

TAMARA LEVITZ



MODERNIST
MYSTERIES:
PERSÉPHONE

■ Modernist Mysteries: *Perséphone*

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Modernist Mysteries:
Perséphone

Tamara Levitz

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■ *In memory of playing music with my father*
Abraham Levitz (1924–77)

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I wrote this book in memory of playing music with my father, who was an amateur violinist. When I was a child, I would accompany him at the piano in reading through sheet music together, whether excerpts of

Yiddish theater that he had bought in the 1950s on trips to New York City from his hometown of St. John's, Newfoundland, *Fiddler on the Roof*, Al Jolson songs, or a selection from the wide range of largely French popular piano pieces of the early twentieth century that my parents had bought at flea markets in the Catholic churches in Montréal, Québec, where we lived. I remember most vividly the serene smile on my father's face whenever he leaned his head into the rest on his violin and began to play with his strong vibrato. In writing this book, I wanted to remember that smile and the sound of his violin, and to celebrate my father's love of music by recreating the passion, vitality, and individuality of people who collaborated and created music in the past. My father died of cancer when I was fourteen.

Finally, I want to say a special word about Tim Stowell, who became the Dean of Humanities at UCLA at a critical moment in the history of this book. I quickly came to admire Tim as a mentor whose honesty, integrity, acuity, and capacity to remain down-to-earth allowed him to create a wonderful atmosphere in the humanities at UCLA. Tim showed me what academia could be, namely, a community of scholars who treat each other with generosity and compassion and who share a common purpose in pursuit of intellectual goals. Tim's equanimity, fairness, and unwavering support of his faculty changed my life. At a very crucial moment he gave me the courage to find my voice as an author and to complete this project.

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■ ABBREVIATIONS

■ ARCHIVE ABBREVIATIONS

AG-BLJD	Fonds André Gide, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet
BMdO	Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra (Bibliothèque nationale de France)
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
DAS-BNF	Département des arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France
DC-NYPL	Dance Collection, New York Public Library
DM-BNF	Département de musique, Bibliothèque nationale de France
FAS-MMM	Fonds André Schaeffner, Médiathèque Musicale Mahler
FJC-BNF	Fonds Jacques Copeau, Bibliothèque nationale de France
PSS	Paul Sacher Stiftung

■ BIBLIOGRAPHIC ABBREVIATIONS

BAAG	<i>Bulletin des amis d'André Gide.</i>
CGC	<i>Correspondance André Gide Jacques Copeau</i> , ed. Jean Claude, 2 vols., Cahiers André Gide 13 (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).
CPD	<i>Les Cahiers de la Petite Dame: Notes pour l'histoire authentique d'André Gide 1929–37</i> , 3 vols., Cahiers André Gide 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).
D&D	Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, <i>Dialogues and a Diary</i> [1961] (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).
E&D	Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, <i>Expositions and Developments</i> [1959] (London: Faber and Faber, 1962).
IVP	<i>Igor and Vera Stravinsky: A Photograph Album, 1921–1971</i> , text from Stravinsky's interviews 1912–63, including 258 photographs selected by Vera Stravinsky and Rita McCaffrey with captions by Robert Craft (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).
J-I	André Gide, <i>Journal I 1887–1925</i> , ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Gallimard/La Pléiade, 1996).
J-II	André Gide, <i>Journal II 1926–1950</i> , ed. Martine Sagaert (Paris: Gallimard/La Pléiade, 1997).
JMOC	Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, <i>Oeuvres complètes</i> , ed. Cercle d'études Jacques et Raïssa Maritain, 16 vols. (Paris: Editions Saint-Paul/Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1982).

- M&C* Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, *Memories and Commentaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).
- NRF* *La Nