory of 1918, moments of national celebration—fundamental to the creation of national myths—were colored by similarly ambivalent sentiments.

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that blended relief, rejoicing and mourning—and occasionally cynicism as well. These sentiments were magnified during the “double” celebrations of November 11, 1920, arguably the largest commemoration of the early postwar era. The government’s decision to commemorate the second anniversary of the Armistice with the inauguration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the same day as the festivities of the fiftieth anniversary of the Third Republic exemplifies the overlapping on a national scale of two distinct myths: the mourning of the soldiers’ sacrifice, and the celebration of the nation’s accomplishments since the previous military conflict in 1870. The events comprised two main ceremonies: at first, a procession led the casket of the Unknown Soldier to the Panthéon alongside a reliquary containing the heart of Léon Gambetta, a major political figure from the early Third Republic who was best remembered for his escape from Paris in a balloon to help salvage the new Republican government formed in Tours during the war of 1870. After the speeches, including one from the President of the Republic, the double procession left the Panthéon for the Arc de Triomphe where hundreds of people passed and gazed upon the casket that symbolizes all those who died and disappeared during the war. In the evening, the Unknown Soldier was lodged inside the Arc (awaiting proper burial two months later), while the heart of Gambetta returned to its final resting place at the Panthéon.29

The celebrations were on the front page of every newspaper the following morning. Most major papers adopted a forthrightly celebratory tone, sometimes laden in the same nationalistic and Republican rhetoric that motivated the events. Hence Le Figaro stated: “It was impossible that November 11 should not evoke above all the glorious end of the war, and that prodigious moment of national life when the triumphal cannon announced the victory. Such memories crush all

others.” But this masking of the reality and extent of the sacrifice was not unanimously adopted. Some journalists refused to indulge in such uncritical enthusiasm as displayed by the government and echoed by the major papers, preferring instead to call attention to the ambivalent meaning of these double celebrations—and therefore putting into question the “Myth of the War Experience” that was being constructed by official and public media.

As many critics quickly realized, the two events celebrated on November 11, 1920, were not necessarily compatible. On the contrary, they exacerbated the fragility of the myths on which they relied. In fact, despite being referred to as the “fêtes de la victoire,” the events acted as a strong reminder of the human cost of the victory and of the nation’s equivocal reactions to the heritage of the Third Republic. The entombment of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe acted as a poignant symbol of the divergence between triumph and mourning, prompting one journalist to summarize the event with a fitting maxim: “Sous le Triomphe, on a mis un tombeau…” (Under the Triumph, we laid a tomb…). Playing with the double meaning of “Triomphe” (referring to the monument and to victory) this sentence laid bare the infiltration (both symbolically and concretely) and repurposing of war memories within a positive myth of French history as a way to legitimize the sacrifice of the soldiers. But for this journalist, this repurposing was inappropriate as the festive mood and gaiety of the crowds dominated while many mothers were still tearful. On its front page, La Lanterne published an article titled “La Fête dans l’équivoque,” which expressed puzzlement over the nature of the event and what it was trying to accomplish: “What were we celebrating yesterday? And, first, should we assume a joyful ceremony or a funereal solemnity?” The author, Félix Hautfort, then pointed out that the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic should actually have

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been celebrated on September 4, the real (historical) date of the anniversary. To avoid an excess of cheerfulness when the memories of the war were still so fresh, it had been decided that both celebrations would be joined, a notion that Hautfort deemed a failure: “They wanted to force France to laugh and cry at once! The project was impossible; it has earned us, despite noble speeches, the confusion of a sabotaged celebration.” These lines express the challenge of celebrating the national victory even two years after the end of hostilities. With the omnipresence of visible traces of the suffering caused by the war, which Hautfort described in his article, it was thought that the nation was not yet ready to rejoice, and that it was even less open to the merging of two radically opposite sentiments in the same event.

The accounts of the celebrations of November 11, 1920, expose two competing national attitudes toward the war that French people adopted to cope with their recent history. On the one hand, there was an urge to reunite France under the banner of its Republican achievements by focusing on a positive and intensely symbolic presentation of the nation’s heroes and of its glorious victories. The nation’s history was displaced and idealized, forming a national myth that transformed the experience of the war into a marker of national pride. On the other hand, the unwavering sense of mourning that persisted in 1920 enabled a more cautious attitude toward representations of the past.

2.2.2 Music for the Unknown Soldier

The mild disappointment and ambivalent reactions to the celebrations of November 11, 1920, were echoed in the musical press, and affected the musical production, both official and private, that surrounded the events. In the weeks leading to the ceremonies, critics were already publishing

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33 “On a voulu forcer la France à rire et à pleurer à la fois ! L’entreprise était impossible, elle nous a valu, malgré de nobles discours, la confusion d’une fête sabotée.”
adverse comments in the musical and arts press, with complaints that the celebrations were organized by government officials rather than by artists, and that there was an upsetting absence of music on the (still unofficial) program. The government’s disinterest in commissioning musical memorials to the war had already been noted a year before in response to the “sabotage of music at the fêtes de la Victoire” of July 14, 1919. After the celebrations of November 1920, Léon Vallas commented that “music held an almost imperceptible place.” Indeed, most newspaper accounts of the events did not pay much attention to the music heard at the Panthéon and at the Arc de Triomphe, even though the president, Alexandre Millerand, mentioned César Franck and Debussy among other artists and intellectuals who marked the Third Republic. Besides the patriotic hymns La Marseillaise and the Chant des Girondins (the national anthem of the Second Republic, 1848-1852), as well as the Revolutionary Chant du départ, two patriotic works by Camille Saint-Saëns and Henri Rabaud, both performed at the Panthéon, were worthy of mention. Both pieces emphasized the symbolic presentation of a glorious French Republic, but did so by drawing on the nation’s historic past in order to establish continuity and connection with the past.

The Marche héroïque (Op. 34) by Saint-Saëns provided historical continuity. Conceived during the siege of Paris fifty years before, in November 1870, the work provided a connection to both anniversaries being celebrated in November 1920. On the one hand, it was a nationalist work
with strong ties to the Franco-Prussian War that led to the founding of the Third Republic. On the other hand, the work was dedicated to a painter and singer killed during siege in January 1871, and thus could symbolize all the soldiers who died for the nation, including those who fell during the war of 1914-1918.\textsuperscript{40} The \textit{Marche héroïque} provided further continuity as a work that had been circulating for fifty years in various transcriptions for various combinations of instruments, and for which reprints exist from every decade from the 1870s to the 1910s, as well as regular performances almost every year, including in 1916 and 1917. Finally, in 1905, it had already served at the inauguration of a monument for Gambetta in Bordeaux, making the work a natural choice for the transfer of Gambetta’s heart to the Panthéon fifteen years later. Thus, although written fifty years before, the \textit{Marche héroïque} retained its national, near-official status that had progressed along with the nation without interruption since the very beginning of the Third Republic and provided a positive image of an unbroken national history.

In contrast, the choral piece by Henri Rabaud, also performed at the Panthéon, was a recent composition based on a well-known poem written almost one hundred years before. The \textit{Hymne à la France immortelle}, Op. 12, was first published in a piano reduction in 1917 or 1918.\textsuperscript{41} It was one of dozens of vocal works published between 1915 and 1923 that used Victor Hugo’s famous 1831 poem from \textit{Les Chants du crépuscule} (1835), “Hymne” (“Ceux qui pieusement sont morts pour la patrie”), originally written to commemorate the fallen of the civil war of July 1830:

\begin{verbatim}
Ceux qui pieusement sont morts pour la patrie
Ont droit qu’à leur cercueil la foule vienne et prie.
Entre les plus beaux noms leur nom est le plus beau.
Toute gloire près d’eux passe et tombe éphémère ;
Et, comme ferait une mère,
La voix d’un peuple entier les berce en leur tombeau !
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{41} Both dates appear on the first edition: on the cover page and on the first page of music.
Gloire à notre France éternelle!
Gloire à ceux qui sont morts pour elle!
Aux martyrs! aux vaillants! aux forts!
À ceux qu’enflamme leur exemple,
Qui veulent place dans le temple,
Et qui mourront comme ils sont morts!

Those who piously died for the country
Are entitled to have the crowd come and pray before their coffin.
Among the most beautiful names, their name is the most beautiful.
All glory passes near them and falls, ephemeral;
And, as a mother would do,
The voice of a whole nation cradles them in their tomb!

Glory to our eternal France!
Glory to those who died for her!
To the martyrs! to the valiant! to the strong!
To those who are ignited by their example,
Those who want a place in the temple,
And who will die as they died!42

As Jordi Brahamcha-Marin has shown in a study of the use of poetry on tombstones and monuments dedicated to the soldiers of the Great War, Victor Hugo’s “Hymne” was by far the most quoted poem, and it avoided elitism since it was a classic learned at school and therefore known by everyone in France.43 Brahamcha-Marin argues that it had a double function: “to ensure the unity of the civic body around well-known verses that recalled a shared school experience” and “to suggest the historical unity of post-revolutionary France and of the symbolic identity of the civil and foreign wars she fought.”44 We can therefore see how this poem, like Saint-Saëns’s Marche héroïque, served to convey historical significance to the Great War, contributing to the myth of the war experience.

Hugo’s “Hymne,” and particularly its linking of funeral and patriotic ideas, was aptly suited to the double celebrations of November 1920. Rabaud’s Hymne, written for solo tenor, chorus, and orchestra, adhered carefully to the affect of the text. After 43 measures of slow instrumental

43 Jordi Brahamcha-Marin, “« Ceux qui pieusement sont morts pour la patrie... » : la poésie des monuments aux morts,” Çédille 13 (April 2017): 83–95.
44 Brahamcha-Marin, 94.
introduction, the tenor and chorus sing alternately the three verses and refrains. The work’s main accompaniment motif is a descending modal arpeggio (B–A–F♯–D in D major) whose repetition evokes a celebratory carillon; but a contrasting theme in D minor (which appears only during the verses) features a low pedal tone resounding in each measure like a death knell (Fig. 2.2). The chorus’ refrain, on the other hand, is always set to the same melody in D major, with a different accompaniment every time it returns: at first, it is written contrapuntally, but then in unison, with the tenor joining in on the third and last refrain, symbolizing the coming together of the people of France. In other words, the Hymne traces a symbolic trajectory from the personal mourning of the departed soldiers to the communal exaltation of the nation’s living glory.

Figure 2.2: Henri Rabaud, Hymne à la France éternelle, Op. 12 (Paris: Choudens, 1917-18), mm. 44-46.

In order to appreciate how the Tombeau de Claude Debussy, published a few weeks later, was positioned as a memorial, it is necessary to understand how the music performed publicly at the ceremonies of November 11, 1920, conformed to the myth of the war experience and symbolized the continuity of national history in its bridging of the gap created by the war by reverting to prewar works, texts, or melodies—if we include the Marseillaise and the Chant des Girondins in addition to Saint-Saëns’s Marche héroïque and Rabaud’s Hymne, the works spanned 130 years of France’s post-revolutionary history, and alluded to some of its major civil and military events from 1830, 1870, and 1914-18.

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45 The orchestral score was not published—and it seems to have been lost. There is no record of any performance of Rabaud’s Hymne apart from the performance on November 11, 1920.
2.2.3 Mythifying sonic warfare on the home front

The scarcity of major new compositions to accompany the official ceremonies should not be read as a sign of disinterest from musicians. On the contrary, several other compositions performed or published at the time reflect personal and national attitudes toward the memorials that either supported or weakened the official ones. For the past two years, musicians had been writing about the place, value, and meaning of music in the war and its aftermath. In many instances, musicians tried to strike the right balance between the complementary themes of mourning and glory—as expressed in Rabaud’s *Hymne*—while also integrating or reacting to preexisting musical representations of the war. For example, two pieces for violin (or cello) and piano by Noël Gallon, entitled *Marseillaise de douleur* and *Marseillaise de fierté*, depicted very well this dichotomy. Although first performed in Bar-sur-Aube on March 23, 1919, Gallon’s two *Marseillaises* were auspiciously copyrighted in November 1920. The two pieces, which are, of course, based on the national anthem, do not attempt to reconcile the two emotional poles, but instead strive to express the irreconcilable antagonism between the nation’s mourning and its overcoming of adversity.

However, other musicians, including those who penned chronicles for the music press, explored feelings of homesickness and nostalgia. They particularly valued the comforting qualities of music and through their music contributed to a nostalgic reassessment of the myth of the war experience. The return to normalcy that the Armistice enabled merged with a nostalgic return to the (mythical) sources of French music. Hence, Jacques Heugel explained in *Le Ménestrel* in October 1919 that the war intensified memories of the “enchancements of art” by distancing them

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46 “Concert artistique,” *Le Petit Troyen*, March 25, 1919, 2. I could not find traces of any other performance of these pieces.
47 Two main series of chronicles ran in *Le Ménestrel*: “Souvenirs de cinq années (1914-1919)” by Julien Tiersot (published in eight issues from October 24, 1919, to January 23, 1920) and “Le Théâtre et la Musique pendant la Grande Guerre” by Arthur Pougin (published in thirteen issues from July 2 to October 1, 1920). Julien Tiersot then penned the two-part chronicle “La Musique française après la guerre” (published on November 5 and December 31, 1920). So, the readers of *Le Ménestrel*, the oldest music journal still publishing in 1920, were treated to regular articles on music during and after the war until the end of 1920.
from the present reality—a distancing at the heart of nostalgia’s homesickness and of the
mythifying of history:

La France a accepté le sacrifice. Tout ce qui faisait sa joie, tout ce qui faisait son
plaisir, est passé au second plan : les enchantements de l’Art, les pures ivresses
de la Pensée ne furent plus que des souvenirs, — des souvenirs bien vivants
dauphins, des souvenirs qui soutinrent magnifiquement les âmes dans leurs tâches
démesurées et qui, au rude contact de l’action brutale, semblèrent briller d’une
façon nouvelle, plus splendide et plus vibrante.

France accepted the sacrifice. Everything that made her joy, that gave her pleasure,
was relegated to the background: the enchantments of art, the pure exhilaration
of the intellect, were but memories, — living memories actually, memories that
magnificently supported souls in their excessive duties and that seemed to shine in
a new, more splendid and more vibrant way during the harsh contact of the brutal
action.48

The musicologist Julien Tiersot expanded upon this idea in the nostalgic reevaluation of his
recollections of wartime musical experiences. Published in Le Ménestrel in eight installments
between October 1919 and January 1920, Tiersot’s “Souvenirs de cinq années (1914-1919)” opens
with a remembrance of the first song he heard shortly after the declaration of war, after “the city
noises had fallen into silence”:

L’air semblait une sorte de ranz des vaches, rendu vulgaire par les voix
faubourtiennes qui le chantaient, non sans charme cependant et tout mélancolique :
à cette heure du soir et dans un pareil moment, ses notes traînantes allaient à
l’âme.

The song sounded like a sort of ranz-des-vaches, made vulgar by the Faubourg
voices who were singing it, though they were not without charm and very
melancholic: at this hour of the evening, and at such a moment, its dragging notes
touched the soul.49

Tiersot reverted to the age-old story of the ranz-des-vaches, which I have discussed in the previous
chapter as the original—and by far most iconic—example of musical nostalgia, a fact that a
knowledgeable musicologist like Tiersot could not have ignored. Interestingly, Tiersot specified
that he was hearing that particular song (Sous les ponts de Paris)—or at least its lyrics adapted to
the circumstance—for the very first time. Hence, he departed from the historical accounts of the

ranz-des-vaches as a song heard (or misheard) abroad that reminded one of home and prompts geographical longing. Instead, Tiersot expressed nostalgia for a city he had not left because of the context in which a previously unheard song was heard—Tiersot only needed to qualify it as “one of these Parisian songs that express the poetry of the river” to render the full sense of his mal du pays, which is not a physical return home, nor even a return to the past (not literally at least), but a return to sound, a restitution of music: “It was the first musical impression that I felt after the seemingly endless days since the declaration of war.”

A song as commonplace as Sous les ponts de Paris referred to the continuity of the Parisian landscape as well as of its music in times of war. Music, in other words, had become nostalgic itself, an “enchanted art” as Bertrand put it. I must stress here that Tiersot wrote these recollections in 1919, at a time when such a story could be read more broadly as evoking a nostalgic longing for the prewar music that was interrupted by the war.

In the last instalment of his war recollections, Tiersot turned once again to his mal du pays, this time to characterize the return to silence that followed the long days and nights of noise caused by the bombing of the French capital in the spring of 1918. Tiersot used musical analogies to describe the sonic warfare of the attacks: he talked of the “symphony . . . of city, street and sky noises” and he compared the amplitude of the “scales of the sirens” to those of the Overture to Mozart’s Don Giovanni. He even analyzed the discordances—which he qualified as “modernist”—between the bugle’s arpeggiation of B-flat and the siren’s warning of impending disaster on A and B-natural. It is only after an extended and vivid picture of the cataclysmic sounds of the war that Tiersot turned to the succeeding silence, out of which reassuring bells could be heard. For Tiersot, the bells heard in the middle of the night after the bombing seemed like the “distant call of some

50 “C’était, adaptée à des paroles de circonstance, une de ces chansons parisiennes, exprimant la poésie du ruisseau, que le peuple aime à redire: « Sous les ponts de Paris »; je l’entendais pour la première fois. Ce fut la première impression musicale qu’après des jours qui semblaient interminables il me fut donné de ressentir depuis la déclaration de guerre.”
country church.” One is almost tempted to imagine Paris transformed into a quaint village not so unlike the one pictured on the cover of the 1841 song *La Nostalgie, ou le Mal du Pays* (see Fig. 1.4). Sounds that could not possibly be heard in normal times were now being recalled, or rather re-imagined, through the wistful ears of the music critic.

Julien Tiersot was certainly not alone in associating the bells with nostalgia. As Alain Corbin shows in his aural study of nineteenth-century French countryside, *Les Cloches de la terre*, the gradual “disorganization” of the rural soundscapes in the second half of the nineteenth century caused a weakening of the meanings and functions of bells, which led to nostalgic attempts to either preserve or resurrect them. For instance, among many examples, Corbin mentions the nostalgic reaction to the ban on religious bells during the Revolution, the “archeological” casting of new bells based on ancient practices in mid-century, or the desacralization and fading of the their sonic messages later in the century.

Corbin’s study does not venture into the twentieth century, but we can observe the same construction of a nostalgic symbolism associated with bells during and after the Great War. In the July 15, 1919, issue of *Paris qui chante*, René Legrand opined that French songs brought comfort to the soldiers because it reminded them of “the bell tower, the sweetheart, the country.” Soldiers brought with them to the front the personal and national memory of the sounds of bells, which they evoked to comfort them and remember their homes. In the December 1920 issue of *Nos Chansons françaises*, a French soldier recalled the Christmas night of 1915, when he heard bells for the first

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52 Tiersot, 35. “Enfin, dans le silence revenu, la cloche faisait résonner ses notes argentines. Quels sont calmants ! Quelle voix rassurante ! Je ne sais si ceux qui ont donné ces consignes l’ont fait consciemment, mais ils ont vraiment très bien trouvé : il semblait, au milieu de la nuit calme, qu’on entendait l’appel lointain de quelque église de campagne, et l’on était tranquillisé.”


54 René Legrand, “Notre enquête sur la chanson,” *Paris qui chante* 17, no. 2 (July 15, 1919): 2. “Après le vacarme déprimant de la bataille ou du bombardement, ne s’offrait-elle pas [la chanson] d’elle-même à ce dernier [le soldat] comme un salutaire réconfort ? Ne lui parlait-elle pas du clocher, de la bien-aimée, de la Patrie ? J’émettrais bien cette opinion que la Chanson Française, en contribuant à maintenir le soldat en bon état moral, a été pour quelque chose dans la victoire finale, mais, en pareille matière, mon avis est un peu suspect de partialité.”
time in months: “French bells were sending us their melancholic greetings in order to give us courage and to lift our spirits a little.” It is only after realizing that the bells came from the French territory occupied by the Germans that the soldier’s nostalgia was supplanted by a feeling of indignity—his nostalgia had been stripped from him; his longing for a mythical home faced the reality of the humiliating invasion. To respond to this outrage, another soldier gifted with a strong voice was sent to a shell hole to sing the *Marseillaise* while the rest of the battalion stood defiantly at the top of the trenches. In this poignant anecdote, told five years after the events it depicted, the bells played an essential symbolic role in the construction of a mythical sonic experience. By linking bells with the national anthem, the soldier elevated them beyond their nostalgic status to a meaningful patriotic one. As we will see in several examples in this chapter and the next one, the bells evoked in musical compositions of this period usually served a nostalgic function, and thus can be heard as representing a longing for a prewar (and preindustrial) time.

As evidenced in the soldier’s Christmas tale above, the *Marseillaise* remained the strongest musical symbol of national pride and military heroism throughout the war and after. More than any other sound, the *Marseillaise* represented the unity and strength of the nation against its enemies. Composers regularly quoted its melody in pieces and songs related to the war, especially when intended for large public audiences. I already mentioned the *Marseillaise de douleur* and *Marseillaise de fierté* by Noël Gallon as dualistic examples of nationalist fervor. To give one additional example related to the postwar memorials, Casimir Renard’s art song *Sous l’Arc de Triomphe*, Op. 175 (with lyrics by Marcel Nadaud), was written in commemoration of the celebrations of July 14, 1919, and dedicated to the president Raymond Poincaré. Although unrelated to the Unknown Soldier of the following year’s ceremonies, Renard’s song uses the Arc as a symbol of French past and present victories, uniting the memory of the soldiers who fell during

Napoléon’s reign to those who came back victorious from the recent war. In the instrumental introduction that precedes the singer’s entrance, we hear the low rumbling of cannons played as forceful clusters hit on the lowest range of the keyboard (Fig. 2.3). Is this a recollection of the bombing of Paris or an abstract representation of sonic warfare? Soon, however, after a warning by the clarion, the opening notes of the Marseillaise are heard to signal victory. Yet, the hymn’s lack of closure, in addition to its chromaticism, constant tonal shifts and borrowings from unrelated keys (for example, the first clarion outlines G♭ while four measures later the same clarion “fell” to F♭; or the cadence E♭ – B♮ – E♭+ – A♭ immediately before the singer’s first entrance; in fact, there is no perfect authentic cadence in Sous l’Arc de Triomphe), weaken the sense of unrestrained optimism that we found in the works by Saint-Saëns or Rabaud performed at the 1920 ceremonies. Renard’s song seems too dramatic, too chromatic (perhaps too “Germanic”) to encapsulate the need for communal victory: it reveals the instability of the musical symbols associated with the myths of the war experience.
We saw in this section how the media and musicians contributed to the formation of a common “Myth of the War Experience” by relying on shared symbols and narratives of historical and national unity. Whereas, on a national level, ceremonies attempted to erase the tension between mourning and rejoicing by joining them under one celebration, personal narratives showed a more ambivalent view of these emotions and often refused to coalesce them. Nostalgia played a significant role in postwar narratives, and sounds associated with a mythical idea of the nation’s glorious history, such as bells or the *Marseillaise*, were used musically or evoked narratively to convey a comforting sense of nationhood and stability. These were the sounds that gave courage to the troops and therefore were responsible for the victory. The Armistice, and especially the nationalist enthusiasm that surrounded the creation of memorials (such as the one for the Unknown Soldier), constituted a moment of reflection on the nature of myths.
It was in this memorial context that the *Tombeau de Claude Debussy* was planned, composed, published, and performed in late 1920, and thus an analysis of this context is necessary to understand its reliance on or subverting of contemporaneous myths. Debussy was not remembered just as an important composer, but as a French composer who died for his country during the most tragic week of the war in Paris. To read his *Tombeau* as a memorial tomb to a mythicized hero—and to use the same historical criteria that affected the reception of the memorial to the mythicized Unknown Soldier—is therefore a plausible proposition.

### 2.3 A MEMORIAL TO DEBUSSY

#### 2.3.1 The tombeau as nostalgic genre

The *Tombeau de Claude Debussy* was written at the instigation of Henry Prunières by ten composers and published as a thirty-two-page *supplément musical* to the second issue of Prunières’s *Revue musicale*, published in December 1920. The *Revue* itself consisted of eight main articles about different aspects of Debussy’s life and works, and six shorter articles about his connections with various countries (France, Belgium, Spain, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia). Paralleling the national celebrations of November 11 that marked the culmination of two years of victory and of its memorialization, the *Tombeau de Debussy* also marked two years of homages, memorialization, and mythologization of the composer’s persona, some of which we encountered at the beginning of this chapter. As Barbara Kelly points out, the articles in the *Revue* largely focused on Debussy’s middle period—what she refers to as his “most memorable and now nostalgic

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56 In a letter to André Caplet (August 11, 1920, BnF, NLA-269 (676)), Prunières informed his collaborator that the first and second issues of the magazine would be interchanged. No reason was given for this change.
repertoire”—and payed very little attention to his late, wartime works. Kelly argues that these tributes to Debussy were a moment to remember not just the man, but the lost aesthetics of the prewar. For instance, when an unpublished letter by Debussy about Mallarmé’s reaction to the Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune surfaced in the Chesterian in January 1920, an unnamed writer in Le Monde musical declared it was “the best reminiscence I have from that era before people started annoying me with ‘Debussysme’.” Earlier that month, in Le Courrier musical, Jean d’Udine had gone even further in his nostalgia for Debussy’s middle period by commenting on the “waste of his talents” in his late years. In short, d’Udine appeared to mourn Debussy’s departure from his early style more than his actual death:

As soon as Debussy had discovered the kind of suavity to which his innate ability to create suave harmonies was to be attached, he had completely accomplished himself. The Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, so nostalgic, the ethereal Nocturnes, the tender, occult and painful Pelléas, affirmed this particular way of communing with the elusive soul of sensations and of evoking the delicious and terrible lure of love.

... But when, much later, the flattering or disheartening literature that distracts and deviates a Chateaubriand, an Ingres, or a Rodin, brought him to the childlike artifices, the amusing little malice, and the Byzantine trifles of the Boîte à joujoux, the only thing that remained, to those who have loved the master for the candid and penetrating grandeur of his accents, was to cry over the waste of talents that snobbery loses and that an astute profession ends up enslaving.59

58 “Une lettre inédite de Debussy,” Le Monde musical 31, no. 1–2 (January 1920): 11. “C’est, pour qui veut bien, un document de premier ordre ! En tout cas, c’est ce que j’ai de mieux comme souvenir de cette époque où l’on ne m’agaçait pas encore avec le « Debussysme ».”
Of course, the characterization of the Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune as “nostalgic” by d’Udine is multifaceted. In addition to revealing the critic’s personal remembrances of an earlier era (his own longings), it also hints at the nostalgic character that musicians ascribed to the exoticism of the piece, and especially of its flute solo, as we will see below. The potential for the Prélude to elicit extra- and intramusical nostalgia, as well as the nostalgic remembering of Debussy, are crucial in order to understand some of the works that came to be included in the Tombeau of 1920.

The genre of the tombeau originated in France during the sixteenth century, first in poetic works, before being adopted by composers.60 If many tombeaux were dedicated to patrons and relatives, musicians often memorialize their teachers or masters by invoking their styles in what Jacques Dugast called an act of “commemorative mimesis,” and that Carolyn Abbate later saw as a defining characteristic of the tombeau as a musical genre.61 Discussing its use in the Baroque era, Abbate perceives a double perspective in the tombeau that bridges the dead and the living:

It plays back a lifeless work. But it is also inspired by that work, like a puppet in a theater of reanimation, a lifeless object set in motion by some hand that moves from within. The living composer plays his imperfect recording of a dead master’s sounds, and a past master brings a present composer back from stasis or death. Both ideas suggest a double exposure, the sense that there is a sound that is gone—concealed or lost—and yet is audible through a present sound. Tombeaux repeat sounds from the past without repeating them phonographically as a facsimile.62

In these lines, Abbate hints at the nostalgic function of the tombeau that consists of its “imperfect” reproduction (or resounding) of past sounds that have become inaudible. The tombeau remembers the deceased by misremembering it, just as nostalgic memories (or myths, for that matter) transform the historical past into distorted visions. It is the purpose of the tombeau to give a second life to the musical dead, promising its return as much as it regrets its loss (without which there would simply be no tombeau). An interesting passage from a 1920 review of Maurice Ravel’s Le Tombeau de

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60 Carolyn Abbate summarizes the history of the musical tombeau in Carolyn Abbate, “Outside Ravel’s Tomb,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 52, no. 3 (1999): 469. In this chapter, I use Tombeau in italics to refer to the Tombeau de Claude Debussy and tombeau (without italics and in lowercase) to discuss the musical genre.
61 See Abbate, 469–70.
62 Abbate, 470.
**Couperin** conveyed this notion of a musical second life, of a rejuvenation: the music critic Pierre Lalo, unsatisfied by the lack of Couperin and of the “spirit of Watteau” in Ravel’s piano suite, wondered how nice it would be to have “a *Tombeau* of M. Ravel by Couperin!”63 This musing of an inversion of the dead and the living in Ravel’s *Tombeau* was a consequence of the incapability of a “commemorative mimesis” to fully revive Couperin, which causes a lack that remains unfulfilled. Abbate recognizes that the “Baroque tombeaux engender a ‘mélancholie rêveuse’ not unlike the melancholic nostalgia inspired by Arcadia, because the lost object they contain is heard as if at a distance, unchanging even as we move away from it.”64 Hence, unless Couperin himself comes back from the dead to write his own *Tombeau*, the tombeau is bound to be a fundamentally nostalgic genre.

*Le Tombeau de Couperin* (written in 1917 and premiered in 1919), a suite of Baroque dances recreated in Ravel’s colorful style, was one of the first musical works to revive the genre of the tombeau, which had long been out of fashion.65 The *Tombeau de Debussy* followed soon after, in 1920, with a completely different—and potentially more contentious—agenda, for two main reasons. First, rather than celebrating the legacy of a composer who had died almost two hundred years before, it was attempting to memorialize one whose memory was still very fresh. And second, rather than presenting the voice of a single mourner, ten composers from six different nations were invited to contribute, producing a flagrant lack of unity of tone and affect among the pieces. Furthermore, unlike the nostalgic musical mimesis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tombeaux and, to some degree, Ravel’s homage to Couperin, “commemorative mimesis” was only to be found sparingly in Prunières’s album. Remarkably, Debussy’s tombeau avoided

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64 Abbate, “Outside Ravel’s Tomb,” 473.

65 We can find a precursor in the six pieces in homage to Haydn by Debussy, Dukas, Hahn, d’Indy, Ravel and Widor, published in the January 15, 1910, issue of the *Revue musicale S.I.M.*
straightforward Debussysme, a school of impressionism that was held in disregard by many of the close friends and admirers of Debussy, and most conspicuously by the postwar generation of composers, including by some like Stravinsky who contributed to his *Tombeau*. Thus, as we will see in the detailed analysis below, many pieces in the collection only obliquely acknowledged Debussy’s invisible presence, if at all. Finally, as I have argued above, the proximity of the war, the mythification process of Debussy’s death and legacy, and the concurrence of the *Tombeau* with imposing national war memorials, all had an impact on its reception, and therefore expose the intricacy of the myth of the war experience as it relates to Debussy.

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**Figure 2.4**: Raoul Dufy, *Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, 1920, lithography. Centre national d’art et de culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris.

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2.3.2 A controversial tombeau

The archives have only retained fragmentary evidence of the origins of the commemorative project and of its development. While the five French composers who contributed (Paul Dukas, Albert Roussel, Florent Schmitt, Maurice Ravel, and Erik Satie) were among the most famous French composers at the time, the five foreign composers representing five different nations (Gian Francesco Malipiero, Eugène Goossens, Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky, and Manuel de Falla) were partly chosen from Henry Prunières’s own acquaintances and were either currently present in the French capital, or had been there recently. The information contained in various sources suggests that the ten composers were not all invited to contribute at once. In fact, some composers are only mentioned late in the correspondence around the Tombeau, while at least one composer initially considered did not appear in the final collection. More specifically, while Falla received his invitation to compose a brief homage to Debussy on February 4, 1920, Stravinsky was apparently only commissioned two months later, in April. In a letter Prunières addressed to André Caplet on June 11, he mentioned the project and its collaborators, but did not list three of the ten final composers (Roussel, Bartók, and Satie), while he included Arnold Schoenberg, who was sent an invitation on June 30. Prunières also revealed some knowledge of the historical conventions of

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67 In a brief discussion of the national representation of Debussy after his death, Pascal Ory states that the Tombeau de Debussy was “consisting of a set of scores signed by an elite of composers who were mostly French or culturally naturalized.” (Pascal Ory, “Debussy, c’est la France ? Destins d’une musique et d’un auteur dans la littérature musicologique et musicale française, d’une fin de guerre à l’autre (1918-1949),” in Regards sur Debussy, ed. Myriam Chimènes and Alexandre Laederich (Paris: Fayard, 2013), 47.) Although each of these composers had some sort of connections with France—rare were those who did not, in those years—I would disagree with Ory since his statement disregards the opposition that the collection faced due to its perceived lack of a uniting sense of nationalism. From the very beginning, Prunières’s objective with La Revue musicale was to make it an international journal. His invitation to Schoenberg (see below), whose music was still fairly unknown in France, supports this intention.


70 Prunières to Caplet, June 11, 1920, BnF, NLA 269 (674). The manuscript of Prunières’s invitation to Schoenberg is preserved at the Library of Congress and dated June 30, 1920. In that letter, Prunières listed
the tombeau genre as he associated his publication with the “monuments” that Renaissance poets elevated to deceased artists. Hence, it seems that although the content and sources of the homages took shape only gradually, over the course of several months (it is even possible that Satie was not invited until September, and accepted as late as October\textsuperscript{71}), the function of the collection as an emulation of the tombeau was decided early on and must have influenced his choice of composers.

It is interesting to examine Prunières’s choices of composers. Schoenberg had acquired a high reputation in French modernist circles by the end of 1920, even though his music was largely unheard in Paris: Pierrot lunaire would have to wait until January 1922 to be performed publicly in its entirety in Paris.\textsuperscript{72} When for whatever reason Schoenberg did not participate in the collection, German or Austrian composers were no longer represented, a fact that might speak to the political climate of the war and immediate postwar more than to the lack of a suitable composer (also absent were the likes of Richard Strauss, Hans Pfitzner, and Alexander von Zemlinsky). In the journal itself, articles about the reception of Debussy’s work abroad also excluded Germany and Austria. Indeed, we can imagine the challenge in justifying the inclusion of these nations in a publication devoted to a composer whose death had been characterized as a casualty of their attacks on Paris.

On the other hand, Prunières’s selection of French composers derived largely from his own aesthetic preferences, even if that meant leaving aside some of the composers who were most frequently regarded as the greatest French composers of the time—including Vincent d’Indy, Gabriel Fauré, and Camille Saint-Saëns. D’Indy’s new opera, La Légende de Saint Christophe, was the same names as he did in his letter to Caplet, with the omission of Schmitt. Prunières specified the terms: he would pay 250 francs for “a very short small piano piece of one or two pages at most” (une petite pièce de piano très courte d’une ou deux pages au plus), which he would be the first to publish. Schoenberg would retain the property of the work, Prunières stating that the work would not be reissued by him outside of the Tombeau. Finally, the work would be due by August 15. Schoenberg’s response (if any) is found in neither his nor Prunières’s archives. Considering that only Dukas, Schmitt, and Ravel contributed more than two pages of music (5, 8, and 6, respectively), we can surmise that the terms would have been comparable for the other composers, for which I could not find any such letter of invitation.

\textsuperscript{71} According to a letter from Emma Debussy to André Caplet dated September 20, 1920 (BnF, NLA-269 (183)), and a letter from Satie to Henry Prunières dated October 5, 1920 (BnF, NLA-407 (57)).

\textsuperscript{72} See François Lesure, ed., Dossier de presse de Pierrot Lunaire d’Arnold Schönberg (Genève: Minkoff, 1985), 240–41 and 250–51. Interest in performing the work started in 1913 but the unavailability of the material led to aborted projects. The first part was performed on December 15, 1921.
qualified as “the most important event of the season” in July 1920, while Fauré was described as “the greatest musician alive in the world today,” and “the true master of our French school today.” These absences were noted with some censure: for example, when reviewing the commemorative issue in his Nouvelle Revue musicale, Léon Vallas expressed disappointment that d’Indy had been ignored while the collection “ends on a unconsciously parodic page by Erik Satie.” Vallas spent most of his short review refuting the opening article of the issue by André Suarès, in which he found passages that are “painful for the reader” because they are “unfair” to both Gabriel Fauré and Vincent d’Indy.

We cannot do much more than speculate about the reasons that led to these omissions. Five of the composers (Ravel, Schmitt, Roussel, Falla, and Goossens) were on the committee of the Société Musicale Indépendante (S.M.I.), which was dedicated to the promotion of new French music and would eventually premiere the complete Tombeau in January 1921. Of the remaining five composers, Dukas and Satie had had personal relationships with Debussy while the others (Malipiero, Bartók, and Stravinsky), all under forty, were regarded as the most advanced composers of their respective countries. It is also possible that Prunières favored composers with whom he himself had good personal relationships. This could explain, for instance, Malipiero (with whom Prunières had recently collaborated on a few projects) being favored over the well-known Italian composer Alfredo Casella, whose contribution was therefore limited to a short article on the

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77 Malipiero’s La mascherate delle principesse prigioniere (1918) is composed on a text by Prunières, while the musicologist adapted the composer’s Sette canzoni in French for performance at the Opéra in July 1920.
influence of Debussy on young Italian composers. On the other hand, Prunières’s good relationship with Fauré was not enough to warrant his participation in the collective tribute.

Overall, these choices resulted in a diversity of national and aesthetic voices, suggesting that Prunières’s priority was not to construct a unified and cohesive myth of Debussy in the *Tombeau*. As a consequence, the project resulted in a memorial too disorganized to represent any integrated attitude toward the deceased composer. As we will see, the homages that strayed too much from a general idea of Debussy’s myth were forcefully criticized as they undermined the stability and homogeneity of the memorial as a whole, and therefore of the memory and legacy of Debussy. After seeing the names of Satie and Stravinsky in the collection, Camille Saint-Saëns qualified it as “bolchévisme musical” and decried the decline of the French musical tradition in the midst of foreign and modernist influence. To confirm his traditionalist stance, Saint-Saëns remarked that his Symphony in C minor (no. 3), which was completed over thirty years before, was still applauded by audiences. Robert Godet, one of Debussy’s oldest friends for thirty years, felt ashamed of the *Tombeau*, from the composers of which he only respected (and barely) Ravel (“at least decent”) and Falla (“the least fallacious of all”). Godet’s peer, the music critic Willy Schmid, responded with the same antipathy, going further by disapproving even of Falla’s composition. He wrote that the composers (excepted Ravel) “pile the crowns to hide the deceased, or they swagger advantageously, taking with a vulgar insolence the place of the god in praise of whom this

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78 In a letter that Erik Satie addressed to Prunières, he mentioned Casella as “ce veau de Casella.” Prunières may not have shared Satie’s dislike on that point, though (March 9, 1918, BnF, NLA-407 (57)).
80 In a postcard to Philippe Bellenot, December 4, 1920, BnF, NLA-254 (184).
ceremony was to be.” Schmid then concluded by saying that the Satie composition was “odious,” and that Charles-Marie Widor would have done better. These critics from an older generation all had a particular opinion of who should and should not have written an homage to Debussy: while Schmid opted for the 76-year-old organist Widor, the 85-year-old Saint-Saëns praised his own work dating from the previous century as an alternative to the modernism displayed in the *Tombeau*. Their attitudes reveal their nostalgia for the music of another time and their regrets that the individual personalities of the composers of the homages stood in the way of some unspoken idea of what a memorial to the past should sound like.

These comments—all addressed privately—are among the most dismissive of Prunières’s project. Public reviews were, on the other hand, generally more balanced, but rarely altogether positive. By far the most important review of the *Tombeau* was written by Émile Vuillermoz and published in the newspaper *Le Temps* on November 19 (coincidentally, on the same day that *Le Ménestrel* published Pierre de Lapommeraye’s review of the adaptation by the Ballets suédois of Ravel’s *Le Tombeau de Couperin*) and December 3 (see full text in Appendix B). Predating by almost two weeks the December release of the commemorative issue, and by as many weeks any further mention of it in the press, Vuillermoz could explain in great detail, and with unconstrained eloquence mixed with poetic elation, the character and musical value of each piece before anyone else had seen them—and so he had the unchallenged capacity to shape the early reception of the collection. Vuillermoz attempted to defend the collection, which he considered a “touching...
testimony of the religion of remembrance.” But to do so, he realized he needed to explain how most of the pieces related to Debussy—a process that clearly signaled the challenge posed by the collection as a memorial, its lack of clarity as a tombeau, and the fragility of Debussy’s myth in homages that omitted commemorative mimesis. Having generated such pieces around his tomb, Debussy, in Vuillermoz’s estimation, remained the most precious “animateur” (someone who stimulates, or more literally, who brings to life). Since it provides important insight into the early interpretation of Debussy’s legacy, I will frequently return to Vuillermoz’s review in my analysis of the ten homages.86

### 2.4 NOSTALGIAS IN THE TOMBEAU DE CLAUDE DEBUSSY

#### 2.4.1 Structure of the Tombeau

Rather than trying to find a unifying structure or topic that can unify the entire Tombeau, acknowledging its lack of cohesion can provide explanation to its divisive reception, as well as to

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86 The only other substantial analysis of the Tombeau de Debussy was written nearly one hundred years later by musicologist Marianne Wheeldon. Wheeldon analyzes the Tombeau within the context of the reception of Debussy’s late works, which (as I have noted) she argues were omitted from tributes and memorials. She identifies two recurring references in the homages that constitute the Tombeau, either to the composer’s early works (such as the Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune) or to ancient Greco-Roman myths (such as Pan or the muses), but finds none to his latest works that recast, for instance, the eighteenth-century French heritage of the sonata. However, Wheeldon does not analyze the collection exhaustively, omitting from her discussion the more disparate pieces by Bartók, Stravinsky, and Satie, likely because they do not relate to her topics and approach Debussy’s legacy very obliquely. See Wheeldon, Debussy’s Late Style, 114–42.
the fragmented character of myths in public memorials. In my analysis, I suggest that it is possible to read the Tombeau as a tombeau in a more general sense when we incorporate the paradigms of nostalgia introduced in chapter 1. This allows us to uncover a great variety of nostalgic topics in the collection, and to reinterpret the myth of Debussy in divergent ways rather than as a uniquely stylistic one. The Tombeau de Debussy is not most revealing when it is most “commemoratively” mimetic, but rather when it confronts conventional forms of commemoration by introducing divergent forms of nostalgia. Accordingly, I divide the ten pieces of the collection into four groups of pieces that share similar attitudes toward the notion of the tombeau. Each group (identified by a letter) focuses on one of the four paradigms of nostalgia; the numbering indicates each piece’s position in the album:

Group A: exotic nostalgia
1. Paul Dukas, La Plaïnte, au loin, du faune...
2. Albert Roussel, L’Accueil des Muses
6. Florent Schmitt, Et Pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s’accouda

Group B: ethnic modernism
9. Manuel de Falla, Homenaje (pour guitare)\(^{87}\)

Group C: commemorative nostalgia
3. Gian Francesco Malipiero, Hommage
4. Eugène Goossens, untitled [later published as Hommage à Debussy, Op. 28]

Group D: commemorative modernism
7. Igor Stravinsky, Fragment des Symphonies pour instruments à vent à la mémoire de Claude Achille Debussy
8. Maurice Ravel, Duo pour violon et violoncelle
10. Erik Satie, Que me font ces vallons... paroles de Lamartine

The five pieces in groups A and B share an interest in exotic or ethnic musical representations akin to the two paradigms of geographical nostalgia. The five pieces in groups C and D focus instead on temporal and aesthetic considerations as they explore musical features of Debussy’s or the contributor’s style detached from geographical considerations. Schematically, the four groups could be presented on a diagram similar to the one introduced in chapter 1:

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\(^{87}\) The title was first printed as Homenaja. However, an erratum in the issue of La Revue musicale of February 1921 corrects it to “Homenaje.”
Figure 2.5: The pieces of the *Tombeau de Debussy* grouped according to their predominant nostalgic paradigm.

Of course, there is overlap between the four groups, especially as regards the stylistic features of the exotic and ethnic pieces (which share similarities with either groups C or D). Yet, this graph shows the predominant leanings of each composer, guides our understanding of the collection as a whole, and helps us to understand the critical reception that these pieces received after their publication. For instance, we can already note that the five pieces that show greater nostalgic tendencies (groups A and C) are among the first six pieces in the album (1-4 and 6), while the five modernist pieces appear in the second half (5 and 7-10). The placement of the most nostalgically derivative compositions at the top, while leaving the most distinct (and provocative) compositions for the end, is significant as it anchored the collection in a stable memorial narrative before challenging it. Rather than expressing a variety of personal reflections on Debussy, it typified a movement away from remembrance and prewar aesthetics toward a postwar and post-Debussy horizon. Thus, I will argue that the structure of each piece, the positioning of each piece within the collection, and contemporaneous interpretations of the works either reinforced or
compromised the myth of Debussy by using a compendium of nostalgic paradigms, from Orientalism to archaism, as well as anti-nostalgic attitudes.

2.4.2 Dukas, Roussel, and Schmitt: The myth of Debussy as exotic composer

The Tombeau de Claude Debussy opens with Paul Dukas’s La Plainte, au loin, du faune..., the most evocative and deliberate instance of “commemorative mimesis” to be found in the entire collection—six years later, the piece would still be remembered as “the most heartbreaking appeal that a musician can address to his deceased brother.” This homage can be seen as a variation on the opening motif from the Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, like a “shroud” enveloped in the tender and severe harmonies of Paul Dukas, as Robert Brussel qualified it. As the entrance to the Tombeau, Dukas’s Plainte justifies the use of the term “tombeau” as it was historically conceived through its “commemorative mimesis” that brings an inexact repetition of the deceased composer’s music back to life. Dukas’s distorted remembrance reveals the passage of time and the elusive longing to capture and revive a bygone era.

The piece invites the listener on a mnemonic journey to gradually retrieve the memory of Debussy’s flute solo that begins his Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune (hereafter referred to as the “Faun’s melody”). It plays with the notion of longing for the original as it attempts to recover a quotation it cannot seem to remember. The first section of the piece features a repeated G that could be heard as figuring a wearisome funeral march, a relentless lament, or as Émile Vuillermoz suggested, a tolling bell—perhaps a first hint at the nostalgia of the piece. Is this a reenactment of the procession at Debussy’s funeral? The first melodic phrase (Fig. 2.6, mm. 3-6) is a variation of

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88 Robert Brussel, “Claude Debussy et Paul Dukas,” La Revue musicale 7, no. La Jeunesse de Claude Debussy (May 1, 1926): 109. “[Paul Dukas] écrivit alors cette pièce, intitulée La plainte au loin du faune... qui est bien l’appel le plus déchirant qu’un musicien puisse adresser à son frère disparu. Le thème du Prélude y prend un accent poignant sous les tendres et graves harmonies qui l’enveloppent comme un suaire.”
the Faun’s melody (Fig. 2.7) where each measure matches (or rather, mismatches) one from the original. Dukas’s arabesque begins with an accented appoggiatura and then unfolds in a swirly chromatic wave, spanning a descending minor third (D–B) whereas the Faun’s melody slid to an augmented fourth. The third measure of the phrase (m. 5), starting on a C♯ as in the original, also fails to reach the perfect fifth of Debussy’s triplet, attaining instead only a fourth before diverting from its model by shifting its downward jump of a minor sixth to an upward one of a perfect fifth. The accompaniment of low minor chords, absent in Debussy, also adds a darker, mournful character to the piece. Overall, whereas this first phrase mixes chromatic scales and modal arpeggios in Debussy’s original piece, it is transformed by Dukas into a more dissonant and austere passage. As Vuillermoz wrote: “the Faun lost its carefree sensuality. He moans. In tears, he finds the arabesques so dear to his past exhilaration.”

Figure 2.6: Paul Dukas, La Plaine, au loin, du faune..., mm. 1-6.

89 “Le Faune a perdu son insouciante sensualité. Il gémit, il retrouve, en pleurant, les arabesques si chères de son ivresse passée.”
Dukas then repeats the phrase a fourth higher (while keeping the tolling bell unchanged to create different harmonies), after which he repeats the chromatic swirl three times in a crescendo, each time a third higher than the previous one, until finally reaching a new section—a second attempt at remembering Debussy’s original motif (Fig. 2.8). This second iteration of the flute solo variation brings the listener one step closer to the original melody. The swirl is now replaced by a chromatic descent and ascent that is almost exactly identical to its model—including its onset on the major seventh of the chord—except for its range, still short of Debussy’s augmented fourth. This time, the triplet figure in the third measure retains the same contour as Debussy’s, but with some slightly altered intervals, giving an impression of mnemonic fulfilment: this is the moment when, in a 1927 arrangement of La Plaïnte for flute and piano by Gustave Samazeuilh, the editor added a footnote crediting the original Prélude and its current editor, thus marking the passage as the moment of memorial recovery90—even though it remains an imperfect one, soon further distorted by the overlapping entrance of the motif in the darker hues of the middle register (m. 18). In less than twenty measures, we can experience a gradual process of nostalgic remembering, with each reiteration of the Faun’s melody bringing us closer to the object of longing, but without ever reaching a perfect restoration of the model.

90 And, at the same time, as the turning of memory into a copyrighted object. The reproduction of the quotation from the Prélude is not credited to Debussy but “authorized” by “Mr Jobert, éditeur.” In the twentieth century, “commemorative mimesis” is also a matter of authorial restriction. One must be granted the “authorization” to remember (but not by the “author,” who is dead).
Ten measures later (m. 28), when the Faun’s melody finally appears in its original form (spanning an augmented fourth), it is fragmented, presented high above dissonant harmonies (Fig. 2.9). It is as if the closer Dukas brings the listener to recovering the lost identity of the Faun’s melody, the more that melody evades him, lost to the ages, distorted by the dissonant modernism of a new era that renders the past irretrievable.
The effectiveness of Dukas’s homage relies on its integration of intra- and extramusical nostalgias. As discussed in chapter 1, intramusical nostalgia uses musical attributes to illuminate the nostalgia of musical works. Some scholars (Fred Davis or Vladimir Jankélévitch), would argue that the “long legato line” and “slow tempi” of La Plainte, in addition to its rubato and “wandering pulsation of melody,” would constitute direct nostalgic characteristics. In addition, the numerous minor accents in the melody, beginning with its accented minor appoggiatura (perhaps a sigh figure; see Fig. 2.6, m. 3), add bittersweet expressivity to the Faun’s melody. But more importantly, we can see how the fragmented reiterations of the swirl figure, especially when slowed down at the very end (Fig. 2.10) can create a nostalgic longing for the complete form of the motif or for its tonal resolution. In the final measures, the repeated G of the tolling bell suddenly moves up to an Ab while the melodic fragments and final chords finally attempt to confirm G as the tonal center. This unexpected disparity sustains the chromatic instability of the piece and its inner tension at a moment when it could finally have been resolved in a soothing G major, or so it seems.

Figure 2.10: Dukas, La Plainte, au loin, du faune..., mm. 42-49.
Yet, all these intramusical traits acquire additional nostalgic affect because of the memorial context in which they are presented to the listener and because of their connections with the work of another composer. La Plainte is a good example of what Boym termed “reflective nostalgia,” an exploration of the “shattered fragments of memory” or a meditation on the passage of time. Dukas, more than any other composer in the collection, invites the listener to reflect on the transformed reception of one of Debussy’s early works almost three decades after its creation, to consider the evolution of musical styles in the intervening years and Debussy’s influence on a new generation of composers and a new era of modernism. On a more personal level, Dukas also invites reflections on personal memories of Debussy’s work and the challenge of preserving intact remembrances of the past. In sum, Dukas interrogates the myth of Debussy’s legacy. Whereas the articles in the issue of La Revue musicale were largely uncritical of the composer’s legacy, concurring with the myth that had developed since his funeral, Dukas entered the Tombeau by questioning the myth on which it was founded by using nostalgia in a reflective manner. Samazeuilh’s 1927 arrangement of the homage for flute and piano stems from (and confirms) the strength of its nostalgic longing, which provokes the listener mentally to reconstruct the lost original: it not only creates a longing for the “real” contour of the Faun’s melody, but also for its associated timbre. Samazeuilh’s arrangement is the writing out of this second (but in no way secondary) longing. Because Samazeuilh’s flute is not Debussy’s any more than Dukas’s distorted melody is the Faun’s, the flute arrangement makes even more tangible its own lack—it makes present its own absence.

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91 In a paper given at the conference Music, Intertextuality, and Inter-Art Forms in Third Republic France: Remembering Paul Dukas at 150 (Maynooth, Ireland, July 3-5, 2015), Paulo Ferreira de Castro also noticed references to Chopin’s A-minor prelude in the accompaniment figure of the last measures, which he traced back to Schubert. Although the two pieces share a similar pianistic technique, I doubt that listeners would have caught on that connection.


93 In his 2015 presentation, Paulo Ferreira de Castro argued that Dukas’s piece was as much about remembering than it was about forgetting.
There is yet another paradigm of nostalgia involved in Dukas’s piece. It is not only the treatment of the motif that invites a nostalgic listening to Debussy, but the nature of the motif chosen. In fact, the spinning melody alternating sustained notes and quick spurs of chromatic activity is typical of musical Orientalism as it was still prevalent in postwar France, especially with composers of Dukas’s generation. As a matter of fact, apart from Erik Satie, all the Tombeau composers who were in their fifties at the time of its publication (Dukas, 55 years old; Roussel, 51; Schmitt, 50) were (and are still) renowned especially for the Orientalist features of their styles. As I have shown in chapter 1, Orientalism was generally perceived as a nostalgic musical style in the early twentieth century. In a 1919 article entitled “Oriental Influences in Contemporary Music,” the English composer and music critic Kaikhosru Sorabji characterized Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune as an Oriental piece, teasing that it could just as well have been titled Après une lecture de Hafiz [sic: Hafez], and described the flute motif as having “a very distinctly trans-Levantine flavour.” He concluded that “the Prélude . . . exhibits this elusive feeling of what, for want of a better expression, may be termed nostalgia of the Orient.”94 The expression “nostalgia of the Orient” was also used by Nadia Boulanger a few months later when she commented that it was an “extremely widespread” style, even though she questioned the benefit of such an influence on “us.”95 Hence, Dukas inscribed his Tombeau piece not only as a nostalgic homage, but also as part of the still-current trend of nostalgic Orientalism, a topic that was reinforced in the second and sixth piece of the collection.

The second piece, L’Accueil des Muses by Albert Roussel, evokes the procession of the nine muses who approach, pass, and leave in the distance. The use of static dissonant harmonies, especially in the middle section where they reach an almost obsessive intensity (mm. 13-27; Fig. 2.11), gives the piece more the aspect of a desolate funeral march than of a welcoming embrace.

of the hero by the Greek goddesses (unlike the poetic image Vuillermoz described in his review). Vuillermoz was surprised by Roussel’s use of “color,” noticing the composer’s search for exoticism and “by moments, an almost oriental syncopated sway.” It is unclear which specific moments Vuillermoz had in mind, especially since there is a general sense of unity of tone, color, and rhythm that emanates from the piece. Nonetheless, his linking of impressionistic “color” and orientalism signals the common tendencies of these two stylistic approaches toward atmospheric evocations. Indeed, a critic writing in 1919 about Roussel’s orchestral work Évocations mentioned the composer’s interest in the “enchanting charm of the Orient, and in particular of India, which, by its atmosphere of hallucination and dream, favors remarkably the tendency toward impressionism.” Hence, despite Roussel’s relative stylistic independence as a composer, his orientalism (or what was perceived as such by critics) could also be seen as serving a similar aesthetic as Debussy’s. Thus, although there is no direct connection with a specific work by Debussy in Roussel’s piece, he created a humble, and visibly sincere homage to his peer through the associative quality of his display of interconnected impressionist-exoticism.

Figure 2.11: Albert Roussel, L’Accueil des Muses, mm. 14-18.

Florent Schmitt’s homage, on the contrary, is a virtuosic and complex piece. His contribution, Et pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s’accouda, published in sixth place in the Tombeau,

96 “Les Muses qui s’avancent vers Debussy sont peintes par Roussel avec une recherche de coloris un peu surprenante. . . On y perçoit une recherche d’exotisme et, par instants même, un balancement syncopé presque oriental, qui, pour être inattendu, n’en est pas moins savoureux.”
is by far the longest, taking up a fourth of the entire collection. It is written mostly on three staves, with an orchestral conception apparent in many places, as Vuillermoz noted—in fact, Schmitt orchestrated the piece in 1923 as *La Tristesse de Pan*, the first part of his diptych *Mirages*, Op. 70. As with Roussel’s piece, there is no apparent quotation from Debussy in Schmitt’s homage. Musicologists have nonetheless noted stylistic connections with some of Debussy’s works. For Wheeldon, it is modelled on *L’Isle joyeuse*, albeit with a reversed dynamic trajectory, starting with a fuller texture and ending with a single line (rather than building from a motif to a concluding climax). Drawing from the title of piece, Wheeldon presumes that the single line that concludes the work is an evocation of the flute of Pan. The French musicologist Michel Fleury also implies the presence of the flute, although his model is quite different, as he instead describes the piece as closing “the magical book opened thirty years before by the *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune.*” However, when Schmitt orchestrated the piece three years later, he decided to use the English horn in the passage referenced by Wheeldon. As a matter of fact, there is no flute solo in the entire orchestrated piece. This absence is unsettling in a piece titled after the mythic flautist and heard to this day as suggestive of that instrument. Yet, this absence can create a sense of longing for a particular sound that remains beyond reach, a nostalgic effect similar to the one I described in Dukas’s piece.

As a prominent and prolific composer of orientalist music, Schmitt was particularly attuned to Debussy’s exoticism (much as Sorabji was). As he wrote in 1919, one could find in Debussy “the vehemence and also the adorable nostalgia of the Russians.” Western Orientalism is

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98 Wheeldon, *Debussy’s Late Style*, 130.

In the previous paragraph of his article, Schmitt mentioned Debussy’s trip to Russia as the source of one of his two influences (the other being the study of the harpsichordists). From 1880 to 1882, Debussy was employed by Nadezhda von Meck, with whom he traveled three times to Russia. See Edward Lockspeiser, “Debussy, Tchaikovsky, and Madame von Meck,” *The Musical Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (January 1936): 38–44.
geographically ambiguous at best: Schmitt’s idea of Russia could very well be similar to Sorabji’s Middle Eastern *Afternoon of a Faun*. What counts is that the exoticism of Schmitt’s homage is not only an expression of nostalgia, but his way of engaging with Debussy’s work and paying tribute to it. Thus, despite the density of its pianistic writing, Schmitt’s thematic material is both simple and immediately evocative—“nostalgic”—of the far east, and perhaps even of Russia itself, as Fleury suggested.\(^\text{101}\) Two contrasting motifs introduced in the first four measures (Fig. 2.12, m. 1 and mm. 3-4) form the basic thematic material for the whole piece. The first one is a quick chromatic turn typical of orientalist music, which can be found in many of Schmitt’s works; it is employed for instance in a similar register at the onset of his Oriental ballet *La Tragédie de Salomé* (1907; Fig. 2.13) and in a diatonic variation as a dialogue between flute and oboe at the beginning of “Le Tombeau de Cléopâtre,” the last part of his stage music for Shakespeare’s play, which premiered in May 1920, a few months before the *Tombeau de Debussy* (Fig. 2.14).

\(^{101}\) Michel Fleury describes the main theme as “a beautiful ‘Russian’ theme similar to the love song in Rimski-Korsakov’s *Sheherazad.*” (Fleury, “Blood, Voluptuous Pleasure and Death,” 13.)
Figure 2.12: Florent Schmitt, Et Pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s’accouda, mm. 1-4.

Figure 2.13: Schmitt, La Tragédie de Salomé, no. 1, “Prélude,” piano reduction, mm. 1-2.

Figure 2.14: Schmitt, Antoine et Cléopâtre, 2e suite d’orchestre, no. 3, “Le Tombeau de Cléopâtre,” flute and oboe parts, mm. 1-4.
The second motif can be heard as a diatonic extension of the first one; it is a short wavering melody that undergoes development later in the piece. Its dotted rhythm is reminiscent of the character of some of Schmitt’s exotic dances as well as of some of his sentimental melodies. In a passage marked “soft and melancholic” (Fig. 2.15), this dotted figure eventually becomes the underlying ostinato rhythm on top of which the diatonic melody is stretched out. This passage is similar to the sublime melody heard in the middle section of “Nuit au palais de la reine” from Antoine et Cléopâtre (Fig. 2.16). This could well have been the section that prompted Vuillermoz to declare that Schmitt’s homage was the “only truly lyrical farewell” in the Tombeau.

The orchestration of measures 3-4 for a solo clarinet and harp adds to the romantic sensuality of this passage.

Figure 2.15: Schmitt, Et Pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s’accouda, mm. 42-44.

Figure 2.16: Schmitt, Antoine et Cléopâtre, 2e suite d’orchestre, no. 1, “Nuit au palais de la reine,” piano four hands reduction (only primo showed), mm. 39-46.
These similarities confirm that the style and thematic material used by Schmitt in his homage to Debussy conformed very closely to those he adopted in his overtly exotic compositions, to a degree considerably superior to Roussel’s humbler homage. I would therefore propose that, despite the associations that scholars have drawn between Schmitt’s piece and Debussy (mainly his *Faun*), direct references to Debussy’s work were not necessary to create a space of nostalgic listening in a homage to Debussy. Due to the stylistic and thematic resemblances between Schmitt’s homage and his other exotic works—especially his previous opus, the masterwork *Antoine et Cléopâtre*—I would propose to read some of their initial reactions as interchangeable. *Antoine et Cléopâtre* was a prestigious spectacle in the summer of 1920 (it was adapted by André Gide and featured the illustrious dancer and actress Ida Rubinstein), and therefore it attracted far more elaborate reviews than Schmitt’s piano piece for the *Tombeau de Debussy*. Yet I believe that some comments can apply equally to both works. For instance, Nadia Boulanger described the “Nuit dans la palais de la Reine” mentioned above (Fig. 2.16) as made of “nostalgia, dream, and regret.”

Schmitt’s use of the term “melancholic” in the passage of his homage that most closely resembles it (Fig. 2.15) could easily relate to Boulanger’s interpretation. But besides this poetic interpretation, Boulanger heard in the B♭ melody of Fig. 2.16 “the distant tenderness” which “recalls the Florent Schmitt of twenty years ago”:

*Son élan, son aspiration passionnée ne rejoignent que la solitude mélancolique des chants nostalgiques et s’endort entre les étoiles, les danses, les parfums, les harpes vibrantes, les cymbales à la poudre d’or!*

Its impetus, its passionate yearning, reach only the melancholic solitude of nostalgic songs and fall asleep among the stars, the dances, the perfumes, the vibrating harps, the cymbals with gold dust!

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104 As noted in chapter 1, in the early twentieth century, there was still some degree of overlap between nostalgia and melancholia as emotive labels.
105 Boulanger, “À propos d’Antoine et Cléopâtre,” 293.
The rest of Boulanger’s long review is equally laudatory of the composer’s masterful evocation of the subtle landscapes and emotions of Shakespeare’s play, and she concludes with a final mention of the composer’s “usual nostalgia.”

In sum, the three works in the first group described here form a sort of triptych within the *Tombeau de Debussy* as they all approach the tombeau genre with a similar attitude. For these composers, Orientalism was a personal memorial choice used to connect with what they perceived as a primary aspect of Debussy’s aesthetic. Interestingly, as Wheeldon pointed out, these three nostalgic-orientalist pieces all refer to antiquity in their title, and more specifically to the three mythic flutes of the Faun, Euterpe (one of the Muses), and Pan. Accordingly, as we can see in musical analysis and reception history, the pieces create a longing for an actual flute that remains absent, compelling the listeners to find analogies with other pieces by Debussy that feature the longed-for instrument. Whether this triptych is a mere coincidence or a conscious attempt by Henry Prunières to create cohesion within the *Tombeau* is not known, but either way, as Wheeldon argued, Dukas, Roussel, and Schmitt presented a unified memorial of Debussy that emphasized an earlier period in his career, and thus “elevate[d] him above contemporary cultural politics.” They did not do so by reverting to musical features of the 1890s (as we have seen, each composer remained true to his current style) but by stressing the exotic nostalgia that they associated with Debussy. Detached from historical mimesis, Debussy’s legacy was reinterpreted through the lenses of the myth of his exoticism.

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106 It should be noted that Nadia Boulanger’s ecstatic review was rather uncommon. Other reviewers also saw Schmitt’s incidental music as an orientalist masterpiece (i.e. Gabriel Grovlez, “Concerts Lamoureux,” *Le Courrier musical* 22, no. 17 (November 1, 1920): 290.), but some mentioned that the overlong play was dragging, and that Schmitt’s long and complex interludes overloaded the spectacle. One critic even declared Schmitt’s music a “languid joke” (P. Saegel, “La Semaine dramatique,” *Le Ménestrel* 82, no. 25 (June 18, 1920): 253.)

107 Wheeldon, *Debussy’s Late Style*, 132–33.

108 Wheeldon, 132.
2.4.3 Bartók and Falla: The myth of Debussy as internationalist composer

In contrast to the imagined Orientalism found in the compositions of the French contributors, an ethnic approach was favored by two of the foreign composers, Bartók and Falla. Bartók, who was born in 1881, only started studying Debussy’s music in 1907, after he had already written mature works and developed a personal style. This study led him to recognize that some aspects of his own incorporation of Hungarian peasant music in concert pieces could also be found in foreign modernist music. As he later wrote, he was “greatly surprised to find in Debussy’s work ‘pentatonic phrases’ similar in character to those contained in our peasant music.”109 More than a style to emulate, Debussy’s influence on Hungarian composers—which Lynn Hooker describes as Francophilia110—was twofold: it gave the inspiration to steer away from the German tradition and the confirmation that Hungarian folk songs were a valid source for modernist music.111 Hence, the absence of characteristic “impressionist” traits in Bartók’s 1920 homage should not be taken as defiance against the tombeau genre; on the contrary, the untitled homage (but soon after included in the Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, Op. 20, BB 83) reflects Bartók’s interpretation and reverence for the artistic bridge between his and Debussy’s music.

While some composers were directly influenced by the nature of the project as a tombeau (like Dukas), not all composers contributed new works written specifically for the occasion. Wheeldon contends that Bartók, Stravinsky and Ravel, simply chose to dedicate their latest project to the deceased composer—and, perhaps for that reason, she leaves them out of her discussion. But regardless of the circumstantial origins of these three compositions, they deserve a closer look since they were nonetheless chosen by the composers themselves for inclusion within the collection, implying, at the very least, a reflection on the nature of the tombeau, of Debussy’s legacy, and of a

111 Cooper, Béla Bartók, 105.
suitable dedication. Furthermore, even though it may only be peripheral to the argument here, the two longest sections in Vuillermoz’s review of the *Tombeau* were about Stravinsky and Bartók, indicating that the critic felt a need to explain and justify the inclusion of their pieces. Hence, in reaction to a concert of the S.M.I. where Bartók’s music had been unjustly derided, Vuillermoz spent an entire column defending the Hungarian composer’s sincerity and stylistic freedom. In a sense, these composers’ apparent remoteness from the stylistic expectations of what a tombeau should sound like marks them as worthy of attention and vindication.

In the context of Bartók’s oeuvre and of his ethnographic interest in his nation’s folklore, the homage might seem like just one piece among others, as Wheeldon presents it. In fact, László Somfai remarks that Bartók first sent another piece to *La Revue musicale* (the no. 4, *Allegretto scherzando*, from Op. 20), before realizing that it “would not have been at all suitable in this company.”¹¹² His careful reconsideration indicates concern for finding a piece with the proper mood for the homage, rather than merely sending for publication his latest project. Although the French audiences might not have been aware of it, Bartók’s replacement piece uses a folk lullaby that he encountered in his ethnographic research. Its lyrics, “Beli fiam beli, Hn Nem apádtól való” (*Beli* [hush], *beli*, You are not by your father)¹¹³ seem acutely appropriate to the mournful circumstances (Fig. 2.17) and could bring to mind the mournful lullaby that Debussy had himself written during the war, the *Berceuse héroïque* (published in 1915). Bartók did not need to print the text of the lullaby, or even to give it a title, in order to convey its evocative power. Indeed, Vuillermoz immediately recognized the nostalgic qualities of the melody and its connection with

¹¹² László Somfai, “Preface,” in *Improvisationen über ungarische Bauernlieder, Opus 20 (Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs op. 20)*, ed. László Somfai (Budapest: G. Henle Verlag, 2018), V.

¹¹³ See the “Index of the melodies and their words” in László Somfai’s edition (Budapest: G. Henle Verlag, 2018), 27. Bartók discusses this lullaby in a footnote of one of his essays from 1936, “Why and how do we collect folk music?” (Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 16, n. 1.) Bartók’s fourth *Village Scene*, BB 87a is also lullaby on a similar text although it uses a different melody. See also Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 177–78.
the topic of the tombeau: “A melancholic theme, exposed in unison, resonates with a tranquil simplicity, like a popular threnody hummed by a distant procession.”

The dissonant chords that begin their echo in the second measure evoke the tolling bells in the distance. They become more prominent as the piece unfolds; yet, even when the peasant song returns in the middle of the piece buried under a string of dissonant chords, it retains a clear melodic contour. Eventually, the dissonances recede and the melody is heard in octave once more, again interspersed by the dissonant bells, or, as Vuillermoz described it: “The nostalgic passer-by continues on her way and, behind her, the thirds and seconds drip slowly with a soft hush of wrinkled silk.” In sum, even though it eschews mimesis, Bartók’s homage offered a markedly nostalgic bridge between ethnic peasant music and modernism, one that could be immediately identified with the theme of the Tombeau.

Like Bartók, Falla’s homage was infused with nationalism, heightened by his use of the guitar instead of the piano. Falla was the only composer in the Tombeau who also contributed an article in the issue, titled “Claude Debussy et l’Espagne,” in which he argued that “Debussy wrote Spanish music without knowing Spain,” because of his knowledge of “authentic” Spanish images,

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114 “Un thème mélancolique, exposé à l’unisson, chante avec une simplicité tranquille, comme une mélopée populaire fredonnée par un cortège lointain.”

115 “La nostalgique passante poursuit sa route et, derrière elle, les tierces et les secondes, soulevées, retombent lentement avec un doux bruit de soie froissée…”
songs, and dances. Even if idealized, Falla’s praise of Debussy’s “authentic” Spanish music (which was for the most part premiered by a Spanish pianist, Ricardo Viñes, as Falla pointed out) contrasts with the fantasy-ridden worlds conjured by the exoticism of Dukas, Roussel, and Schmitt. Coming from a Spanish composer, the statement that Debussy’s La Soirée dans Grenade is Spanish “to the smallest detail” even if not a single measure is directly borrowed from Spanish folklore, rings as an undebatable fact. This is what Falla calls “truth without authenticity.” Hence, when Falla quotes four measures of La Soirée dans Grenade at the end of his homage, now played by the guitar’s “authentic” timbre, he assimilates Debussy’s Spain-inspired music—which Barbara Kelly has described as “exotic places in his musical imagination”—into his own idea of Spanish authenticity (Fig. 2.18 and 2.19). The quotation, like his article, can be read as an attempt to neutralize Debussy’s Spanish exoticism by claiming its ethnic authenticity. Moreover, it is introduced at the very end of the homage as a distorted reminiscence of Debussy’s piano piece, remembered, through the guitar’s timbre, as more authentic than it ever was. It thus deflects the usual remoteness of nostalgic quotations: this is the reverse of the process that we saw in Dukas’s homage, where the flute motif lost its instrumental color, prompting the listener to long for the missing original. With Falla’s homage, “authenticity” constructs an idealized myth of Debussy’s legacy of Spanish compositions, where the myth supersedes the “truth” of the original composition. Indeed, by using a relatively unaltered quotation of Debussy’s work (it retains the same rhythm, melody, and key, but adapts the texture to fit the range of the guitar), Falla was not having recourse to the tombeau’s traditional mimesis to create nostalgia for the deceased composer; instead, he was

Anna Rita Addessa writes about the personal and musical relations between Falla and Debussy. She discusses the Homenaje as one among other works by Falla that pay homage to the French composer. See Anna Rita Addessi, Claude Debussy e Manuel de Falla: Un caso di influenza stilistica (Bologna: Clueb, 2000).


recontextualizing it to grant it new agency in the question of Spanish authenticity. Finally, as if to
draw one further connection between Debussy and Spain, Falla signs his composition from Granada
right under the quotation of La Soirée dans Grenade (see Fig. 2.19), blurring the line between the
real and the imagined one last time.

![Figure 2.18: Debussy, Estampes, no. 2, “La Soirée dans Grenade,” mm. 17-23.](image1)

Although Falla distinguished Debussy from the “makers of so-called Spanish music” of
former times, for most Parisian audiences the characteristic rhythms and harmonies of Spanish
music were heard within the realm of nostalgic exotic music regardless of the authenticity of their
origins. For instance, a few weeks before the publication of Falla’s Homenaje in the Tombeau, a

![Figure 2.19: Manuel de Falla, Homenaje (pour guitare), mm. 61-70.](image2)
music critic addressed (or rather disregarded) the issue of authenticity when he compared two Spain-inspired French compositions by Ravel and Chabrier, stating that they would please “listeners who love nostalgia” and that each listener would decide for themselves which one expresses the best the “soul of the country.” If each listener can make up their mind on such a topic, it suggests that authenticity did not really matter in a musicological sense as long as the pieces displayed some of that familiar longing for the exotic elsewhere. Even in his own praise of Debussy’s Spanish style, Falla could not avoid saying that it was based only on impressions garnered outside of Spain rather than from an insider’s perspective, but that it did not prevent it from being “true.” Therefore, the homebound nostalgia expressed in Falla’s homage (or even Bartók’s) might better be understood, at least from the perspective of the French audiences, as a form of exoticism: the mal-du-pays is as much an exoticization of home as exoticism is the appropriation of the foreign home. In that light, the homages by Bartók and Falla were not different than those by Dukas, Roussel, and Schmitt in their imagined representations of Debussy as a composer of exoticism, whether Middle-Eastern, Russian, Hungarian, or Spanish.


   Similarly, Pierre de Lapommeraye described Falla’s Nights in the Gardens of Spain in very broad terms in June 1920, saying that “there is nothing more melancholic than the short sunsets of Spain.” (Pierre de Lapommeraye, “Concerts divers,” Le Ménestrel 82, no. 24 (June 11, 1920): 245.)

119 Michael Christoforidis writes that the Homenaje is “both nostalgic and modern . . . a distillation of the musical discourse that had given rise to a post-Romantic construction of exoticism based on the reimagining of Granada, that quintessential site of otherness in Europe.” (Michael Christoforidis, Manuel de Falla and Visions of Spanish Music (London: Routledge, 2018), 63; see also 116-118.)
2.4.4 Malipiero and Goossens: The nostalgia of commemorative mimesis

Two other foreign composers, one Italian, one English, contributed pieces that avoided the rich exoticism of the five pieces described above in favor of a more abstract approach that each focused on a single aspect of Debussy’s pianistic technique. Malipiero’s Hommage is written entirely in parallel perfect chords (minor for the most part), a technique used by Debussy in multiple pieces. Wheeldon describes the work’s structural and melodic similarities with “La Cathédrale engloutie,” but Vuillermoz cited Le Martyre de saint Sébastien as a model (Fig. 2.20 and 2.21), which sounds more akin to the homage’s resolutely minor soundscape than the major mode of “La Cathédrale engloutie.” It is more likely, however, that Malipiero echoed a general feature of Debussy’s music rather than imitated a specific piece.

Figure 2.20: Gian Francesco Malipiero, Hommage, mm. 5-7.

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120 Wheeldon, Debussy’s Late Style, 130–32.
In contrast, Goossens’s untitled piece (later titled *Hommage à Debussy*, Op. 28), which directly follows Malipiero’s in the collection, was qualified by Vuillermoz as “superchromatic,” and even “rougher and more aggressive” than Bartók’s homage (Fig. 2.22). Yet, Goossens’s chromaticism here does not point forward to new modernist innovations but back to Wagner, whom Debussy admired early in his career. Vuillermoz even alluded to the composer’s early pilgrimages at Bayreuth in 1888-1889:

Assurément, nous sommes très loin des habituels procédés d’écriture de Tristan, et les premières mesures du compositeur anglais ne nous le laissent point ignorer. Cependant la filiation lointaine est si perceptible que Debussy pourrait protester, dans l’au-delà, contre cette façon de pleurer en s’essuyant les yeux avec un mouchoir acheté, il y a fort longtemps, à Bayreuth.

Surely, we are very far from the usual writing methods of *Tristan*, and the first measures of the English composer do not let us ignore it. However, the distant lineage is so perceptible that Debussy could protest, from beyond, against this way of crying by drying his tears with a handkerchief purchased a long time ago in Bayreuth.

While Goossens’s chromaticism points back to Debussy’s youth, it is when he departs from it that the homage veers to the truly nostalgic. In a short middle section (mm. 10-16; Fig. 2.23), Goossens contrasts the dense chromaticism with an expressive diatonic melody that features a high-pitched echo in quartal harmonies superimposed over perfect chords. Within the structure of the piece, this
short *espressivo* section, which sounds ethereal, almost otherworldly, is the passage of nostalgic affect: it interrupts the agitation of the piece by reverting to a simpler use of tonality supported by the static repetition of A in the left hand (perhaps another tolling bell?). Yet tonality is only partially retrieved since chromatic dissonances still color the harmonies. When the motif from measure 10 is outlined three measures before the end of the piece in a distorted bi-tonal passage (Eb over D7), it functions as an echo of the *espressivo* section, confirming its nostalgic affect and leaving the listener on a bittersweet note. If this motif represents a temporal return to Debussy, then Goossens seems to indicate that this longed-for return is impossible.

Figure 2.22: Eugène Goossens, untitled (*Hommage à Debussy*, Op. 28), mm. 1-5.

Figure 2.23: Goossens, untitled (*Hommage à Debussy*), mm. 10-13.
Despite their clear modernist leanings, these two pieces respected the mimetic conventions of the tombeau genre but did so via stylistic reminiscences rather than through direct quotations or thematic transformations. They were listening back to Debussy’s life and works (especially those of his youth) and offering a transformed, yet not necessarily critical, view of them. In a sense, it is not surprising that these two pieces counted among the least discussed of the entire collection since they did not provoke a reassessment of Debussy’s legacy or a reevaluation of the tombeau as a commemorative practice.

2.4.5 Stravinsky, Ravel, and Satie: Closing the tomb and discarding the myths

Finally, the three pieces by Stravinsky, Ravel, and Satie seemed the most at odds with the spirit of the tombeau due to their complete refusal to make references to Debussy’s work. That these three homages were relegated to the end of the Tombeau (as the seventh, eighth, and final piece) may have been an attempt to diminish (or at least delay) the shock of their eccentricity, whereas most of the more overtly referential pieces appeared in its first half, where they could reassure the listeners of the sincerity of the Tombeau as a whole. On the other hand, the first part of Vuillermoz’s two-part review of the collection was entirely devoted to Stravinsky and Satie, thus bringing to the fore these pieces that were grouped at the back of the Tombeau. Two weeks before his review of the eight other pieces, Vuillermoz—a frequent advocate of modernist music—portrayed the Tombeau de Debussy as a modernist project that was aesthetically challenging. For that reason, he needed to explain those pages that pose “some small and current aesthetic problems” (quelques petits problèmes d’esthétique assez actuels) and that pose “the question of composing that will one day be necessary to clarify” (cette question de l’écriture qu’il faudra bien se décider, un jour, à tirer au clair). In so doing, he inadvertently drew attention to the notion that the Tombeau de Debussy
might not be solely about Debussy after all; it could actually be discussed as a statement on the current state of modernist innovations in music since Debussy’s death.\textsuperscript{121}

Vuillermoz spent half of his first review explaining and defending Stravinsky’s use of dissonance in general and the steps in his evolution toward bitonality and polytonality. For the music critic, Stravinsky’s dissonance was like “a \textit{vibrato} communicated to a perfect chord,” by which he meant that dissonance is not generated from linear motion but from harmonic combinations. This description applies especially well to Stravinsky’s homage to Debussy, the \textit{Fragment des Symphonies pour instruments à vent}, in which the choral-like texture is written mostly with perfect major chords in the right hand coupled with dissonant or bitonal intervals in the left hand (Fig. 2.24). Comparing the “wrong notes” to organ pipes out-of-tune, Vuillermoz argued that dissonances add radiance and expressiveness to the music. Ultimately, this long digression bore no connection with Debussy, and the critic did not attempt to justify the piece’s inclusion in the \textit{Tombeau} or to characterize its funeral character beyond (yet another) passing reference to the “vibration of bells.” Thus, he fell short of pinpointing ritual elements in Stravinsky’s score, which he could have used to strengthen its suitability to the memorial.\textsuperscript{122} Vuillermoz concluded by criticizing the composer’s lack of clarification in his score, namely the absence of instrument names to guide the reader on the importance of each note within the chords (since this is a reduction of a work for wind ensemble) and the total absence of dynamics. According to him, this carelessness revealed the composer’s lack of consideration for the reader and demonstrated why there was such a gap between modern music and audiences. In sum, Debussy is conspicuously absent from Stravinsky’s work and its review. With his “fragment,” Stravinsky

\textsuperscript{121} Barbara Kelly also reckons that Stravinsky and Ravel, unlike the other collaborators, “had not relegated Debussy to a reposeful past.” Their homages showed that “Debussy continued to play a role and participate in new ideas despite the challenges of serious illness and the context of war.” See Kelly, \textit{Music and Ultra-Modernism in France}, 154.

refused to engage with the past (at least in any transparent manner) and continued resolutely to look forward.

Ravel’s *Duo pour violon et violoncelle* (which would later become the first movement of his sonata for violin and cello) faced harsher criticism from the music critic of *Le Temps*:

_Sa couleur, sa grâce souple et fuyante et son mouvement dégagé n’ont, au premier abord, rien de particulièrement funèbre. . . . L’une de ses phrases épouse même si étroitement le rythme d’un allègre refrain populaire, que l’on demeure un peu troublé d’une telle désinvolture en présence d’un aussi redoutable sujet de méditation!_

Its color, its supple and fleeting grace and its flowing movement have, at first sight, nothing particularly funereal. . . . One of its phrases matches so closely the rhythm of a cheerful popular refrain, that one remains slightly troubled by such insouciance in front of such a formidable subject of meditation!

There is indeed nothing particularly mournful in this homage. Contrary to the nine other pieces in either slow or moderate tempo, Ravel’s _Allegro_ stands in sharp contrast as the only fast piece in the collection. It is also the only one that requires two musicians to perform, placing it at the periphery of the collection, and thereby preventing many readers from hearing it accurately. As can be seen

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Figure 2.24: Igor Stravinsky, _Fragment des Symphonies pour instruments à vent à la mémoire de Claude Achille Debussy_, mm. 1-11.
in Fig. 2.25, even a good musician attempting to read the Duo from the piano would struggle with its tightly intertwined melodic lines and its dense instrumental texture.

Overall, the Duo is constructed as a loose sonata form, with each section delineated by the recurrence of an arpeggio motif that is first introduced by the violin at the top of the piece, before the cello introduces the first theme (Fig. 2.25). This motif is characterized by a constantly shifting third between minor and major. It is only at the end of the coda that the instability at the core of the piece is finally resolved (with a major chord). Vuillermoz described this motif as an “undulating arabesque,” a reference to one of Debussy’s most characteristic stylistic features and to two of his earliest piano pieces. More specifically, he mentioned a “voluntary deformation” of the Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune. This comparison is greatly surprising, especially after the explicit distortion of the same piece by Dukas a few pages earlier: the chromatic descent and ascent of Debussy’s famous motif is sonically very much unlike the arpeggiated ascent and descent of Ravel’s duo. One needs to finely compare the two motifs to find similar pitch content between them (Fig. 2.26). However, this comparison is far from convincing since the characteristic minor-major shift of Ravel’s motif is not stressed in Debussy, where the C♯ (B#), is only a brief passing note to the C#. Nonetheless, as stressed in Fig. 2.27, Debussy uses chromatic shifts that might be heard as distant cousins of Ravel’s motif.
Showing these connections between the two pieces might support Vuillermoz’s comparison, but it also indicates that his only direct reference to Debussy was quite tenuous.¹²³ For

¹²³ In his review of the first performance of the *Tombeau*, Laurent Ceillier heard Ravel’s motif as based on the motif from the scherzo of Debussy’s *Quatuor* (which is actually the unifying motif of all four movements of the work). The comparison might have been prompted by a performance of the *Quatuor* earlier in the program of the evening (Laurent Ceillier, “Le Tombeau de Debussy,” *Le Monde musical* 32, no. 1–2 (January 1921): 20.). Like Ravel’s *Duo*, this motif also alternates between major and minor thirds (F♯ and F♮) and it is repeated as relentlessly as Ravel’s arpeggio motif, especially in the scherzo. The figure below shows the
Wheeldon, Ravel’s homage is easy to dismiss as only the dedication of his latest project to the deceased composer. But, as with Bartók and Stravinsky, we must look beyond the absence of intentional mimesis to understand the composer’s choice not just as a de facto contribution to the collection but as a reaction against the conservative notion of homage: unlike Stravinsky, who still decided to include the dedication to Debussy within the title of his work, Ravel eschewed any extramusical references, including in the title, which only specifies the instrumentation. Rejecting motivic quotations, stylistic allusions, and memorial sentimentality, Ravel was forging ahead in contributing a sort of anti-tombeau work to the Tombeau de Debussy. In that sense, he was going even further than he had done in his Tombeau de Couperin in deconstructing the tombeau as a genre. Yet, of all the pieces included in the collection, Ravel’s was perhaps the most attuned to the spirit of Debussy at the time of his death. During the war, Debussy had moved further away from the impressionism of his early maturity and adopted in his three instrumental sonatas a new kind of abstraction that would later be known as “neoclassical.” Ravel’s Duo, eventually included as the first movement of a sonata, is a logical continuation of this series of sonatas that were left interrupted at the composer’s death. So, rather than using the Tombeau as an opportunity to reflect on the past legacy of the dead composer, Ravel looked ahead in a way that paralleled Debussy’s latest explorations.

viola part at the beginning of the second movement. The viola repeats the same pattern for another 20 measures before it is picked up by the violin and then the cello.

124 Many authors have remarked on the classical qualities of these sonatas. Scott Messing discusses them as precursors to neoclassicism. Among his sources, he mentions an article by Egon Wellesz from May 1920 where the Austrian musician referred to the “neun klassische Stil” of Debussy’s late works. See Scott Messing, Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 45–46 and 75–76. I discuss “neoclassicism” in chapter 4.

Finally, the collection closes with its shortest, and perhaps most polemical, contribution: Satie’s 12-measure long song on a text by Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869). The piece (which was subsequently retitled Élégie) is sensitively dedicated “to the memory of an admiring and sweet friendship of thirty years” (en souvenir d’une admirative et douce amitié de trente ans), a reminder of the two musicians’ relationship that begun around 1892.126 Mary Davis describes the reciprocal nature of that relationship, which, despite occasional friction, led to notable musical exchanges, such as Debussy’s orchestration of two of Satie’s Gymnopédies in 1896, his only orchestration of another composer’s work. In 1922, Satie expanded on the nature of his friendship with Debussy when he wrote: “As soon as I saw him for the first time, I felt drawn towards him and longed to live forever at his side. For thirty years I had the joy of seeing this wish fulfilled . . . it seemed as if we had always known each other.”127 Thus, Satie’s contribution to the Tombeau was not that of an outsider (such as the twenty-seven-years-old British composer, Goossens, for instance), but of a devoted friend and outspoken admirer.

However, as we saw earlier with the comments by Léon Vallas, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Willy Schmid, for many readers the inclusion of Satie in an homage to Debussy—even (or especially) as the final contributor—was reprehensible. In 1920, Satie was now at the height of his fame, and his work was discussed and promoted in journals and newspapers as what Mary Davis referred to as “dernier cri avant-gardism.”128 Satie was now associated with anti-debussyism (or even anti-Debussy)129 and more particularly with the group of modernist young composers known as Les Six, who, under their mentor Jean Cocteau, took Satie as their leader.130 But Parade (1917), one of his latest collaborations with Cocteau, had caused a rift in Satie’s friendship with Debussy.

126 See Mary E. Davis, Erik Satie (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 37, see also 35-38.
127 Quoted in Davis, 37.
128 Davis, 115.
130 For instance, in Le Coq et l’Arlequin (1918), Jean Cocteau praised Satie’s return to order, clarity and simplicity against the outdated fuzzy style of Debussy. (See Jean Cocteau, Écrits sur la musique, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Paris: Vrin, 2016), 108–9.) See also the final chapter of this dissertation.
when the latter criticized it. In a letter addressed to André Caplet in September 1920, Emma Debussy, the composer’s widow, brought up the hostility between the two musicians as she expressed her disapproval of the inclusion of Satie in the *Tombeau* dedicated to her late husband because “the master [Debussy] was angry with Satie.” But, as she recognized, Prunières was an unswerving admirer and friend of Satie. A few months earlier, he had published an article in the *Nouvelle Revue française* praising Satie’s latest work, *Socrate*, and declaring it the composer’s masterpiece. It is obvious that the idea Prunières had of his *Tombeau* was not a private one, governed by familial and individual considerations—other than his own, of course. His admiration of Satie superseded the aversion of the composer’s widow.

Despite its brevity, Satie closed the collection with one of its richest intertextual pieces. The text he selected is excerpted from the first *Méditation poétique* by Alphonse de Lamartine. First published in 1820, this collection of poems came to be regarded as the originator of Romantic poetry in France. In 1920, its hundredth anniversary was celebrated with multiple articles and homages that brought Lamartine back to the fore of intellectual and popular collective memory. The four lines set to music by Satie were (and remain) some of the most frequently cited by Lamartine:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Que me font ces vallons, ces palais, ces chaumières ?} \\
\text{Vains objets dont pour moi le charme est envoyé ;} \\
\text{Fleuves, rochers, forêts, solitude si chères,} \\
\text{Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé.}
\end{align*}
\]

What are to me these palaces, these cottages, these vales?
Vain objects all, whose borrowed charm for nothing now avails.
The floods, the rocks, the forests, all beauteous though they be,
When the sole-beloved one is not there, unpeopled seem to me!

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131 See Davis, *Erik Satie*, 125.
132 September 20, 1920, BnF, NLA-269 (183).
134 Emma Debussy also disagreed with Prunières over the inclusion of a reproduction of a portrait of Debussy on his deathbed in the commemorative issue. The portrait was finally included on a separate leaf between pages 112 and 113.
Rather than nostalgia, this passage expresses a melancholia close to utter dejection, the transformation of all life into desolate emptiness after the death of a loved one. But the verses that follow in Lamartine’s poem change this feeling into a fervently arousing longing for an impossible recovery of hope and love:

Mais peut-être au-delà des bornes de sa sphère,
Lieux où le vrai soleil éclaire d’autres cieux,
Si je pouvais laisser ma dépouille à la terre,
Ce que j’ai tant rêvé paraîtrait à mes yeux ?

Là, je m’enivrerai à la source où j’aspire,
Là, je retrouverai et l’espoir et l’amour,
Et ce bien idéal que toute âme désire,
Et qui n’a pas de nom au terrestre séjour !

But, perhaps, beyond the [last faint line of his vast, yet] bounded sphere,
Where o’er other heavens the true sun shines [with a light more purely clear,]
If I could leave my mortal spoils on the earth [on which I pine,]
The things that I so oft have dreamed before my eyes might shine.

There would I quaff [the draught divine,] at the source where I aspire.
There hope and love, refound once more, [again my breast should fire]
With the fancied good, [so sweet in thought,] which every heart demands,
And which has no name in this lower world [where earth-born man commands.]

Although this affective reversal in Lamartine’s poem is rarely (if ever) excerpted alongside the famous quatrain used by Satie, its underlying longing for an escape to the realm of dreams and souvenirs can emerge as a natural reaction to the melancholic desolation of death. In *L’Amour enseveli* (*The Buried Love*), an obscure yet fascinating novel serialized daily in *Le Figaro* from April 30 to May 29, 1921, the author Pierre Courtois described how the life of a fictional, young composer changed between March 1914 to the Armistice of November 1918. The last chapter (published May 26 to 29) shows the return of the composer to Paris after the war and his distress at the transformations that occurred while he was at the front. On the day of the Armistice, while

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*Magazine of Politics, Literature, Art, Science, and the Belles Lettres*, New Series, XXI, no. 125 (May 1836): 431. This ornate translation, for lack of faithfulness to Lamartine, has the benefit of having been written in Paris during the French poet’s lifetime. I am marking within square brackets the passages that are Patrickson’s own additions in the second and third quatrains quoted here.
he observes the celebrations of victory, he becomes very critical of the exuberant joy that surrounds him while he weeps and despair over the loss of his friends, love, and memories:

Pierre rentra à Paris tout à fait désemparé. Il retrouva une ville en une fièvre joyeuse, dans l’exaltation de la fête et son tumulte de victoire. Les maisons se pavoisaient de lampions et ce n’était, à travers les rues, que le développement de danses et de farandoles, un bondissement de cortèges et de chants... des traiñées de voix se répandaient, apportant l’écho de Marseillaise déchiquetées, de Madelon, de « Non, fallait pas qu’y aille ! » qui traduisait l’ivresse d’un peuple, l’allégresse de la populace qui débordait.

Pour Pierre, l’univers s’évanouissait. Il n’avait jamais senti avec cette acuité la vérité de ce vers de Lamartine :

Un seul être vous manque et tout est dépeuplé.

Il allait au milieu de cette foule exubérante, chargé de solitude, l’air égaré, le cœur brisé. Il aurait voulu que quelqu’un de ces gens se détachât pour l’interroger sur sa souffrance et y compatir. Mais la foule, toute à son plaisir, n’avait pour lui que de l’indifférence.

Pierre returned to Paris quite distraught. He found a city in a joyous agitation, in the excitement of the fête and its tumult of victory. The houses were adorned with lanterns, and throughout the streets, there was only the progress of dances and farandoles, a surge of processions and songs... Bursts of voices were spreading, bringing the echo of shredded Marseillaises, of Madelon, of “No, he shouldn’t have gone!” that reflected the rapture of the people, the overflowing joy of the populace.

For Pierre, the universe was vanishing. He had never felt with such acuteness the truth of this verse of Lamartine:

You may miss a single being, and all is desolate.

He went in the midst of this exuberant crowd, laden with loneliness, looking astray, the heart broken. He would have liked one of these people to come out to question him about his suffering and to sympathize with him. But the crowd, absorbed by its pleasure, had nothing but indifference.136

Even if this passage is set in November 1918, it recalls with dramatic intensity the equivocal criticism of the celebrations of November 1920, and the ambiguity between rejoicing and mourning that they encapsulated and that marked the cultural discourses at the time that the Tombeau de Debussy was published. It also confirms that the words chosen by Satie for his homage to Debussy represented personal feelings (Satie’s personal loss of his old friend Debussy) as much as they had social significance (the symbolic loss of a world and of a generation of soldier encapsulated in the figure of the Unknown Soldier and of his tomb). Hence, in a manner akin to Victor Hugo’s

“Hymne” discussed above, I would argue that readers of *La Revue musicale* would have been pressed to reflect on their own losses while reading the last page of the *Tombeau* and, as with the hero of Courtois’ *L’Amour enseveli*, these reminiscences might have prompted nostalgic feelings for the past.

So, how does Satie, in only twelve measures (Fig. 2.28), accomplish this affective connection with the war? The *Élégie* consists of two parallel phrases of six measures each, each divided in two melodic lines of three measures. The first and third lines are played quietly and accompanied by an unobtrusive piano in the higher register, corresponding to the solitude of the desolate landscapes. However, the second and fourth lines are *mezzo-forte* to *fortissimo*, with angular vocal lines, dissonant harmonies, and accompanied by the piano’s lower register as an expression of the angst and distress of the soul. Despite their contrast, these phrases balance each other logically: the half cadence of measure six in C major is resolved in measure twelve by a closure in F major. Yet, as with Lamartine’s poem, this closure is incomplete since the final chord retains a dissonant D♭, a note which Vuillermoz analyzed as an unresolved appoggiatura of C♮ and creating “an indecision full of charm and a melancholic wavering conducive to the infinity of daydreaming.”137 Thus, according to this critic, Satie’s work seems to guide the listener into the longing that suffuses the following verses of Lamartine’s *Méditation*.

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137 “Il faut donc se pencher sur la partition, repérer le ré bémol, et déduire par un raisonnement technique, basé sur les plus antique principes de la grammaire du Conservatoire, que ce ré bémol est peut-être bien une appoggiature non résolue dans l’accord parfait de fa et sous-entend savoureusement un do naturel, en créant ainsi une indécision pleine de charme et un flottement mélancolique propice à l’infini de la rêverie !…”
Over the sustained Db, Satie’s song ends with the final two tolling bells of the *Tombeau*. It closes the tomb not with a final farewell to Debussy (as in Falla’s *Homenaje*) but by bringing the listener back to the broader question of mourning in the postwar context. Is it possible that this *Tombeau* was not just about a deceased composer—that it echoed other forms of mourning and
other memorials to real and imagined, known and unknown, soldiers? Satie’s choice of text, the directness of his setting, his astonishingly stark *fortissimo* on the final words—“tout est dépeuplé”—where another composer might have preferred to end *pianissimo,* the unresolved longing, and the echo of the bells—all these details draw attention to the postwar social context and, perhaps, to the other tombeau commemorated in November 1920. Stravinsky, Ravel, and Satie all shunned conventional forms of mourning by adopting alternative attitudes that rejected the myth of Debussy and introduced divergent modes of mourning. When comparing, for instance, Raoul Dufy’s symbolic cover for the *Tombeau de Debussy,* which depicts a mythical mountaintop castle surrounded by sea mermaids and a ship leaving in the distance under a radiant sunset (Fig. 2.4; see also Fig. 1.6), with the raw press pictures of the entombment of the Unknown Soldier on January 28, 1921 (Fig. 2.29), it appears that these three composers (but especially Satie) discarded the myths to recapture some of the intense and ambivalent emotions that marked public and private life in Paris in the autumn of 1920.139

![Figure 2.29: Burial of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe, January 28, 1921.](image)

138 Louis Niedermeyer (1802-1861), the only other composer of a setting on this text according to the LiederNet Archive, omitted this quattrain! (See http://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=9796.)

139 The face of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier was engraved with the words LE SOLDAT FRANÇAIS. Coincidentally, Debussy signed “musician français” on the title pages of his three late sonatas, all composed and published in wartime.
2.4.6 The Tombeau as war memorial

The first public performance of the Tombeau de Debussy happened on January 24, 1921, only four days before the Unknown Soldier was buried under the Arc de Triomphe. The performance was part of a concert in memory of Debussy that began with his Quatuor and the Promenoir des deux amants. It was followed with new homages by four members of the comity of the S.M.I., composed independently of the Tombeau: La paix du soir au cimetière (Charles Koechlin), an Élégie for string quartet (Léo Sachs), a Sarabande (Gabriel Grovlez), and a Barcarolle (Jean Huré). Finally, the Tombeau de Claude Debussy was performed in its entirety with the exception of Stravinsky’s work, which was listed on the program with the following notice: “Due to material difficulties and in agreement with the author, this piece will not be played.” (En raison des difficultés matérielles et d’accord avec l’auteur, ce morceau ne sera pas joué.) What kind of “material difficulties” could have prevented Stravinsky’s homage to be heard? Technically, it should not have posed any problem to the pianist since this is by far the easiest piece in the collection. A performer able to master Schmitt’s virtuosic homage would have easily read through Stravinsky’s miniature. So, unless Stravinsky himself refused permission for his “fragment” to be heard in concert separately from the Symphonies pour instruments à vent of which it is excerpted, we can only presume that his homage was skipped for aesthetic reasons.

140 After the Unknown Soldier was carried to the Arc de Triomphe on November 11, 1920, it was kept inside the Arc until his final burial in January.
141 I will not discuss these pieces in further detail, partly because of the scarcity of information on two of them. However, it is worth noting the origins and sources of these four pieces:

Koechlin: This is the penultimate piece (no. 15) in Koechlin’s vast cycle Les Heures persanes, Op. 65 (composed for piano in 1913-1919, orchestrated in 1921), partly inspired by Pierre Loti’s Vers Ispahan (see discussion of exoticism in chapter 1). The complete suite Les Heures persanes was first performed in its entirety only in 1986, before its publication in 1987, 37 years after the death of its composer.

Sachs: The only Élégie in Sachs catalogue of works is for piano, published in 1918. I do not know if the piece performed at the concert was an arrangement or a different work altogether that remained unpublished.

Grovlez: Probably the densely-textured Sarabande published in the Supplément musical of La Revue musicale of October 1, 1921.

Huré: Piece not located.
The accounts of the concert published by the musical press were mostly brief, providing very little insight into the reception of the *Tombeau* at its only documented live performance. In *Le Monde musical*, Laurent Ceillier limited his comments on each piece to just a few words, either simply descriptive of the music or briefly praising the performers. However, Ceillier began his review by decrying the lack of works by Debussy performed before the *Tombeau*, judging that the works composed by Koechlin, Sachs, Grovlez, and Huré were “pièces de circonstances” made of “funeral bells, nostalgic pedals and ostinatos, all the darker as they followed each other.” The public grew impatient, and two or three members of the audience rudely showed their discontentment (to Ceillier’s condemnation).

Louis Vuillemin, in *La Lanterne*, was satisfied with the first part of the concert, but described the *Tombeau* as a “bizarre monument” that lacked consistency. Vuillemin mentioned Stravinsky’s piece, even though it had not been performed, writing that it was “closer to paradox than to music.” It is thus likely that Vuillemin reviewed the concert from scores rather than from hearing it live. He reserved his harshest words for the final piece of the concert, Satie’s song, which he found “ridiculous” and more suitable to the *Tombeau de Paul Delmet*, a reference to the singer (1862-1904) of light chansons and romances. Finally, Vuillemin closed by suggesting that the composer, had he been attending the concert, would have ran away during the *Tombeau*—if he had even made it through Élégie by Léo Sachs. In *Le Courrier musical*, Louis Durey reiterated Vuillemin’s words, saying that the *Tombeau* was a “bizarre assemblage” and that it was made “quite randomly.”

In these reviews, the failure of the *Tombeau de Debussy* as an actual musical memorial is arresting. If official homages and funerals were “meant to exalt national sacrifice, mourning, and

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142 Ceillier, “Le Tombeau de Debussy,” 20. “Mais le programme s’allongeait d’une série de pièces de circonstance : cloches funèbres, pédales nostalgiques et « ostinatos » d’autant plus sombres qu’elles se suivaient. La salle fut houleuse et marqua son impatience, deux ou trois auditeurs allant jusqu’à une grossièreté que l’on ne saurait trop réprouver.”

memory,” and “carried a socially unifying and affective dimension,” then this one was, at least in part, falling short of its purpose. What we observed throughout the Tombeau and became even more audible in its performance at the close of a concert to the memory of Claude Debussy, is the gradual loss of Debussy’s voice, the gradual dissolution of his myth. In comparison, the S.M.I.’s previous concert to the memory of Claude Debussy, held on March 14, 1919, was a true memorial concert that exclusively included works by the deceased composer spanning his entire career up to the wartime Sonata for flute, viola and harp. The Tombeau (and the concert in which it appeared), however, opened with Debussy—in one case Dukas’s variation on the Faun, in the other, Debussy’s Quatuor—and gradually strayed away from the impressionist and exotic ideals to pieces that were declared “bizarre,” “random,” or “ridiculous” because they did not fit within a homogeneous or consistent idea of Debussy’s legacy. This gradual disappearance of Debussy shows the inherent conflict in memorials between, on the one hand, a form of remembrance that brings back to life (i.e. the conventional paradigm of “commemorative mimesis”) and, on the other hand, the entombment as a symbol of hiding away what is no longer, of shutting access to the past. This process of memorialization thus plays a double role that inspires nostalgia at the very same time that it confronts it with its own silencing. For many listeners, the memorials were understood as open tombs, as repositories of memories—and thus perfect vessels for commemorative mimesis—rather than as sealed monuments made of impenetrable stone that can only give back a distorted echo of the voices of the present. In the Tombeau de Debussy, we witness the tomb being gradually shut, Debussy’s historical voice being replaced by the voices of those who came to mourn him and those who come after him. Falla’s brief quotation of the Soirée dans Grenade at the end of the penultimate piece of the collection is Debussy’s last breath. When Satie steps forward, the brevity and forcefulness of his homage brings us back to the reality of the postwar traumatic experience, of deceased soldiers, heroized victims, and woeful survivors.

144 Fulcher, The Composer as Intellectual, 91 and 87.
3 WALTZES OF NOSTALGIA

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"Je suis enveloppé par mille souvenirs.
Des valses de jadis ma chambre est toute pleine,
Je ne puis discerner à travers vos soupirs
Mes peines d’aujourd’hui avec mes vieilles peines." 1

3.1 DANCING IN POSTWAR PARIS

3.1.1 The end of the waltz

"The waltz stops. The dancers stand still. The bells of Paris all count the twelve strokes of midnight. From December 31, 1919, we move to January 1, 1920." 2 Thus begins Le 1er janvier 1920, historian Arthur Conte’s fascinating glimpse into Parisian society, culture, and politics at the turn of the first new decade since the end of the war. 3 It was not so much the specific events of January 1st, 1920, that mattered to Conte, but the date gave him a convenient and symbolic starting point to survey the changes that would characterize the new decade. One of these changes is alluded to (almost inadvertently) on the very first page, when Conte imagined the last seconds of 1919 at the elegant restaurant Maxim’s: this is the end of the waltz, perhaps a trivial remark, unless it is, as I read it, an oblique metaphor that captures the transformation of the dance as a social activity in postwar Paris. In the first chapter, I quoted the lines that follow this passage to illustrate the attempts that

1 Maurice Magre, L’Œuvre amoureuse et sentimentale de Maurice Magre (Paris: Bibliothèque des curieux, 1922), 87.
3 This book, published in 1976, is part of a series that also includes Le 1er Janvier 1900, 1940, 1960 and 1980. Conte would later expand the series to include 1789 and 1800.
were made to preserve a sense of continuity within Parisian social circles. Although it is tempting to say that the customers of Maxim’s would have seen no difference between December 1919 and January 1920, newspaper and magazine accounts give us a sense of hyper-awareness of some crucial ongoing social and cultural shifts they might well have felt in a suddenly acute manner at this symbolic juncture. Conte’s very first sentence—“The waltz stops.”—expresses more than a brief musical pause during a New Year’s Eve celebration. It alludes to the coming obsolescence of the waltz, a genre whose decline and demise was announced, apprehended, and averted repeatedly in the postwar years. What was once one of the most characteristic genres of popular music in France became a symbolic remnant of a better past, as well as a safeguard of French elegance and moral superiority, and consequently acquired an exceptional nostalgic valence. But nostalgia is paradoxical in its capacity to provide a sense of continuity in ruptures, to bridge temporalities and distances, and, especially in music, to act as a “resistance to the irreversible,” as Vladimir Jankélévitch put it.4 The waltz stopped, and yet, it did not. In his book tracing the history of the waltz, Luc Rudolph touches on this paradox when he identifies the year 1914 as “the end of the absolute domination of the waltz in the world of dance music, even if hundreds were created during the carnage, despite the ban on ballroom dancing. . . . The waltz was staying put.”5

It is not immediately obvious why the onset of the war should have marked the end of a musical genre so highly prized until then if that genre remained strongly represented in the following years, if it “stayed put.” Of course, the ban on dancing during the conflict had major

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5 Luc Rudolph, La valse dans tous ses états: Petite histoire de la valse et de ses compositeurs dans le monde (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011), 296. It is unsettling to see that one of the only studies of the history of the waltz writes so summarily about its decline. “Avant 1914, la valse régnait, « faisait fureur »: impossible d’imaginer une soirée chez « Maxim’s » sans que le chef Boldi en joue de nombreuses. Mais cette date marque la fin de la domination absolue de la valse sur le monde de la musique de danse, même si pendant le carnage des centaines furent créées, en dépit de l’interdiction des bals. . . . Nombre de titres étaient influencés par le conflit en cours, mais la valse restait là. Après la guerre, elle perdit progressivement sa prééminence, comme la danse perdait de son importance sociale.” Rémi Hess, author of the other major study of the waltz in 1989, is even more succinct. Even though he discusses the interactions between jazz and the waltz, he does so only in the abstract, detached from a specific historical context. See Rémi Hess, La Valse : Révolution du couple en Europe (Paris: Métailié, 1989), 298–99.
consequences for Parisian dancing activities, but every dance, and not just the waltz, was affected. Why would the waltz in particular be at a disadvantage? Was there something unique in the relation between the waltz and the war? And how can we explain the persistence of this genre even while it was coming to be considered outdated in the press? In this chapter, I will answer these questions by drawing attention to the debates that framed the discussions of the value of the waltz in the early postwar years, touching on the ethics of dance, on the preservation of France’s national culture and musical tradition, and on the damage of the war. First, I will show the political, ethical, and musical challenges to the waltz as a popular dance, including how it became entangled in nostalgic experiences and discourses. I will then analyze a number of waltzes that produced “sounds of memory,” justifying the continuing predilection to compose new waltzes in domestic, theatrical, and concert settings after the Armistice, and which together expose the conflicting interpretations of the nostalgic affect of the genre in varying settings. I will demonstrate that the waltz acquired its nostalgic affect both through extramusical circumstances (based on postwar national and international relations) and intramusical features (chiefly through formal and metrical disruptions), which I study here as necessarily interconnected, concluding that the waltz was not just a nostalgic object, but also a channel through which the Parisian public could interpret their national history and their place in contemporary politics.

The waltz, more than any other dance (and perhaps any musical genre) acquired an exceptional status after the Armistice: writers and critics for many different types of publications and readerships frequently spoke of the waltz in the past tense. The prolific critic of concert music Émile Vuillermoz commented in 1922 that “today, the languid ecstasy of the waltz is as far from us as the ceremonial rites of the minuet or pavane. And it is the tango that currently collects the curses of the misoneists, until the time when the shimmy will take its place.”

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6 Émile Vuillermoz, “Les Grands Concerts,” Excelsior, January 16, 1922, 4. “Aujourd’hui, la languide extase de la valse est aussi loin de nous que les rites cérémonieux du menuet ou de la pavane. Et c’est le tango qui recueille actuellement les malédictions des misonéistes jusqu’à l’heure où le shimmy viendra prendre sa place.”
hyperbolic statement and his use of the rare word *misonéiste* to refer to the haters of anything new situates the waltz as a distinctly outdated dance, yet one that still remains alive, at least as part of a dispute between old and new dances. What is at stake here is the idea that dances are competing against each other, vying for primacy on the dance floors. It is implied that the misoneists promote a return of the waltz as part of their aversion to the tango, one of the most popular dances after the war. This kind of swift, matter-of-fact dismissal of the waltz as obsolete is common in the press of the time, usually without additional justification, as if it were a given, needing no elaboration.

Another reviewer of concert music, G. Allix, offered a more explicit critique of the changed social context of the dance in what could otherwise have been a straightforward concert review. Commenting on a performance of Hector Berlioz’s symphonic arrangement of Carl Maria von Weber’s *Invitation à la valse*, Allix indicated that a certain knowledge of the social norms of dancing had disappeared since the heyday of the waltz—a change that could even be noticed during an orchestral concert when dancing was absent. He asked, with more than a hint of regret: “Have the modern generations forgotten this page of Weber, that any girl once used to play as best as she could before she could think of getting married? The audience immediately applauded the finished waltz without suspecting the *coda*. Or is it no longer the custom to escort the dancers back to their place?”

Allix might have been right in suspecting that Weber’s *Invitation à la danse*, over a hundred years old, was no longer a favorite of the young generation, despite being part of the repertoire of the Ballets russes before the war. But he might also simply have overlooked the differences in listening expectations between music written to accompany social dancing and music for theatrical staging, the *Invitation* being an example of the latter. The blurred boundaries between these two might explain the audience’s premature applause. Nonetheless, Allix’s suggestion of a generation gap in understanding the social functions of the waltz, and the implication that

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7 G. Allix, “Concerts Pasdeloup,” *Le Monde musical* 31, no. 21–22 (November 1920): 331. “Mais est-ce que les générations modernes ne connaissent plus cette page de Weber, que toute jeune fille autrefois devait jouer tant bien que mal avant de pouvoir s’ouvrir à se marier? Le public applaudit aussitôt la valse finie, sans paraître soupçonner la *coda*. Ou bien n’est-ce plus la mode de reconduire les danseuses à leur place?”
something was lost, something that failed in transmission to the next generation, helps to understand the multiple facets that informed the decline of the waltz.\(^8\)

Similar statements can be found in the dance press, which spread rapidly in 1920 with various degrees of commercial success. The magazine *Paris-Danse* told its readers in April 1920 that “we speak only for memory of the mazurkas, . . . of the polkas cadencées, of the waltzes in triple time, of the American quadrilles.”\(^9\) Yet, in its following issue, it backed down and reassured its readers that “all our dancers are still strong supporters of the waltz,” a dance it described as “our old dance.”\(^10\) During the postwar years, it was not unusual to see the end of the waltz being simultaneously announced and averted, since claims concerning its disappearance were also a way to reminisce about it and to promote reengagement. As I will show in this chapter, the threat to the waltz was also perceived as a threat to the nation, which explains the characterization of the waltz in *Paris-Danse* as *our* dance, and the rhetorical emphasis with which it reports the dance’s endurance just after having declared it a “memory.”

Evidently, magazines like *Le Monde musical* (which published Allix’s review) and *Paris-Dance* appealed to different kinds of readers and different levels of engagement with the dance. In the former example, it is the waltz as a musical genre that is deemed outdated; in the latter, it is the waltz as a social activity. Together, these comments reveal that it was both the status of the *waltz* and of *waltzing* that had recently changed. To better understand each of these changes, we must

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\(^8\) Not much information about G. Allix can be gathered from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which lists simply his dates as 18..-19.. Allix annotated letters by Berlioz for a 1903 publication, which would make him at the very least forty years old in 1920, likely older. For comparison, Émile Vuillermoz was 42 years old in 1920.


\(^10\) Jean de Marcigny, “Sport et Art : La Danse est un art plastique,” *Paris-Danse* 1, no. 9 (April 9, 1920): 1. “Est-ce à dire que pour ces danses nouvelles, nous négligions en France, nos vieilles danses ? En aucune façon et tous nos danseurs, toutes nos danseuses sont encore de fervents adeptes de la valse.”
first have a closer look at the ethical and political discourses that accompanied dancing activities after the war.

3.1.2 The ethics and politics of dancing

Initiated within days after the beginning of the war in 1914, the ban on public dancing marked the end of an era of popular dancing in Paris. It took months after the return to peace before the ban was finally lifted, on April 3, 1919. After five years of waiting, the reestablished right to publicly dance initiated an unparalleled craze for the activity sometimes referred to as dansomanie (dance-mania). American music would shape most of the debates about the dansomanie. But although jazz had been popularized in France in 1917 with the arrival of black American soldiers, the dance craze was often perceived as a result and reaction to the end of the war more than to the presence of a new type of popular music. In February 1920, a new dance magazine, Paris-Danse, explained in its first issue that “the current dance craze is a consequence of the war. Such a phenomenon always occurs after troubled times of existence, in the face of the uncertainty of human affairs.”

We saw in chapter 1 that periods of ruptures, tension, or social unrest often lead to intensified experiences of nostalgia, but in the postwar years, it was rather a desire to forget that propelled the dance craze. As Sophie Jacotot put it, dance was “increasingly perceived as a sport capable of...

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12 Little information has surfaced about clandestine dancing during the war. It is often mentioned in the press but without enough detail to fully understand it. When dancing was legalized once more, dance halls were still forced to comply with strict regulations and restrictions, for example with early closing times at 10:30 or midnight (depending on the source). See, for instance, Paul Perret, “Les Dancings de guerre,” La Rampe, no. 164 (December 28, 1919): 26; and André Warnod, Visages de Paris (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1930), 302.

regenerating society.” Another new magazine devoted to dance, *Paris-Dancing*, also treated dance as an antidote to nostalgia, writing on the first page of its inaugural issue in December 1919 that dance came to “proclaim the revenge of pleasure over boredom, to disperse the rooted germs of our spleen into the exhilaration of its swirls!” The magazine also compared the return of dance to the return of a war prisoner, effectively linking the dance craze to military victory: “Dance broke its chains at the first shouts of victory; she showed herself, and the conquered crowd formed a harmonious cortege behind her.” For *Paris-Dancing*, that victory was a national victory for France and Frenchness. Thrusting aside the fact that the most popular dances at the time were Argentinian and American, the magazine asked: “Don’t we all take it to heart to preserve securely the privilege of elegance and beautiful manners, which has shone with such pure radiance for centuries at the heart of our race?”

Even one of Gabriel Fauré’s first postwar compositions, the short song *C’est la paix*, Op. 114, on a poem by Georgette Debladis, repeated the trope by emphatically singing (in triple time, but closer to marching than waltzing) that “we will go to them [the returning soldiers] dancing the dance we dance at home.” In creating this parallel between the French military victory and its revival of dance, the authors of such publications situated dance within discourses on the preservation of French national culture amid threats of its decay in the “troubled” and “uncertain” world that the war was leaving behind. To reclaim dance in such terms,

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15 “Quelques mots...,” *Paris-Dancing*, no. 1 (December 1, 1919): 1. “La danse a brisé ses chaînes aux premiers chants de victoire ; elle s’est montrée, et la foule conquise a formé derrière elle un harmonieux cortège. Ne venait-elle pas proclamer la revanche du plaisir sur l’ennui, disperser dans l’ivresse de ses tourbillons, les germes enracinés de notre spleen !”

16 “Quelques mots...,” 1. “N’avons-nous pas tous à cœur de conserver précieusement le privilège d’élégance et de belles manières, qui brille d’un si pur éclat depuis des siècles au blason de notre race ?”

17 “Et joyeusement, toutes en cadence, nous irons vers eux en dansant la danse qu’on danse chez nous.” Graham Johnson writes that the dotted rhythm that pervades the song *C’est la paix* “recalls the music for Ulysse’s triumphant return in Pénelope” (Fauré’s 1913 opera). Not only does he find them “strangely stiff and inappropriate to the dancing in the street,” but it reminds him of “newsreel footage of the Great War where great generals and their confident troops are depicted in quick, jerky movements, the faded black and white of their images casting an eerie pall over the cinematic shuffling of bodies that were soon to be blasted into dust.” See Graham Johnson, *Gabriel Fauré: The Songs and Their Poets* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 357.
as something racially pure, was the first step toward a nostalgic reassessment of its idealized history, of which the waltz was the centerpiece. Reclaiming the French origins of the waltz was more than just a celebration of national culture; it was a reaction against what was perceived by some as the invasion of France by foreign dances, especially those that American soldiers had popularized since their arrival in France in 1917.

Indeed, the reconsideration of the waltz after the war was caused primarily by the status of Paris as a center of global cultural exchange. Rather than relying on the institutions that defined Parisian dancing before the war, the postwar was characterized by a new type of establishment rooted in cosmopolitan artistic cultures rather than French tradition. Indeed, not all establishments that had closed during the war reopened immediately after the ban was lifted: while the Moulin de la Galette resumed its activities shortly after, on May 17, 1919, other famous places like the Bal Bullier or the Moulin-Rouge remained closed until December 2 and 17, 1921, respectively. Others, such as the Jardin de Paris, where the dancer Jane Avril had triumphed in the 1890s, never reopened. The new dance halls that flourished in the early 1920s in response to the high demand for public dancing not only contested the hegemony of those dating to the previous era, but replaced them altogether. These new dancings (as they were called in French) signaled the presence and influence of American culture in the French capital, which inaugurated a new wave of cosmopolitanism that would mark the French jazz scene of the 1920s.

As soon as they appeared, the dancings became a cause of heated debate that covered the social structures that enabled them as well as the musical styles they favored. The term dancing was itself criticized as it was seen by part of the public as a “manifestation of unpleasant Anglomania, a threat to the purity of our language,” echoing the argument that dance used to be, and should remained, racially pure. “Just because they have replaced our traditional French dances

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with Negro and savage steps,” wrote Jean Lecoq in *Le Petit Journal*, “this is no reason that they should also sacrifice the good old term of *danse*, which is French.”\(^\text{20}\) To this complaint, the editors of *Paris-Dancing* responded: “We think that something new needs a new name: and, without being savages, we will do… as the Negro does!”\(^\text{21}\) Even in debates over the terminology of the dance craze, we can read the protectionism and racism latent within the traditionalist desire to preserve a certain form of French dance that would be linguistically French as well as racially white. One writer of *Paris qui chante* mocked this debate by saying that the word *dancing* “is French just like sport, sketch, wagon, water… etc.”\(^\text{22}\) But in these politics of respectability, the use of a term and its appropriation within the French language was not innocuous. It constituted a defense by the adepts of the new dances against their opponents.

A major factor that contributed to hostility against the *dancings* arose from the postwar economic context. Since 1914, the French population had been affected by inflation and strict privations, from which it would only gradually recover in the early 1920s. In this connection, the excessive spending that the *dancings* were thought to encourage was broadly disapproved of in the press.\(^\text{23}\) For example, the reprise of a twenty-five-year-old play at the Comédie-Française in January 1920 was praised for *not* including “tangos, fox-trot or other stupid one-steps triggered by a savage jazz-band. Oh! the modern ‘dancings,’ another sad postwar novelty!”\(^\text{24}\) The *dancings* had

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\(^\text{20}\) Jean Lecoq, “Propos d’actualité : « Dancing »,” *Le Petit Journal*, November 1, 1919, 2. “C’est à croire, en vérité, qu’on a juré de rayer certains mots de notre langue : le mot *danse*, par exemple, et l’expression *salle de danse*. On ne voit plus que des *dancing* et des *dancing palaces*. Sur les enseignes, dans les journaux, partout revient cet agaçant *dancing*,… Mais ce n’est pas une raison, parce qu’ils ont remplacé par des pas de nègres et de sauvages nos traditionnelles danses françaises, pour qu’ils sacrifient également ce bon vieux terme de *danse* qui est français.”

\(^\text{21}\) “Dancing...,” *Paris-Dancing*, no. 1 (December 1, 1919): 6. “Nous estimons qu’à chose nouvelle il faut un nom nouveau : Et, sans être des sauvages, nous ferons… comme le nègre!”


become so invasive in Paris that they presented a potential threat to even the most conservative of theatrical stages. Whether the Comédie-Française actually performed fox-trots in any of its plays was not even the question; the mere thought of the possibility that they might was frightening enough to warrant calls for an immediate control from the government. So, the reviewer ended with a long and seemingly unrelated plea to the finance minister to “take most, if not the entirety, of the taxes you intend to demand from the dancings, which have the resources.”²⁵ In the end, the French government acted. In the spring of 1920, after months of debates about taxes in the arts and culture, new taxes were adopted that hit the dancings harder than other cultural entertainment establishments. While symphonic concerts were being taxed at 10%, and cinemas were taxed between 10% and 25% depending on their revenues, dancings were taxed at 25% regardless of their revenues.²⁶

Perhaps more significantly than questions of nationalism and economy, it was the moral qualities (or lack thereof) of the dancings that were criticized by their traditionalist opponents most vociferously. As Matthew Jordan points out, the Catholic Church led the crusade against the dancings, believing that they “caused more psychological and constitutional damage to the individual than any war trauma ever could.”²⁷ Unsurprisingly, the Church forbade dancing, and its affiliated magazines, like Nos Chansons françaises, published by the Association catholique de la jeunesse française, tried to discourage its readers with dissuasive arguments that played on the trauma of the war: “It’s not in order to marry little parakeets who only think about the fox-trot that they went out to have their faces smashed.”²⁸ However, the publications of the Church and its

²⁵ Chevalier, 11. “Pitié pour le théâtre, Monsieur le Ministre, et sans scrupule aucun, arrachez au « dancing », qui ont des moyens, la plus grande part, sinon la totalité des impôts que vous comptez demander.”
²⁶ See “Un nouvel impôt sur la musique : Protestons et agissons,” Le Monde musical 31, no. 1–2 (January 1920): 4; Marcel Paul-Demeny, “Les Fameux 25%,” Paris-Danse 1, no. 22 (November 19, 1920): 1; see also Jordan, Le Jazz, 57. Ironically, Joseph Caillaux, the finance minister before the war who was the instigator of the income tax in France, was incarcerated in 1920 for defeatism during the war.
²⁷ Jordan, Le Jazz, 54.
²⁸ René Bastien, “Le Bluff à la Mode : Fantaisie-revue en un acte,” Nos Chansons françaises, no. 2 (November 1920): 49. “Les jeunes gens qui ont le cœur propre, et Dieu merci il y en a encore, commencent à se rendre compte que ce n’est pas pour épouser des petites perruches qui ne songent qu’au fox-trot qu’ils
supporters, with limited reach, had no visible impact on the popularity of the activity, which kept increasing.

Still, the debate over the ethics of the *dancings* was not limited to those affiliated with the Catholic Church. In one of the most provocative pieces of journalism to be published in *Le Courrier musical* in 1920, music critic Charles Tenroc qualified the *dancings* as “disgusting and macabre,” and described them as a contagious disease that would hopefully quickly go away. The article’s ostentatious style, replete with rare and unusual words, combined with its nationalist, economic, and moralist implications, is worthy of a place in any history of dance in France (see full text in Appendix B).


Je n’ai pas connu Rigolboche, qui levait la jambe à la hauteur d’une institution, ni Fille de l’air, dont la verve entraînait les régiments italiens. Mais je me souviens des fantaisies chorégraphiques d’après la défaite de 71 – de Bullier, du Moulin-Rouge, du Jardin de Paris, du Coq-Duel avec des ailes dans le dos, de Valentin le Désossé, de Rayon d’Or et de Nini-Patte en l’air, morte hier à Villejuif. L’on s’amusait vigoureusement alors dans les nuages de tabacs, de poussières, aux mousselines lancées par-dessus les Moulins de la Galette, aux valsé non encore chaloupées et autres acrobaties joyeuses et nerveuses de Lanciers. Les plus moroses oubliaient leurs dyspepsies aux farandoles et aux rythmes francs.

... Je sais des ménages menacés, des salons réputés musicaux où la musique est sacrifiée à la mode de quelques tours de matchiches et de foxtrott. Des lumières, du charbon sont gâchés en faveur d’exploitations irritantes, alors que dehors les gueux sains heurtent les poubelles. La police n’a d’autre mission que de surveiller l’exactitude de la fermeture des tristes maisons tolérées et la pénombre de leur façade.

Allons ! je supplie qui de droit de dissiper ces suppôts de Salpêtrière, ces mous maniaques circulaires, avant que l’indignation publique leur fasse un méchant parti. Je supplie les gens du monde de proscrire ces gabegies stupides renouvelées des harems de Sémiramis, moins le faste.

Et quand on aura oublié tout cela, il se trouvera un maître de danse française pour établir un pas français sur de la musique française. Alors nous danserons...


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sont allés se faire casser la figure. Alors, quand elles verront qu’elles restent pour compte, les petites perruches, ça les fera tout de même réfléchir.”
I never knew Rigolboche, who raised her leg to the height of a building, nor Fille de l’air, whose verve excited the Italian regiments. But I do remember the choreographic fantasies after the defeat of 71 – of the Bullier, the Moulin-Rouge, the Jardin de Paris, of Coquelin Cadet who had wings at the back, Valentin le Désossé, Rayon d’Or and Nini-Patte en l’air, who died yesterday in Villejuif. We used to have a good time then in the smoke of tobacco and dust, with the muslins thrown over the Moulins de la Galette, with the waltzes not yet chaloupées and other joyous and nervous aerobatics of lanciers. The most depressed people would forget their dyspepsia with the farandoles and strong rhythms.

... I know of threatened households, of salons that have the reputation of being musical where music is sacrificed to the fad of a few turns of maxixe and foxtrot. Electricity and coal are wasted in favor of irritating businesses, while outside healthy beggars bump into garbage cans. The police have no other mission than to monitor the accuracy of the closure of the tolerated, sad houses and the darkness of their facade.

Come on! I beseech whoever is entitled to dispel these henchmen of Salpêtrière, these circular maniacs, before public indignation do them wrong. I beseech the people of the world to proscribe this stupid pandemonium, revived from Semiramis’ harems, yet without the pomp.

And when we will have forgotten all this, there will be a French dance master to establish a French step on French music. Then we will dance...

As with other examples cited above, Tenroc’s condemnation of the dancings was anchored in the economic context of the postwar, which left many people struggling. Because of these struggles, dance warranted state control. That Tenroc was in favor of heftier taxes on the dancings is

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28 Rigolboche (1842-1920) was a dancer of cancan popular in the late 1850s and early 1860s. She was portrayed by Mistinguett in the 1936 film based on her life. Fille de l’air was the name of a féerie with songs and dances in 1837 and of an opérette fantastique by Paul Lacôme in 1890. The name Fille de l’air was associated with the lead dancer of these shows, at least in promotional pictures. I have not been able to find a dancer of that name associated with Italian regiments, although at least two Italian operas bear this title (from 1790 and 1826).

30 All three establishments were still closed at the time this article was published (see above), which explains Tenroc’s use of the past to refer to them.

31 Coquelin Cadet (1848-1909) was a comedian at the Comédie-Française. The wings in the back might refer to one of his monologues as well as his name, which could be translated as the Young Rooster. Valentin le Désossé (1843-1907) was a dancer and contortionist, especially at the Moulin-Rouge, where Toulouse-Lautrec painted him with La Goulue in 1895. Rayon d’Or and Nini-Patte en l’air were two dancers at the Moulin-Rouge around 1900.

32 The lanciers is a square dance. Although the valse chaloupée (rolling waltz) is a relative of the waltz dating from around 1908, it is seen here as a less pure derivative of its ancestor, perhaps due to its proximity with the Apache dance, which Tenroc describes as “villainous” in the following paragraph. Jody Blake describes the valse chaloupée as “danced to a three-beat measure and consisting of running steps and turns.” (Jody Blake, Le Tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930 (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 103.)

33 La Salpêtrière is a historic hospital in Paris. It was known particularly for its research in nervous diseases and for purveying to the poorest.

undoubtable, but his ideal solution would be to get rid of them altogether. At the same time, Tenroc revealed that his nostalgia prompted his adverse reaction to the new dances. In a long enumeration, he mourned the disappearance of dancers and dances of one or two generations ago, including the waltz, before it had been corrupted in the early 1900s. Tenroc also expressed nostalgia for the future, with an underlying mal du pays, when he imagined an era when the dancings will be gone and forgotten and French culture triply restored with French dance masters, French steps and French music. The climate of fear of cosmopolitanism and of cultural invasion is tangible in Tenroc’s article, and can explain, at least partly, his aversion for the Brazilian maxixe and the American foxtrot.

For Tenroc, as for any of his conservative peers, jazz was the real enemy, the “American disease” that was spreading through all levels of society. It is not just purely because of their geographical origins that “jazz” dances, such as the reigning fox-trot, were regarded by traditionalists as a threat, but also because of their temporal origins in the midst of the conflict. “Inextricably associated with the American troops who had imported it,” explains Jody Blake, “jazz was thought to epitomize the barbaric upheaval of the First World War and its aftermath. For all those who sought to restore order in the midst of this chaos, there was no easier or more obvious target than jazz.” Jazz was linked to the war on multiple levels. Sonically, jazz was regularly described (or rather dismissed) as noise instead of music. As Blake writes, jazz “seemed to echo the din of war” and “the devastation of the battlefield.” In his lengthy book on the dancings, published as early as 1922, André Warnod wrote a sort of organology of the jazz-band that evoked

35 Jordan, Le Jazz, 57.
36 Blake, Le Tumulte noir, 86.
37 See for example Jordan, Le Jazz, 116. Jazz was not the only music described as noise. An unsigned article in L’Écho musical complained that concert music was now overrun by noise. The author mentioned, for instance, Milhaud’s Choéphores. (X***, “La Musique et les Mœurs,” L’Écho musical 4, no. 4 (July 31, 1919): 93–95.) Likewise, the reprise of Satie’s Parade in 1920 provided the occasion for Jean Cocteau to improve the score and add more noise. (Léon Vallas, “Erik Satie,” Nouvelle Revue musicale 19, no. 2 (December 1920): 27.)
38 Blake, Le Tumulte noir, 81.
a number of noises while offering derision for the instruments to which the previous generation
danced the waltz:

À danse nouvelle, orchestre nouveau !

Laissons donc les cuivres tonitruant[s] et les pistons narquois jouer en
mesure les polkas et les valses sur lesquelles nos pères dansaient. Ne rappelons
pas les tziganes en vestes rouges et leurs violons langoureux dont les accents
charmeurs donnaient du vague à l’âme, ne réveillons pas les échos des valses
tristes que chantait Mme Paulette Darthy. Autant faire venir un clavecin. Les gens
d’à présent veulent avoir les nerfs secoués par des instruments plus brutaux. Allons
chercher les nègres et leur jazz-band.

... Le jazz-band, c’est le halètement de la machine, la trépidation de
l’automobile ; le train qui grince sur le rail, le tramway qui passe en agitant sa
cloche. C’est la catastrophe de chemin de fer, la chaudière qui fait explosion, la
sirène hurlante du vaisseau en perdition, et tout cela entraîné dans un tourbillon
infernal, frénétique, qui mèlent tout, qui précipite tout dans le ronronnement
impitoyable du klakson ; le jazz-band c’est un cataclysme à la blague qui vous fait
eclater de rire.

To new dances, new orchestras!

Let’s leave the thundering brass and sly valves to play the polkas and
waltzes on which our fathers danced. Let’s not call back the gypsies in red vests
and their languorous violins, whose charming accents produced melancholy, let’s
not awake the echoes of the sad waltzes that Mrs. Paulette Darthy sang. Might as
well send for a harpsichord. People now want to have their nerves shaken by more
brutal instruments. Let’s seek the Negroes and their jazz-band.

... The jazz-band is the panting of the machine, the tremor of the
automobile; the train that grinds on the rail, the tram that goes by rattling its bell.
It is the disaster of the railway, the boiler that explodes, the shrieking siren of the
sinking ship, and all of this entangled in an infernal, frenetic whirlwind that mixes
everything, that rushes everything in the ruthless roar of the klaxon; the jazz-band
is a joking disaster that makes you burst out laughing.39

Warnod does not refer specifically to sonic warfare; quite on the contrary, his praise of the noise
quality of jazz seems to describe it as exhilarating, almost humorous, rather than traumatic. This
“noise” phase of commentary on French jazz was short-lived40 but gave fodder to the traditionalists’
argument that jazz was not music, hence making it an easy target for those who sought to restore
order in the midst of this chaos. For example, in a highly symbolic mock-revue by René Bastien
published in the Catholic magazine Nos Chansons françaises, a jazz band made of whistles, car
horns, bells, and instruments “as unmusical as possible” walks on stage, each musician playing a

40 See Jordan, Le Jazz, 75.
different tune in a different tempo. Only a gunshot followed by the start of a traditional French song succeeds in dispersing the band.\textsuperscript{41}

3.1.3 The waltz as resistance

The reviews and articles I have highlighted so far illustrate the viewpoint that the dancings were establishments of debauched entertainment negating basic moral values, like a “cultural disease.” But the truth was that the dancings were much more varied than this. André Warnod, who gave us the colorful description of the jazz-band instrumentation cited above, immediately inverted it on subsequent pages with a description of the nostalgic power of jazz:

Mais soudain, dans le fracas des machines devenues vivantes, s’élève une plainte, un chant nostalgique aigu, crispant, qui s’insinue en vous, qui s’attaque aux fibres les plus sensibles et les plus secrètes, et tandis que monte le chant aigu, s’évoquent des paysages lointains qu’on ne verra jamais. Invitations aux impossibles voyages.

\ldots C’est à présent la plainte nostalgique dont nous parlions tout à l’heure, les guitares havaïennes, les banjos, les clarinettes commencent leurs mélopées. La danseuse s’abandonne davantage dans les bras de son danseur, il ne s’agit plus de frénésie ni de gesticulation, le chant nègre vous coupe bras et jambes ; on danse quand même, mais presque inconsciemment, les gestes sont plus mous, plus lents, une sorte de voluptueux alanguissement pèse sur les couples.

But suddenly, in the clatter of machines that have become alive, a lament rises, a nostalgic song, high, clenching, that creeps into you, that attacks the most sensitive and secret nerves, and while the high song rises, distant landscapes that will never be seen are evoked. Invitations to impossible journeys.

\ldots It’s now the nostalgic lament we were talking about earlier, the Hawaiian guitars, the banjos, the clarinets, begin their threnodies. The dancer gives herself up more in the arms of her dancer, it is no longer a matter of frenzy or of gesticulation, the Negro song cuts off your arms and legs; people dance anyway, but almost unconsciously, the movements are slacker, slower, a sort of voluptuous languor weighs on the couples.\textsuperscript{42}

It is almost as if Warnod was coming to the defense of the dancings by trying to appeal to a more conventional idea of lyrical music: Warnod repeats the word “song” three times in this short

\textsuperscript{41} Bastien, “La Bluff à la Mode,” 48–49.
\textsuperscript{42} Warnod, \textit{Les Bals de Paris}, 292–93.
excerpt. One might wonder how a genre so new as jazz could already be described as nostalgic. In fact, all the new dances were from time to time referred to nostalgically using the plurality of nostalgia’s meanings available at the time. Warnod’s nostalgia, for example, with its “invitations to impossible journeys,” fits squarely within the paradigm of exoticist nostalgia defined in the first chapter.43

The portrait of the Parisian dancings that Warnod captured in *Les Bals de Paris* is much more heterogeneous than any single critic or article can show. Surveys of jazz in France tend to misrepresent it by focusing mostly on postwar novelties without paying much attention to the presence of older styles. In fact, jazz bands would perform an eclectic choice of music that included French dances in addition to the international dances newly in vogue. Thus, far from being relegated to old-fashioned ballrooms, the waltz was adopted by—and adapted to—the dancings. In its “Chronique des dancings,” the magazine *Paris-Dancing* would recount in each issue the sights and sounds of the most popular dancings of Paris, including the elegant Coliséum de Paris, located in Montmartre. After writing about its decor and commenting on the elegance of its customers, assumed to be of the higher classes, the author described the music and dances performed during the evening:


In the boxes disappearing under an avalanche of artificial flowers, old gentlemen wearing monocles follow the movements of the couples, who twist and roll to the unexpected chords of “William’s Jazz-band.” The tangos made even more nostalgic by the moving voice of Cerbon Norbens,44 whom the chorus of the

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43 Jody Blake writes, about poets inspired by the dada group: “All of these poets used references to African-American music and dance (and other well-known aspects of American popular culture) to impart a fantastic humor, barbaric insolence, and primitive nostalgia to their imagery.” (Blake, *Le Tumulte noir*, 71.)

44 Probably Marie-Louise Cébron-Norbens (1888-1958), a mezzo-soprano who performed in operettas during the interwar.
Coliseum accompanies quietly, succeed to the fox-trots and Brazilian habaneras to which the orchestra of maestro Smet gives rhythm. People stop dancing for a moment to allow Duque and Gaby to perform in the “Waltz of the Kiss” – their creation.\textsuperscript{45}

Even though there is little specific detail about individual pieces, one can feel from this excerpt the integration and intersection of multiple regions and cultures at such \textit{dancings}. For instance, Duque was a Brazilian dancer who acquired his reputation in Paris in the 1910s by promoting music from his country, among which the \textit{maxixe}.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, here the new dance that Duque introduced with his partner Gaby was not Brazilian but French—although Duque and Gaby had introduced it in South America in 1916 (Fig. 3.1). “Valses du baiser” abounded in the prewar dance repertoire, and it is possible that this number, in recalling earlier dances, would have been as nostalgic as the tango heard earlier in the evening. The article also stressed social cohesion and order in the way that the chorus quietly accompanied the singer and in how the public stopped dancing to respectfully watch the leading couple perform their new routine—after all, this dance was presented as a choreographed interlude, a spectacle to behold from the side of the dance floor. In the context of contention discussed above, this article could have been used to mitigate the criticisms against the \textit{dancings} and oppose calls for governmental measures by proving the respectability of the audience (“gentlemen wearing monocles”), the calm, harmony, and elegance of the dancers, and the continuity between pre- and postwar music (the “Valse du Baiser” is the only piece whose title is given), despite the presence of a jazz-band performing “unexpected chords” and the inclusion of dancing novelties such as the American fox-trot, popularized only months before.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{47} See Jacotot, \textit{Danser à Paris dans l’entre-deux-guerres}. A “fox-trot comique réaliste” titled \textit{Charlot Fox-Trot}, published by Jean Daris in 1920, tells the story of the opening of a new fox-trot \textit{dancing} founded by a guy from San Francisco named Charlot (Chaplin’s nickname in France)!
Because of its cultural history in France, the waltz could play an important role in the defense of the *dancings*, either in performance or through journalism. For instance, in the first section of this chapter, I quoted the magazine *Paris-Danse*, which claimed that dancers were all “strong supporters of the waltz,” a claim that elevated the waltz to the status of safekeeper of France’s cultural heritage and of the Frenchness and civility of its population. Immediately after reassuring its readers that Parisian dancers still knew how to dance the waltz, the magazine nonetheless reappraised the new dances, perhaps in an attempt to put them on par with the waltz: “For being less aesthetic than the rhythmic dances of yesterday, those of today lack neither grace nor science.”48 As if that was not a strong enough rebuttal, that same issue of *Paris-Danse* was

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48 Marcigny, “La Danse est un art plastique,” 1–2. “Pour moins esthétique que les danses rythmées, nos danses d’hier, celles d’aujourd’hui ne manquent ni de grâce ni de science.”
accompanied by the score of a *valse lente* for piano in its central pages, one of two *valses lentes* published in its pages during its first twelve bi-monthly issues.⁴⁹

It is in this context of widespread traditionalist concern and opposition toward postwar Parisian *dancings* that the waltz—regardless of its decline in popularity—emerged as a genre that symbolized the desires of an older population for a dance that would be socially respectable, racially uncorrupted, stylistically elegant, and musically sophisticated. In short, the waltz was a remnant of a better national past (both aesthetically and ethically), and its association with a more stable period of French history (or at least what was imagined to be more stable) made it a nostalgia-potent genre. Hence, it is not just against the *dancings* that the waltz was enacting its resistance, it was against time itself, and it is in that sense that it became an act of “resistance to the irreversible.”

### 3.2 The Waltz as a Sound of Memory

The first part of this chapter showed the exceptional place occupied by the waltz among the dances and popular music of 1920 Paris. In the following section I leave aside the *dancings* to focus more specifically on the representations of the waltz as a nostalgic genre. Hence, while press coverage informs us of the multiple external sources that affected the transformation of the waltz, by looking at specific compositions, and the responses they elicited, we can observe how composers also reconstructed the waltz as a nostalgic genre from the inside, activating through music what I will refer to as the “sounds of memory.” Michael Puri has paid close attention to the role of memory in Ravel’s waltzes, writing of “an oblivion that, at the end of the long nineteenth century, was in the process of transforming the waltz from a cultural monument into a ruin. Or—since the notion of ruins would likely bring to mind the blasted landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich more readily

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⁴⁹ For comparison, during that same period, the magazine also published three tangos, three one-steps, two foxtrots and two javas (a recent dance derived from the waltz and especially popular at bals-musettes).
than musical genres—it might be better to describe the waltz as a *lieu de mémoire*.”

The concept of *lieu de mémoire* was first introduced by Pierre Nora in the late 1980s to describe the collective “commemorative vigilance” that occurs following the consciousness of a “break with the past,” the sense that “memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.” For Nora, “there are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory.” Real memory is social, immediate, in permanent evolution, open to remembering and forgetting, while sites of memory are organizations of the past, reconstructions, always problematic and incomplete. That is, sites of memory such as museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, monuments, books, and so forth, are deliberately created, substituting themselves for spontaneous memory. Yet to be considered *lieu de mémoire*, sites must be more than simply constructed repositories of history, “vestiges of the past in the present.”

For Nora, they should satisfy three conditions: material, symbolic, and functional. Hence, “an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura”—in other words, a *lieu de mémoire* cannot be a simply functional site.

Michael Puri invokes this concept to describe the interplay of memory and living tradition in Ravel’s waltzes. In his musical analyzes, Puri attempts to “gauge the presence of memory in a specific piece by examining it for marks that betray a sense of distance from the past.” However, Puri’s goal was not to locate Ravel’s waltzes within a broader social history of the waltz, nor to initiate a conversation about sites of memory in music beyond these specific examples. To extend the idea of sites of memory to a musical genre as a whole, we must first ask when and how a site

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52 Nora, 7.
53 Puri, *Ravel the Decadent,* 16.
54 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 19.
of memory is produced, or rather when and how sound becomes sound of memory? Insofar as not all historical sites act as sites of memory invested in the creation of symbolic meaning, not all musical genres from the past stand as sounds of memory. For instance, although the cakewalk was also an outdated dance after the war, it did not turn into a sound of memory due to its relatively recent introduction, the brevity and limit of its vogue in Paris (at its peak for only a few years, c. 1903 to 1908), its lack of deep national historical significance in France, and the assimilation of its characteristic rhythms into other popular genres of the 1910s and 1920s. In short, the cakewalk never acquired the nostalgic affect nor the exceptional status necessary for its survival. In contrast, the ambivalent positioning of the postwar waltz between past and present, its rootedness in French cultural history, 56 and its reconstruction and revival of aesthetics that could no longer be perceived as participating in the current evolution of the dancings, together fulfil the criteria of Pierre Nora’s concept. Thinking of the waltz as a sound of memory by focusing on its material, symbolic, and functional content will allow us to understand how nostalgia is enacted musically.

One problem that arises when attempting to uncover the sounds of memory of musical works is that the scarcity of first-hand accounts often forces us to rely exclusively on the musical text, separately from the specific context of its production and reception, which left little or no traces. While this is not so much of a problem with Ravel’s La Valse (for which there is both an abundance of first-hand accounts and a musical-structural complexity), it is readily apparent in the homogeneity of popular music, especially music meant for the dance floor, in which uniformity is a given. As I argued in chapter 1, musical nostalgia is generally expressed as musical difference—but to read difference within pieces that display very little of it requires attention to details and a grasp of the constraints and features of the genre. Reynaldo Hahn’s review of the 1919 revival of Offenbach’s 1864 operetta La Belle Hélène provides an interesting example of musical nostalgia in popular music (although not of a waltz) that comes from such attention to details.

56 For example, the waltz was taught in elementary schools in Paris in 1900. See Rudolph, La valse dans tous ses états, 104; and Hess, La Valse, 240.
La brillante reprise de La Belle Hélène à la Gaîté a ravivé en moi bien des souvenirs. Quand j’étais petit, c’est au son des refrains d’Offenbach que mon père me faisait sauter sur ses genoux et, dès ce moment-là, le rythme véritable de cette musique s’est implanté dans ma mémoire, car mon père, qui n’était guère musicien, fredonnait ces airs machinalement et, par cela même, fidèlement comme il les avait entendu chanter sous le règne d’Offenbach, par Schneider, par Coudert, par Dupuis, par Granier... De là vient, sans doute, que je ne trouve jamais assez rythmée l’interprétation qu’on en donne de nos jours. Il semble qu’on n’ose pas exagérer l’accentuation des temps forts, chose à laquelle Offenbach tenait essentiellement, et qu’on bouscule les mouvements sous prétexte d’entrain.

... Je me souviens fort bien de la façon dont mon père scandait l’air de Barbe-Bleue : « qu’un bon courtizzan s’incline, qqu’iiil s’incline, qqu’iiil s’incline !... » On oublie trop que la musique d’Offenbach est de la grande caricature, de la grande parodie. Il faut l’exécuter largement. Pas de demi-nuances, pas de timidité dans la coloration sonore, pas de tiédeur; les petits effets conviennent à la discrète jovialité d’un Lecocq, à la polissonnerie bourgeoise d’un Auber; le rire d’Offenbach est autre chose que cela!

The brilliant revival of La Belle Hélène at the Gaîté has revived in me many memories. When I was little, it was to the sound of Offenbach’s refrains that my father would bounce me on his knees and, from that moment, the true rhythm of this music was fixed in my memory, because my father, who was hardly a musician, would hum these tunes mechanically and, for that reason, as faithfully as he had heard them sung during the reign of Offenbach, by Schneider, by Coudert, by Dupuis, by Granier... That is certainly why I find that the performances given today are never rhythmic enough. It seems that no-one dares to exaggerate the accentuation of the strong beats, something that Offenbach really cared about, and that we rush the movements under the guise of enthusiasm.

... I remember very well the way my father chanted the air of Barbe-bleue: “qu’un bon courtizzan s’incline, qqu’iiil s’incline, qqu’iiil s’incline !...” We often forget that Offenbach’s music is a great caricature, a great parody. It must be broadly executed. No half-shades, no timidity in the tone color, no tepidity; little effects are suitable to the discreet joviality of a Lecocq, to the bourgeois mischief of an Auber; Offenbach’s laughter is something else!

Here, Hahn combined personal memories and music criticism with the expertise of a prolific composer of vocal music and stage works. His nostalgic criticism recalls Goethe’s letter, cited in chapter 1, in which the German writer explained that the Swiss’ homesickness for the ranz des vaches was caused by a lack of sameness (it was a “nostalgia for the distinctive thusness of the original sound,” as Helmut Illbruck puts it). Hahn’s nostalgia stemmed from a similar lack of authenticity in new performances as compared to his father’s, to which he ascribed the utmost

57 Reynaldo Hahn, “À propos de La Belle Hélène (Extrait d’un volume de souvenirs inédits),” Le Ménestrel 81, no. 1 (October 17, 1919): 3. The article is announced as an excerpt from yet unpublished reminiscences. I have not been able to trace this passage in any other publication by Reynaldo Hahn.
authenticity, despite his father’s lack of musical training and his “mechanical” reproduction (machinalement): unable to come up with his own personal interpretation of Offenbach’s songs, Hahn’s father must therefore be replicating to the letter the interpretations he has heard from Offenbach’s first singers. Hahn deftly avoided turning his criticism into solely a case of childhood nostalgia by adding a musicological explanation, sketching a more nuanced interpretation that covers the material, symbolic, and functional meanings that made the air such a strong sound of memory for him. The authenticity that the composer heard (or remembered hearing) in his father’s voice lied mostly in the peculiar accentuation of Offenbach’s lyrics, which have often been criticized for emphasizing the wrong syllables (Fig. 3.2).\textsuperscript{58} So, for a composer of vocal music like Hahn—born eight years after the premiere of Barbe-bleue and three-and-a-half years after the Siege of Paris—the structural integrity of the work was lost when the peculiarities of Offenbach’s musical style were compromised.

\textsuperscript{58} The proper spoken accentuation in the line provided by Hahn in his review would be “qu’il s’incline” instead of “qu’il s’incline”.
Few examples of nostalgic narratives from the postwar era demonstrate how sounds of memory are produced as clearly and concisely as Hahn’s review, which considered both the work and its environment. Yet, not all instances of nostalgic narratives are suited for this reflexive examination. For instance, pastiches often downplay the symbolic aura of sounds of memory due to their unmediated use of the past. Hahn’s music was frequently influenced or derived from nineteenth-century popular composers like Offenbach, but his *Thème varié sur le nom de Haydn* from 1910, although characterized as having “passion and nostalgic melancholy” in a 1920 review, could hardly be regarded as a sound of memory. When it was reprinted in *Le Ménestrel*...

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in 1914, the piece was introduced as a “pastiche,” “a charming piece that has all the aroma of the old days, which were not the worst. All the spirit of the old master is alive again in these few fine pages.” I would argue that the historicist character of Hahn’s piece, despite a few modern surprises, is more akin to retro than to nostalgia. Performed as part of a program that featured mostly modern composers (Fauré, Cyril Scott, Gabriel Grovlez, Debussy), Haydn/Hahn would evidently have felt like a step back in time, but not a reflexive interpretation of the past for the reason that it used the material of the past without investing it with a strong symbolic meaning.

In the following pages, I will develop this concept by examining waltzes of different types addressed to different audiences and different kinds of listening practices in order to uncover different layers of nostalgic affect in the waltz. I will focus especially on the construction of nostalgia in these pieces, exploring how something that is originally purely functional like dance music can produce nostalgic meaning by presenting itself as a sound of memory. After a brief look at two prewar waltzes from 1907 titled Nostalgie that are important in revealing two major tropes that recur in postwar waltzes, I will examine waltzes in three diverse settings. First, I will look at war-themed waltzes that coped with the disaster by proposing to reconstruct continuity of personal and national memory. Then, I will inspect three works by Henri Christiné that expose the ambiguous status of the waltz as a vehicle for nostalgia, providing an illustration of how meaning is constructed at the intersections between new and old and between international and national debates. And finally, in the last section of this chapter, I will focus on concert waltzes (using Ravel’s La Valse as prime example), whose position outside the dance halls enabled a degree of abstraction that raised concerns regarding the current aesthetic value of the genre and its place in the modern nation. In these discrete examples, I will argue that disruptions to the signature rhythm of the waltz often reflect their creator’s attitudes toward the contemporary social order.

60 “Notre Supplément musical,” Le Ménestrel 80, no. 5 (January 31, 1914): 35, quoted on reynaldo-hahn.net. “Reynaldo Hahn eut le caprice d’écrire un Thème varié dans la manière de Haydn et, comme il excelle en ces sortes de pastiches, il écrivit une pièce charmante qui a tout le fumet de l’ancien temps, lequel n’était pas le plus mauvais. Tout l’esprit du vieux maître revit en ces quelques pages si fines.”
3.3 A PANORAMA OF NOSTALGIC WALTZES

3.3.1 The nostalgias of prewar waltzes

Already in the early 1900s, the waltz had been linked to ideas of nostalgia and remembrance. Many of the musical works published in that period under the title *Nostalgie* were waltzes, covering a range of markets from amateur to professional. 1902 alone saw the publication of three “nostalgia” waltzes composed by Louis Arnaud (Op. 3), Maurice Depret (Op. 36), and Fortuné July (without opus number). All three are waltz suites in the format popularized by Johann Strauss II (comprising an introduction, a series of three to six alternating waltzes, and a coda), although none of them aspires to the same refinement and inspiration as those by the Viennese composer. If nothing else, these “nostalgia” waltz suites show that composers were by the turn of the century both self-conscious of the appeal of nostalgia as a popular, evocative, and poetic term, and of its semantic suitability to the waltz. However, none of these generic waltzes render explicit the object of their nostalgia, thus reducing the term to a hollow expression that simply implies a sentimentality akin to an objectless melancholia devoid of specific spatiotemporal connotations. In fact, unlike the nostalgic pieces that I used in chapter 1 to exemplify the four paradigms of nostalgia, few “nostalgia” waltzes allude to specific objects external to themselves.

Among those that do, a 1907 *valse-poème* by Gabriel Fervan combines the two paradigms of geographical longing in a two-part piece. The first part, “À la manière tzigane” (Fig. 3.3) repeats a phrase in C minor in a gradual crescendo from *piano* to *fortissimo* over 48 measures. Suddenly, the second part (“Très tendrement”) follows without transition, jumping to a *pianissimo* phrase in...
C major (Fig. 3.4). This second part unfolds its long melody by departing from a regular sequence of chords and including a momentary modulation to the submediant. It builds to a climax before ending quietly on the C major phrase. The stylistic opposition between the two parts establishes a contrast between the exoticism of the “gypsy” melody and the stylistic neutrality (or neutralization) of the “unmarked” second part, which could be interpreted as “French.” The piece’s epigraph clarifies the composer’s intention: “Ah! Regret and desire swoon… / When clear, meticulous, heartbreaking, and ruddy / The past comes and kisses the soul!…” These lines are taken from a poem titled “Nostalgie” by Anna de Noailles (to whom the piece is dedicated). The poem is a reminiscence of the author’s youth in the hills, involving both spatial and temporal reflections in its description of her rural past. Interestingly, Noailles recalls how she could hear the bell toll through the silent landscape at dinnertime. Now that she lives in the city, she remembers the past, but she does not have the strength to wish to go back to the quieter fields. The waltz by Gabriel Fervan replicates the polarity between two environments (or two ‘sites’) but he replaces the rural-urban binary by an exotic-national one, in which the “tender” waltz is turned into a sound of memory that emerges as a quiet reminiscence of France’s national past, symbolically opposed to the country’s cosmopolitanism, signified by a “gypsy” waltz. Interestingly, Fervan ends this brief piece without the da capo or coda customarily used in this genre. The last phrase could be perceived as a short syntactic coda that resolves the tension accumulated in the climax (a half-diminished chord on the second degree). However, the conventions of the genre make us expect a return to the “gypsy” part that is never realized. This unconventional ending functions as a way for the nostalgic waltz to keep its promise alive by preventing the reminiscence of France’s national past from being overtaken by foreign styles. This inscription of nationalism (here through an evocation of

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63 Anna de Noailles, *L’Ombre des jours* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1902), 163–66. “Ah ! comme le regret et le désir se pâment… / Quand clair, minutieux, déchirant et vermeil / Le passé vient et fait comme un baiser dans l’âme !…”
“otherness”) is an important trope in many postwar waltzes, where it acquired new urgency due to the changing political climate.

While Gabriel Fervan turns the French waltz into a nostalgic sound of memory through regional stylistic differences, Marie Bonnand’s “nostalgia” waltz (also from 1907) would have been equally well suited to accompany the poem by de Noailles. Bonnand evokes temporal distance in a stylistically uniform waltz suite that behaves properly within the conventions of the genre, including introduction and coda. Although the structure, variety, and technical writing are simpler than the other waltz suites cited above (for instance, Bonnand did not include a contrasting minor mode section), it explicitly inscribes its nostalgic object within the score. After a first waltz in D major (a short phrase repeated twice), a second phrase (also in D major) is announced as “Cloche au loin” (bells in the distance) (Fig. 3.5). The bells are suggested with the repetition of the accented note A over alternating tonic and dominant harmonies that give a more rustic feel to the passage. The accompanying chords outline a proper melody that retains—or rather, asks the performer to retain—the “espressivo” character of the waltz. There is apparently nothing extraordinary in this use of the bells topic; in fact, this one seems banal, almost trite, when compared with the expressive
potential of bells in the postwar, as commented on in chapter 2. This might just be pure waltz filling, mere functional texture on which to dance. Normally, it should not draw attention to itself. Yet, by marking itself extra-musically, it makes us pause reflectively. How is one supposed to perform “espressivo” the bell’s repeated note? Or is it the accompanying chordal melody that should be rendered expressive?—but in that case, the bells would risk losing their marked identity.

Are the dancers expected to hear the sound of the bells and react physically or emotionally, or on the contrary is the indication intended for the performer alone? In Bonnard’s seemingly anodyne waltz, it is this ambiguity between foreground and background that creates the effect of irretrievable distance that the title invites us to listen for. It produces the symbolic meaning of a sound of memory in an otherwise essentially functional piece of music. Postwar composers would also be invested in the inscription of longing in their waltzes, which they would often achieve by using elements that textually or rhythmically disrupted or reflected on the exceptional character of the dance.

Figure 3.5: Marie Bonnard, Nostalgie: valse (Genève: Union Artistique, 1907), mm. 25-35.

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64 See chapter 2, section 2.2.3. Bells are a recurring musical topic during and after the war. Another example analyzed below (Auguste Macquet’s Aux cloches de la France occupée) makes use of the full range of meanings of bells in that period.
65 Henri Cramer’s 1852 piece La Nostalgie, Op. 133, which I briefly discussed in chapter 1, uses the same technique as Marie Bonnard’s to represent bells in the distance. Cramer’s piece is a simple ternary form in which the contrasting middle section also begins with five measures of a repeated bell-like note with an accompanying melody in waltz rhythm.
### 3.3.2 Waltzing the war

While there is continuity among the prewar, war, and postwar waltzes in terms of their stylistic features, the waltz, like all other genres, adapted its themes to the current events, commenting and reflecting on the war. Because of the ban on public dancing during the conflict (which did not prevent dancing in private or clandestine settings), such wartime waltzes as *La Valse des munitions* (*The Waltz of the Ammo*, 1915), *La Valse des mitrailleurs* (*The Waltz of the Gunners*, 1916), *La Valse des matelots* (*The Waltz of the Sailors*, 1917), *Pierrot se fait aviateur* (*Pierrot Becomes an Aviator*, 1916), *Pâquerette des tranchées* (*Daisy of the Trenches*, 1916), *Valse à l’absent* (*Waltz of the Missing*, 1917), and many others were likely not written to accompany social dances. Instead, they can be viewed as symbolic gestures of hope that the soldiers would return home. Hence, wartime waltzes, even when they remain very conventional, frequently convey a double nostalgia: firstly, in its premise of a return home, and secondly, in the reenactment of the lost sociality of dancing.

For example, *La Lettre* (*The Letter*, music by Pierre Dezeff, lyrics by Simplex, 1916; Fig. 3.6) is written as a letter from a lover to a French soldier at the front. After an introductory waltz in which the lover hopes for the soldier’s return, a second waltz recalls the pleasures of a day the couple spent together in the fields. The reminiscence continues even as the first waltz returns, creating a bridge between them and current hopes for the soldier’s return. Finally, after a third waltz, the opening waltz is played one more time as the lover imagines the future that will follow the return, when the couple will “relive that day” they spent together. This recurrence of the opening waltz in the middle and at the end of the piece acts as a comforting reminder of the inevitability of the homecoming. Hence, *La Lettre* adapts all four paradigms of nostalgia to the military context: temporally, it reminisces about past moments while promising their future restitution; geographically, it promises a return to the homeland, but one completely de-urbanized as the lover sings of the fields, flowers, and clear skies of a pastoral land that is geographically undefined.
In the year following the Armistice, in 1919, half of the French music published (around one thousand works) was still related to the memory of the war. Whereas the dominating subject was now victory (Bénédicte Grailles states that “songs, melodies, hymns and marches expressed exclusively this theme”), not only was victory treated with different affects by different composers and lyricists, but, as we have seen in the previous chapter, composers also musically produced a process of reconstruction and memorialization of the war. One group of sixteen pieces by Auguste Macquet stands out for the ambition and scale of its production of a musical

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memorialization of the war. Each piece is given a title and date referring to a period in the occupation of Cambrai, a commune in the north of France that was occupied for the entire war and largely destroyed by the German army. The series, which includes ten songs with lyrics by Macquet himself and six instrumental waltzes for piano (spanning 95 pages of music), was likely written over the course of the war, but its publication in Paris between the fall of 1919 and the spring of 1920 marked it as a cohesive collection of memories produced after the fact rather than as a yearly chronicle. Despite the specificity of some dates (“30 août 1917,” “14 juillet 1918”), Macquet’s interest was in the emotional responses that the occupation elicited at various moments, with some themes like Christmas or hope recurring multiple times with different dates. The table below lists all sixteen pieces in roughly chronological order of events portrayed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece Description</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Plate Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Souvenir de la mère-patrie (Pendant l’occupation à Cambrai 1915)</td>
<td>Valse lente</td>
<td>1017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’espère en toi, ma France (Cambrai occupé 1916)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noël des occupés (1916)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dans l’attente (Cambrai occupé 1917)</td>
<td>Valse lente</td>
<td>1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maudite soit la guerre (Cambrai occupé 1917)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aux cloches de la France occupée (30 août 1917) (Cambrai occupé) (Grande scène)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sous les obus</td>
<td>Valse</td>
<td>1014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noël (Cambrai occupé 1917)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mort, quel est ton maître ? : Souvenir de la Grande Guerre (Cambrai occupé 1918)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Revanche (Cambrai occupé 1918)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le 14 juillet 1918 (Cambrai occupé)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Espérance aux pays occupés (1918)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valse de l’espérance</td>
<td>Valse</td>
<td>1006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valse de la délivrance</td>
<td>Valse</td>
<td>1005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymne aux morts de la Grande Guerre (1914-1918)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur les rives de l’Escaut</td>
<td>Valse</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: List of works in the series *Cambrai occupé* by Auguste Macquet (Paris: Pitault, 1919-20).

The rightmost column indicates the plate numbers used for each title.  

The ten vocal pieces are certainly the most interesting stylistically, but the six waltzes (all written as waltz suites in multiple sections, as was customary in dance halls) are perplexing due to

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68 The numerical sequence is missing plate numbers 1001, 1003, and 1012-13, probably attributed to other composers, unless they were not deposited at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, or not produced. Most pieces in the series were printed in 500 copies except plate 1004 (and 1002?) in 300 copies. See Marcilloux, *Chefs-d’œuvre et circonstances*, 45, n. 81 and 89, and p. 53.
their innocent and uplifting character, which, in at least one case, *Sous les obus (Under the Shells)*, runs counter to the title’s emotional suggestion of disaster or trauma. The earliest and shortest waltz in the collection, *Souvenir de la mère-patrie (Memory of the Motherland)*, could indicate that Macquet’s recurring use of major-mode waltz is specifically related to his own homesickness. Presented as a sound of memory—as the memory of sound through sound—the waltz could function as a diversion from the reality of the present day, providing a clue to understanding the puzzling title, *Sous les obus (Under the Shells)*, as a symbol of France’s resistance against the invaders. *Dans l’attente (Waiting)* is the only waltz that includes contrasting major- and minor-mode sections. The opening minor-mode introduction, written in compound quadruple meter (Fig. 3.7), features dotted rhythms, minor seconds, and diminished seventh chords that contrast sharply with the following major-mode waltz, perhaps hinting at an emotional binary between the strain of the occupation and the gaiety of the dance. Yet, even during the main waltz in F major the minor-sixth degree (Db/C♯) is highlighted as a reminder of the modal shift (as with the borrowed flat-six chord in the third measure of Fig. 3.8), here expressing a sense of continued military tension. Thus, the nostalgic waltz may be conceived as a coping mechanism that attempts to resist or counter the traumatic experience of the war by reinforcing the attachment to the community and generating a sense of personal and cultural security.

![Figure 3.7: Auguste Macquet, Dans l’attente (Cambrai occupé 1917) : valse lente (Paris: Pitault, 1920), mm. 7-9.](image)

![Figure 3.8: Macquet, Dans l’attente, mm. 41-48.](image)
This interpretation is confirmed in *Aux cloches de la France occupée* (The Bells of Occupied France; Fig. 3.9), the longest and most ambitious song of the set, at fourteen pages long. In this song, Macquet depicts the many functions of village bells, from their use for celebrations and funerals to their use to announce the declaration of war, their silencing during the occupation, and their removal to be melted into cannons and bombs. In the middle section of this “great scene,” a “lullaby” reprises in minor mode the carillon that joyously opened the piece as we are led into sad and fond reminiscences of the bells of long ago, which are no longer heard because they were sacrificed for the nation. At the end of the lullaby, a slow waltz takes over in a contrasting major mode, promising the victory of France over its enemies (“Boches”) and the sonorous return of the bells (“cloches”) to the bell towers (Fig. 3.10; the text translates as “But when the peace will later
come to consecrate its glory, our homeland will forever keep your memory”). This is the principal moment of nostalgia in the piece, formulated as a promise of a future that will bring back the sounds of the past, sounds of memory that are symbolized by the rhythm and texture of a slow waltz, styled here as if it could have been written fifty years before. In *Aux cloches de la France occupée*, as in *La Lettre*, the slow waltz appears at a crucial moment in the middle of the piece, as a sort of interlude in which the regrets of the vanished past are merged with nostalgia for a future that enables a positive return of something intangible, like a cultural artifact, that has been lost. While Jankélévitch had written that “nostalgia is a reaction against the irreversible,” musical nostalgia can effectively reproduce the sounds of the past and give the impression of continuity. In a sense, it can pretend to reverse the irreversibility of time’s passage, although Jankélévitch would describe it as “winning imaginary victories.” It is thus especially interesting that a piece published over a year after the Armistice still depicts the victory as a future hope, as an imagined possibility, rather than as an accomplished event. Despite the real military victory, the waltz cannot escape the realm of its nostalgic affect when constructed as a sound of memory, which is what Macquet achieves in his distinct yet interconnected waltzes.

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70 Jankélévitch, 56.
71 Even if the piece was written a few years before, the general public would have had access to it as a new publication only in 1920.
3.3.3 Staging the waltz

Unlike Macquet’s nationalist appropriation of the waltz as a sound of memory anchored in a sense of continuity with the past, Henri Christiné’s waltzes exemplify the double status of the postwar waltz as something both new and old, and reflected the cosmopolitanism interaction of foreign and national dances in Paris. Born in Switzerland in 1867, Christiné was one of the most successful songwriters in Paris at the turn of the century. Stars like Maurice Chevalier and Vincent Scotto both acknowledged Christiné’s impact on launching their successful careers.72 In 1920, when he was in his fifties, Christiné might have been the most performed composer in the French capital: his

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operetta *Phi-Phi* played every night without interruption since the day following the Armistice.\(^{73}\)

Set in Ancient Greece, *Phi-Phi* was a witty comedy about a sculptor and his model replete with anachronisms, sexual insinuations, and songs that sounded so familiar that one reviewer mistakenly took them for a medley of Christiné’s most famous tunes with new lyrics.\(^{74}\) Jacques Brindejont-Offenbach (Jacques Offenbach’s grandson) concurred: “This music, manifestly if quite uniformly upbeat, gave the audience who heard it for the first time the impression that they already knew it.”\(^{75}\)

Among the songs and dances, one could recognize the rhythms of the fox-trot and one-step, but there were also three slow waltzes, one of which has been compared to the “dream duet” in Offenbach’s *La Belle Hélène* (act 2, no. 15), an operetta created more than fifty years before.\(^{76}\)

Hence, to describe it as “resolutely up-to-date,”\(^{77}\) as is the consensus among historians, is misleading. While no one would question that *Phi-Phi* pioneered a new style of *comédie musicale*

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\(^{73}\) Phi-Phi premiered on November 13, 1918, to a libretto by Francis Solar and Albert Willemetz. Its success was such that *Phi-Phi* was adapted into a silent film directed by Georges Pallu (shot in 1926, released in 1927, where the lyrics were displayed on screen to be sung to the accompaniment of a live pianist), which was itself turned into a novel (1927). Detailed information on *Phi-Phi*, with numerous pictures, recordings and programs is found on the website of the *Encyclopédie multimedia de la comédie musicale théâtrale en France (1918-1944)*: http://194.254.96.55/cm/?for=fic&cleoeuvre=258. Unless otherwise noted, the following reviews and information are taken from the EMCM.

\(^{74}\) Régis Gignoux, “Courrier des théâtres,” Le Figaro, November 14, 1918, 3.


\(^{76}\) Andrew Lamb, *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 197. James Harding further refers to Offenbach’s *La Vie Parisienne* and Massenet’s *Manon*, although the latter one as a parody. (James Harding, *Folies de Paris: The Rise and Fall of French Operetta* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1979), 166–67.) Florian Bruyas dismisses the “Negro-American folklore” influence in *Phi-Phi*, qualifying its music as “truly French.” However, he believes that Christiné’s departure from the tradition was in the plainness (*dépouillement*) of his dances, including his waltzes. Many composers would provide a better integration of American music in their shows in the following years, but Christiné would always be considered the first one to have attempted it, if only because *Phi-Phi* was the very first show to open after the Armistice. See Florian Bruyas, *Histoire de l’Opérette en France, 1855-1965* (Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1974), 427–28.

in France—literally, a new chapter in the history of the genre—\textsuperscript{78} that borrowed from the new American jazz idioms in a simplified and condensed staging, this appraisal understates the degree to which \textit{Phi-Phi} was in many ways produced, performed, and received in the tradition of French operetta rather than as something absolutely new. It well illustrates Christine’s ability to draw on past and present, and to create a compromise between the familiar and the new—as Richard Traubner put it, “\textit{Phi-Phi}, schizophrenically, looked back and looked ahead,”\textsuperscript{79} or as is perhaps best summarized in an advertisement published for the premiere: “Greek costumes, Gallic spirit, French music, English dance” (\textit{costumes grecs, esprit gaulois, musique française, danse anglaise}).\textsuperscript{80}

Overall, \textit{Phi-Phi}’s mixture of French and American dances reflects the heterogeneous melding of various types of dances that people would hear in postwar dancings, as I have stressed above.

The third act of \textit{Phi-Phi} contains a duo that perfectly exemplifies the temporal tension among past, present and future. Titled “duo des souvenirs,” the operetta’s third \textit{valse lente} is written in two parts. In the first part, the characters reminisce about the night of love that followed their exit at the end of the previous act (Fig. 3.11). Without much of a transition, they then sing about their future together by reprising the waltz that accompanied their love scene in the previous act (Fig. 3.12). The reflective quality of the reprise does not stem from any development or alterations (which are conspicuously lacking) but from its positioning that upends expectations by using new music to remember the past and old music to address the future. In \textit{Phi-Phi}, thinking of the future requires the nostalgic remembrance of a previous happy moment; it merges the paradigms of nostalgia for the past and the future. The “duo des souvenirs” is thus double: it remembers by creating something new, and it promises by remembering. Moreover, the two waltzes are so nonspecific in character and affect that they could be easily interchangeable or even merged into

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Phi-Phi} is invariably the first operetta mentioned at the start of a new chapter on the \textit{Années folles} in every history of the genre.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Traubner, \textit{Operetta}, 307.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Quoted in Benoît Duteurtre, \textit{L’Opérette en France} (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 106. It is unclear why the advertisement announced English dance (\textit{danse anglaise}) rather than American dance (\textit{danse américaine}), which would have more appropriately characterized the dances in \textit{Phi-Phi}.
\end{itemize}
one. Even their melodic profiles are almost identical: although they are written in different keys, the first eight notes are the same in both cases (D–E–D–C–B–A–B–C), with only a slight shift in the placement of the downbeat to differentiate them. This lack of differentiation causes even more friction between the new and the old, perhaps as a sign of Christiné’s refusal to indulge in unnecessary sentimentality and his desire to neutralize the waltz’s nostalgic potential. As a whole, *Phi-Phi* functioned the same way as the “duo des souvenirs”: the new melodies sounded so familiar to the first audiences (as intrinsic sounds of memory) that they compelled listeners to think of them as returns of the past; yet, the appearance of familiarity reminiscent of prewar operettas seemed so refreshing in the context of the postwar that audiences flocked to see *Phi-Phi* over a thousand times in its first three years in Paris, elevating it as the precursor of a new era of French musical comedies. By August 1919, one million copies of sheet music from *Phi-Phi* had already been sold; one of the biggest hits being precisely the second-act waltz, the one that is remembered in the following act.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{81} P. C., “Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens : Phi-Phi,” *Paris qui chante* 17, no. 4 (August 15, 1919).
Figure 3.11: Henri Christiné, *Phi-Phi*, act 3, no. 15, “Duo des souvenirs,” vocal score (Paris: Salabert, 1919), mm. 1-23. (In the piano reduction, this number is marked “Tempo di Valse lente.”)
Figure 3.12: Christiné, Phi-Phi, act 3, no. 15, “Duo des souvenirs,” vocal score, mm. 85-101. (This music is identical to act 2, no. 14, “Valse et Finale,” mm. 41-60.)

3.3.4 Flow and hesitation

Despite his success as a composer of popular songs, Christiné did not limit himself only to that genre. Other pieces circulated around Phi-Phi without being directly attached to it. I will now look at some of these pieces as they help us understand the circulation of popular music between different genres, venues, markets, and audiences. These pieces confirm that Phi-Phi, just like any other work, was not appreciated and discussed in isolation, but as part of a larger network of popular
music. Hence, I will show how nostalgic sounds of memory are often produced from the intersections between works rather than from the works themselves.

The first piece to draw our attention is *Nostalgia*, a *valse lente* for piano published by Salabert in 1920. Considering the important sales of sheet music from *Phi-Phi*, it comes as no surprise that the piece was advertised as being “from the composer of *Phi-Phi*” (Fig. 3.13), a notice that likely created expectations for the prospective buyers who could expect to find the same kind of charm and cheerfulness as in the famous operetta. However, the cover by the famous poster artist Roger de Valerio (who also did the posters for *Phi-Phi*) references a different historical period than *Phi-Phi*’s Ancient Greece. It depicts a young woman dressed in the typical fashion of the aristocracy in the decade preceding the French Revolution. Although the cover could be viewed as a marker of nostalgia, its connection with the music is tenuous since Christiné never exhibits the traits of classicism used by the younger generation of composers, whom I discuss in the following chapter.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 3.13: Roger de Valerio (illustration) and Henri Christiné (music), *Nostalgia* (Paris: Salabert, 1920).
Just like almost each piece discussed in this chapter so far, Christiné’s Nostalgia is a slow “hesitation” waltz suite. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the significance of slowness in that genre in the postwar years. According to Jankélévitch, slow tempos in waltzes would contribute to their nostalgic meanings: “it is in slowness that the bittersweet flavor and the perfume of the past are developed.”

Yet, in the case of the slow waltz, the tempo by itself cannot explain the nostalgia experienced by the listener: the valse lente is not just a slowed-down waltz. After the Armistice, when dancing became the “craze” that we know, slow waltzes escaped the reported decline of the waltz by being adapted in two types of dances that remained among the most popular of the time: the boston (which actually dates from the late nineteenth century), and the valse hésitation (popularized in the second half of 1919). In the postwar press, both types were appreciated for their connection with a certain form of Frenchness. Pierre de Lapommeraye described the boston in October 1920 by stating that “this music, which resembles a declaration of love, is admirably suited to the French temperament.” Nonetheless, twice in his article, Lapommeraye alluded to a hierarchy among waltzes when he opposed the waltz to the slow waltz, which he believed was just a fad. The slow waltz “lacks youth and gaiety,” it does not have the “swirl of the waltz.” Meanwhile, the status of the hesitation waltz was debated in the press: on the one hand, its newness was reason enough for traditionalist dancers to group it with the other imported novelty dances; on the other hand, its derivation from the boston guaranteed its connections with the waltz’s ancestry. Hence, while it was discredited by a conservative magazine like Nos Chansons françaises, which grouped it with “cacophonous” American music, the more

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82 Jankélévitch, L’Irréversible et la nostalgie, 122.
83 Pierre de Lapommeraye, “Musique de danse,” Le Ménestrel 82, no. 44 (October 29, 1920): 409. Lapommeraye named the four main types of dances in 1920 as the steps, trots, tangos, and bostons. Rémi Hess very briefly mentions the origins of the boston but does not mention the hesitation waltz. (Hess, La Valse, 238.) See also Sophie Jacotot’s website on the dance in interwar Paris: https://sites.google.com/site/danserparisentre2guerres/les-annexes/iii-tableau-des-danses.
84 Lapommeraye, “Musique de danse,” 410. “Cette musique, qui ressemble à une déclaration d’amour, convient admirablement au tempérament français.” Distancing himself from the wartime themes, Lapommeraye also perpetuated the prewar sentimental character of the waltz when he mentioned that the boston needed a romantic title.
liberal magazine *La Danse* characterized it as “the most harmonious and distinguished dance there is,” and set it apart from the other novelty dances because it was the only one derived from French choreography. The double status of the hesitation waltz created a composite array of meanings as it retained the potential to turn nostalgic through the reminiscences of the waltzes of the previous era, while constituting a new, popular, and appealing genre for a young audience.

Christiné’s inscribed this double status within the form and phrasing of *Nostalgia*. After a brief introduction, it begins with a first waltz in D minor written in long notes grouped in long legato phrases (Fig. 3.14). With its long descending scale in the bass, its melody in the tenor register, its aeolian mode that delays the dominant chord until the fifteenth measure (and then immediately evades its resolution, deferring the authentic cadence for another sixteen measures), the phrase immediately places us in a different sound world than the waltzes from *Phi-Phi* (in fact, of any other waltzes cited in this chapter). The character of *Nostalgia* is definitely more contemplative than outward, as if it was wandering aimlessly, unable to find the stability of the tonic-dominant relationship that is so fundamental to the turn-of-the-century popular waltz.

![Figure 3.14: Christiné, Nostalgia, mm. 9-24.](image)

The second waltz immediately reestablishes the tonic-dominant relationship as it modulates to the submediant key of B♭ major (Fig. 3.15). However, after only nine measures of

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mostly tonic and dominant chords, Christiné departs once again from the conventional waltz, this time syntactically rather than harmonically. Three times during this second waltz, fermatas on rests mark musical “hesitations,” perhaps as a way to emphasize the dancers’ own hesitation step. At its most basic, dancers simply hold position on the toes for one measure during the hesitation step, while the music continues, and then alternate back and forth with the regular waltz step (or *boston*). Although this step can be choreographed on any waltz, slow waltzes with fermatas or varying tempos are particularly suited. The practice of marking the hesitations within the score only occurred sporadically in published sheet music at the time despite the name of the dance. The hesitations stemmed from the social dance as a choreographic set of movements rather than from a musical feature inherent to the style, and therefore they did not need to be written down. For example, the waltz *Tu voudrais me voir pleurer* by Ferdinand-Louis Bénech (Fig. 3.16) stipulated that it should be performed “slowly, with hesitation,” yet it did not provide any information as to where the hesitations should be added, assuming the performer to either know the piece for having previously danced on it, or to know the style enough to interpret the hesitations correctly. Christiné, however, took none of the assumptions for granted by inscribing the hesitations directly in the score—and not merely at the level of the interpretation or of the articulation, as in Marcel Frossard’s *Mourir!.. dans un baiser* (Fig. 3.17), which is more analogous to rubato—but at the level of the phrase structure, at the core of the piece itself. In Christiné’s *Nostalgia*, the hesitations are not a performative choice; they cannot not be performed.

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87 See A. Peter’s, “Rubrique Technique : Étude de la ‘Valse-Hésitation’ par le Professeur Peter’s,” *Paris-Danse* 1, no. 22 (November 19, 1920): 3. The suitability of slow waltzes with fermatas is mentioned in “La valse-hésitation au dancing,” *Paris qui chante* 18, no. 23 (June 15, 1920). “La valse-hésitation comme le double et triple boston n’est qu’une façon d’interpréter chorégraphiquement la musique de valse : ce sont des figures, intercalées dans le boston. Les valses lentes avec ralentis, points d’orgue, mouvements variés, conviennent particulièrement pour une valse-hésitation.”
Thus, by inscribing pauses in the syntax of his waltz, Christiné created hiccups that disrupt the music and make the listener aware of the fragility of the waltz’s assumed lyrical and sentimental phrasing. It undermines the continuity of the piece and draws attention to the sociability of the dance. It is indeed during the silences, when the music stops, that we are reminded of the sense of
unsteadiness in the performance of the hesitation step. In Christiné’s silences, we are thus compelled to think of the waltz as a form of movement. Framed between two waltzes that create unusually long and winding phrases, the silent hesitations are rendered even more peculiar, broken, undecided: they almost seem to nostalgically regret the sense of musical continuity that pre-hesitation waltzes (in other words, prewar waltzes) provided. Thus, instead of eagerly anticipating the second beat as customary in nineteenth-century Viennese waltzes, the hesitation waltz delays the following downbeat and interrupts the flow of movement and music. A piece like Christiné’s *Nostalgia* confirms the double status of the waltz that I discussed above. It shows that the discursive tension around the waltz might not only have been triggered by the arrival of new and foreign dances (as reflected in the assortment of *Phi-Phi*), but also from inside, from a gradual transformation of its practice. Note that even the use of the English title (*Nostalgia* instead of *Nostalgie*), seen here for the first time in a French publication, signaled these changing times.

### 3.3.5 Intertextuality in three pieces by Christiné

The story of *Nostalgia* does not stop here. The circulation, performance, and promotion of music in a consumer market of publications for domestic and personal use caused intended and unintended connections between pieces. An advertisement page for Christiné’s *Nostalgia* (Fig. 3.18) exposed the juxtapositions that could bring together pieces meant for markedly different occasions. This advertisement proposed two “new successes” by the “composer of the legendary operetta *Phi-Phi*”: on both sides of a portrait of Henri Christiné were quoted the first phrases of *Nostalgia* (“all the rage everywhere we dance”) and of a song titled *Le Chant des Nations*, announced as the first prize in a contest. Before we even open the score of *Le Chant des Nations*, we know that the three pieces mentioned in this advertisement initially served different social functions, from the theatrical entertainment of *Phi-Phi*, to the dance of *Nostalgia*, to the prize-winning hymn of peace perhaps
intended for official occasions. Yet, because of Salabert’s marketing, all three pieces were now domesticated for private use and intertextually connected, confirming the potential interactions between them.

![Advertisement page printed as the back cover of La Complaine de la Seine by Jean Nouguès (music) and Maurice Magre (lyrics) (Paris: Salabert, 1920).](image)

The advertisement appeared at the back of an unrelated song by Jean Nouguès, *La Complaine de la Seine*, whose text by Maurice Magre is a thinly-veiled reaction to the death toll of the war. The singer gives a grim description of what one can find at the bottom of the Seine.

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88 Most of the time, advertisements on the back pages of sheet music would propose a selection of popular pieces in a similar style (such as a list of recent songs or instrumental dances) or by the same composer. Sometimes, however, as in the case of *La Complaine de la Seine*, the advertisement would propose pieces in a markedly different style by an unrelated composer, simply as a means to promote the publisher’s latest publication, whatever it was. These juxtapositions were doubtless unintentional—that is, they were not guided by any musical logic—but they are by no means less significant than the intentional juxtapositions that grouped pieces like *Nostalgia* and *Le Chant des Nations*, if only because performers would have seen them. Taken as a group, the four pieces mentioned here (*Phi-Phi, Nostalgia, Le Chant des Nations, and La*
including corpses, boats, jewels, and the hearts of those who suffered too much to live.\textsuperscript{89} It paints a gloomy picture of postwar Parisian society, perhaps intended to suggest the failure of nationalism and the vanity of riches. The piano accompaniment uncommonly doubles the vocal line in the lower register while a monotonous note resonates uninterrupted throughout most of the song like a persistent death knell ("comme une cloche qui teinte au lointain").\textsuperscript{90} This bell in D minor seems to find its continuation in Christiné’s waltz, also in D minor. Although the parallel between the keys is entirely fortuitous, a reader of the \textit{Complainte} would nonetheless have been invited to carry on with Christiné’s \textit{Nostalgia} in the same key after seeing the advertisement on the last page. The parallel could have incited or prolonged a reflection on the connections between the trauma of the war and the social activities intended to distract from it. Whether any musician actually performed these two pieces back to back is not so important; what I am arguing here is that because they shared a similar performative space, because they participated in musical exchanges between different genres, markets, and audiences, we cannot ignore the potential of symbolic connections between these pieces.

The other piece advertised on Salabert’s advertisement page is Christiné’s \textit{Le Chant des Nations}. This internationalist celebration of peace to words by Raoul Rebour was awarded first prize by the public at a concert-contest organized by the Société Proudhon and the newspaper \textit{L’Œuvre} on May 29, 1920. In November of that year, the song was sent to the League of Nations

\textit{Complainte de la Seine} form a disparate assemblage produced by commercial incentives. It nonetheless constitutes a coherent portrait of the interactions between major facets of musical production around 1920, with each piece informing and affecting the reception of the others.\textsuperscript{89} The poem was first published in a volume in 1922, two years after the song. In its 1922 publication, the last word of the first line ("Au fond de la Seine, il y a des morts") was changed to “or” (gold) retaining the rhyme but altering the tragic affect of the text. It is possible that three years after the Armistice, Magre’s grim depiction of the reality of Parisian life and the consequences of the war was no longer deemed acceptable. Kurt Weill composed one of his most famous songs in 1934 using the revised version of the poem. Hence, the only place where the word “morts” was printed is in the 1920 sheet music.\textsuperscript{90} The \textit{Complainte} was interpreted by Damia (who is pictured on the front cover), a café-concert singer famous for her realist and tragic songs. Due to her celebrity, a buyer of the sheet music would likely have been aware of the pathetic performative style of the song.
as a suggestion for an international hymn. The public’s blind vote might have recognized Christiné’s unmatchable melodic talent more than his internationalist aspirations. Indeed, as Carl Bouchard points out, *Le Chant des Nations* is an ambivalent work that exalts internationalist peace but does so with French patriotic fervor. Bouchard sees references to the French national anthem in the lyrics in lines such as “Allons, enfants de toutes les patries” and the use of the words “liberté” and “fraternité.” The music similarly echoes these textual references to the *Marseillaise* by quoting it briefly at the end of each verse, constantly reminding the listener that the international peace is a national accomplishment, possible because of France’s military victory and the universality of its Republican values. Consequently, the song’s patriotic nostalgia is ambiguous: despite calling to “all nations,” the quotation of the *Marseillaise* marks a brief moment of return to a glorious pre-international France. Moreover, when the first verse mentions that “when . . . fathers and sons were falling in the trenches (sillons), the proud mothers were dreaming of a family, which they already named League of Nations,” one can think for a moment that the mothers are dreaming of the family they could have had with their lost husband and sons. Coincidentally, the song was dedicated by the lyricist Raoul Rebour to his brother, killed in the first days of the war in 1914, shifting the quotation of the French anthem into a moment of personal remembrance, a final anthem to a French soldier who died during the conflict.

This interplay between the international, the national, and the personal seems to have resonated deeply with the Parisian audiences. After its premiere performance during the contest, it was sung again on June 11 at a gala in celebration of the 750th performance of the operetta *Phi-Phi*, at which time it was decided that the *Chant des Nations* would be performed every night during the operetta’s first intermission. If the singing of hymns or anthems was common during wartime, the insertion of such a piece in the middle of an amusing show two years after the Armistice denotes

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92 Bouchard, 115–16.
the continuing affective power of the war and confirms once again that the disparate groupings of pieces caused by marketing could also occur in live performances. Inserted in Phi-Phi, Le Chant des Nations functioned on another symbolic plane of memory and remembrance. The internationalist song did not merely interrupt the show, it interfered with it by creating a connection with the outside world, breaking, so to speak, the illusion of the theatrical performance. When the couple dreams of their future together by singing a waltz from their own past, they might as well have said that their future would be built on the memories left by the war—the waltz, as we have seen, being one of the most potent postwar sounds of memory. In sum, these pieces by Henri Christiné confirm that nostalgic meaning is not only textual, nor only a consequence of the changed status of the waltz after the war. New meanings can also emerge from small, apparently innocuous, disruptions from regularity, either at the level of a single work or in the interactions between multiple works when they are brought together. Christiné’s extraordinary success in the postwar years might well have been caused by his masterful scoring of these interstitial spaces that reconciled novelty and tradition as well as international and national concerns.

3.4 CONTESTING NOSTALGIA IN CONCERT

3.4.1 Readings and misreadings of Ravel’s La Valse

The postwar press features very few comments written about individual dances or songs, probably due to the ephemerality of these pieces. Major stage works like Phi-Phi were reviewed in some detail, but there are no mentions of pieces like Christiné’s Nostalgia. In contrast, our understanding of concert music benefits from the numerous published reviews, which clearly show that the reassessment of the waltz was not limited to popular venues. In this last section, I propose that
concert waltzes, apparently detached from the polemical circumstances of the dance as a popular or domestic activity, also challenged the nostalgic reevaluation of the genre on an aesthetic level. Maurice Ravel’s choreographic poem *La Valse* provides a fascinating example since its conception began well before the war, yet it was completed and first heard only in 1920. This section looks at readings and misreadings of *La Valse* after its premiere, and the impact that these varied interpretations have had on the construction of the still-contested symbolic meaning of this work and its genre.\(^93\)

Before *La Valse*, Ravel had already composed for the genre in his *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (published for piano in 1911, for orchestra the following year), the title of which refers to Schubert’s 1823 cycles of the same name. While composing that cycle of waltzes, Ravel had already begun conceiving a large-scale symphonic work, one that would take him a decade to complete. Hence, while the *La Valse* was first heard in 1920, its conception dates from well before the war. Although this chronology was ignored or overlooked by the work’s first reviewers, it is worth keeping in mind as we read their comments. Appended to the published work was a short program that effectively situated the work in the distant past:

*Des nuées tourbillonnantes laissent entrevoir, par éclaircies, des couples de valseurs. Elles se dissipent peu à peu : on distingue [A] une immense salle peuplée d’une foule tournoyante. La scène s’éclaire progressivement. La lumière des lustres éclate à [B]. Une Cour impériale, vers 1855.*

Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be glimpsed. The clouds gradually scatter: one distinguishes [A] an immense hall peopled with a twirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers erupts at [B].

An imperial court, around 1855.

Many reviewers tied the work to the decay of the waltz, and they often used the term “nostalgia” to refer either to their listening experience or to the composer’s assumed intentions.

\(^93\) Although a “choreographic poem” intended for the stage, I am here treating *La Valse* as a concert work since it is in this setting that the work would have been heard from its premiere in December 1920 until its first staged production in October 1926. For a more detailed discussion of *La Valse* as a ballet, with a special focus on its scenario and choreography, see Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 149–81.
Among them, Émile Vuillermoz took the program provided by Ravel as a starting point to describe the pastness of the waltz: “It is not a waltz that we hear, it is the nostalgic soul of dead waltzes that returns to wander in the ghostly scenery of an imperial court of 1855.”

Vuillermoz explained that it is the decline of the waltz (“as far from us today as the ceremonial rites of the minuet or of the pavane”) that made it possible for a great composer to use it to evoke the past (“the art of Johann Strauss”) like the “ghost of a waltz that arises from a kind of swirling fog filled with shadowy lights.” In this description, Vuillermoz referred to the beginning of the work, where the waltz gradually emerges in fragments played in the lower register over a deep string rumbling (Fig. 3.19), as if it is being pieced together from shattered memories. For Vuillermoz, it was this shadowy presence, this fragmentation of the waltz’s material, that rendered it truly nostalgic because it placed it at a distance, like the longing for an object that will remain forever irretrievable.

Furthermore, even though the program did not locate La Valse geographically, Vuillermoz’s identification of the connection to Johann Strauss led him into exotic nostalgia as he limned an imagined Viennese golden age: he dreamt of the chandeliers, crystals and gowns of another era and of another place (there and then). Vuillermoz claimed that Ravel gave its full “ethnic meaning” to the Viennese waltz.

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94 Vuillermoz, “Les Grands Concerts,” 4. “Ravel a fait surgir son fantôme de valse d’une sorte de brouillard tournoyant que trouent de vagues lueurs. . . . Ce n’est pas une valse que nous entendons, c’est l’âme nostalgique des valses mortes qui revient errer dans le décor fantomatique d’une cour impériale de 1855. . . . Cette valse, ces lambeaux de valse qui flottent, planent, ondulent dans un éclairage ornemental où brillent les pendeloques des lustres de cristal et des girandoles, et où bruissent les robes à treize volants, finissent par provoquer une grisserie où l’oreille ne reçoit plus que des bouffées de sonorités détachées de l’ensemble, minutes enivrantes de vertige et d’hallucination que la musique traduit avec une miraculeuse adresse. . . . Page magnifique exécutée par Rhené-Baton dans un mouvement excellent, avec une force et une lourdeur volontaires dans le tournoiement qui donnent à cette apothéose de la valse viennoise toute sa signification ethnique et toute sa mécanique puissance.”
Figure 3.19: Maurice Ravel, *La Valse*, opening measures in reduced score.

Throughout this chapter, observers more or less explicitly assumed the waltz to be of French origins. If I did not discuss or contest these national origins so far, it is mainly because they are lost to time, or rather, because the waltz had long become an intercontinental dance. As Rémi Hess explains, around 1900 the waltz was a “national” dance: for French authors, it was a French dance; for the Germans, its origins were Germanic; and for the Austrians, it was, of course, the Viennese waltz.⁹⁵ For the reviewers of *La Valse*, however, the ethnic origins of the waltz were far more contested. Even though the “imperial court of 1855” could well have been that of the Second French Empire of Napoleon III, everyone situated Ravel’s inspiration in the Viennese waltz of the mid-nineteenth century (i.e. Johann Strauss) rather than in its French counterpart, thus pointing towards a geo-temporal nostalgia. Yet, the exoticization of Vienna was usually paired with a repatriation of the waltz as a quintessentially French genre. This repatriation was timely at the end of years of conflict with Germany. Claiming the Frenchness of the waltz could be read politically as a recognition of France’s superiority at the end of the conflict with Germany. After the premiere, Ravel was praised for “rehabilitating the waltz” by composers such as Eugène Cools and Florent

Schmitt, himself one of France’s most prolific, original, and versatile composer of waltzes, including two different *valses nostalgiques*. Schmitt provided a short but evocative review. In his overview of *La Valse*’s subject and form, he compared it to the Viennese waltzes of Johann Strauss before turning his attention to the contemporary dances, which he rejected as “buffooneries” and then affirming, quite emphatically, the Frenchness of the waltz:

Il faut savoir gré à M. Ravel d’avoir ainsi entrepris, et avec quel bonheur, la réhabilitation de la plus noble et la plus passionnée des danses, si haineusement jalousee, d’ailleurs sans grand résultat, par les cake-walk, fox-trotts, ragtimes et autres regrettables pitreries. Et, n’est-ce pas à l’un des plus purement français, parmi les musiciens français qu’incombait, par définition, la tâche de cette mise au point… je dirais patriotique si ce mot, trainé dans la boue, n’avait perdu son véritable sens. Car vous savez – ou ne savez pas, – que la valse, malgré ses attaches germaniques, est d’origine essentiellement française.

We must be grateful to M. Ravel for having undertaken, and with such delight, the rehabilitation of the noblest and most passionate of dances, that is envied with such enmity, without much result, by the cake-walk, fox-trotts [sic], ragtimes and other lamentable buffooneries. And, is it not to one of the most purely French among French musicians that this task of restoration [*mise au point*] was naturally assigned… a task that I would avow patriotic if this word, dragged in the mud, had not lost its true meaning. Because you know – or do not know – that the waltz, despite its Germanic ties, is of essentially French origin.

For Schmitt, Ravel’s waltz may have evoked Vienna, but its geographic nostalgia remained that of a national return, a restoration, or “mise au point.” The role of the “patriotic” French composer was therefore to safeguard the national musical heritage. In that regard, the waltz was not just a genre of music: it stood as a symbol of French unity and victory against foreign threats. By affirming the rehabilitation of the waltz, Schmitt obliquely confirmed its decline in the face of the *dancings* and the invasion of American dances. The comparison of Ravel’s *La Valse* to popular dances is curious: it gives the impression that Ravel rehabilitated the waltz as an autonomous dance that could find its place once again on the dance floor, which is certainly not what Schmitt had in mind. The comparison is especially surprising coming from a composer who had himself written a majestic

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symphonic waltz titled *Rapsodie viennoise* back in 1904 (Op. 53, no. 3, published for orchestra in 1911) that lasts almost as long as Ravel’s *La Valse*, also begins with a long, fragmented introduction, and ends in a grand dramatic climax. What then was Ravel rehabilitating in Schmitt’s mind? Perhaps more than anything, Schmitt was longing for the return of the great romantic orchestral waltz suite, a genre that had virtually disappeared in France, and that certainly did not seem to interest the new generation of young composers such as Francis Poulenc and Igor Stravinsky, as I discuss below.

Another composer-reviewer, Eugène Cools, gave thanks to both Ravel and Schmitt for having “rehabilitated” the waltz—and acknowledged once again that Ravel’s inspiration was Strauss’s Viennese waltzes. He suggested that *La Valse* was a “sign of new times,” which, I assume, implied a desire, if not an optimistic anticipation, that the genre would endure from now on. Cools contrasted the reception of *La Valse* to Ravel’s prewar Schubertian suite, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, which had been met with a “harshly hostile demonstration” at the Société Musicale Indépendante (S.M.I.) in 1912. Cools concluded: “1912 is already a long time away, a lot of blood separates us from it. But yet it was yesterday. And it seems to me that we are evolving rapidly.”

Cools did not give more context to the reception of Ravel’s 1912 waltzes. Using a shortcut similar to Schmitt’s bridging of *La Valse* with the new American dances, Cools let his readers believe that it might have been the waltz as a genre that was being rejected in 1912, rather than Ravel’s work in the context of a concert by an independent society dedicated to works by French composers who wanted to break ties with the more conservative Société Nationale. For Cools, then, the rehabilitation was a sort of paradoxical “evolution” backward where the waltz regained the esteem it once had, but only through a nostalgic reassessment of its prewar decay.

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98 Eugène Cools, “Concerts Lamoureux,” *Le Monde musical* 31, no. 23–24 (December 1920): 363. “C’est un signe des temps nouveaux que la naissance de cette partition et il est curieux de rapprocher l’accueil chaleureux qui lui fut fait de la manifestation durement hostile qui accueillit les *Valses nobles et sentimentales* du même auteur, données en 1912 dans un concert de la S.M.I. 1912, c’est loin déjà, beaucoup de sang nous en sépare. Mais pourtant c’était hier. Et il me semble que nous évoluons à grands pas.”
Like Vuillermoz, both Schmitt and Cools based their “rehabilitation” narratives on the introduction of the piece (where “ghostly” fragments of the waltz gradually emerge), while ignoring its dramatic ending. As Michael Puri argues, it is the introduction of the work that opens it to nostalgic interpretations: “musical frames seem to represent the waltz an object distant in memory, an artifact that is available to the present only upon being recalled from the past. . . . The opening frame of La Valse gradually assembles waltz fragments into complete phrases.”99 Puri also uses this framing of La Valse as an argument to see it as “celebrating [the] miraculous recovery” of the “irreversible loss of the past.”100 But by disregarding the ending of the piece, these interpretations of the work as a rehabilitation fail to account for what has been described as the “imminent disintegration of an entire society,” or as “the violent death of the nineteenth-century world.”101 It was perhaps in the interest of Schmitt and Cools as composers of waltzes to convey a nationalist narrative of return rather than one of closure, even though that meant discarding from their analysis parts of the piece that did not seem conducive to nostalgia. Indeed, in the final minutes of La Valse (starting at figure 76 in the orchestra score), the waltz acquires more and more density, loudness, and speed until the orchestral force breaks up in a moment of extreme intensity. In the final measures, the momentum becomes so great that the waltz’s melodic material is uncomfortably disfigured: its defining triple time is repeatedly dislocated with hemiolas, and even the penultimate

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99 Puri, Ravel the Decadent, 168.
100 Puri, 168. The “miraculous recovery” brings to mind the early modern pathological origins of nostalgia. By “restoring” the waltz to its former status, Ravel’s rehabilitation can be read as an attempt to heal the genre from its deteriorating state. During the wartime years, the waltz took the appearance of a decaying body (Vuillermoz did talk of the “soul of dead waltzes”), but with its rehabilitation/recovery/restoration, this “charming dance” (Cools) can return to the dance floor as a vigorous body. Even George Benjamin said of the introduction: “a heartbeat evolves, intimating perhaps that the origins of the waltz are atavistic and physiological, not merely cultural.” (Quoted in Deborah Mawer, “Ballet and the Apotheosis of the Dance,” in The Cambridge Companion to Ravel, ed. Deborah Mawer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 152.) In other words, Ravel’s La Valse is not only nostalgic for the past, Vienna, or France; if successfully rehabilitated (or resurrected), it could also provide a cure to the nostalgia for the waltz.
measure is written with a quadruplet, musically symbolizing the ultimate destruction of the waltz (Fig. 3.20). ¹⁰²

![Figure 3.20: Ravel, La Valse, final measures in reduced score.](image)

This interpretation of *La Valse* as a cataclysmic ending was far more common than the “rehabilitation” narrative, to the extent that Ravel had firmly to discard the disaster interpretations a few times, including in a 1924 interview where he instead proposed a third alternative:

Some people have seen in this piece the expression of a tragic affair; some have said that it represented the end of the Second Empire, others said that it was postwar Vienna. They are wrong. Certainly, *La Valse* is tragic, but in the Greek sense: it is a fatal spinning around, the expression of vertigo and of the voluptuousness of the dance to the point of paroxysm. ¹⁰³

By affirming that there are “wrong” readings of his music, Ravel did not deny the “fatal” conclusion of his choreographic poem, but he rejected its socio-historical associations, thereby eliminating its potential to become a sound of memory. This was a revisionist turnabout from a composer whose claims about the inspiration for the work had till then been consistent: as early as February 1906, ¹⁰³

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Ravel had informed Jean Marnold that he was writing “a great waltz, a sort of homage to the memory of the great Strauss—not Richard, the other one, Johann;” and until around December 1919, the work was provisionally titled Wien. By revisiting La Valse as an abstract concept of tragedy that pre-dates the waltz genre by two millennia, Ravel clearly wished to dissociate himself from the current political, ethical and aesthetic context of the postwar waltz.

In the examples previously cited in this chapter, the composer’s voice was absent; nostalgia was produced musically and contextually. However, Ravel’s brief comment raises new questions regarding a composer’s authority to produce or refute nostalgia even when it contradicts individual listenings. It would seem that, at least in this case, authorial intent had no impact on the conceptualization of his work: Ravel could not impose a decontextualized listening of his waltz. To this day, the work is still read (or misread) as being “about nothing more than the Viennese waltz itself.”

Ironically, one year after Ravel’s 1924 interview, Silvio Itálico, a Spanish critic, wrote a long article on La Valse to accompany a concert of the Orquesta Sinfónico de Madrid in which he completely redefined the composer’s authorial intent by arguing that La Valse was a piece about Ravel’s own childhood nostalgias:

La maravilla emotiva del vals solo podemos sentirla, embalsamada de recuerdos, aquellos que hemos doblado ya el promontorio de nuestro camino…… ¡Y nuestras madres, que aun nos hacen jóvenes a nosotros en esta agridulce evocación!

Ravel sintió en esos momentos, la nostalgia irresistible que hace girar imperiosamente nuestra cabeza para obligarnos a mirar hacia atrás. Y allá, en San Juan de Luz – de donde Ciboure, su cuna, es un barrio – contempló, entre nieblas de lejanía en el tiempo, la pretérita felicidad de los bailes del Casino provinciano: los más jugosos del mundo, porque son los más esperados, los más disfrutados y los más saboreados después……

¡Y Ravel, mientras les contemplaba con los ojos del espíritu, cuando ya eran imposible para él, mientras dulcemente les ligaba a algunas emociones de

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104 Ravel, A Ravel Reader, 80; Ravel, L’intégrale, 128.
105 See Marcel Marnat, Maurice Ravel (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 473. The title Wien might have made it into 1920 (see Roger Nichols, Ravel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 208.), but even after the change, Ravel occasionally mentioned in interviews that Wien had been the original title.
106 On the other hand, Marcel Marnat points out that Ravel’s life was marked by death during these years. See Marnat, Maurice Ravel, 470–75.
107 Puri, Ravel the Decadent, 181.
juventud que dejan huellas florecidas en la primavera, sentía hervir en su corazón el poema, y en su espíritu, sonar los valses de su edad novela!

The emotional wonder of the waltz can only be felt, embalmed in memories, by those among us who have already turned at the headland of our life path…… And by our mothers, who still make us young in this bittersweet evocation!

Ravel felt in those moments the irresistible nostalgia that makes us turn our head imperiously to force us to look back. And there, in San Juan de Luz – of which Ciboure, his birthplace, is a neighborhood – he contemplated, amid the mists of temporal distance, the past happiness of the dances of the provincial Casino: the juiciest in the world, because they are the most anticipated, the most discussed and the most relished afterwards……

And Ravel, as he contemplated them with his mind’s eyes, when they were already impossible for him, as he delicately linked them to some youthful emotions that left traces that blossomed in spring, he felt the poem boil in his heart and the waltzes of his novel age sound in his spirit! 

For Itálico, nostalgia was an inherently personal and intimate emotion that no contextual reading could alter or rewrite. Musicians and scholars have long been intrigued by the sources of Ravel’s nostalgic sound. In 1977, Robert Craft penned an essay titled “The Nostalgic Kingdom of Maurice Ravel” in which he described what he perceived as the composer’s incapability to be separated from his mother (who died in 1917) and to outgrow the world of his childhood, both of which can be observed in the composer’s fascination for toys, fairies and fairy tales. In Craft’s opinion, these attachments to the past led Ravel to his “failure to evolve.” This argument undermines the potential of evaluating nostalgia as a structure of rhetoric (see chapter 1) and fails to explain the works in any analytical detail. To see La Valse construed as nostalgia for his Basque heritage and the dances of his youth is probably the last thing Ravel would have anticipated, considering the

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108 Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure are two communes in south-western France (Basque). Ravel was born in Ciboure in 1875.
110 Robert Craft, “The Nostalgic Kingdom of Maurice Ravel,” in Current Convictions: Views and Reviews (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 187. A few pages later, Craft teases: “No doubt the ideal ‘performance’ [of L’Enfant et les sortilèges] will one day be installed among the electronic entertainments of Disney World.” (Craft, 190.) Roger Nichols also suggests that La Valse “may even be heard as an attempt to deal with his anger at his mother’s death.” (Nichols, Ravel, 213.) However, much of Ravel’s nostalgia is quite distinct from his childhood experiences and ethnic ancestry, even though Craft dismisses them as “secondary to his own.” (Craft, “The Nostalgic Kingdom of Maurice Ravel,” 193.) For instance, Ravel used the term “nostalgically” in the “Blues” (second movement) of his Violin Sonata, written in 1923, before his 1928 American trip. Interestingly, Emmanuel Rosenthal observed Ravel’s nostalgia for France in the first movement of the sonata. (See Zank, Irony and Sound, 133.)
absence of markers of Spanish exoticism in the score. Yet, it shows once more the divergent significance of nostalgia according to the various points of view of listeners and the context in which they write: while the Spaniard Silvio Itálico was probably more attuned to the Spanish waltzes than his French contemporaries, Robert Craft benefited from decades of biographical research on Ravel.

In sum, when we pay attention to the community of listeners—even those that the composer would have dismissed and those that have been ignored by musicologists—we can enrich our understanding of the waltz’s nostalgic affect in postwar Paris. We see that nostalgia is not unequivocally produced. Aesthetic and ethical considerations motivate its production, and as these considerations evolve and pass through different ears, nostalgia is revised and re-produced. Therefore, even though we can find consensus about the nostalgic character and appeal of the postwar waltz in general, the specific features and functions of that nostalgia are inconsistent due to the essential differences between, for instance, the reception of a symphonic poem in an orchestral concert and the popular culture of the dancings. Nonetheless, as the reception of Ravel’s La Valse confirms, these disparate environments shared the same urgency to construct a strong national identity through the example of the waltz.

3.4.2 “Melted into air”

In March 1921, Maurice Brillant concluded his review of Ravel’s La Valse with a comparison to the music of the younger generation of composers: “But how far we are from the young music and the École des Six! As we know, since Stravinsky, our young musicians are glad to paint the thousand sounds of fairs and, above all, of popular fairs. But they paint them very differently and they have repudiated (I dare say, but in a whisper, that I regret…) this subtle and delicious haze
that they consider too inconsistent and too ‘impressionistic.’”

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the waltz as a sound of memory that was producing nostalgia at personal, social, or national levels, a nostalgia that involved resistance to new dances and that attempted to retrieve the irretrievable. However, as Brillant indicated, the young composers of Les Six were turning away from the manner of their predecessors, rejecting their “subtle” and expressive style in favor of a more direct one inspired by the everyday. In the next chapter, I will address the friction between modernity and pastness in the music of Les Six. There are many ways by which Les Six exuded nostalgia despite their apparent rootedness in the here and now; but before turning to that topic, I wish to conclude this chapter by looking at two waltzes that exemplify the younger generation’s rejection of the acquired nostalgic affect of the waltz by un-producing its sounds of memory.

We have seen how sounds of memory result from the production of symbolic meaning around (or in addition to) the materiality and functionality of the waltz. The examples discussed in this chapter have demonstrated many ways by which the symbolic meaning of postwar waltzes was produced, either through musical difference, intertextuality, or contextual history that involved a memorative conceptualization of the waltz. This applied to waltzes even when they were meant for a consumerist market of normative popular music whose role was primarily functional. To defuse nostalgia, musicians would have had to decontextualize the waltz, remove all instances of difference, of intertextual interpretation and of contextual readings, in other words, to strip the waltz down to its material essence, turn it into a “sound” deprived of memory.

The waltzes that Francis Poulenc and Igor Stravinsky published in 1920 and 1922 are good examples of this process of negation. They steer clear of the metrical disruptions and hesitations

111 Maurice Brillant, “Les Œuvres et les Hommes,” Le Correspondant 93, no. 1404 (March 25, 1921): 1127. “Mais que nous sommes loin de la jeune musique et de l’École des Six ! Depuis Strawinsky, nos jeunes musiciens, on le sait, peignent volontiers les mille bruits des fêtes et surtout des fêtes populaires. Mais ils les peignent bien différemment et ils ont répudié (j’ose avouer, mais tout bas, que je regrette…) ce subtil et délicieux poudroiement qu’ils jugent trop inconsistent et trop « impressionniste ». Et nous suivons sans doute leurs recherches avec gravité, parce qu’ils ont du talent, parce qu’il faut tout comprendre et goûter tout ce qui en vaut la peine, mais nous applaudiissons joyeusement, frivoles esprits, la Valse de M. Maurice Ravel.”
we have seen in many of the above examples, and instead of slowness so easily conducive to expressive rubato, they retain a rubato-free fast tempo throughout. The short and unassuming waltz for piano that Poulenc wrote for the collective *Album des Six* in 1920, for which he gave the generic title *Valse*, can be seen as the opposite of Ravel’s *La Valse*: it is interesting primarily because of its use of rhythmic patterns that are at times playful or caustic. The first chord (C major) lasts no fewer than 32 measures of vamping under which the right hand plays a jolty Lydian melody (Fig. 21). The regularity of phrase length (always eight or four measures) is offset by the frequent metrical disruptions created by the right hand. For instance, the melody at the end of the first two phrases (mm. 7-8 and 15-16) runs over the bar line, while the following phrase (mm. 17-24) is entirely made of accented and dissonant hemiolas. But unlike the metrical disruptions in pieces like Christiné’s *Nostalgia*, here they are humorous. Combined with the unrelenting repetitiveness of the accompaniment, this waltz has a rebellious quality that opposes any form of sentimentality.

Figure 3.21: Francis Poulenc, *Valse* (Paris: Demets, 1920), mm. 1-26.
The second theme of Poulenc’s waltz (we can barely speak of a second waltz) mimics the long legato phrases of the popular waltzes. But instead of writing an expressive melody, Poulenc writes a very static one that circles around the first degree of the scale on which it returns every other bar (Fig. 22). The markings “souple” and “très chanté” seem almost farcical in that context: it is almost impossible for the pianist to “sing” these repetitive (almost monotonous) lines without turning the piece into a caricature of itself (which is perhaps what Poulenc wanted). Eventually, this section leads into eight measures of vamping where the waltz only retains its textural quality. And then the opening waltz resumes, identically. Many of these elements (vamping, non-developmental reprises, simple cadences) are taken directly from popular music. But Poulenc, by remaining light and playful, refuses to engage with the vast array of national, sentimental, historical, and intertextual meanings that were attached to the waltz at that time.

Figure 3.22: Poulenc, Valse, mm. 45-62.

Stravinsky’s *Valse pour les enfants*, composed in 1917 but first published in *Le Figaro* on May 21, 1922, goes far beyond Poulenc’s *Valse* in terms of its level of abstraction (Fig. 3.23). The repetition of the vamping (the waltz rhythmic pattern) is maintained for the duration of the minute-long piece without any moment of contrast or disruption to its obsessive, mechanical regularity. The melody is also far less caustic than Poulenc’s. Richard Taruskin described this piece as a paradigm of *nepodvizhnost’*, a term meaning immobility that was used by critics of Stravinsky’s
ostinato-driven music where ‘‘goal-oriented’’ form and directed voice-leading are most conspicuously in abeyance.” In other words, *nepodvizhnost*’ refers to the “nondevelopmental,” “nonteleological” quality of the work: chord progressions are discarded; dynamic contrasts are avoided; and phrases do not seem to move in any particular direction. Hence, Stravinsky’s waltz cannot articulate form—it ends abruptly unless it is played as a loop like a music box, making its circularity even more apparent—nor can it articulate meaning beyond its own circularity. Taruskin writes: “The harmony is denatured, ‘melted into air,’ and on this bed of air the melody floats free, unfettered by any directionality that a more dynamically articulated chordal succession might have imposed. For a true antecedent to this innocuous little waltz one must look not to Lanner or Schubert or Chopin, but to the ‘Augures printaniérs’ or the ‘Cercles mystérieux’ [of the Rite of Spring].”

By quoting the well-known expression from the Communist Manifesto, Taruskin pointed toward the way modernism could discard the foundations of musical form and tonality. It was an erasure of the past, where Lanner, Schubert and Chopin (and Johann Strauss) were no longer the models on which musical history was built, as it was still the case for Ravel as he was writing *La

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113 Taruskin, 2:1451.
The waltzes by Poulenc and Stravinsky are bound to their actuality, their sheer presence in the moment of realization. They have no before, no after. They have no memory. They are closed onto themselves, hermetic to the kind of affective reading that could render them nostalgic. They are therefore negations of nostalgia—at least in a conventional sense based on the paradigms introduced in the first chapter.

Paradoxically, it is that negation of nostalgia that confirms the nostalgic affect of the waltz in the postwar years. When they refuse to look back at tradition, Poulenc and Stravinsky make listeners like Brillant regret its repudiation. The paradox of modernity, which is the topic of the next chapter, is then perhaps the inescapability of nostalgia—were Poulenc and Stravinsky nostalgic for something else, something that our conventional understandings of nostalgia cannot account for, like a sense of immediacy and presentness? Revolutionizing the relations of the production of sounds of memory only shifts these relations to different spaces. It does not erase them. When “all that is solid melts into air, . . . man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”

In sum, in the years that followed the Armistice, the presence of nostalgia in the waltz was more contentious than simply recognizing the obsolescence of the genre. From its use as a direct nostalgic recuperation of the national heritage in response to both the trauma of the war and the invasion of American popular music, to the attempts to actively detach it from such contemporaneous connections, the cultural value of the waltz was repeatedly questioned and reassessed. The symbolic meanings of sounds of memory are always constructed, and the forces guiding them can be controversial, equivocal, and motivated by political, aesthetic, or ethical considerations that not only affect listeners on personal and collective levels, but also constantly evolve as nostalgia is revised and reproduced. Nostalgia is never stable nor definitive. The

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114 I address this question in the final chapter, where I introduce another way to approach the topic of nostalgia in similar works—suggesting that Poulenc and Stravinsky might indeed have been nostalgic for a sense of immediacy in popular music.
interpretations of the waltz that I present here stem from this exceptional moment for the waltz immediately after World War I. They encapsulate a time of transition to peace, marked by reengagement with the nation’s cultural history and reaction to social, global, and economic uncertainties. As the war would gradually fade from public discourses, the waltz would continue its decline and would eventually lose its polemical status.
4 NOSTALGIC REVOLUTIONS, MODERNIST RENOVATIONS

Il y a dans le Chinois, la petite Américaine et les Acrobates, des nostalgies inconnues jusqu’à ce jour.¹

4.1 THE NOSTALGIA OF MODERNISM

4.1.1 Modernism and nostalgia

Two months before the collaborative Tombeau de Debussy appeared in the December issue of La Revue musicale, the twenty-eight-year-old composer Germaine Tailleferre penned her own Hommage [sic] à Debussy for piano, which remained unpublished during her lifetime. Apart from the date of October 1920, marked by Tailleferre at the end of the manuscript, biographers or scholars have yet to discover the circumstances of its composition, and when (if ever) the piece was publicly performed during the composer’s lifetime.² Tailleferre likely knew that a collective Tombeau de Debussy was about to be published, considering her close relationship with Erik Satie, one of the project’s contributors. Satie was then regarded as the mentor of the group of six young composers that rose to prominence in 1920 as Les Six (Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Tailleferre). Satie considered Tailleferre as his

² The work is listed without further information in the catalogues of Tailleferre’s works (Georges Hacquard, Germaine Tailleferre : La Dame des Six (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998); and Robert Shapiro, Germaine Tailleferre: A Bio-Bibliography (Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994). None of them have retained Tailleferre’s peculiar spelling of Hommage.

The holograph manuscript is held in the Arthur Rubinstein Music Collection at Juilliard School (www.arthurrubinsteinmusiccollection.org/TAIL_HOMM/). Rubinstein and Tailleferre grew close in the late 1910s. Rubinstein likely received the manuscript as a gift from Tailleferre, who also dedicated her Quatuor à cordes from 1917-19 to the pianist.
“musical daughter” and they had performed his ballet *Parade* together on piano at a Festival Erik Satie in June of that year. Tailleferre could have been inspired or encouraged by this friend and mentor to write her own homage to Debussy. Another opportunity could otherwise have arisen from Tailleferre’s touring schedule in late 1920. After a trip to England in the summer of 1920, she traveled to Norway where she performed on November 25 and 26 alongside the singer Louise Alvar in two concerts that featured Debussy’s music (the second of which was exclusively dedicated to the composer). These concerts would have proved a suitable occasion for the aspiring young composer to present her newly written homage, perhaps as an encore.

For French audiences of the time, however, a musical homage to Debussy composed by one of the young members of Les Six would have seemed a most incongruous idea. From the very beginning, this group of composers formed around (and heavily promoted by) the tutelar figure of Jean Cocteau was recognized as being resolutely against debussyism and Impressionism. The two articles by Henri Collet that famously brought public attention to the six composers as a coherent group, in January 1920, repeated Cocteau’s rejection of Debussy from his manifesto *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, published a year before. Collet’s articles and Cocteau’s manifesto remained for many decades the most important publications marking the public emergence of Les Six and durably

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The rejection of Debussy by Les Six was more nuanced, generally admiring of his aesthetic, but objecting to his numerous followers and to “impressionism” as a movement. For instance, Poulenc said in 1920: “weary of debussyism—I ADORE Debussy” (Quoted in Marianne Wheeldon, *Debussy’s Legacy and the Construction of Reputation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 73.). Marianne Wheeldon also discusses the “oversimplification” of debussyism in *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* and its impact on the reception of Debussy’s works. See Wheeldon, 70–71.
shaped the reception of the group. That Tailleferre not only performed Debussy’s piano works and songs during that period, but also wrote her own homage to the composer that was so vehemently rejected by her peers confirms the gap between the public presentation of these composers and their personal preferences and influences.

Nonetheless, despite its title, Tailleferre’s *Hommage à Debussy* (Fig. 4.1) bears no relation to the deceased composer and does not display obvious signs of memorial practice. Rather, it partakes of an emerging musical aesthetic of rational order and simplicity that would later become a fixture of French postwar “neoclassicism.” The piece (which is missing a tempo marking) exudes a rather melancholic character without overt sentimentality through its lack of directionality in the superimposed melodic lines (which are unpredictable as much as motivically highly repetitive, for instance with their sequences of falling thirds) and in the oscillating accompaniment between the tonic and flattened subtonic, which eventually unexpectedly resolves on the submediant (defiantly spelled E–Ab–B). Although the lower register of the piece is solidly grounded in the G major / F major oscillation, the two polytonal melodies create instability by alternating between G major, E Dorian (D major), and Ab major. The dynamism of these interwoven lines might recall the contrapuntal flow of a Baroque trio sonata more than Debussy. Polytonality was one of the notable innovations of the modernist composers that grew in popularity through the 1910s and became common in the 1920s. Yet, its novelty was described as a *volte-face* to Debussy, as Collet expressed in his second article on Les Six: “The polytonality removed from the bewitching haziness of this period of development can, with its starkness, seem somewhat jarring. The meeting of voices would

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shock ears once hypnotized by *debussysme*. They will need to adjust to it, but one becomes accustomed to it with ease and rapidity.”8 If we are to take Tailleferre’s piece seriously at all—and resist considering it as an anti-homage dismissal of Debussy’s legacy, as an ironic jab at the debussyists, or as a tombeau parody—then we are faced with a puzzling discord between her modernism and her memorial intentions. Unlike any composer involved in the “official” *Tombeau de Debussy*, Tailleferre had strong, public, and well-known associations with an anti-debussyist movement while she also defended Debussy’s music in concert. Her short piano piece prompts us to reconsider how musical works that seem both new and departing from traditional means of expression can simultaneously reflect on the past without sacrificing their modernity.

![Figure 4.1](image)

Figure 4.1: Germaine Tailleferre, *Hommage à Debussy*, transcription of the manuscript, 1920 (Arthur Rubinstein Music Collection, Julliard School), mm. 1-8.

In the previous chapters, nostalgia emerged in situations where it implicitly rejected novelty, innovation, and change, either as a gesture of personal, cultural or political resistance, or in order to promote the retrieval of threatened cultural symbols. Composers who adopted modernist aesthetics, such as those who broke away from the conventional boundaries of the tombeau genre

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(chapter 2), or those who dismissed the sentimentalism of prewar waltzes (chapter 3), appeared to reject nostalgia and to refuse to participate in the nostalgic tendencies of some of their peers. Yet, despite their essential differences, the traditionalism of nostalgic musicians and the reactionary attitudes of modernist artists were tightly connected and often overlapped with each other, as we can observe in Tailleferre’s Hommage à Debussy. No one has more succinctly condensed this relationship than Richard Taruskin: “Nostalgia is perhaps the most modern and complicated—or in one word, the most modernist—of all emotions.” As he wrote in his discussion of the late Romantic era’s return to the original roots of “authentic” folklore in art songs, “only modernity’s quickened sense of loss (of innocence, of goodness, of well-being and peace) demanded the undiluted restorative powers of actual, rather than artistically adapted, folklore.” The loss of innocence prompted a return to innocence. In the early twentieth century, as in the late sixteenth century when Hofer coined the term, modernity instigated nostalgia.

This symbiotic relation (or tension) between two ideologies that theoretically appear to be at antithetical ends of a temporal and artistic spectrum has been the focus of much research in the humanities over the past decade, especially in literature and in art. In musicology, the relation between modernism and the past has been central to the study of neoclassicism since Scott Messing’s pioneering study of the concept in 1988. More recently, Tamara Levitz identifies two main issues addressed in musicological discussions of neoclassicism. Firstly, scholars have attempted to “reconcile” neoclassicism with modernism and to understand how it could contribute to modernist aesthetics. Levitz exposes the erasure of neoclassicism’s broader history that occurs

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when scholars become “trapped” in analytical frames in order to make neoclassicism fit within the customary parameters of modernism. Secondly, scholars have looked at the nationalist ideology (or ideologies) that neoclassicism is understood to have communicated. Since the publication of Levitz’s monograph in 2012, a handful of scholars interested in neoclassicism has added even more nuance to the relationship between modernism and the past. However, the concept of nostalgia has rarely been employed as a critical term in studies of neoclassicism. Taruskin’s words suggest that, while nostalgia has been an underlying concern in discussions of neoclassicism and modernism, it needs to be addressed more specifically and thoroughly in its role as a cultural agent in the emergence and development of a classicist aesthetic in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In this chapter, I will reexamine the debate on the modernist value of neoclassicism in the aftermath of the First World War by taking into consideration the notion of nostalgia as understood at the time. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, a retrospective engagement with the past was only one of multiple aspects of nostalgia. The multiple layers of nostalgic expression in 1920, and especially what I will refer to as “sideways nostalgia,” give a different appreciation of nostalgia within modernist movements than the one that scholars have circulated. I will draw attention to little-known pieces (such as Tailleferre’s Hommage à Debussy) that I believe help present a more accurate portrait of modernism in Paris in 1920, and I will offer new perspectives on some of the works that have been featured (sometimes obsessively) in prior discussions of neoclassicism (such as Satie’s wartime ballet Parade). Firstly, I will give a brief overview of the theories and histories of neoclassicism, eventually following Theodore Ziolkowski in dismissing the term altogether.

13 Most importantly: Maureen A. Carr, After the Rite: Stravinsky’s Path to Neoclassicism (1914-25) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ziolkowski, Classicism of the Twenties; Wheeldon, Debussy’s Legacy and the Construction of Reputation.
14 I employed the term “neoclassicism” in the introduction to this chapter only for convenience as a common term used by musicologists to refer to French modernist aesthetics of the 1920s. About the evolution of the term, Scott Messing’s 1988 study remains an essential read.
will then analyze the entanglement between modernism and nostalgia in two sections, the first one
centered around the idea of nostalgia within modernist circles, especially as it related to their
adaptations of popular music, and the second one around the public reception of these works within
communities of listeners and musicians still attached to prewar idioms. The viewpoints of these
audiences have been largely marginalized by musicologists because of their conservative attitudes,
considered obsolete and therefore—in a teleological view of music history—deemed less worthy
of attention.¹⁵ Yet, as I will show, the aesthetic priorities of these listeners and musicians is
noteworthy not only because it comprised by far the most substantial portion of the music produced
and performed in Paris during this period, but also because they continued to be interested in the
evolution of music and its development in the postwar era, even if they might have been less
informed about the latest musical novelties. Therefore, I believe that previous discussions of the
interactions between modernism and the past have been incomplete, due to their disregard of the
interactions between modernist circles and the larger public.

4.1.2  (Neo)classicism as nostalgia, modernism, both, or neither?

The relation between neoclassicism and modernism requires careful consideration, especially when
applied to the transitional period of the 1920s. As Scott Messing showed over thirty years ago, the
term “neoclassical” as usually employed by musicologists today—to refer to the movement that
groups composers who “revived the balanced forms and clearly perceptible thematic processes of
earlier styles to replace what were, to them, the increasingly exaggerated gestures and formlessness
of late Romanticism”¹⁶—obscures its discursive history, which shifted considerably at the end of

¹⁵ Jane Fulcher is probably the most important scholar to have drawn attention to the complex networks of
composers that circulated in Paris in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, her
discussions of musical works are still heavily geared toward the pieces that have become “classics” of the
repertoire.
the First World War. Neoclassicism was not employed in the current sense of the term until 1923; therefore, its contemporary use to describe music written before that date requires an appreciation of the terminology. On the other hand, “modernism” was—and remains, to some extant—a vague term denoting a broad range of ideas, from the most advanced innovations of the avant-garde to the mere suggestion of anything current, of the present time. Hence, to locate nostalgia at the intersection of these fluctuating terms first necessitates clarification of their respective meanings.

As Messing points out, the term “neoclassical” semantically evokes the tensions between “order and freedom, continuity and innovation, and tradition and novelty” that existed in the early twentieth century.\(^\text{17}\) In reaction to German romanticism—and especially Wagnerism—the French musical tradition of the past was seen by its advocates (among which were Debussy and Vincent d’Indy) as “classical,” defined by such traits as expressive clarity, proportion, and formal concision. Hence, three or four decades before the modernist neoclassicism of the twenties, French composers inspired by their rediscovery of Rameau and Couperin, and substantially aided by the development of French musicology,\(^\text{18}\) were already reviving forms and techniques from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet, as Messing points out, the pieces sometimes owed more to the contemporary styles than their classicizing titles (i.e. \textit{Pièce dans le style ancien}) would suggest.\(^\text{19}\) Although composers writing such pieces did so only circumstantially, falling short of eliciting a strong classicist movement, their occasional interest in the French classical past constituted a meaningful reorientation of French music that the postwar generation would further exploit and take in new directions. However, in the early 1900s (and until the end of the war), while classicism

\(^{17}\) Messing, \textit{Neoclassicism in Music}, xvi. My cursory overview of neoclassicism is largely indebted to Scott Messing and Jane Fulcher.

\(^{18}\) See Fulcher, \textit{The Composer as Intellectual}, 40–42. Perhaps most symbolic of this connection between French nationalism and musical classicism is Debussy’s self-labeled “\textit{musicien français}” on the title pages of his three late sonatas as a way to position himself as successor of Rameau, Couperin, and Chopin. See Wheeldon, \textit{Debussy’s Legacy and the Construction of Reputation}, 8–9.

\(^{19}\) Messing lists many such compositions dating back to 1871 (see Messing, \textit{Neoclassicism in Music}, 24–38.). Barbara Kelly also writes that Debussy’s Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp “teases the listener with nostalgia for the fin-de-siècle” (Barbara L. Kelly, \textit{Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939} (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), 143.).
was commended as a “national language of both remembrance and of mourning.”\textsuperscript{20} the term “neoclassic” was applied derogatively as a scornful epithet to composers who superficially imitated the instrumental forms of the eighteenth century without musical depth. In an era of cultural nationalism, when artistic productions were intended to support the national myth, neoclassicism was framed in opposition to French classical art, and was therefore “invariably used by French writers to describe German musicians,” such as Brahms or Mahler.\textsuperscript{21}

After the war, the term neoclassicism was still used to refer to works that conservatively used classical forms.\textsuperscript{22} To avoid its pejorative meaning, some artists like Cocteau used the Latinized phrase “\textit{nouveau classicisme}” to characterized their use of the past in a creative manner rather than merely imitatively. But by 1922-1923, neoclassicism had lost its conservative connotations, the term now being used to label an alternative set of musical traits.\textsuperscript{23} Pointing to the mixture of innovation and tradition that was transforming the past into something new, Diaghilev quipped: “One does not revive. . . . One evolves toward neoclassicism, as Picasso involves toward Ingres.”\textsuperscript{24} Diaghilev clearly understood neoclassicism of his time as antithetical to the previous generation’s retrospective classicism, one that could now be used to locate modernist artists within tradition without suggesting any form of academicist return to old styles. This definition of neoclassicism as a modern reinterpretation of earlier styles has been adopted by musicologists ever since. Furthermore, as Wheeldon argues, the attributes of neoclassicism now overlapped with those of anti-debussyism, which means that the techniques that the young composers originally employed to distance themselves from Debussy were reframed as neoclassical.\textsuperscript{25}

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\textsuperscript{20} Fulcher, \textit{The Composer as Intellectual}, 22.
\textsuperscript{21} Messing, \textit{Neoclassicism in Music}, 14.
\textsuperscript{22} See Messing, 81–82.
\textsuperscript{23} It is common to cite Boris de Schloezer’s review of a Jean Wiéner concert in the February 1923 issue of the \textit{Revue contemporaine} as the “first occasion on which the term neoclassicism was employed in a manner which matches current usage both in its characterization as a musical idiom and in affiliation with its most frequently cited practitioner, Stravinsky.” (Messing, 87.)
\textsuperscript{25} Wheeldon, \textit{Debussy’s Legacy and the Construction of Reputation}, 90.
\end{flushleft}
With its combination of tradition and innovation, neoclassicism fits uncertainly within discussions of nostalgia, especially when both concepts are defined narrowly. Thus, even though Messing himself refers to “nostalgia for the past” multiple times in his book, he dismisses Satie’s neoclassical simplicity as anything but nostalgic, saying: “Nostalgia for the eighteenth century was an anathema to him, and he invariably couched his evocations of the past in ruthlessly satiric terms. Satie’s *Sonatine bureaucratique* (1917), for example, is a notorious burlesque of Clementi’s Sonatina No. 1.”

Likewise, Julian Johnson states:

> The aesthetic fascination with ruins, from German Romanticism through to the present, has little to do with nostalgia for the past; rather it foregrounds the sense of a break with the past. As in Stravinsky’s Neoclassicism, the musical past is referenced not as the expression of a desire to return there, but as a self-conscious acknowledgement of the gap that divides the past from the present—modernity’s self-awareness of itself as non-contiguous with the past.

And Arnold Whittall’s Grove dictionary entry for “Neo-classicism” sees it “not as regressive or nostalgic but as expressing a distinctly contemporary multiplicity of awareness,” which he compares to postmodern sensibilities of the 1970s. Whittall’s association of nostalgia with regression is typical of the negative and dismissive views of nostalgia shared by many scholars in the late twentieth century: Taruskin himself asked in 1993 if neoclassicism was “hardboiled modernism or futile nostalgia.” For these musicologists, the irony that pervades neoclassicism’s

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26 Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 91. On the other hand, Messing claims that Stravinsky’s waltz from *Three Easy Pieces* (one of eight waltzes Stravinsky wrote within five years) “evokes nostalgia for the world of the child.”

27 Julian Johnson, *Out of Time: Music and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 26. Another strikingly anti-nostalgic comment (from 1939) is quoted in Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 280: “Stravinsky’s art, for [scholar André] Schaeffner, is unquestionably one of ‘evocation,’ however with historical objectivity—styles are denuded of both nostalgia and emotional resonance.” This historical view was promoted by Stravinsky himself in interviews and other writings.

28 Whittall, “Neo-classicism.”

29 Richard Taruskin, “Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology,” *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 3 (1993): 287. The question arises from a tension between what Taruskin sees as neoclassicism’s “true break with the past” and its “retrogression into the traditional.” In the rest of the article, Taruskin puts this question aside as he explores different attitudes toward neoclassicism in Igor Stravinsky’s works from the 1920s. While Taruskin’s pragmatic explanations of the composer’s retrospective turn might shed some light on its sources, they completely leave aside the polemical question that opens the article, rendering nostalgia’s futility a mere catchword to grab the reader’s attention into an unsolved polemic.
use of the past allows modernist composers to avoid the reputed dangers of nostalgia, its “futility.”

In reality, as we have already seen in Tailleferre’s little homage, neoclassical composers around 1920 were neither always ironic or detached, nor always inspired by the past, which renders impractical this conventional definition of the term and Taruskin’s binarism between modernism and nostalgia.

Because of the changing ways that the term neoclassical has been used, and the uncertainties in its contemporary use, Theodore Ziolkowski nixes the prefixes “neo” and “nouveau” and proposes a stronger conceptual distinction between classical and classicism. He argues that the war brought a renewed interest in classical themes that did not necessarily equate to a turn to the spirit of classicism. He describes such examples of “classical without classicism” that can be found all around Europe, citing for instance Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Prokofiev’s first symphony, and Milhaud’s *Les Choéphores*, all dating from 1916-17. Of the latter, he says that the use of polytonality, percussion instruments, and insistent rhythms “can by no stretch of the imagination be considered a work of classical balance and restraint.” Ziolkowski thus supports the view that classicism is a “frame of mind” as opposed to the classical imitation of forms, styles, or subjects from the past. Yet, if “classical” can exist “without classicism,” Ziolkowski overlooks the possibility of a “classicism without classical,” which would retrieve the spirit of the past without reviving its stylistic features.

Jane Fulcher illustrates the variety of approaches to classicism in the early twentieth century and explores their various aesthetic and political motivations, ranging from serving national memory to challenging the politicization of an official classicism. On the one hand, for d’Indy and composers associated with the Schola Cantorum (an institution founded in 1894 with the goal of

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30 On the other hand, Ihor Junyk thinks that “Stravinsky’s nostalgic turn to the classical past needs to be seen as a strategy for dealing with his loss of ‘home’ after the Russian Revolution, and a means of articulating new forms of personal and musical identity. . . . Denied order and stability in his life, he increasingly sought refuge in rigid and problematical forms of nostalgic art.” (Ihor Junyk, *Foreign Modernism: Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Style in Paris* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 81.)

reviving early music), classicism was connected to the “orderly and hierarchical values of Catholicism,” based on classical models, and therefore aligned with the nationalist right. On the other hand, composers like Ravel and Roussel refused to ban German or Austrian works during the war, defending instead a universal understanding of classicism closer to the socialism of the French left. In previous chapters, we saw how Ravel’s La Valse fused French and German sensibilities, while Le Tombeau de Couperin and his contribution to the Tombeau de Debussy paid homage to the past while showing his adoption of modern aesthetics within a classicist format. Yet, Ravel’s controversial refusal of the légion d’honneur in January 1920 can be seen as a rejection of official culture. In this context, anything that was deemed true to the French spirit had claims to classicism, whether or not it recuperated classical forms. For instance, as composer Charles Koechlin understood it in February 1920, “Fauré and Debussy are essentially classic due to the purity of their writing and of the realization of their thought, because everything is neatly said”—and writer André Gide stated a year later that classicism was “a harmonious sheaf of virtues, of which the first is modesty.” In other words, this interpretation of classicism allows us to posit that it may not necessarily be based on a revival of the past, but that it can act “sideways,” by finding its inspiration in contemporary models that also convey the French virtues extoled by Koechlin, Gide, and other writers. Here, one could notice echoes of Svetlana Boym’s division of nostalgia into two types, restorative and reflective. While the restoration of the past characterizes more adequately prewar neoclassicism as the superficial imitation of classical rules and styles, postwar classicism is invested in a reflective approach to its models, as it does not seek to retrieve, but instead strives to comment—either seriously or ironically—on its models.

33 See Fulcher, 65–70 and 136–46.
34 Koechlin quoted in Fulcher, 364, n. 296; and Gide quoted in Ziolkowski, Classicism of the Twenties, 53.
35 Although Ziolkowski never cites Boym, the vocabulary used in his conclusion is strikingly similar to Boym’s definition of reflection nostalgia. See Ziolkowski, Classicism of the Twenties, 192–93.
In the nationalist context that we have seen, modernism—as a prioritization of innovation and of the future progress of art and culture—emerges as an equally politicized term in scholarly writings about the period. As Fulcher writes, “modernism was indeed perceived as dangerous—as not only unpatriotic, but as socially seditious, associated with the foreign, the ‘enemy without,’ as well as with insidious elements within.” It was associated with the “boches” (the German enemy) and was deemed “un-French.”

For example, combined with their public rejection of Debussy, the interest that Les Six showed in Arnold Schoenberg immediately after the war could easily be criticized as unpatriotic by their opponents, such as Louis Vuillemin, who wrote in a 1923 article: “they try to destroy a ‘national’ musician (let us be quite clear about this word) who is glorious in France, and around the world, in order to invent for the benefit of a certain foreign country a ‘national’ musician which it does not have but would like to have.”

However, in the press of the time, the term “modernism” itself (along with the concept of modernity) was loosely applied, and radical attacks on modern music were limited to foreign importations (whether German or American). In 1920, in the pages of Le Ménestrel (then the longest-running music journal), the terms “moderne,” “modernisme” and “modernité” appeared rather frequently, and always in a non-prejudicial and non-partisan manner. As such, the “maîtres modernes” were understood and discussed in contrast to the “maîtres du passé,” the old classics constituting the tradition.

Hence, even Schumann, who died in 1856, could be labelled a “compositeur moderne” when compared to Bach. Thus, the meaning of these terms depended largely on their contexts, and “modern harmonies” or “modern tonality” were not necessarily meant as rebukes (although this could occasionally be the case). In short, around 1920, “modernity” referred to anything that was contemporary: one could not escape it, although some rejected it by reminiscing about the vaguely

36 Fulcher, The Composer as Intellectual, 84, 50, and 96.
38 See Le Ménestrel, 1920, pages 7, 28, 36, 47, 62, 63, 70, 74, 81, 82, 89, etc.
nostalgic tradition that had been lost or that was currently threatened. For example, André Cœuroy’s book *La Musique française moderne*, published in 1922, includes chapters on fifteen living composers ranging from Fauré and d’Indy to Satie, Honegger, and Milhaud.  

Cœuroy defended these “modern” composers even in their most adventurous ruptures from the previous generation, by introducing their aesthetic as a “brutal return” toward a “bare art” (*art dépouillé*) found in the popular world of the “modern life of the cities” and of the fairs. What unites these “modern” composers is that they follow Fauré’s ideal “of clarity of thought, [and] of restraint and purity of form.”  

Despite their divergent stylistic means, each of these modern composers maintains a sense of tradition: this is what Cœuroy called “the multiple expressions of a common heritage.”  

Milhaud himself would concur, writing the following year that Les Six and Satie “have tried to restore the national and authentic tradition of their country,” which he would define elsewhere as Rameau, Berlioz, and Chabrier.  

These writings show that while classicism was linked to French nationalism, modernism was not necessarily its opposite—even if conservative figures remained suspicious of most things new. In short, although it seems that classicism’s longing for the tradition is contradictory to modernism’s breaking from it, in practice composers managed to unite both: postwar classicism

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41. Cœuroy, 17.  
42. Cœuroy, 19.  
44. Barbara Kelly makes a similar case over the use of the term “ultra-modernism,” showing first that the term (in 1915) could equally refer to Franck, d’Indy, Debussy and Ravel—“who put invention and imagination first, and precedent, convention and scholarship last” (the words are from Edmondstoune Duncan’s 1915 *Ultra-Modernism in Music*)—as well as those who threatened France, mostly from outside. Kelly eventually concludes that “there is little consensus over the meaning and scope of modernism.” (Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*, 6.) Meanwhile, her discussion of anti-modernism (Kelly, 209–14.) in the early 1920s does not diminish the ambiguities over the term, as it was used by Cocteau as well as the Catholic writer Jacques Maritain in equivocal ways.
can be ranked among the modernist movements while also being a nostalgic one at the same time. Therefore, asking whether modernism and classicism are nostalgic or anti-nostalgic is not productive—however provocatively these questions may be formulated. Instead, I will show that nostalgic and anti-nostalgic expressions are often so closely connected within modernist compositions that they become indistinguishable. In this chapter I will refer to modernism mostly in relation to the generation of young composers who came of age during the war, since their music, more than any other produced at that time, challenged the authority of the previous generations and the aesthetic continuity with the prewar era.

4.2 Sideways Nostalgia

4.2.1 Nostalgia and everyday life: Satie’s Parade

If classicism is understood as an ideology (or a “spirit”) that does not require a turn toward the past, then we can include it within a plural form of musical nostalgia that finds its inspiration elsewhere, starting with the contemporary urban (“modern”) world. Nancy Perloff identifies a number of aesthetic principles derived from the Parisian cabaret, the music-hall, the fair, and the circus, that Satie and members of Les Six used in the years following the war instead of reverting to elements from the past: parody, musical diversity, simplicity, repetition, and nostalgia. Because each of these principles, as we have seen, also broadly characterizes classicism, we can observe a link between the popular and the classic. Although popular entertainment could evoke the “sights and sounds” of childhood (as Perloff argues in the case of Poulenc) or the simplicity of eighteenth-century
classicism (as she discusses in connection with Cocteau’s *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*),\(^{45}\) I would argue that overt representations of the past were neither the only nor the most important means by which popular music could be understood as a signifier of nostalgia in those years. Even if some statements by Les Six (such as Auric’s declaration that Satie’s ballet *Parade* offers the “nostalgia of a barrel organ that will never play Bach fugues”\(^{46}\)) would indeed seem to express regret for a lost past (and a very artistic and classical one) and create what Perloff calls “a bittersweet inflection and a wistful yearning for the past” or, in other words, an “implicit” association between popular entertainment and the past,\(^{47}\) a closer look at how the term was used (by Auric and others) and how *Parade* was interpreted will reveal an alternate interpretation and a more accurate understanding of the meaning of nostalgia in the context of popular entertainment.

*Parade* was a collaboration between Satie (music), Cocteau (scenario), Pablo Picasso (sets and costumes), and Léonide Massine (choreography). It was first performed by Diaghilev’s Ballets russes in May 1917 (as the company’s last wartime creation) and revived in December 1920.\(^{48}\) It is an interesting work to discuss here because of the tension it enacts between modernism and nostalgia. Whereas Robert Shapiro writes that the ballet “dealt deathblows to the musical status quo,” and Fulcher argues that Satie “exposed and ridiculed the preponderant wartime myth of a healthy, exclusive, classical, and Latin tradition as characterizing French art,”\(^{49}\) Perloff’s analysis locates three moments that represent, according to her, what Cocteau had described as “varieties of nostalgia hitherto unknown” in his famous pamphlet *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*. The nostalgic character of these three moments does not emerge from any particular reference to popular entertainment but rather from “the contrast between the surface buoyancy of the music-hall acts and the wistfulness


\(^{49}\) Shapiro, *Les Six*, 2011, 40; Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 82 (see 78-82).
In her first example, Perloff’s description of the repetitive sigh figures in the violins that immediately follow the brassy chorale opening is based entirely on the notion of difference: quiet versus loud; expressive versus marcato; brass versus strings; and (in some recordings, but not demanded in the score) slowed-down rubato versus martial. While Perloff correctly points out that the effect of the violin statements is “to undermine the chorale’s bravado and to introduce a bittersweet hue,” this nostalgia has not much to do with either reminiscences of the past or the nature and affect of popular entertainment. This nostalgia based on difference operates similarly in any musical genre. Perloff’s second example—a passage in the middle of the dance of the Chinese Magician—parallels her first, but in reverse: the lively rhythmic section now interrupts the sigh figures, and thus “strikes the listener in retrospect.” Finally, Perloff describes the closing measures of the ballet where, once again, a brassy repetitive passage is suddenly interrupted to leave room for a quiet coda played by the strings. However, this time, in addition to the elements of direct contrast, the passage also recalls the opening fugue of the ballet (which was heard immediately after the brassy chorale and the sigh figures), thus creating a diegetic temporal nostalgia for the past, when the managers still hoped to attract audiences to their acts.

While all three examples can reasonably be described as nostalgic in the context of structural and intramusical difference, none of these passages justifies Cocteau’s idea of “varieties of nostalgia hitherto unknown” nor Auric’s reference to the “nostalgia of a barrel organ that will never play Bach fugues.” On the contrary, I believe that this analysis fails to understand what nostalgia meant for the modernist artists involved in this project and in similar ones. In the preface he wrote for the piano score of Parade, Auric stressed (as did Apollinaire in the program notes) the “reality” of the piece, anchored in the stage noises, and evoking the “rumbling of the tramways.” His mention of nostalgia does not proceed from a longing for the past, but from that inherently melancholic character of this truer-than-life material:

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50 This and following quotes from Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 146–47.
Les mystères terribles de la Chine, la tristesse de bar nocturne de la petite américaine, les gymnastiques étonnantes des acrobates : c’est là toute la douleur des trêves, – la nostalgie de l’orgue de barbarie qui jamais ne jouera de fugues de Bach.

The terrible mysteries of China, the sadness of the American girl’s nightclub, the astonishing gymnastics of the acrobats: these are the sorrows of the fair, the nostalgia of the barrel organ that will never play Bach fugues.51

Placed at the end of a list of miserable characters, the barrel organ must be seen here as a pauper’s instrument.52 At the turn of the century, the barrel organ was a familiar street sound in Paris. It was played by old, itinerant, and sometimes disabled musicians whose lives were precarious and who would turn the instrument’s handle for hours every day in the hope of receiving a few coins. Perhaps because its sound could be “unappealing” and “trembling,”53 by 1908 the number of players was diminishing. Already ousted from the streets of the city, a new measure was taken early that year to stop giving new licenses to grinders for performing in public.54 Consequently, by 1920, hearing the organ grinder could “recall distant memories that one believed forever erased.”55 But rather than evoking this nostalgic disappearance of the instrument, Auric’s preface appears to be primarily referring to its limited repertoire and—in contrast to Bach’s fugues—its characteristically limited and repetitive sound, which would never be able to capture the essence of a performance on a non-mechanical instrument. As Potter put it: “The barrel organ is an instrument of nostalgia because it reproduces something well known, even hackneyed, yet in imperfect form: the tune can never be as good as the original because the technology is imperfect.”56 Therefore, it is in both the short,
repetitive cells of popular music, and in the irretrievability of more complex musical forms, that we must look to locate nostalgia—as it was understood in those years—in Satie’s *Parade*, rather than in its use of dynamic, instrumental, and rhythmic contrasts. The repetition of popular motives and the eschewal of complex forms are both central to French postwar classicism and, rather than undermining Satie’s modernism, actually define it. As Auric suggested in the last sentence of his preface (“Art continues its way that no-one can interrupt”—*Cependant, l’Art poursuit son chemin que nul ne peut interrompre*), the forward-looking, modernist aesthetic of *Parade* was not opposite to the notion of nostalgia as a trait of everyday music, even though wartime audiences would initially perceive this work as unpatriotic, anti-French, and “boche.”

Auric used the term “nostalgia” to describe *Parade* at least twice in the following years. Interestingly, he did so in reference to various aspects of popular Parisian culture, confirming that it is not just the specificity of the barrel organ itself that was the most nostalgic, but urban life in general, and its soundscape in particular. Hence, in 1921, Auric wrote:

> Parade, j’y retrouve, après bientôt quatre ans, cette nostalgie émouvante des trombones et des tambours, boulevard Saint-Jacques ou boulevard Pasteur, la pauvre mélancolie des faubourgs, des visages blêmes sous les lumières de la foire.

Nearly four years later, I find in *Parade* this stirring nostalgia of the trombones and drums, Boulevard Saint-Jacques or Boulevard Pasteur, the poor melancholy of the suburbs, the pale faces under the lights of the fair.

And again, a year later, reusing the image of the barrel organ in a slightly different context:

> Mais c’est de la même façon que Strawinsky écoutant un orgue de Barbarie, le transforme en une machine à rêves qui, dans le premier tableau de Pétrouchka, nous découvrira une nostalgie, une détresse foraine qui dépasse la foire de Petrograd comme la Parade de Satie dépasse les boniments des camelots et les chevaux de bois, boulevard de Clichy.

But it is in the same way that Stravinsky, listening to a barrel organ, transforms it into a dream machine which, in the first scene of *Petrushka*, reveals a nostalgia, a

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57 See Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 83.
fairground distress that exceeds the Petrograd fair just as Satie’s *Parade* exceeds the peddlers’ sales and the wooden horses, Boulevard de Clichy.\(^{59}\)

In both cases, we can notice a subtle hint at the poverty and mercantile aspect of street life which seem to guide Auric’s use of the term nostalgia. For Milhaud, however, it is not the sad aspects of street and fair music that cause nostalgia, but the entertainment world as a whole: once again positing the connection between nostalgia and popular entertainment within a classicist aesthetic, *Parade* evoked a “nostalgia of the music-hall,” where “the melodic line is so simply drawn that the emotion is captured in it,” as he wrote in a 1923 article in which he also noted Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for Georges Bizet’s *Carmen* as an example of the philosopher’s nostalgia for an art of clarity amidst Wagnerism.\(^{60}\) These several quotations only serve to reinforce the notion of a nostalgia for everyday life that was shared by artists attached to Les Six around 1920. Although these statements all concern the same work, they could also be read in connection with other works that share similar traits and thus guide our interpretation of nostalgia as a characteristic of French modernist music in 1920—a characteristic clearly recognized by the writer François Mauriac, who mentioned that the composers of the *École nouvelle* (the “new school”) were “haunted” by the nostalgia of *parades* and their music.\(^{61}\)

### 4.2.2 Nostalgia and *saudade*: Milhaud’s Brazilian excursions

Darius Milhaud’s ballet *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, which premiered on February 21, 1920, alongside pieces by Auric, Poulenc and Satie at a “spectacle-concert” organized by Cocteau, is comparable

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to Satie’s *Parade* in many aspects, both theatrical and musical, even though its inspiration stems from a different source: popular dances that Milhaud encountered during his stay in Brazil in 1917-1918 as Paul Claudel’s assistant. One month before the premiere of *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, Collet’s second article on Les Six had already described Milhaud’s latest work as the “joyous and active counterpart to the nostalgic *Parade*.” As with all the “nostalgic” interpretations of *Parade*, this opinion originated from a supporting member of the modernist circles, but did not reflect the public press that Cocteau’s spectacle received. Just like Satie’s, Milhaud’s ballet depicts everyday characters and is inspired by everyday music. Set in an American bar (that gave its name the following year to a famous Parisian restaurant that remains open to this day), *Le Bœuf* introduces a variety of characters who visit the establishment (a barman, a boxer, a policeman, two women)—played by (male) clowns rather than by ballet dancers. However, contrarily to Satie’s ballet, which includes abrupt contrasts that may be analyzed as nostalgic, Milhaud’s ballet does not feature any such moment. *Le Bœuf* is structured as a lively rondo (Collet wrote “endiablé”—devilish) whose main syncopated theme (“Thème du Barman,” Fig. 4.2) alternates seamlessly with fourteen episodes based on Brazilian popular dances. Only for a brief moment at midpoint does Milhaud departs from the binary rhythm that permeates the rest of the ballet to introduce the unwanted policeman, whose absurd decapitation by the ceiling fan moments later marks the return to duple time. Unlike Satie’s evocations of the nostalgic barrel organ, the energetic duple dances that inspired Milhaud do not explicitly allude to such aspects of popular music. On the contrary, the


frivolous character of both the music and the action seems to eschew any possibility of nostalgic remembrance. Yet, if we wish to consider Collet’s view that Le Bœuf is the “counterpart to the nostalgic Parade,” we must look beyond the conventional signs of intramusical nostalgia.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 4.2: Darius Milhaud, Le Bœuf sur le toit, Op. 58, piano four hands reduction (Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1920), mm. 1-4.

There are two main ways to address nostalgic longing in Le Bœuf sur le toit. The first one relates to Milhaud’s personal experience in Brazil, which left a strong impression on his music upon his return to France. As Milhaud eloquently described it in his memoirs, his return to Paris in the midst of the celebratory excitement that followed the victory triggered in him nostalgic feelings for the South American country:


I returned to a Paris jubilant with the Victory celebrations. But it was as a stranger that I took possession of my old flat again, for my eyes still retained too much of the murky light reflected from Brazilian skies, my ears were still too full of the sumptuous sounds of the forest night and the subtle rhythms of the tango. I took out of my trunk all sorts of knick-knacks that I had bought in South America: nutshells engraved and painted by the Indians, clay whistles in the shape of birds, Morpho butterflies, heavily ornamented toothpick-holders, and specimens of
Portuguese colonial silverware. I placed all these silent witnesses to the lovely voyage I had made on the mantelpiece of my room.\footnote{Darius Milhaud, \textit{Ma vie heureuse} (Paris: Belfond, 1987), 81; Darius Milhaud, \textit{My Happy Life: An Autobiography}, trans. Donald Evans, George Hall, and Christopher Palmer (London: Marion Boyars, 1995), 82.}

It is a comparable kaleidoscopic view of Brazil’s material and immaterial treasures gathered as a sort of memorial collection that inspired Milhaud’s two principal Brazilian-themed compositions, where “popular melodies, tangos, maxixes, sambas and even a Portuguese fado”\footnote{Milhaud, \textit{Ma vie heureuse}, 86; Milhaud, \textit{My Happy Life}, 86–87.} are amassed and succeed each other in quick succession. Indeed, as Manoel do Lago shows, Milhaud based his work on over two dozen themes (all from music already published) that he found in Brazil, creating no less than “an anthology of Rio and São Paulo popular music at the end of World War I.”\footnote{Lago, “Brazilian Sources in Milhaud’s \textit{Le Bœuf sur le Toit},” 6. The only theme whose authorship is attributed to Milhaud is the rondo theme mentioned above.}

According to Milhaud, this compositional process was prompted by nostalgic recollection: as he wrote in his memoirs, he worked on \textit{Le Bœuf} as he was “still haunted by [his] memories of Brazil,” and his joy of being back in Paris and to see his family and friends was “tinged with a certain nostalgia: I deeply loved Brazil.”\footnote{Milhaud, \textit{Ma vie heureuse}, 86 and 75; Milhaud, \textit{My Happy Life}, 86 and 77 (I altered Evans’s translation to get closer to the original text).} He also recalled that the pianist Ernesto Nazareth’s “elusive, nostalgic, fluid way of playing, also helped me to get a deeper insight into the Brazilian soul.”\footnote{Quoted in Lago, “Brazilian Sources in Milhaud’s \textit{Le Bœuf sur le Toit},” 7.}

Yet, however profoundly anchored Milhaud’s personal nostalgia was in his impulse to create Brazilian-themed compositions in 1919 and 1920, it cannot wholly explain Collet’s comparison with \textit{Parade}.

The second way to address nostalgia in Milhaud’s ballet is to look at his source material from the perspective of geographical difference. This is clearly articulated in a 1923 article by Charles Koechlin, “the \textit{Tangos} of Mr. Milhaud, nostalgic souvenirs from Brazil, charm us and move us with their strange exoticism.”\footnote{Charles Koechlin, “Les Jeunes et l’évolution musicale,” \textit{Europe}, August 15, 1923, 332–42, in Charles Koechlin, \textit{Écrits}, ed. Michel Duchesneau, vol. 1: Esthétique et langage musical (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2006), 214. “Mais, si les \textit{Tangos} de M. Milhaud, nostalgiques souvenirs du Brésil, nous charment et nous émeuvent}
of nostalgic associations in the postwar years, and it is therefore not surprising that a work inspired by South American rhythms would be heard as representing this type of nostalgia—especially in the eyes of a composer like Koechlin, who regularly depicted foreign lands in his works (I mentioned in chapter 1 his massive Les Heures persanes, completed in 1919 and orchestrated in 1921, as a paradigmatic example of exotic nostalgia). Milhaud and Cocteau (who wrote the scenario of Le Bœuf) were likely aware of these exotic associations when they decided to include a “Danse de Salomé” in which one of the women dances with the head of the decapitated policeman brought to her by the barman on a large plate. Explicitly intended (as per the published scenario) to be an exaggerated portrait of the Salome dances, this tango can be read not only as an absurd parody of Salome, but as a blunt dismissal of the excesses of the prewar generation, and especially of its obsession with exoticized and hypersexualized characters. Hence, unlike Koechlin’s Persian vignettes, Milhaud’s Brazilian exoticism functions in a very different manner than the stereotypes of exoticism favored in music at the time. Therefore, I would argue that it constitutes a rejection, rather than an embracing of the conventional nostalgic exoticism—which is perhaps the reason why Koechlin described it as a “strange” exoticism. Indeed, rather than attempting to capture a luxurious vision of Brazil (for which one needs to turn to Heitor Villa-Lobos, whom Milhaud met in Rio), Milhaud’s playful recreations and distortions of popular dances create a distanciation (a “strangeness”) that may be heard as undercutting the longing felt for the source material. This is most apparent in the composer’s characteristic use of polytonality, as in the “Danse de Salomé,” where a main tango in F minor (representing Salome’s languorous dance) is heard simultaneously to a bouncy countermelody first played in F major and then in A major (Fig. 4.3). The continuous use of polytonality, where one theme is solidly anchored in one key while secondary material floats above and around in unrelated keys, causes a sense of displacement, which is especially audible when the various materials each produce a different affect, as in this example. Since phrase and

par un étrange exotisme, on n’est pas certain de trouver pareille réussite (malgré d’audacieuses dissonances) dans son Caramel mou, « Shimmy » difficile à l’usage des virtuoses.”
harmonic structures usually match between the different tonal groups, the effect is not so much as if two ensembles were playing different pieces at the same time (a technique more commonly explored by Charles Ives), but rather as if there was distortion in the substance of the piece that made some instrumental groups play slightly higher or lower than expected.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 4.3: Milhaud, *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, piano four hands reduction, 16 measures after T.

In short, although Milhaud’s use of foreign music can be heard as engaging with exoticism, to regard it as serving a purely nostalgic-exotic function would reduce the intricacy of its modernist and parodic transformations. The “Danse de Salomé”—and the work in its entirety—indicate that exotic nostalgia cannot be taken at face value, that its function had shifted with the new modernist composers. As with Satie’s *Parade*, we are confronted with references to nostalgia that do not perfectly map onto conventional paradigms because they are expressed through a combination of
popular and modernist styles, that is, a modernist nostalgia that defies the traditional definitions of “nostalgia.”

To clarify Milhaud’s understanding of nostalgia and help us understand the threads of modernist nostalgia that we find in the young generation of composers emerging after the war, we can look at Milhaud’s other major Brazilian work, titled Saudades do Brasil, originally written and premiered for piano in 1920, and orchestrated shortly thereafter. Saudades do Brasil is a suite of twelve dances titled after various neighborhoods of the city of Rio de Janeiro. As with Le Bœuf, the entire cycle is written in duple time, with most movements featuring the dotted tango rhythm employed in a repetitive manner, yet with constantly imaginative variations and under different tempos. Unlike Le Bœuf, however, the material in Saudades do Brasil is entirely original. As with most of Milhaud’s music of that period, the work is permeated with polytonality, such as the overlaying of F minor and F♯ minor in the second movement, “Botafogo” (Fig. 4.4). Because of the clarity and simplicity of the melodic material in both keys, supported by a strongly accented bass pattern, Milhaud can retain the popular character of the dance while adopting a modernist approach that creates a unique and colorful texture. While “Botafogo” is the easiest movement of the suite, and the simplest in terms of compositional methods, its use of polytonality exemplifies the types of displacement employed by Milhaud to create distance between the original and his adaptation.

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71 See Lago, “Brazilian Sources in Milhaud’s Le Bœuf sur le Toit,” 9.
Besides its many similarities with the other works mentioned above, the interest of this work for our current purposes also relates to its title. “Saudade” counts among the most notoriously untranslatable Portuguese words. Although it can be likened to nostalgia, Portuguese speakers, authors, and scholars have been reticent to translate it for over two hundred years, preferring instead to attempt to describe it or explain why it cannot be translated. This semantic difficulty can however provide insight into a form of nostalgia—or rather, an approach to nostalgia—that seems to relate to many works composed by Les Six after the war. George Monteiro gives a detailed account of the meaning and history of saudade in an aptly titled book, There’s No Word for Saudade. To summarize the distinction with the European sense of nostalgia, saudade tends to be more focused on tender feelings, on the happiness that is brought to mind when the object of desire is evoked (which is why one can close a personal letter with “Saudades” in Portuguese as a friendly “I’m missing you”). The South African poet Roy Campbell wrote that it is a “fusion of yearning with satisfaction, pain with pleasure, and resignation with unattainability.”

Although the same polarity can be found in nostalgia, saudade emphasizes the emotions felt for something that feels both pleasurably present and achingly absent. Near the end of his book, after having carefully studied

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72 Quoted in George Monteiro, There’s No Word for Saudade: Perspectives on the Literature and Culture of Portuguese America (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 189.
hundreds of examples, Monteiro writes: “It is almost as if, then, that *saudade* has had as many meanings nearly as there have been individual beings familiar with the concept and convinced of its emotional force. Sooner or later, even those who are most skeptical seem to find in the idea of *saudade* either uneasiness or comfort—or, better still, simultaneously.”73 Because of the insistence on its untranslatability, the term has often been associated with a specifically Portuguese (or Brazilian) type of longing that only people from these regions can experience. Consequently, Milhaud could not have used that title for any of his compositions that were not inspired by his impressions of Brazil—there is no such thing as a Parisian *saudade*.74 However, other authors convey the sense that there is nothing inherently Lusophone (either geographically, linguistically, or culturally) about it. Campbell explains:

> “Saudades,” however, are inherent, in varying forms, in the poetry and music of all Celtic and Celtiberian peoples, from the love-lilts of the Hebrides to the medieval barcarolas of the Portuguese and the modern fados which are so popular in Lisbon today. “Saudades” embody that wistful yet smiling melancholy with which Baudelaire sees

> *Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant.*75

This broader perspective on *saudade* hints at a dimension of longing anchored in the regional folklore as an affective space, no matter its specific geographical origins. *Saudade* could therefore be described as a type of nostalgia which, in addition to stressing the pleasurable experience of longing—of a passionate, loving kind of longing76—relates to a particular engagement with regional styles that are part of a common musical heritage. In that sense, it recalls the eighteenth-century discussions of nostalgia, when the symptoms were closely linked to the quintessentially Swiss *ranz-des-vaches*. By extension, I would argue that, if we allow *saudade* to be exported

73 Monteiro, 194.
74 The foremost Brazilian composer of concert music in those years, Heitor Villa-Lobos wrote five compositions titled “Saudade da/do…”
75 Monteiro, *There’s No Word for Saudade*, 192.
outside of Portuguese fados and Brazilian tangos, we can discover similar expressions of pleasurable longing inscribed in the specificities of the French folklore that attracted musicians in the postwar era.

4.2.3 Sideways nostalgia, or nostalgic modernism

We can easily trace back the argument I have developed so far to locate saudade in the other musical examples that I have discussed: firstly, there is a self-conscious instance of saudade in Milhaud’s adaptation of Brazilian popular music in his Saudades do Brasil; secondly, based on the composer’s comments, we can look at his earlier Le Bœuf sur le toit as expressing a similar feeling of Brazilian saudade; finally, due to the musical and affective parallels between Milhaud’s ballet and Satie’s Parade, its “nostalgic counterpart,” the latter can be also understood as an example of saudade, albeit one explicitly centered on the French folklore (such as the barrel organ). Except for a few critical moments relating to their onstage action, it would be difficult to convincingly connect these works to any one of the paradigms of nostalgia (or understand why they have been described as such in early accounts) without having recourse to the concept of saudade.

However, to avoid confusion over a term that has already been used abundantly in other Lusophone contexts, I prefer to think of these works as exhibiting “sideways nostalgia.” Unlike nostalgic works that attempt to capture the spirit of an absent object (Boym’s “restorative nostalgia”), the works described in this chapter engage in playful interactions with contemporary sources that current conventional interpretations of nostalgia do not adequately encompass, but that saudade can approximate. Although Boym does not appear to have ever used the phrase “sideways nostalgia,” I adopt it from her intuition that “sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past

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77 Satie’s lengthy quotation of Irving Berlin in Parade does not affect this argument. On the contrary, Satie was clearly engaged with various forms of folklores in Parade, treating ragtime as an ideation of American music, perhaps as a representation of American saudade.
either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space.”

When she reuses the term “sideways” at the very end of *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym more specifically associates it with mimicry and irony as a way to avoid the pitfalls of restorative nostalgia and its “paranoic determination.” As scholarship on (neo)classicism has frequently repeated, mimicry and irony were two central components of French modernism after the First World War. Hence, sideways nostalgia could be equated to a sort of modernist nostalgia (or nostalgic modernism), a phrase I hesitate to use even though sideways nostalgia is distinctive of modernism.

Sideways nostalgia is not merely the use of nostalgia without claims to return to the time or place of longing: other paradigms of nostalgia (as promise or as exoticism) already account for that form of nostalgia. Instead, sideways nostalgia differs from these other paradigms in that it does not think of itself as playing a role in conveying idealized alternatives to the present. Sideways nostalgia is not triggered by a dissatisfaction with the present, by a regretted absence, or by a fascination with the different possibilities of other places and other times. It is commenting on the idiosyncrasies of everyday life, on objects which, under any other circumstances, would not evoke nostalgia. In other words, sideways nostalgia is a reversal of nostalgia itself: if, as I wrote in chapter 1, nostalgia is the relation of difference with an object experienced outside the sphere of immediate reality, then sideways nostalgia is the relation of difference with reality itself, with the present. As confirmed by the examples analyzed here, sideways nostalgia is more vividly experienced in relation to popular culture in the modern world. While concert music can aspire to permanency by becoming part of a canonical repertoire (or, in any case, of an archive), age-old popular entertainment forms, like the waltz or the organ grinder, despite the apparent permanency of their everyday manifestations, are always liable to vanish, especially in an era of rapid cultural and technological changes. Therefore, popular forms with supposedly ancient origins are paradoxically

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79 Boym, 354.
fixed to their present iterations, on which they depend—and thus more likely subject to sideways nostalgia.

I opened this chapter with a discussion of Tailleferre’s *Hommâge à Debussy*, whose origins and intentions are clouded in mystery. Trying to explain this miniature piece by using conventional patterns of intramusical nostalgia based on difference (as Perloff does with Satie’s *Parade*) remains inconclusive. Conversely, due to the lack of strong biographical evidence, trying to judge the nostalgic quality of the piece merely on the assumption that its title reflects its composer’s mournful longing is at best arbitrary. However, when we analyze the piece as an instance of sideways nostalgia, in light of my interpretation of Satie’s and Milhaud’s nostalgias, Tailleferre’s homage suddenly takes a new meaning, which, I contend, clarifies the problem of nostalgia not just in this piece, but also in classicist music of the time. Indeed, Tailleferre’s piece shares with the aesthetic of Satie and Milhaud three defining characteristics. Firstly, the repetition of a simple harmonic-rhythmic accompaniment throughout the entire piece evokes the simplicity and regularity of popular music. Secondly, its meandering melodic lines comprised of simple, repetitive, and mostly diatonic motifs, echoes the melodic material of her peers, in particular Satie’s fairground or childhood-oriented style. Indeed, Tailleferre’s homage is perhaps more directly reminiscent of the barrel organ than any other piece mentioned in this chapter. Finally, its polytonality parallels Milhaud’s experiments and signals Tailleferre’s participation in the development of new modernist aesthetics. Taken together, these characteristics typify the kind of sideways nostalgia already observed in *Parade, Le Bœuf sur le toit*, and *Saudades do Brasil*, where the nostalgic longing is not directed toward a specific past, nor another geographical location, but toward a displaced popular world. They also typify the values of simplicity and order upheld by the advocates of postwar classicism. Hence, rather than forming contradictory impulses in need of some analytical reconciliations, nostalgia and modernism are tightly interwoven tendencies of French music.
Sideways nostalgia is the essence of that new music, not because of a particular use of the classical past, but because of its rootedness in the everyday presentness of the French folklore.⁸⁰

4.3 REVISING MODERNISM

4.3.1 Revolutions and renovations

Having posited the connection between nostalgia and modernism, it is worth recontextualizing the assumed centrality of modernism in postwar music in Paris. Musicologists have circulated a view of that period that focuses almost exclusively on the development of modernist styles that either broke from, or built upon, the conventions established before the war. Yet, this view is at odds with the experience of most audiences of the time. Because a large quantity of music published and performed after the war still owed much to prewar aesthetics, dismissing it as old-fashioned not only silences a vast portion of the repertoire, it also does disservice to the history of French musical modernism. I have drawn attention to some of that repertoire in chapter 3. I now wish to focus on the interactions between modernist composers and more conservative (or traditionalist) audiences in order to better show how modernism circulated in public spheres, and what kinds of nostalgic experiences different types of audiences had. It would be too easy to dismiss all the conservative listeners and musicians as being nostalgically attached to the past and resistant to the emerging modernist styles (although it was certainly the case for many people). On the contrary, even at the end of 1920, several months after the revelatory founding of Les Six as a group, several concertgoers, including some preeminent critics, seemed surprisingly ignorant that any new

⁸⁰ Considering this argument, we could hear the waltzes by Poulenc and Stravinsky analyzed at the end of chapter 3 not as “anti-nostalgic” but as participating in this form of sideways nostalgia characterizing the modernist appropriation of popular culture.
movement had appeared since the end of the war. Whether they were unwilling to admit the times were changing or genuinely unaware of the new trends in music is an interesting question since the sense of continuity with the prewar afforded by these concertgoers provides an important counternarrative to the dominant orientation towards modernism of French music history. The musical press of the period suggests the paradoxical thesis that audiences who preserved a sense of continuity with the past were no less avidly engaged in the renewal of French music than more progressive ones. The rejection (or ignorance) of the new movements was not a mere nostalgic assault on novelty, rather it actively contributed to the debate around the future progress of French music.

The musical press of the postwar era was a key forum for the never-ending debate over the course of French music. Among the more intellectual figures, Julien Tiersot, one of the leading French musicologists, wholly dismissed the presence of a new generation of composers in the second of a pair of articles titled “French music after the war,” published in the pages of *Le Ménestrel* in December 1920:

> De fait, si, depuis 1918, il y a eu en France une énorme consommation de musique, cette consommation a porté essentiellement sur des réserves antérieures ; autant que nous pouvons nous en rendre compte actuellement, la production a été presque nulle, moindre que celle de la guerre elle-même. Des ouvrages nouveaux ont été donnés dans les théâtres, et plusieurs ont obtenu de brillants succès ; mais ce sont toutes œuvres d’avant-guerre et il ne nous a encore été rien révélé qui eût été conçu sous l’influence rénovatrice que nous espérons. Donc, aucune indication ne nous permet encore d’apercevoir ce que sera cette orientation nouvelle, et ce n’est que par des conjectures que nous pourrons tenter de répondre à la question toujours inquiétante : « Où allons-nous ? »

In fact, if there has been a huge consumption of music in France since 1918, this consumption has mainly been concerned with previous supplies. As far as we can

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81 The four major music publications in 1920 were *Le Ménestrel* (82nd year; issued weekly; totaling 532 pages in 1920), *Le Monde musical* (31st year; issued monthly; 380 pages in 1920), *Le Courrier musical* (22nd year; issued bi-weekly except in summer; 346 pages), and *La Revue musicale* (1st year starting in November; issued monthly; 216 pages), totaling together almost 1500 pages of music news, articles, and critiques. In addition, articles about music also appeared in many other publications, including the popular press about songs and dances, and newspapers and journals that were not solely dedicated to music: *Comœdia* (where Henri Collet had a weekly series), *Le Temps* (which featured articles by Pierre Lalo and Émile Vuillermoz), *Le Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires* (which included an article by Adolphe Jullien every other Sunday), *La Lanterne* (for which Louis Vuillemin wrote), among many others. There was definitely no dearth of content about music in all types of popular and intellectual media.
tell now, production has been almost nil, lower than that of the war itself. New works have been presented in theaters, and many have achieved brilliant success; but they are all pre-war works, and nothing has yet been revealed to us that would have been conceived under the renovating influence that we are hoping for. So, no indication yet allows us to see what this new orientation will be, and it is only through conjectures that we can attempt to answer the constantly worrying question: “Where are we going?”

Tiersot makes no mention of any of the composers of the younger generation, even though by then their concerts had been advertised and reviewed in most of the major papers, including in the pages of Le Ménestrel, and in the same issue where Tiersot’s article was printed. That audience members did not know about the new movement at its height is a possibility; that a musicologist of Tiersot’s stature ignored it can only have been a conscious decision, either to downplay its significance, or (more likely) because he did not consider these composers a dominant presence that would have a lasting impact. Nonetheless, his statement that all new works presented in theaters were pre-war works indicates his dissatisfaction with the lack of groundbreaking novelty (the most prestigious premiere of 1920, Vincent d’Indy’s opera La Légende de Saint-Christophe, while fairly-well received, can hardly be said to be innovative), and his anticipation of something that would really differ from the prewar aesthetics. Tiersot’s idea of a “renovating influence,” however, was not so far off from the ideas of Les Six. As he wrote a few paragraphs later, he envisioned the renovation as comprising a rapprochement between art and folk, similar to the pursuit at the heart of Satie’s, Milhaud’s, and others’ works in the early postwar years:

C’est seulement par l’accord du génie populaire avec l’élite que l’œuvre rêvée pourra être accomplie. L’art des temps futurs n’a pas besoin de rompre tout lien avec les arts du temps présent ni du passé : il doit conserver leurs qualités, en y ajoutant les siennes.

It is only through the agreement of the popular genius with the elite that the ideal work will be accomplished. The art of the future does not need to break all ties

83 Tiersot would later admit that postwar music differed from that of the prewar in the preface to the second (largely unchanged) edition of his book Un demi-siècle de musique française, initially published in 1918: “les tentatives nouvelles que nous avons entendu se formuler après 1918 représentent un « art d’après-guerre », dont nous ne saurions dire encore s’il constitue un aboutissement réel ou n’a pas plutôt un caractère de transition et de provisoire, mais qui, en tout cas, est, à tous les points de vue, dissemblable de celui des années antérieures.” (Julien Tiersot, Un demi-siècle de musique française, 1870-1919, 2nd ed. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1924), 3.)
with the art of the present and of the past: it must preserve their qualities, while adding its own.

Thus, even though Tiersot’s baffling refusal to acknowledge the efforts of the new generation of composers might illustrate a conservative view of the musical world after the war, his position was not particularly nostalgic. He was apparently interested in discussing and promoting the advancement of French music, which he hoped would bridge the gap between the past, the present, and the future. If one needed a definition of what postwar modernist classicism ought to be, Tiersot’s view of the “art of the future” is as good as any: it uses the past not as a simplistic return, but as the foundation for the future.

Whereas Tiersot was a high-profile intellectual who alleged that no new artistic movement had emerged since the end of the war, concert music was also discussed in more popular, less intellectually rigorous, publications. For example, concert music was discussed rather unexpectedly in the pages of *Dancing* in May 1920, in a section affectedly titled “Le Foyer des gens de goût”:

*Il est bien évident pour tous maintenant, comme je l’avais prévu depuis longtemps, que la guerre n’a aucunement amené cette révolution bienfaisante dans la musique dont certains se réjouissaient à l’avance. Après les rudes assauts que subirent, de la part de tous les esprits rétrécis par la haine, Beethoven et Wagner, on eût pu croire qu’on allait enfin entendre des œuvres françaises vraiment admirables. Il n’en fut rien. On n’encouragea point les jeunes ni les méconnus.*

It is quite obvious to everyone now, as I had foreseen for a long time, that the war has not brought to music this beneficent revolution which had been hastily applauded by some people. After the rude assaults against Beethoven and Wagner from all those minds weakened by hate, one might have thought that we were finally going to hear truly admirable French works.

It did not happen. The young and the unknown have not been encouraged.\(^4\)

At first sight, this account reads just like another outright dismissal of the work produced by the new group of young composers: it posits that nothing changed since the war. Yet, besides its publication in a dance magazine, this account is especially remarkable because its author, Henri Cliquet-Pleyel, was an aspiring composer of only 26 years who had befriended both Milhaud and

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Tailleferre while studying at the Paris conservatory.\textsuperscript{85} His music had been performed alongside pieces by Satie and members of Les Six (Auric, Milhaud, and Poulenc) at a concert on January 23, 1920—the same day that Collet’s second founding article about Les Six was published.\textsuperscript{86} He would subsequently become, in 1923, a founding member of the short-lived École d’Arcueil with Henri Sauguet, Roger Désormière, and Maxime Jacob, under the aegis of Satie. It is therefore evident that Cliquet-Pleyel had first-hand knowledge of the emergence of new composers who were bringing the “beneficent revolution” he was hoping to see—after all, he was actively contributing to that revolution and participating in the activities of its most-discussed group, Les Six.\textsuperscript{87}

Despite having produced a sizeable catalogue of compositions, Cliquet-Pleyel’s work did not leave a durable trace and has now been almost entirely forgotten. For our purpose, perhaps the most significant of his compositions is the 3\textit{ Complaintes de Jules Laforgue}, an unpublished manuscript for voice and piano that opens with his setting of Laforgue’s “Complainte des nostalgies préhistoriques.” Although composed in 1913, the work was first performed after the war, at a Jane Bathori concert on December 13, 1919, with the composer at the piano. Cliquet-Pleyel accompanies the symbolic text by Laforgue (1860-1887) with a sparse texture that includes many unaccompanied measures, bringing it closer to a musical declamation than to an actual song. He is undeniably more attentive to stressing certain words rather than to creating a single atmosphere that would underscore the whole poem. Nevertheless, this work reveals the young composer’s exploration of new expressive means through his use of extended chords and dissonant tone clusters (Fig. 4.5), and a harmonic palette that oscillates between tonal and non-tonal phrases, sometimes simultaneously (Fig. 4.6).

\textsuperscript{85} See Shapiro, \textit{Les Six}, 2011, 189 and 245.
\textsuperscript{87} Cliquet-Pleyel’s 1921 piano suite, \textit{Sept Acrostiches}, is an homage to each member of Les Six and Jeanne Herscher.
While obviously turning his back on the romantic and impressionist styles of the prewar era, Cliquet-Pleyel’s singular and expressive approach is at odds with the tenets of classicism espoused by the other modernist composers of his generation in the postwar years: it does not share their simplicity and restraint, nor their adaptation of popular sources. When contrasted with the compositions that followed the Complaintes at their 1919 premiere, the divergence between Cliquet-Pleyel and other young composers becomes even more apparent. Indeed, the Complaintes were followed on the program by two chamber symphonies for nine and seven instruments (“Le Printemps” and “Pastorale”) written by Milhaud in 1917 and 1918, during and shortly after his stay in Brazil. Lasting around four minutes each, both symphonies are representative of the composer’s brisk, polytonal style that we have already discussed, including the frequent collisions of instrumental lines, which Milhaud referred to as “tonal independence.” The pieces clearly convey
the pastoral simplicity, classicist order, and folklore of sideways nostalgia. In his memoirs, Milhaud related how he was inspired to write them after having “recaptured the sounds I had dreamed of as a child when I closed my eyes for sleep and seemed to hear music I thought I should never be able to express.” There are several musical markers of such nostalgia in these short pieces: for instance, in the first symphony (“Le Printemps”), the first movement highlights dreamlike harp glissandos, the second movement features an oboe melody apparent to a nursery rhyme, and the last movement is a joyous folk dance (Fig. 4.7).

![Figure 4.7: Milhaud, 1st Symphonie [pour petit orchestre] (Le Printemps), Op. 43, III (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922), mm. 19-21. (The nine instruments are, from top to bottom: piccolo, flute, clarinet, oboe, harp, string quartet.)](image)

88 Milhaud, *Ma vie heureuse*, 69; Milhaud, *My Happy Life*, 72. “En écrivant cette musique, j’avais retrouvé la sonorité dont je rêvais tout enfant, lorsque avant de m’endormir j’imaginai, les yeux fermés, une musique qui me semblait impossible à exprimer.”
So, to come back to Cliquet-Pleyel’s statement in *Dancing* regarding the absence of “truly admirable French works” and the lack of encouragement geared toward the young composers, it appears that the composer held an uncertain place within the new generation as an insider-outsider, left out of Les Six (although Albert Roussel had listed him alongside them as a promising young composer89), and musically disconnected from their orientation, at least in his early public appearances.90 On the one hand, it seems astonishing—and counterproductive—that an insider within the young generation of modernist composers would be so uninclined to elevate his peers as pioneers of a new art in a new era. On the other hand, Cliquet-Pleyel might have been ideally placed to notice the lack of a single, defining “beneficent revolution” in French music that could bring together an entire generation who shared similar desires for renovation, but who expressed them with distinct artistic means. As Milhaud recalled in his memoirs, audiences were “shocked by the brevity” of his chamber “symphonies,” titled in the spirit of the Renaissance, and consequently intended as a caustic rejection of the romantic symphonic repertoire.91 Hence, even in a smaller setting that was meant to highlight the innovations and achievements of the modernists, composers were not shielded from disapprobation, and their sense of self-importance was easily downplayed in the press.

### 4.3.2 New music at the “grands concerts”

These accounts suggest that modernist music of the younger generation did not figure centrally into the larger public’s appreciation of the course of music after the war. If these composers would later be retrospectively considered as the “renovation” of French concert music, it might however be

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90 It is only a few years later, with his participation at the École d’Arcueil, that Cliquet-Pleyel would adopt the more current musical idioms of classicism and popular music.
necessary to give credence to Cliquet-Pleyel’s and Tiersot’s words: besides isolated events (such as *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, or, the following year, *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*), this “renovation” did not happen overnight. Despite the emphasis placed by musicologists on Collet’s articles and Cocteau’s writings as launching them, Les Six and their peers did not have a significant impact on concert life in the first few years that followed the war, and only gradually became famous outside of their relatively circumscribed network.\(^{92}\) Most of the modernists’ early works were of smaller scale, ideal for chamber concerts that did not have the potential to challenge the hegemony of prewar music featured in orchestral concerts that were systemically reviewed in the press. More often than not, the young composers created works that remained at the margins of musical culture in 1920, no matter how much their advocates were promoting them in writing. The weekly symphonic *grands concerts* (comprising the Concerts Colonne, Lamoureux, and Pasdeloup, and the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire) were by far the most mediatized non-theatrical musical events and were discussed at length by a variety of critics in the musical and generalist press, reflecting on their mainstream appeal to a wide public. Although the majority of pieces performed at these concerts were taken from the nineteenth-century French and German repertoire (for instance, Gabriel Pierné conducted Beethoven’s symphonies up to twenty times per year at the Concerts Colonne after the war\(^ {93}\)), they also regularly featured premiere performances (the Concerts Colonne included around sixteen premieres per year spread over forty-eight concerts\(^ {94}\), but very rarely by one of the young composers.\(^ {95}\)

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\(^{92}\) Barbara Kelly writes that the premieres of Poulenc’s *Les Biches* and Auric’s *Les Fâcheux* some years later, in January 1924 “marked their final acceptance by virulent opponents,” and “constitute their coming of age.” (Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*, 217.) In any case, it is not unusual to see revolutionary or avant-garde movements integrated in the canon several years later. In that regard, the general public’s attitude toward Les Six in 1920 is not so surprising nor unusual.


\(^{94}\) Masson, 60 and 66.

\(^{95}\) René Dumesnil gives the exact count for the 1922-23 concert season: Wagner (334 times), Beethoven (139), Saint-Saëns (111), César Franck (98), Rimsky-Korsakov (81), Mozart (76), Berlioz (62), Mendelssohn (55), Debussy (53), Borodin, Ravel, Schumann, Weber, Fauré, Schubert, Liszt, Dukas, Vincent d'Indy (around 30 each), Bach (22), Chabrier, Roussel, Stravinsky, Florent Schmitt, Charles Koechlin, Richard Strauss, Pierre de Bréville, André Caplet, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Roger-Ducasse, Gustave
For instance, the weekend that Le Bœuf sur le toit premiered at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, on February 21, 1920, the grands concerts introduced no fewer than four new works: at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, the Poème légendaire for violin and orchestra by Fernand Le Borne (1862-1929) was described as “the frantic adoration of Beauty” (Le Ménestrel); at the Concerts Lamoureux, Georges Brun (1878-1961) premiered two Tableaux bretons that expressed the “melancholy of distant departures and the anxiety of long absences” (Le Ménestrel); finally, at the Concerts Colonne, audiences heard Le Réveil des Bouddhas, an exotic song with orchestra by Eugène Grassi (1881-1941), and the Heures héroïques (1914-1918), an orchestral suite penned at the front by Paul Pierné (1874-1952; cousin of Gabriel), in which each of the five movements was directly inspired by different episodes of the war. The reviewer for the Figaro wrote that Pierné “likes new methods and sounds, but without exaggeration; his modernism is accommodating.” With the exception of Le Borne’s Poème, each of these premieres alluded to a different form of nostalgia, easily recognized in their titles and descriptions as one of the conventional paradigms I described in the first chapter: exoticism (Grassi), mal du pays (Brun), and regret (Pierné). Thus, the concert societies, while premiering new works (almost) weekly, largely chose works that preserved continuity with the conventions of symphonic music that predated the war. Older composers kept supplying them in large amounts (the youngest composer

Samazeuilh, Maurice Delage (not numbered, but assumedly less than a handful of times each). See René Dumesnil, La Musique en France entre les deux guerres, 1919-1939 (Genève: Éditions du Milieu du Monde, 1946), 18.

96 Antoine Banès, “Les Concerts,” Le Figaro, February 23, 1920, 3. I have not been able to locate a copy of Pierné’s Heures héroïques, which does not appear to have been published.

97 The other works performed at the grands concerts that week show the enduring dominance of music from mostly German composers of the previous century (Schumann, Mozart, Liszt, and—multiple times each—Wagner, Beethoven), with the addition of French works that were established in the concert repertoire before the war started and that maintained a sense of tradition in support of the national myth (Dukas’s La Péri, d’Indy’s Symphony No. 2, Franck’s Chasseur maudit and Lénore, Chausson’s Poème de l’amour et de la mer, Lalo’s Symphony in G minor, and, perhaps the more obscure selection on these concerts for that week, Jean Cras’s Élégies).
here was almost forty, while the oldest neared sixty). Indeed, even the works of the most prestigious composers of the time did not show signs of stylistic rupture during and immediately after the war.98

As with the other venues surveyed in this study, the idea of “prewar music” at the *grands concerts* was received with mixed feelings depending on one’s generation or camp. While most reviews focused on the qualities of the performances, some reviewers were far more critical of the choice of works, and occasionally questioned their relevance in the aftermath of the war. Antoine Mariotte’s review of a Concert Colonne that featured César Franck’s *Béatitudes* portrays a work that was irredeemably stuck in the past, and not deserving of restoration:

*C’est bien là de la musique d’avant-guerre, de la musique qui date de cette époque si formidablement lointaine où l’on avait assez de sérénité dans le cœur pour se complaire à la sérénité de Franck, à cette tendresse continue, à cette bonhomie dans la puissance comme à cette sentimentalité dans la grâce. Aujourd’hui, nous ne pouvons plus. En dépit d’une excellente exécution . . . je n’ai plus retrouvé mes émotions d’antan.*

This is indeed prewar music, music that dates from that terribly distant epoch where there was enough serenity in the heart to indulge in the serenity of Franck, in that constant tenderness, in that bonhomie in might as in that sentimentality in grace. Today, we cannot anymore. Despite an excellent performance . . . I did not retrieve my former emotions.99

For Mariotte, the old musical styles did not reflect the modern world and therefore lacked relevance. On the other hand, the longing for a lost “golden age” of French music often resurfaced in the writings of older and more conservative figures. At one extreme, for instance, Camille Saint-Saëns, the venerated dean of French music in his mid-eighties, expressed his nostalgia multiple times in the last years of his life, revealing his aversion to the “progress” of the postwar:

*Aussi ne saurais-je encourager les prétendus progrès de la musique à notre époque. On a multiplié les instruments, on a élargi les règles, on a abusé de leur*

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98 Such is the case, for instance, of the late Camille Saint-Saëns (who died in 1921) and Gabriel Fauré (who died in 1924), of Albert Roussel and Florent Schmitt (whose works I have discussed in previous chapters), and of Vincent d’Indy or Gabriel Pierné, to name just a few of the most renowned. For example, Pierné’s *Paysages franciscains* premiered on February 28, 1920, and prompted Nadia Boulanger to “relive memories of a past that does not go away.” The *Paysages* have since been described as “looking back more than thirty years.” See Nadia Boulanger, “Concerts Colonne,” *Le Monde musical* 31, no. 5–6 (March 1920): 90; and Masson, *Gabriel Pierné*, 120.

élasticité jusqu’à la rupture ; on a découvert des jouissances nouvelles, mais au prix de quelles fatigues, imposées aux exécutants et même aux auditeurs !

Therefore, I cannot encourage the so-called progress of music in our time. The instruments have been multiplied, the rules have been expanded, and their elasticity has been abused to the point of rupture; new pleasures have been discovered, but at the cost of such exertion imposed on the performers as well as on the listeners! 100

Prefiguring Taruskin’s view that nostalgia is a consequence of modernism, Saint-Saëns was convinced that the unstoppable progress of civilization would necessarily bring a return to the past—although he seemed oblivious to the fact that this return was already taking place within modernist circles:

Mais, étant donné que dans notre civilisation moderne il n’est pas permis de s’arrêter, on ne s’arrêtera pas ; et comme il est impossible d’aller plus loin que l’absurde, on sera forcé de revenir en arrière. Alors, probablement, on s’éprendra des œuvres du passé, on leur découvrira, à côté des qualités qu’elles ont, d’autres qu’on imaginera.

But since in our modern civilization it is impossible to stop, we will not stop; and since it is impossible to go further than the absurd, we will be forced to go backwards. Then, we will probably become passionate about the works of the past, we will discover, alongside the qualities they have, others that we will imagine. 101

Nostalgia was undoubtedly a strong feeling shared by some of the audiences of the grands concerts. As public venues, they had to tread the line between the need to promote the renovation of French music in order to avoid becoming totally irrelevant, and the pressure to preserve the tradition to avoid falling into the threat of “absurdity.” Consequently, only three works by Les Six were presented at the grands concerts in these early years, all in 1920. The first one, Honegger’s Le Chant de Nigamon, was premiered at the Concerts Pasdeloup on January 3, before “Les Six” had been named, although they had already appeared together in several concerts of chamber music.

101 Saint-Saëns, 1077 (written December 28, 1920; published January 1, 1922). Saint-Saëns also wrote, about the theaters (September 5, 1920): “It was like that in my youth; let me regret this golden age.” (Pourquoi n’avons-nous plus le brillant Théâtre-Italien, qui nous donnerait les ouvrages italiens anciens et modernes, et ceux de Mozart même, non défigurés par des traductions parfois déplorables ! Nos théâtres français ne seraient pas envahis par ces œuvres déformés, au grand détriment de la production nationale. C’était ainsi dans ma jeunesse ; qu’on me permette de regretter cet âge d’or.) (Saint-Saëns, 1051.) All three citations were published in Les Annales politiques et littéraires.
Le Chant de Nigamon, composed in 1917, was received respectfully. Its depiction of a Native American sacrifice (using themes taken from the Notes d’ethnographie musicale of none other than Julien Tiersot) was initially associated with the widespread and familiar oriental inspiration. However, ten months later, on October 24, during a week that included no other premiere at any of the symphonic concerts, Milhaud’s second Suite symphonique (Op. 57) provoked a noisy protest that had to be stopped by the police. The reviewer for Le Ménestrel, René Brancour, had to be evicted. His review mentioned that Milhaud’s piece stood out as a “nightmare” between Bach’s fifth Brandenburg Concerto and Ravel’s “delicate and neat” suite Ma Mère l’Oye (which he probably did not hear for having been shown the door after the Milhaud). Even Saint-Saëns, in absentia in Alger, wrote of his disapprobation in a letter to Pierné, citing the pandemonium caused by instruments playing in different keys all at once. This was de facto opposition like Paris had seen before, most famously at the premiere of Le Sacre du printemps. But in contrast with some of the listeners’ most hostile and vociferous reactions, reviews in both Le Courrier musical and Le Monde musical (written by Paul Le Flem and Nadia Boulanger, respectively) firmly disapproved of such attitudes, and respectfully applauded Milhaud’s melodic and rhythmic qualities even if they did not go so far as to acclaim his work. In support of Milhaud, Le Courrier musical even published as its supplement the first movement from the composer’s piano suite Le Printemps, a calm and graceful piece that uses polytonality parsimoniously, avoiding any harsh dissonances between the melodic lines, despite its use of frequent and sudden key changes.

103 See Masson, Gabriel Pierné, 54–55. Milhaud’s suite was reprised the following Saturday, this time alongside an “Interlude” from La Mort de sainte Almée by Honegger, lodged between concert favorites by Mendelssohn (the violin concerto) and Wagner (excerpts from Die Meistersinger).
104 According to Milhaud, Ma vie heureuse, 91; Milhaud, My Happy Life, 90.
106 Quoted in Milhaud, Ma vie heureuse, 92; Milhaud, My Happy Life, 90. “Je vois avec douleur que vous ouvrez la porte à des aberrations charentonesques et que vous les imposez au public quand il se révolte. Plusieurs instruments jouant en des tons différents n’ont jamais fait de la musique, mais du charivari...”
The intrusion of Milhaud at the *grands concerts* intensified the rift between the listeners who violently rejected the experiments of the young modernists and those who encouraged novelty as a much-needed renewal of music. Perceived as a threat to the national order and to tradition, their music publicly exacerbated the sense of nostalgia for a better past characterized by comfortable musical sensibilities. However, as I argued in this chapter, these traditionalist voices did not have the monopoly on nostalgia. As much as conservative musicians were intrigued by the developments in music and awaited a renovating and uniting force, the young modernists found ways to express nostalgia within their music and their attachment to long-held national traditions by reclaiming the classicism of their art, even when the techniques they employed seemed counterintuitive to the conventional patterns of nostalgia. Therefore, we cannot assert that one group was more nostalgic than the other, or that certain musical styles expressed nostalgia more adequately than others. On the contrary, in the postwar years, nostalgia was a guiding force behind both the more progressive and more conservative movements. And this is perhaps the most remarkable (and even paradoxical) manifestation of nostalgia immediately after the war: in its multiple applications, it transcended generations, aesthetics, subjects and audiences.

### 4.4 Remembrances and Reinterpretations of Les Six

Les Six were merely a short moment in the history of French music. Within months of its founding, Louis Durey was the first composer to leave the group.\(^{108}\) His departure, however, did not alter the myth that Les Six had created around themselves. Rather than becoming a group of “Five” after Durey’s secession, the myth of Les Six had become stronger than the actual number of composers involved. Whereas within the group the composers could attempt to rewrite their own history, they

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did not control the trajectory of “Les Six.” The collective had erased the multiple individualities. One might recall how Maurice Halbwachs had proposed, in 1925, that individual memory is not possible outside the social frameworks in which humans inscribe and retrieve souvenirs.\(^{109}\) For Halbwachs, the power to constitute memories (and therefore myths) essentially belongs to the collective, not to the individual. The end of Les Six on an individual level did not alter its nature on the collective level, even though every member kept repeating, for decades afterwards, that there never was such a group. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely because the individuals themselves refused to belong to the group that they could not separate themselves from it. This was Honegger’s reaction to Durey’s departure:

I have never for an instant contemplated separating myself from my comrades. Moreover, that seems impossible, since the group is neither an association nor a club, therefore a separation would simply signify a breach of our connections of friendship. If, instead of calling ourselves ‘[Les] Six’, we had been baptized the ‘Cubist Musicians’ or ‘The Dadaists’, that label would remain and would not be able to be rid of it. That is why I disapprove of the ‘resignation’ of my friend Louis Durey, which, to my mind, remains purely fictitious. If he is no longer one of ‘Les Six’, then he is an ‘ex-Six’, which amounts to the same thing.\(^{110}\)

Honegger implied, paradoxically, that the collective is not a collective. Louis Durey, by publicly removing himself from the group, became a figure of both exclusion and inclusion: while threatening the existence of the group on a personal level, he reinforced its mythical status as a collective. More specifically, Halbwachs explained the reasons for this cohesion of the collective which surpasses the individual forces that constitute it:

\[D'abord, comme les groupes n'ont, dans l'espace, qu'une stabilité relative, comme sans cesse certains de leurs membres s'éloignent d'eux, un fait qui concerne un individu n'intéresse le groupe que pendant un certain temps, tant que les individus sont rapprochés, et que l'acte ou l'état de l'un réagit ou peut réagir sur la manière d'être et les démarches des autres. Les transformations du groupe ne résultent d'ailleurs pas seulement de ce qu'il se sépare de tels ou tels de ses membres : mais le rôle et la situation des individus changent sans cesse dans une même société. Qu'un fait se produise, qui détermine un ébranlement notable dans l'état perceptif ou affectif de l'un d'eux. Tant que les conséquences matérielles ou les répercussions psychiques de ce fait se font sentir dans le groupe, celui-ci le retient, le met en bonne place dans l'ensemble de ses représentations. Du moment où\]


\(^{110}\) Quoted in Shapiro, *Les Six*, 2011, 64.
l'événement considéré, a en quelque sorte épuisé son effet social, le groupe s'en désintéresse, alors même que l'individu en ressent encore le contrecoup.

First, as the groups have, spatially, only a relative stability (since some of their members are constantly moving away from them), an event that concerns one individual is only interesting for the group for a while, as long as the individuals are close together, and that the act or status of one reacts or can react to the manners and attitudes of the others. The transformations of the group are not only the results of a separation from some of its members; but the role and status of the individuals are constantly changing in the same group [société]. An event occurs, causing a significant disturbance in the perceptive or emotional state of a group. As long as its material or psychological consequences are felt within the group, the group secures it into its representations. From the moment that the event has somehow exhausted its social effect, the group loses interest in it, even though the individual still feels its repercussions.111

Although the composers that constituted Les Six repeatedly denied the group’s identity as a group, their memories rapidly joined the discourses acting on the mythico-history of the group. In 1929 and 1952-53, for their tenth and (belated) thirtieth anniversaries, the former Six organized important concerts during which the ambiguities and conflicts surrounding the nature of the group were momentarily suspended. Nostalgia for their past friendships could not tolerate the truth of their united disunity. In his 1952 Journal d’un inconnu, Cocteau claimed that the composers were “still linked together by the same bond. . . . Never once of the many times when the malicious angled to disunite us did we take the bait.”112 For the audiences too, the anniversary concerts were

111 Halbwachs, Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire, 98. This passage from the first edition is absent in the new edition (1952) which served as the basis for the English translation published under the title On Collective Memory. Translation is therefore mine. The complete French first edition can be accessed online at http://www.uqac.uquebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/index.html.

More recent influential examinations of forms of collectivity and groupings include Manuel DeLanda’s assemblage theory and Bruno Latour’s actor-network-theory (ANT). DeLanda’s assemblage theory, recuperated from Gilles Deleuze, presents the assemblage as a synthesis of properties that cannot be reduced to its individual parts. DeLanda’s theory accounts for the intermediate levels of organization (between the micro- and macro-levels of social reality), such as interpersonal networks or organizations, of which Les Six is a good example (Manuel DeLanda, A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity (London: Continuum, 2006). Bruno Latour’s ANT focuses on the activities of actors (human or non-human) involved in a network and on how they contribute to various kinds of relations to the world (Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Both theories can play an important part in music studies due to their attention to things and collaborators that lie outside the principal agents of music, such as machines (computers, printing press), sites (halls, streets), texts (scores, recordings), ideas, and so on. Memories are yet another important actor in the production and reception of music.

112 Quoted in Shapiro, Les Six, 2011, 86.
a nostalgic moment in which the 1920 avant-garde could be reimagined. As Janet Flanner, a correspondent for *The New Yorker* wrote: “The enormous audience was composed of people who were young thirty-five years ago, when Les Six were *le dernier cri*. . . . All in all, it was a melancholy concert. It recalled the wonderful first postwar Paris, when the Kaiser’s Germans had just been defeated and Lenin’s Russians worried no one yet.”

By then, the memory of the avant-garde had turned into a nostalgia for the potential of modernity that had been lost—a nostalgia for what could have been afterwards, after that “first postwar Paris.” Deserted by the post-World War II avant-garde, the anniversary concert of the old Six had become a time capsule—a museum—in which it was still possible to dream of their music as a novelty. Among the hundreds of fragmented reminiscences of Les Six in Cocteau’s voluminous criticism, we find some passing references to the political climate of the time. For him, the Cold War had brought discord among people, and nationalist groups like Les Six were sadly nowhere to be found anymore. It is apparent that in later years, Cocteau regretted the sort of productive oppositions and hostilities that had animated modernist factions in the 1920s, and which had—according to him—disappeared after the Second World War.

Concurrently, the radical tenets that Cocteau had formulated in *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, and that Les Six had upheld as their manifesto, were all overturned. In a radio program, Cocteau rehabilitated Debussy (who had initially been his scapegoat) by apologizing for having been paralyzed by the obligation to revolt that is proper to youth. “Age calms those tempests and, now, we are apt to rest on foam, to listen to the faun’s flute. . . . Erik Satie, were he alive, would salute with us his old comrade and would laugh at the quarrels that once excited them on Sundays.”

Musically, the return to Debussy and impressionism resurfaced in compositions like Poulenc’s

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113 Quoted in Shapiro, 87.
115 Cocteau, 451. “L’âge calme toutes ces tempêtes et, maintenant, nous sommes aptes à nous reposer sur la mousse, à écouter la flûte du faune. Notre maison est assez riche pour recevoir noblement un hôte royal. / Erik Satie, s’il vivait, saluerait avec nous son vieux camarade et rirait des disputes qui les excitaient l’un contre l’autre à la table du dimanche.”
Mélancolie (1940) as distinct moments of nostalgic longing. The melody of this lyrical piece is mostly diatonic and conjoint, with a few larger leaps, but the end of the middle section leads to a transitional, anti-climactic section where tonality has faded away after the excitement of the previous section (Fig. 4.8). Here, Poulenc wrote some of his rare moments of truly debussyist music: whole-tone scales, atmospheric trills on every note, static extended harmonies, undulating arpeggiated waves, sparkling flourish. Eventually (at measure 78), this vaporous sound evaporates and the sweet melody that opens the piece returns, “very calmly,” in the luminous tonality of C major (it first appeared in D♭), like the slight distortion of melancholic remembrance. The brief reference to impressionism reveals the distance that separates the melancholy of popular music in 1940 from pre-World War I pianism. In the context of the piece, however, it reconciles the present with the once discarded past. It shows the recovered unity between styles and generations, making the French tradition whole again.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Barbara Kelly also briefly mentions Les Six’s nostalgia for their younger selves, citing Milhaud’s 1937 Scaramouche, whose last movement, “Brasileira,” recalls the Saudades do Brasil. (Kelly, Music and Ultra-Modernism in France, 233.)
Just as the presence of impressionism in Poulenc’s *Mélancolie* does not overlap with his tuneful lyricism, classicism and modernism were not meant to be indistinguishable. The juxtapositions of styles were often quite striking, meant to be audible, or even shocking. But it is because they were tightly interconnected that they came to define the period and prompted dozens of musicians and scholars to ask: was it one or the other? As I have shown, this dialectical approach fails to account for the multiple layers of meaning inscribed in these works and found in the most
unexpected places. When we look at how composers described each other’s works, and how these works were circulated in public venues where most people were unaccustomed to their idiosyncrasies, then the traces of their ambiguous relations to tradition become acutely visible. Perhaps Picasso can provide a final illustration of this multilayered understanding of modernism. His 1920 painting titled Études (Studies) juxtaposes his new neoclassic style (remember his “evolution toward Ingres”) on the same canvas as reminiscences of his earlier cubist style (Fig. 4.9).

![Figure 4.9: Pablo Picasso, Études, 1920, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Musée Picasso, Paris.](image)

Picasso’s evolution toward the figurative past turns his own stylistic past, once at the forefront of modernism, into a memory. What we see in the Études are ten fragments that suggest a reversal in time: the four figurative fragments, echoes of Ingres, are reminiscences of an earlier era, yet they point toward Picasso’s future developments; the six cubist still lives, on the contrary, point toward Picasso’s prior modernist experiments. Although the fragments are stylistically disconnected, they
all equally participate in the artist’s nostalgia—for the past, for the present, and for the future. But the most fascinating aspect of that painting is invisible to us: the artist painted this work over a copy (probably by himself) of Rembrandt’s *La Résurrection de Lazare*, symbolically telling us, perhaps, that there are always other temporalities that lay dormant and unrecognized under the layers of history. As one Picasso scholar put it: “I think [the terms classicism and cubism] prevent us from being properly puzzled by the coexistence of styles—from being goaded and even scandalized by it, as the best of Picasso’s viewers were at the time.”\(^{117}\) In the same way, the audiences of modernist music in 1920 were reacting so profoundly to these works because they were baffled by the contradictions and ambivalence between their revolutions and their renovations, at a time when society as a whole was responding to years of conflict in similarly ambivalent ways.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we have seen how an expanded interpretation of nostalgia that considers its meaning and use in the early twentieth century can provide new understandings of the musical activities of that period. The paradigms of nostalgia defined in chapter 1 and applied in the following chapters—nostalgia as mal du pays, as exoticism, as regret, and as promise—demonstrate how deeply imbricated the concept was in the articulation of French musical and national heritage during and after the war. They show the potency of nostalgia in the production and experience of art and cultural meaning in this period. Expressions of nostalgia took multiple forms and its functions were diverse, ranging from personal mourning to nationalist progress. It was not a sporadic emotion. On the contrary, because of the need to redefine Frenchness and French identity after the war, nostalgia appealed to audiences of all types and affected all genres of music. Although it was an important driving force behind the impulses toward reconstruction in the postwar years, nostalgia was not exclusively tied to regressive and conservative attitudes. It could become an element of political resistance (as in the rejection of foreign dances by nationalists opposed to the Americanized dancings) as much as it could express a progressive re-articulation of the nation’s cultural history (as in the modernist reinterpretation of folklore by young composers).

We could thus talk of a nostalgic moment in France after the Great War. The urgency of the national debate about the nation, its history, and what it meant to uphold its core values in an increasingly cosmopolitan environment, gave rise to an increase in nostalgic expressions, and coincided with a widespread return to classical ideals in music, arts, fashion, and literature. Many questions raised by postwar nostalgia predate the war: classicism, the preservation of Frenchness against threats from outside, and even the adoption of the term “nostalgia” by artists and writers.
But due to the trauma of the war and the ensuing reconstruction, the postwar era seemed more acutely preoccupied by nostalgia, a phenomenon that can also be observed after other historical events of similar magnitude. For example, two decades later, Francis Carco’s evocation of Paris, titled *Nostalgie de Paris*, resembles many sources dating from the First World War. First published in 1941 in neutral Geneva while Paris was under German occupation,¹ the book was then republished in Paris several times after the war, in 1945, 1946, 1947, and finally in 1952. One might conclude from Carco’s sentimental anecdotes and poetic impressions of old Paris that the city had always been marked by some intrinsic nostalgia (an idea I examined in chapter 1), but this nostalgia was greatly exacerbated by the wartime context, which rendered this author’s vision of the city a momentarily popular reflection on its cultural history.

By reorganizing our analysis around the overarching notion of nostalgia, we can draw new connections to the critical terms that other scholars have used to describe this period. Indeed, in traditional histories of the turn of the 1920s, the focus tends to fall on modernist and avant-garde innovations, or on the development of jazz and other new popular music. In these accounts, nostalgia is allied with conservative or old-fashioned music that did not evolve with the times, and that evokes the “lost period” of the prewar era.² But the evidence presented here sheds light on the complex interactions and reconsiderations of the past at this time, and shows that notions of nostalgia not only reflected a desire to preserve national heritage, but also shaped musical innovation. Works by Les Six and Satie, deemed scandalously modern by some early audiences, derived some of their modernist impulses in self-consciously nostalgic ways, but in reference to objects that were not thought lost nor past. Hence “sideways nostalgia.”

The distinct case studies in this dissertation should not be interpreted as isolated examples that would appeal to different people. Avoiding a separation between lowbrow and highbrow

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genres, venues, and publications allows us to see that the issues that affected concert life intersected with similar issues in popular venues. Whereas the inspiration, performance context, and musical content of Ravel’s La Valse might bear no resemblance to the waltzes heard in the dancings, it shared with them the same desire to confront and rehabilitate the position of the waltz in postwar culture. Likewise, the issues surrounding the development of French music, although primarily explored by intellectuals, also engaged the general public, including readers of dance magazines. The archival material at the basis of this dissertation gives lie to the notion that some kind of a divide between popular and art music determined how most people engaged with music. While it is well-known that Les Six, Satie, and Cocteau enjoyed going to the fair, about which they frequently spoke, popular culture and national politics influenced the works of other musicians, and informed their public reception, as is the case with the Tombeau de Debussy, published in the wake of the grand national celebrations of the double anniversary of November 1920, or with Ravel’s La Valse, whose reviewers were keen to compare it to other dances in vogue at the time.

There is no doubt that everyone had their personal longings—especially after years of deadly and costly conflict—but nostalgia played a public and collective role through publications and performances. Journalism was the principal forum in which ideas about the past, the war, the nation, the exotic, and the future were most dynamically formulated. And musical compositions not only prompted nostalgic reactions, they also reflected them, resulting in a constant synergy between text and sound. For instance, at a time when memorial practices were frequent and closely scrutinized, the Tombeau de Debussy exemplified the interconnectedness between postwar trauma, personal memory, national myths, and collective nostalgia.

Let us consider one final bit of evidence of this interconnectedness of networks of people, works, and ideas in the postwar period. On January 8, 1921, in a page of musical news from L’Intransigeant, an anonymous audience member at the previous night’s Opéra-Comique performance of Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande regretted that “we are not celebrating [our masters]
as they deserve it.”

Ironically, a few paragraphs above, the newspaper announced a performance of the *Tombeau de Debussy* at the Librairie Gallimard the following afternoon. Perhaps this is not the kind of celebration that the anonymous audience member had in mind, but there is no denying that Debussy was indeed well celebrated after the war. Immediately below the announcement of the concert, we read the following piece of musical “news”: “In London, there is currently an active campaign in favor of a renaissance of the waltz and other dances which were dear to our ancestors.”

Another anecdote in the following column inadvertently gave a reason for that renaissance of old dances. After the police had to intervene in a *dancing* in Passy, where a fight broke out, it was declared that:

*C’est d’ailleurs un fait reconnu que les danses qui nous viennent d’outre-Atlantique surexcitent les nerfs et rendent danseurs et danseuses prompts à la colère et aux emportements qu’ignoraient la pacifique polka de nos aïeux.*

It is a well-known fact that the dances that come from overseas overexcite the nerves and cause men and women dancers to be quick to fits of anger that were unknown to the peaceful polka of our ancestors.

And finally, returning to the left-hand side column, the newspaper informed its readers that a ball would soon be given at the Opéra, and it pondered if it would be a “historical ball” or one with a “very modern character.” It is unclear what is meant by “very modern” or if it was a desired or dreaded thing. But that this is the reviewer’s only concern is telling. Modernism mattered to the public beyond the small group of composers of concert music.

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3 “Nos Échos,” *L’Intransigeant*, January 8, 1921, 2. The following news is from the section immediately above, “La Vie Théâtrale.”
4 I did not find any further mention of this performance. If this performance actually happened, it would have preceded by two weeks the “official” premiere of the work, discussed in chapter 2.
In the postwar years, a reader of *L’Intransigeant* might have proceeded just as we have, flicking through these pieces of news with more or less curiosity, provoked by the challenges of memorialization, the nostalgic campaign for the return of the waltz and against the newly-arrived American dances, and the unresolved opposition between tradition and modernity. These topics echoed each other in various journalistic and musical forms, and that they are all perfectly condensed within a few inches of paper in *L’Intransigeant*, a generalist daily publication, is no mere coincidence: these were the issues that people were invested in, engaging with, and reading about in all sorts of outlets.

By mentioning the campaign to revive the waltz in London, this page of news also touches on the international resonances of the themes of this dissertation. The focus here on Paris, where notions of Frenchness and national history were being reconsidered in the wake of the capital’s growing cosmopolitanism, does not exclude that similar trends can be observed outside of France. While France’s international connections in the early twentieth century are well documented, especially regarding the influence of American music, surely nostalgic sentiments affected musical expressions outside of France in these years. Likewise, considering that by 1921 about 14% of Parisians were foreigners, including Americans who first arrived as soldiers and Russians who fled the Revolution, just as surely various ethnic groups within France—often marginalized in standard journalistic outlets—used nostalgia as a response to postwar cultural changes and to their experience as immigrants.

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6 Matthew Riley’s approach to nostalgia is less comprehensive than mine, but his work remains a substantial musicological study on the theme of nostalgia outside of France: Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Mine is a reading of nostalgia that emerges from primary sources rather than deriving from present-day interpretations of the concept. This allows a major shift in perspective in the approach to historical topics that relate to longing, desire, memory, and trauma. Echoing Jean Cocteau’s “varieties of nostalgia hitherto unknown,” I draw attention to uncommon, atypical, or neglected forms of this affect—in addition to the more conventional ones—at a time when it was only beginning to enter popular and artistic discourses. The four paradigms defined in chapter 1, in addition to the sideways nostalgia of modernism, are transtistorical, meaning that they do not describe successive conceptions of the term, but temporally simultaneous ones, and they are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, although some instances of nostalgia may correspond to one or another of these paradigms, they are not ways to neatly categorize nostalgic phenomena. It will never be satisfactory to merely classify nostalgic examples. But by being attentive to a multiplicity of paradigms of nostalgia, we can begin better to understand its long, rich, and intricate history.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIST OF MUSICAL WORKS TITLED NOSTALGIE, 1833-1922

This list is established from the Bibliographie de la France, which gives the full inventory of bibliographic records of French publications. I searched for “nostalgie” and all its derivatives in each digitized issue of the Bibliographie from its founding in 1811 to 1922 (the last year for which a keyword search is currently possible). This search helped me establish the correct publication date of some works for which the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) has no information. On the other hand, a few works preserved at the BnF are absent from the Bibliographie. I am including these works here only if they were published in France or written by a French composer but published abroad. For all other works included in the Bibliographie, I am listing the issue date and entry number for reference. Of the 47 works included in this list, 35 were published in Paris.

La Nostalgie [song in 6 verses]
1833 (Biblio, 10 août 1833, no. 89) – place and publisher unknown
Music: Hortense, reine de Hollande
Lyrics: Pierre-Jean de Béranger (see La Nostalgie ou le Mal du Pays by Henrion, 1841)

La Nostalgie (Mal du Pays) [song in 3 verses]
1837 (Biblio, 21 octobre 1837, no. 265) – Paris: A. Romagnesi
Music: Charles-Henri Plantade
Lyrics: Mr. Justin

La Nostalgie: 15e mélodie. Op. 38 [song]
1840 (Biblio, 30 mai 1840, no. 306) – Paris: Schonenberger
Music: Heinrich Proch
Lyrics: Crevel de Charlemagne
Also arranged for horn and piano by Jacques François Gallay.

La Nostalgie ou le Mal du Pays [song in 3 verses]
1841 (not in the Biblio) – Paris: J. Meissonnier
Music: Paul Henrion
Lyrics: Pierre-Jean de Béranger (see La Nostalgie by Hortense, 1833)

La Nostalgie (Das Heimweh) : Pensée musicale. Op. 133 [piano piece]
1852 or 1857 (legal deposit: 28 mars 1852; Biblio, 8 août 1857, no. 146) – Mainz: B. Schott
Music: Henri Cramer
La Nostalgie [score not found]
1852 (Biblio, 4 septembre 1852, no. 490) – place and publisher unknown
Music: B. Vidal
Lyrics: M. T. B.
Part of a collection titled Mélodie pittoresque, musique pour tout le monde.

La Nostalgie : Rêverie pour piano. Op. 11 [piano piece]
1857 (Biblio, 31 janvier 1857, no. 197) – Paris: Quantin
Music: Gustave Friedel

La Nostalgie : Polka-Mazurka pour piano [dance for piano]
1858 (Biblio, 5 juin 1858, no. 1010) – Paris: Étienne Challiot
Music: Adrien Deshayes

1860 (Biblio, 28 janvier 1860, no. 226) – Paris: Jules Heinz
Music: Maurice Lee

La Nostalgie : Mazurka pour piano [dance for piano]
1875 (Biblio, 18 décembre 1875, no. 3995) – Paris: imp. E. Delay
Music: Joseph Morch

Nostalgie, in Œuvres de Léon Moreau pour piano, no. 4 [piano piece]
1896 (Biblio, 14 novembre 1896, no. 5463) – Paris: Paul Dupont
Music: Léon Moreau

Nostalgie [song]
1899 (Biblio, 24 juin 1899, no. 2927) – Paris: Ulysse T. du Wast
Music and lyrics: Léon Pillaut

Nostalgie, in Trilogie (août 1898 – juin 1899), no. 2 [piano piece]
1900 (Biblio, 27 janvier 1900, no. 292) – Alençon: imp. Veuve Félix Guy et Cie
Music: Laulau Guy

Nostalgie, in Mélodies choisies, no. 2. Op. 9 [song]
1900 (Biblio, 7 avril 1900, no. 1461) – Paris: E. Fromont
Music: Max Gus
French lyrics by: Henri Anerbach

Nostalgie : Valse pour piano. Op. 3 [dance for piano]
1902 (Biblio, 1 février 1902, no. 595) – Béziers: Justin Robert
Music: Louis Arnaud

Nostalgie : Valse. Op. 36 [dance for piano or orchestra]
1902 (Biblio, 5 juillet 1902, no. 3518) – Paris: Hachette et Cie
reprinted with a new cover in 1912 (Biblio, 1 novembre 1912, no. 4616) – Paris: G. Ricordi & Cie
Music: Maurice Depret

Nostalgie : Valse [dance for orchestra]
1902 (Biblio, 27 septembre 1902, no. 4789) – Paris: E. Gaudet
Music: Fortuné July
Nostalgie d’amour, in Scènes de flirt : Suite pour piano, no. 1 [piano piece]  
1904 (Biblio, 23 janvier 1904, no. 439) – Paris: Enoch  
Music: George Ritas

Nostalgie des nuées, in La Goutte d’eau : Petit Poème pour piano, no. 4 [piano piece]  
1904 (Biblio, 14 mai 1904, no. 2413) – Paris: E. Demets  
Music: Alice Sauvrezis

La Nostalgie : Naïveté militaire [song in 4 verses]  
1905 (Biblio, 15 avril 1905, no. 1706) – Toulon-sur-Mer: Esper  
Music: Octave Lamart  
Lyrics: Félix Clemmenz

1906 (Biblio, 31 mars 1906, no. 1571) – Paris: L. Grus & Cie  
Music: Gaston Paulin  
Lyrics: Maxime Simonnot

Nostalgie de nègres (Des Négers Heimweh) : Pièce de caractère pour piano. Op. 320 [dance for piano or orchestra]  
1906 (Biblio, 15 septembre 1906, no. 3956) – Paris: Heugel & Cie  
Music: Robert Vollstedt

Nostalgie : Valse Poème pour piano [piano piece]  
1907 (Biblio, 7 juin 1907, no. 3616) – Paris: Costallat & Cie  
Music: Gabriel Fervan

Nostalgie : Mélodie [song]  
1907 (Biblio, 28 juin 1907, no. 4137) – Paris: M. Vieu  
Music: George Lauglane  
Lyrics: Paulin Capmal

Nostalgie d’amour : Mélodie [song]  
1907 (Biblio, 9 août 1907, no. 5012) – Paris: Marcel Labbé  
Music: Paul Fauchey  
Lyrics: Gaston Deval

Nostalgie : Valse [dance for piano]  
1907 (Biblio, 30 août 1907, no. 5215) – Geneva: Union artistique  
Music: Marie Bonnand

Nostalgie : Valse pour piano [dance for piano]  
1909 (not in the Biblio) – Paris: A. Béthune  
Music: Fr. Baudel

Nostalgique, in Chansons à quatre voix pour orchestre et quatuor vocal, no. 2. Op. 39 [chorus with orchestra or piano]  
1909 (not in the Biblio) – Paris: A. Zunz Mathot  
Music and lyrics: Florent Schmitt
La Nostalgie : Chanson [song in 2 verses]
1910 (not in the Biblio) – Paris: G. Siéver
Music: César Fantapié
Lyrics: Jean Dauras

Sehnsucht (Nostalgie) [piano piece]
1910 (not in the Biblio) – Paris: O. Boursens van der Boijon
Music: Józef Zygmunt Szulc

Nostalgie, in Intimités : Pièces pour piano, no. 3. Op. 53 [piano piece]
1911 (Biblio, 10 mars 1911, no. 889) – Paris: Henry Lemoine & Cie
Music: Aloys Claussmann

Nostalgie [song]
1911 (Biblio, 1 septembre 1911, no. 3301)
Lyrics: E. Th. Hoffmann

Valse nostalgique, in Pièces romantiques pour piano à deux mains, no. 3. Op. 42 [piano piece]
1912 (Biblio, 7 juin 1912, no. 2413) – Paris: S. Chapelier
Music: Florent Schmitt

Nostalgie, in Impressions, no. 3 [piano piece]
1913 (Biblio, 17 janvier 1913, no. 347) – Paris: Jean Jobert
Music: Paul Paray

Nostalgie : Duo pour ténor ou soprano et baryton [song in 2 verses]
1913 (Biblio, 29 août 1913, no. 4288) – Geneva: Union artistique
Music: Al. Stoupanse
Lyrics: Marc U. Berger

1913 (Biblio, 5 septembre 1913, no. 4395) – Paris: J. Hamelle
Music: Marc Delmas

Nostalgie [song]
1913 (Biblio, 17 octobre 1913, no. 5376) – Brussels: J.-B. Katto
Music: Alberto Soler
Lyrics: Paul Rouget

Impressions nostalgiques (1. Heure de spleen dans la serre chaude – 2. Gondoles – 3. Rêverie au clair de lune) [three piano pieces]
1919 (not in the Biblio) – London: Joseph Williams (Paris: Francis Salabert)
Music: Vincenzo Davico

Nostalgie : Valse [dance for piano]
1920 (Biblio, 3 décembre 1920, no. 2107) – Paris: Francis Salabert
Music: Henri Christiné
Chant nostalgique pour violon et piano [piece for violin and piano]
1921 (Biblio, 4 février 1921, no. 215) – Paris: Ch. Hayet
Music: Claude Laty

Nostalgie, in Douze Préludes pour le piano, no. 5. Op. 36 [piano piece]
1921 (not in the Biblio) – Geneva: Henn
Music: Louis Vierne

Nostalgie, in Suite orientale pour piano, no. 7 [piano piece]
1922 (Biblio, 28 avril 1922, no. 1183) – Paris: Maurice Senart
Music: C. d’Ollone

Nostalgie : Mélodies pour chant et piano (1. Pourquoi ? – 2. Que l’heure est donc brève ! –
1922 (Biblio, 12 mai 1922, no. 1407) – Paris: Maurice Senart
Music: Sylvain Dupuis
Lyrics: Armand Silvestre

2e Serenata (Notte nostalgica) : La Dernière Nuit [song]
1922 (Biblio, 16 juin 1922, no. 1798) – Paris: Smyth
Music: Enrico Toselli
French lyrics by: Georges Millandy
*Exists in versions for solo piano, piano and violin, piano and cello, and tenor or soprano and piano.*

Chanson nostalgique, in Feuilles d’automne, no. 3 [piano piece]
1922 (Biblio, 23 juin 1922, no. 1846) – Nice: F. Pichon
Music: Jean Antiga

Chanson nostalgique [song]
1922 (Biblio, 8 septembre 1922, no. 2768) – Paris: Heugel
Music and lyrics: Eugène Grassi

Nostalgie, in Sur quelques notes : Petite Suite cyclique en six pièces pour violon et piano, no.
5. Op. 15 [piece for violin and piano]
1922 (Biblio, 17 novembre 1922, no. 3419) – Paris: Maurice Senart
Music: Adolphe Piriou

Related publications

Quand reverrai-je, hélàs !… [song]
1918 (Biblio, 11 octobre 1918, no. 1127) – Paris: Durand & Cie
Music: André Caplet
Lyrics: Joachim du Bellay
*A work by Caplet titled Nostalgie was sung by Jane Bathori on March 2, 1919. Since Caplet never
published a work of this title, and considering the other songs performed on the program, it seems
possible that Quand reverrai-je, hélàs !… was retitled for the occasion.*
1926 (according to the BnF catalogue) – Paris: Rouart Lerolle & Cie
Music: Václav Štěpán
The piece is dedicated to Blanche Selva, who performed it in Paris in March-April 1920.
APPENDIX B: PRESS ARTICLES

Émile Vuillermoz, “Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy”


[The text presented here follows the original publication in Le Temps, including original spelling. I marked the beginning of each section by highlighting the composers’ names.]


L’édification des « tombeaux » d’artistes, pieuse pratique fort répandue parmi les poètes et les musiciens du seizième siècle, est une élégance intellectuelle qui semble jouer, depuis quelque temps, d’un regain de faveur. Les amis de Jules Écorcheville lui ont élevé un tombeau littéraire, ciselé avec une affectueuse fidélité ; Maurice Ravel a voulu exprimer sous cette forme son admiration pour Couperin ; et voici qu’une publication nouvelle, la Revue musicale, va nous offrir, dans quelques jours, un Tombeau de Claude Debussy, dont les architectes et les sculpteurs se nomment Bartók, Dukas, de Falla, Goossens, Malipiero, Ravel, Roussel, Schmitt, Satie et Strawinsky.

La pensée est touchante qui fait s’incliner respectueusement devant la sépulture encore fraîche de l’auteur de Pelléas les représentants les plus significatifs des grandes écoles musicales de l’Europe. Il était équitable, d’ailleurs, de fournir à la jeune musique hongroise, espagnole, anglaise, italienne et russe, en même temps qu’à la nôtre, l’occasion de s’acquitter symboliquement d’un impérieux devoir de gratitude. Debussy, en effet, avant même d’être prophète en son pays, l’était secrètement dans les foyers intellectuels étrangers. Ses œuvres, impatiemment guettées par les compositeurs, étaient étudiées avec une minutieuse attention, auscultées et disséquées par des praticiens experts. Sans tomber dans l’imitation servile, ces musiciens affinaient leur technique à l’école de ce maître du langage incisif et délicat, de cet inventeur d’expressions pénétrantes et justes, de ce collectionneur avisé de sonorités de grand luxe et de timbres d’art. Le debussysme n’a pas été précisément un article d’exportation ; mais tout un précieux vocabulaire international, toute une série de locutions suggestives et un certain tour de main orchestral n’appartiendraient pas, aujourd’hui, à la Société des nations si les partitions de Debussy n’avaient pas discrètement franchi nos frontières. On ne s’appropria évidemment ni la « sensitivité » inquiète, ni la pudeur farouche de ce lyrique trop distingué pour la plupart des races mélomanes de l’heure présente ; on ne put faire tomber dans le domaine public l’élément essentiellement national du génie de cet artiste d’Île-de-France. Mais les meilleurs des jeunes compositeurs étrangers de ce temps ne seraient pas tout à fait eux-mêmes, si ce professeur de goût, de tact et de bonnes manières ne leur avait pas donné quelques bonnes leçons de maintien, par correspondance. Les cinq couronnes que l’Europe musicale suspend aujourd’hui au Tombeau de Claude Debussy payent une dette d’honneur !
Voici donc dix compositeurs réunis autour du cercueil du maître disparu. Ils sont entrés en méditation et chacun d’eux va prononcer un petit discours. Que vont-ils dire ? Que dirait surtout leur sarcastique ami s’il pouvait promener sur ce petit groupe son regard malicieux et doucement sceptique ? En reconnaissant certains de ces orateurs funèbres, il ne pourrait s’empêcher de sourire avec un peu d’ironie. Tel et tel de ces « pleureurs », remplis de componction, ne lui dédient-ils pas une tendresse un peu tardive ? N’apportent-ils pas leur collaboration à ce monument avec la secrète satisfaction du maçon qui scelle définitivement une porte ou mure un caveau pour l’éternité ? Pour sculpter sa pierre tombale, Debussy aurait-il choisi ces dix marbriers ?…

Mais cette remarque faite, d’un petit ton pointu et amusé, l’auteur des Nocturnes aurait étudié avec beaucoup d’attention les dix oraisons funèbres prononcées en son honneur. Imitons-le, en feuilletant l’album où elles ont été réunies par les soins d’Henry Prunières.

**IGOR STRAVINSKY** a été bref et lapidaire. Son hommage est intitulé : « Fragment des symphonies d’instruments à vent, à la mémoire de Claude-Achille Debussy. » Deux pages robustes, déchirantes — même pour les tympans aguerris — et d’une couleur étrange. De lourds accords, massifs comme les piliers d’un temple barbare, soutiennent une monotone et douloureuse mélodie qui a la mélancolie résignée et extatique de certains neumes de notre plain-chant et que traversent et enveloppent des vibrations de cloches. Pas de nuances, pas d’armature à la clef, pas de désignation d’instruments, pas d’indications de mesure. On passe brusquement de deux temps à trois temps, de trois à quatre, et de quatre à deux ou à cinq, sans qu’aucun signal d’alarme fonctionne, à l’intention du timide lecteur. On se demande même pourquoi l’auteur a tenu à conserver, dans ces conditions, les barres métriques dont l’utilité, souvent contestée par nos réformateurs, devient ici infiniment problématique. Ces séparations inégales sont une gêne perpétuelle pour l’œil et vous imposent certaines conventions d’accentuation forte ou faible qui sont probablement très loin de la pensée du compositeur.

Cette page de Strawinsky, brutale, mais forte, et remplie d’une douleur sauvage et un peu animale, pose quelques petits problèmes d’esthétique assez actuels qu’il n’est peut-être pas inutile de formuler avec netteté. L’auteur du Sacre du printemps est un musicien dont la géniale puissance et la prodigieuse invention rythmique et orchestrale sont désormais hors de discussion. Sa sincérité est éclatante. Acharné, comme la plupart des compositeurs d’aujourd’hui, à tirer de la matière sonore des effets de plus en plus véhéments et de plus en plus intenses, il ne recule devant aucune audace. Les solutions harmoniques, unisonales ou polytonales, qu’il élabore sont de plus en plus corrosives et les sonorités instrumentales qu’il aiguise, de plus en plus térébrantes.

Nul ne songe à comparer cette ardeur fiévreuse de perceur de tunnel qui attaque et fore le roc qu’il veut traverser, aux puériles préoccupations de snobisme de tels jeunes arbitres de nos élégances musicales que le souci de guider la mode entraîne à de perpétuelles surenchères dans le domaine de la dissonance arbitraire et laborieuse. Strawinsky suit logiquement et honnêtement son destin. Il abandonne une formule harmonique ou orchestrale dès qu’elle a cessé de l’émouvoir, et il va plus loin, comme le géant Auférus, à la recherche « du plus puissant » qu’il brûle de servir. Sa marche est rapide, parce qu’il est énergique et courageux. Dès qu’il a traversé une montagne, il s’élançe vers la suivante et reprend son travail. Il ne regarde jamais derrière lui. Aussi ne s’aperçoit-il pas que ses amis s’essoufflent et ont grand’peine à le suivre. Il va, il va toujours, infatigable et résolu. Comme tous les musiciens de sa génération, ilcherche à introduire dans le cri, la plainte ou le soupir de l’orchestre, cet élément de vie, ce coefficient de pathétique qu’est la dissonance. La dissonance n’est pas autre chose qu’un vibrato communiqué à un accord parfait. On croit accabler l’école moderne en la définissant « l’école de la fausse note ». Cette définition n’est pas infamante. Elle ne fait que consacrer une loi primordiale de l’acoustique.

Lorsque l’on accorde les tuyaux d’un orgue, la justesse d’une note ne se mesure pas au diapason, mais à l’amplitude et à la fréquence de ses ondes vibratoires. Fausse, elle émet des
« battements » considérables ; mais, plus l’accordeur la rapproche de la normale, plus ces battements se resserront et ressemblent à des trilles délicats. Et, soudain, le trille disparaît, les vibrations s’unifient : la note est « juste ». Vous vous apercevez alors qu’elle est devenue pure, froide et inexpressive. Le trille léger qui la galvanisait lorsqu’elle était « fausse » lui communiquait une sorte de vie lumineuse, un scintillement, une palpitation qui la rendaient éloquente et persuasive. Vous regrettez, sans le savoir, la magie de la fausse note !

Et cette sensation est si nette que le facteur d’orgue qui veut vous émouvoir par une sonorité prenante, n’a rien trouvé de plus irrésistible que le jeu de la « voix humaine » qui est systématiquement « désaccordé » et qui est constitué d’une série de « notes fausses » délicatement placées en rapport de dissonances avec les autres jeux, pour obtenir cette séduisante vibration dont la caresse enchanter vos nerfs. Une note qui vibre brille comme une étoile. Mais ce n’est plus une note rigoureusement juste : c’est déjà une fausse note qui exerce sa perfide séduction autour d’elle, sur des auditeurs innocents qui se croient parfaitement à l’abri des tentations du démon moderne.

Lancé dans cette voie, vous ne pouvez plus vous arrêter. On se blase assez vite sur la force expressive de la fausse note de la « voix humaine » aggravée de la pédale du tremolo. On se lasse également du vibrato du violoniste qui sait fort bien qu’un jeu mathématiquement « juste » serait dépouillé de toute expression douloureuse ou passionnée et qui « fausse » méthodiquement ses sons pour les illuminer et les faire vivre d’une vie intense. Alors, on recherche des vibrations plus corsées, des scintillements plus vifs. Les dissonances s’incorporent, une à une, aux accords. Elles scandalisent d’abord l’auditeur, puis le charment, puis finissent par perdre leur « potentiel » expressif. Il faut allier plus loin. Les nerfs s’émoussent. On a épuisé toutes les satisfactions de l’ouïe que peut procurer la mise en contact de tous les demi-tons de la gamme chromatique : alors on accouple deux tonalités. On établit ainsi une sorte de formidable vibrato, non plus mélodique, comme celui du violoniste, mais harmonique, par l’écriture bi-tonale, tri-tonale ou multi-tonale dont les premiers exemples nous sont offerts en ce moment, un peu partout, tantôt pour notre supplice, tantôt pour notre joie, tantôt pour notre supplice.

Strawinsky ne pouvait se soustraire à aucune des exigences instinctives de cette évolution. Il a couvert toutes ces étapes, presque sans s’en apercevoir, pourrait-on dire, de l’Oiseau de feu au Rossignol, et de Pétrouchka au Sacre du printemps. Sa bonne foi est absolue. Mais n’avons-nous pas le droit d’attirer son attention sur le malentendu qui grandit entre les chercheurs de son espèce et les auditeurs de bonne volonté ? Il ne faut pas que cette évolution si rapide déroute le public et lui donne l’impression d’un parti pris ou d’une mystification. Or, c’est trop souvent la pensée qui l’effleure en présence de certaines partitions trop complexes ou trop agressives. Car aucune précaution n’a été prise pour le rassurer et l’éclairer.

Vous n’avez pas le droit, compositeurs d’avant-garde, de jouer ce jeu dangereux. Vous devez à vos auditeurs certaines explications. Votre technique s’est profondément modifiée, mais vous n’avez pas songé un seul instant à perfectionner votre écriture qui ne répond plus aux besoins de votre nouveau vocabulaire. Une page comme celle que Strawinsky vient de donner à la Revue musicale pourrait s’éclairer immédiatement par quelques artifices de gravure, mettant en lumière les plans harmoniques, soulignant la logique des recherches les plus hardies et précisant les « valeurs » dans ce tableau sans nuances. De même, il eût été fort utile d’indiquer le nom des instruments participant à cette « symphonie » de cinquante mesures, et d’en faire la distribution pour permettre de donner aux notes leur importance relative dans les heurts et les frottements cruels qui les attendent. Il y a, dans une présentation aussi négligente et aussi volontairement obscure de textes de cette espèce, un manque d’égard vis-à-vis du lecteur, dont on ne saurait apprécier la désinvolture. Le fossé qui se creuse entre la musique moderne et la foule est déjà bien assez profond : il est coupable de négliger une seule occasion de le combler.

1 In the reprint in Musiques d’aujourd’hui, the phrase is changed for: “Fausse, elle émet des « battements » serrés ; mais, plus l’accordeur la rapproche de la normale, plus ces battements s’élargissent.”
À côté de la clameur de chagrin, âpre et stridente, du musicien russe, voici un très humble gémissement français. Sur quatre vers de Lamartine, Erik Satie a exhalé une plainte aussi brève qu’un hai-kai japonais. « Fleuves, rochers, forêts, solitude si chère, un seul être vous manque et tout est dépeuplé !… » Le sentiment en est touchant, mais la prosodie déclamatoire de ces douze mesures surprend un peu. Le parallélisme difficilement justifiable des rythmes de ces deux distiques n’est pas moins inattendu. Il y a là un mélange de styles qui trouble le lecteur toujours prêt à attendre de l’auteur de Socrate des confidences exceptionnelles, formulées en termes ingénieusement insolites.

Ici encore se pose cette question de l’écriture qu’il faudra bien se décider, un jour, à tirer au clair, entre augures qui n’osent pas se regarder dans les yeux. Les musiciens « avancés » de la génération nouvelle n’aiment pas beaucoup aborder ce sujet. Ils professent, c’est entendu, un mépris absolu des vieilles règles du jeu de l’écriture harmonique ou contrapuntique et réclament toute liberté pour assembler à leur gré des bouquets de notes, diaprés, chatoyants, éblouissants de couleur ou violemment parfumés. Soit, mais il faut alors trouver une autre écriture, d’autres conventions graphiques et orthographiques. La vieille écriture a sa logique rigoureuse, ses expressions consacrées, ses truismes, ses prédestinations et, surtout, son énorme cristallisation de souvenirs classés et son pesant héritage de citations inéluctables. Les plus audacieux novateurs demeureront prisonniers de ces formules définitives. Ils ne seront jamais libres tant qu’ils n’auront pu briser cette solide chaîne qui paralyse leurs mouvements.

Voyez ce qui arrive à un musicien comme Erik Satie lorsqu’il veut conclure une phrase en laissant s’évaporer la mélodie, en laissant flotter, se dissoudre dans les airs et se perdre dans le « grand tout ». Il n’est évidemment pas question de tonalité. Mais comment s’évader de la geôle de l’écriture classique ? Le dernier accord de cette Élégie est composé d’un fa, d’un la et d’un ré bémol. Quelle est la pensée de l’auteur ? Pour l’auditeur qui n’aura pas la musique sous les yeux, cette conclusion imposera la plus fâcheuse, la plus banale impression de quinte augmentée, rien ne ressemblant plus à un ut dièse qu’un ré bémol dans un instrument tempéré. Ce n’est certainement pas ce qu’a voulu Satie. Il faut donc se pencher sur la partition, repérer le ré bémol, et déduire par un raisonnement technique, basé sur les plus antiques principes de la grammaire du Conservatoire, que ce ré bémol est peut-être bien une appogiature non résolue dans l’accord parfait de fa et sous-entend savoureusement un do naturel, en créant ainsi une indécision pleine de charme et un flottement mélancolique propice à l’infini de la rêverie !… Mais avouez que la musique ultra-moderne est bien à plaindre si elle doit s’appuyer sur des argumentations de ce genre et si elle ne peut murmurer directement son secret à l’oreille de ses meilleurs amis ! Tant qu’elle sera forcée d’ergoter sur la fonction tonale d’un ré bémol pour convaincre ses auditeurs de son ingéniosité et de sa sincérité, elle ne transformera certainement pas la face du monde.

Ces propos funèbres échanges sur le tombeau de Debussy par quelques-uns de ses héritiers contiennent ainsi plus d’un aveu précieux. Nous en poursuivrons l’étude dans un prochain article.²

Un troisième orateur funèbre s’avance. C’est Béla Bartók, un des représentants les plus caractéristiques de cette jeune et originale école hongroise dont la révélation soudaine, à un concert de la Société musicale indépendante, stupéfia jadis les amateurs français. Cette audition est demeurée célèbre parmi les musiciens à cause de l’impression singulière produite par des pièces de piano de Kodály, exécutées par Théodore Szanto avec une solennité hiératique et un luxe de silences qui déchaînèrent dans la salle une gaieté immédiée. Il n’en fallut pas davantage pour accréditer la légende d’une mystification savante organisée par de facétieux compagnons et créer un état d’esprit terriblement circonspect à l’égard des musiques portant la même bande de garantie.

² This last paragraph is cut in Musiques d’aujourd’hui.
La qualité la plus rare dans les milieux musicaux est, en effet, la sincérité. Un amateur de musique goûte difficilement une joie artistique affranchie de toute idée préconçue, débarrassée de préjugés critiques ou historiques, allégée du fardeau des théories et des hiérarchies. Il a besoin d’étayer ses admirations sur des bases rassurantes: le décret explicite d’une autorité constituée ou l’argument tiré « du consentement universel ». Il n’ose pas interroger son cœur et avouer ingénument son plaisir, son ennui ou sa perplexité. Le respect humain le paralyse. En présence de la singulièr liberté de style des jeunes compositeurs hongrois, de leur affranchissement, de leur délicieuse sensibilité harmonique, beaucoup d’auditeurs éprouverent une surprise nuancée d’inquiétude. Comment classer ces sauvages ? Dans quel compartiment de l’esthétique pouvait-on faire entrer cette sorte de barbarie subtile, cette spontanéité et ce raffinement ? On trouva plus facile d’en rire et de déclarer que Kodály devait être un proche parent de Boronali.

Cependant, quelques auditeurs plus perspicaces avaient remarqué la qualité du discours musical que tenait Béla Bartók. Ils pressentirent un maître et le proclamèrent au milieu des ironies déchaînées. Ils ne s’étaient pas trompés. Le talent de Bartók n’est pas plus discuté à l’heure actuelle que celui de Schoenberg et c’est une satisfaction très vive, pour ses amis de la première heure, de le retrouver aujourd’hui chargé d’une pieuse ambassade au tombeau de Claude Debussy. Il s’en acquitte avec une discrétion et un tact parfaits.

Un thème mélancolique, exposé à l’unisson, chante avec une simplicité tranquille, comme une mélopée populaire fredonnée par un cortège lointain. Chaque membre de phrase s’attarde sur la note finale, selon l’usage des foules qui conduisent une mélodie jusqu’au bout de leur souffle et prennent ensuite largement leur respiration. Mais, sur cette note qui meurt, s’élèvent des réponses mystérieuses, des échos légers qui vibrent et disparaissent, fugitifs, insaisissables. Est-ce une cloche qui disperse et emmêle ses sons harmoniques dans la campagne, est-ce un frémissement de feuillages, un léger sanglot du vent d’ouest ?… On ne sait et il importe peu ; mais une tristesse délicate naît de cette opposition de la mélodie sereine et nue, et de ce frisson d’harmonies inquiètes et douloureuses qu’éveille son passage. Peu à peu, les dissonances chuchotent sous les pas de la mélopée — comme des feuilles mortes qui bruissent au passage d’une promeneuse dans une forêt de novembre — élèvent leur insinuant murmure et tourbillonnent autour de la mélodie qu’elles submergent un instant. Mais la nostalgique passante poursuit sa route et, derrière elle, les tierces et les secondes, soulevées, retombent lentement avec un doux bruit de soie froissée…

L’hommage du jeune musicien anglais Eugène Goossens est plus âpre et plus agressif. Certes, Béla Bartók n’a pas peur des frottements harmoniques audacieux. La « fausse relation » lui est douce, et il est parfois obligé de se servir, pour certaines de ses notes, de tiges fourchées parce qu’il y fleurit simultanément un mi naturel et un mi dièse, un la dièse et un la bécarre ! Mais ces irrigation finissent par se fondre dans un chatoiement confus et harmonieux de nacre changeante. Tout en étant moins hardi, le système harmonique de Goossens est plus cruel parce qu’il dérive, non pas d’une recherche de résonances naturelles qui s’évaporent, une à une, comme des fumées diaprées, mais d’une sorte de superchromatisme serré et tendu, d’hérité confusément wagnérienne. Assurément, nous sommes très loin des habituels procédés d’écriture de Tristan, et les premières mesures du compositeur anglais ne nous le laissent point ignorer. Cependant la filiation lointaine est si perceptible que Debussy pourrait protester, dans l’au-delà, contre cette façon de pleurer en s’essuyant les yeux avec un mouchoir acheté, il y a fort longtemps, à Bayreuth. D’ailleurs, cet accès de désolation furieuse et grinçante dure peu, et le musicien tient, ensuite, des propos parfaitement dignes de son sujet, en disposant ses accords selon les habitudes les plus chères à l’auteur d’une Sarabande qui exerça une influence si décisive sur toute la syntaxe et l’orthographe pianistiques de ces dernières années.

Albert Roussel a intitulé sa composition votive : l’Accueil des Muses. Et c’est, en effet, une sorte de lente procession qui semble se mettre en marche au-devant du nouvel hôte du Bois.
sacré. Elle se déroule avec cette dignité et cette décence qui sont les qualités habituelles de l’auteur du *Poème de la forêt*. On y devine un sentiment à la fois intense et réservé, une grande ardeur de pensée et une certaine pudeur d’élocution. Une sorte de discrétion retient sur ses lèvres les mots trop sonores, les expressions trop frappantes, les locutions trop oratoires ou trop brillantes. Il donne toujours à ses moindres propos le prix d’une confidence amicale et se plaît à suggérer plutôt qu’à certifier les vérités qui lui sont chères.

Les Muses qui s’avancent vers Debussy sont peintes par Roussel avec une recherche de coloris un peu surprenante. Ce n’est pas une blanche théorie de vierges enveloppées de voiles immaculés : ce cortège est plus animé et moins monochrome. On y perçoit une recherche d’exotisme et, par instants même, un balancement syncopé presque oriental, qui, pour être inattendu, n’en est pas moins savoureux. Et l’accueil des neuf sœurs, s’échauffant par degrés, s’achève en apothéose, rythmé par les triolets de la lyre d’Euterpe qui n’a évidemment pas tous les jours le plaisir d’accueillir un visiteur de cette qualité !

Tout différent est l’état d’âme de Florent Schmitt, toujours sous pression, toujours gonflé de musique, toujours torturé par le sentiment de la pauvreté et de la débilité du langage harmonique et du matériel sonore. Celui-là ne connaît dans l’effusion verbale ni timidité ni pudeur. Les accords ne sont jamais assez riches, les instruments ne sont jamais assez puissants ni assez nombreux pour traduire ce qui se passe dans le cerveau bouillonnant du visionnaire qui a écrit la *Tragédie de Salomé*.

On est un peu déconcerté, en effet, de voir Maurice Ravel, par exemple, nouer à la stèle de Debussy la double guirlande fleurie de son duo pour violon et violoncelle. Sa couleur, sa grâce souple et fuyante et son mouvement dégagé n’ont, au premier abord, rien de particulièrement funèbre. Ravel, que mon éminent confrère Pierre Lalo vouait récemment, ici même, à un précoce trépas, se fait sans doute de la mort une idée étrangement sereine et consolante. Les adieux qu’il adresse à l’auteur de *Pelléas* sont empreints d’une résignation toute stoïcienne. L’une de ses phrases épouse même si étroitement le rythme d’un allègre refrain populaire, que l’on demeure un peu troublé d’une telle désinvolture en présence d’un aussi redoutable sujet de méditation !

Mais quelle virtuosité dans ces paroles ailées ! Deux instruments, seulement, dialoguent et échangent leurs répliques. Et, avec ces deux seules voix, le compositeur arrive à ouvrir, en deça et au delà de son texte littéral, des perspectives sonores illimitées. Les deux lignes mélodiques s’enlacent et se dénoncent avec une souplesse serpentine. Une altération instable du troisième degré

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3 This reference to Pierre Lalo is removed in *Musiques d’aujourd’hui*.
entretien une indécision modale d’un charme étrange et énervant. Cette arabesque onduleuse qui, huit fois de suite, enroule et déroule sa volute, semble une déformation volontaire d’un dessin caractéristique du Prélude à l’Après-midi d’un Faune. Des sons harmoniques laissent glisser leur caresse de flûte enchantée. Et l’on fait halte sur un accord parfait avec une inimitable élégance en apaisant peu à peu les deux appoggiatures qui cherchent encore, alternativement, à ébranler la dominante !

Le dialogue se poursuit bientôt. Le violon expose un thème plus dense que le violoncelle étayé d’une substructure solidement syncopée. La construction est renversable sans que l’équilibre en souffre. Alternativement, chaque archet, comme dans un métier de tisserand, tend le fil de la chaîne ou insinue celui de la trame avec une souple précision. Le jeu est d’une légèreté et d’une adresse incomparables. Il s’achève par des courbes d’une grâce plus alanguie et des gestes plus lents qui conduisent à une conclusion en la majeur où passe soudain le reflet d’un rêve attendri et d’une émotion naissante !

FRANCESCO MALIPIERO montre une tristesse grave et religieuse. L’auteur des Sept Chansons, que les abonnés de l’Académie nationale de musique supposaient, sans doute, voué aux discordances les plus féroces, a écrit tout son lamento en accords parfaits. De beaux accords parfaits se déplaçant d’une seule pièce par degrés conjoints, comme ceux du Martyre de saint Sébastien. L’impression est d’une majesté et d’une grandeur souveraine. On s’avance sous une colonnade splendide aux harmonieuses proportions. C’est un véritable temple que le musicien italien élève à la mémoire du maître français. Ét, sous ses voûtes, se propage, un instant, un curieux phénomène acoustique qui nous donne la sensation de sa profondeur et de sa hauteur. Quatre accords descendent lentement les degrés d’un escalier invisible. Chacun d’eux éveille un écho qui nous arrive, avec un long retard, alors que nous avons déjà poussé plus loin notre marche. Le mélange des accords réels et de leur reflet lointain, qui les accompagne fidèlement, à distance, crée un effet de perspective architecturale d’un relief saisissant. C’est là une fort belle page, simple, émue, douloureuse, qui démontrera, je l’espère, à plus d’un amateur impulsif le danger de porter sur les subtils artistes de notre temps des jugements trop rapides et trop simplistes.

L’intention la plus tendrement respectueuse du recueil a été exprimée par PAUL DUKAS. L’auteur de la Péri a voulu retrouver dans les ifs du cimetière « la plainte, au loin, du faune »… La pensée est d’une piété intellectuelle et sentimentale touchante : elle a été réalisée avec un rare bonheur. Pendant qu’un glas pleure, très loin, à travers les feuilles, le Faune debussyste porte tristement à ses lèvres la flûte qui lui servit à chanter, inoubliablement, son « immobile et lasse pâmoison ». Sous deux de ses formes les plus nettes, le thème doucement inflexié du Prélude est utilisé par Paul Dukas avec une ferveur émouvante. C’est toujours le gracieux feston chromatique que « le jonc vaste et jumeau » accrochait naguère aux sous-bois ensoleillés, mais le Faune a perdu son insouciante sensualité. Il gémit, il retrouve, en pleurant, les arabesques si chères de son ivresse passée. Un thème désolé s’accroche obstinément à sa réminiscence. Les harmonies qui la ponctuent sont poignantes ou plaintives. Le sol lointain du glas qui flotte dans les airs traverse cruellement son rêve. Une dernière fois, il redit lentement la tendre phrase voluptueuse et la laisse s’évanouir comme un parfum. On sent qu’il donne un sens nouveau, d’une infinité tristesse, au vers de Mallarmé : « Adieu : je vais voir l’ombre que tu devins ! »

Tous les musiciens qui ont aimé Debussy ne pourront se défendre d’une vive émotion en présence du geste affectueux de Paul Dukas traduisant son admiration fraternelle avec une si discrète et une si persuasive éloquence. Cette page ne fait pas seulement honneur au talent de l’auteur d’Ariane, elle nous dévoile la qualité rare de son cœur.

Enfin, d’Espagne nous arrive une bouffée de musique embaumée comme une couronne d’œillons : MANUEL DE FALLA, le délicat et passionné compositeur de la Vie brève, apporte, à son tour, au cher disparu l’écho d’un pays qu’il aimait. De Falla chante sa mélodie sur l’instrument
vibrant et nerveux des improvisateurs de sa race : la guitare, que les jeunes compositeurs espagnols, aidés par quelques exécutants prestigieux, tentent actuellement d’orienter vers un idéal d’émotion et de poésie.

C’est presque une danse et, malgré tout, sensuelle, qui se balance ici d’une corde à l’autre, mais on ne saurait y découvrir la moindre impixité. Le rythme de la danse espagnole lente convient admirablement à un rêveur pour bercer son chagrin. La *Homenaja*, de Manuel de Falla, est d’une émotion pénétrante, irrésistible. Et qui ne goûtera la jolie attention qui lui fait ramener, dans les dernières mesures, une allusion à la délicieuse *Soirée dans Grenade*, dont Debussy avait noté l’enivrant vertige ?

Tel est ce recueil de pensées tour à tour attendries et douloureuses que dix musiciens ont apportées sur la tombe d’un des leurs. Il demeure un témoignage touchant de la religion du souvenir dont on croyait les pratiques abolies à notre époque d’égocisme frénétique. Et il faut être reconnaissant à Claude Debussy, qui nous a laissé tant de pensées personnelles d’une inoubliable saveur, d’avoir encore trouvé le moyen de faire naître, autour de son tombeau, des propos aussi choisis et de demeurer, en dépit de la mort, le plus précieux des « animateurs » !…
Charles Tenroc, “Il faut fermer les bourges”


Je n’avais pas encore, depuis la Victoire, mis les pieds dans un « modern dancing » — à Londres, on prononce Palais de danse —, Ah ! mes amis ! c’est écoeurant et macabre.


Je n’ai pas connu Rigolboche, qui levait la jambe à la hauteur d’une institution, ni Fille de l’air, dont la verve entraînait les régiments italiens. Mais je me souviens des fantaisies chorégraphiques d’après la défaite de 71 — de Bullier, du Moulin-Rouge, du Jardin de Paris, du Coquelin Cadet avec des ailes dans le dos, de Valentin le Désossé, de Rayon d’Or et de Nini-Patte en l’air, morte hier à Villejuif. L’on s’amusait vigoureusement alors dans les nuages de tabac, de poussières, aux mousselines lancées par-dessus les Moulins de la Galette, aux valses non encore chaloupées et autres acrobaties joyeuses et nerveuses de *Lanciers*. Les plus moroses oubliaient leurs dyspepsies aux farandoles et aux rythmes francs.

Puis l’inquiétude se propagea. Mlle Valentine de Saint-Point inventa la Métachorie, l’évocation du corps astral, la plastique cérébralisée et psychologique luttant de langueur avec les crapuleuses « apach dance » où la saccade avait encore quelque chose de mâle. J’ai vu le tango où mon confrère Laloy discerna sous ses lunettes « l’image de l’amour…, d’un amour qui se complait aux déclarations propitiatoires. »

Et la Victoire est venue. Ah ! mes amis ! en fait de déclarations propitiatoires, nos putiphars vicieux entrent le Bœuf Apis, ataxiques, les yeux vairons, les jambes flasques. Les femmes parmi lesquelles j’ai cru reconnaître tant de marchandes de légumes florissantes, ont des aspects de poules gavées, lourdes de ponte, hiératiques sous l’œil flapi du coq-idole. Obscénités ? pas même. Les Grecs se divertissaient à danser la Phallique. C’est ici le morne ennui qui transpire, le vide déliquescent, la gaucherie des néphroptoses, la nonchalance triste, l’ aspect indigent du crâne déplumé…

Le morne affaissement de la lèvre qui tombe
Et l’aspect indigent du crâne déplumé…

L’habit d’enterrement est de rigueur. Un « professeur » s’exhibe pendant cinq minutes pour quinze ou vingt louis. L’on m’affirme qu’il se fait mille francs par jour ! À Nice, à Cannes, c’est la même fièvre, la même liquéfaction. La Reine du Portugal donne l’exemple à la « société » sélect et dégrafée.

Le patron du nécrocome où j’étouffe, où s’absorbent de tels opiums, m’avoue que « ça ne durera pas ». N’importe. La honte est que cela dure. La contagion gagne les salons mondains. Le virus infectieux se propage en des logis respectables. « Il faut arrêter le désastre. » Je sais des ménages menacés, des salons réputés musicaux où la musique est sacrifiée à la mode de quelques tours de machiches et de foxtrott. Des lumières, du charbon sont gâchés en faveur d’exploitations irritantes, alors que dehors les gueux sains heurtent les poubelles. La police n’a d’autre mission que de surveiller l’exactitude de la fermeture des tristes maisons tolérées et la pénombre de leur façade.

Allons ! Je supplie qui de droit de dissiper ces suppôts de Salpêtrière, ces mous maniaques circulaires, avant que l’indignation publique leur fasse un méchant parti. Je supplie les gens du monde de proscrire ces gabegies stupides renouvelées des harems de Sémiramis, moins le faste.

Et quand on aura oublié tout cela, il se trouvera un maître de danse française pour établir un pas français sur de la musique française. Alors nous danserons…
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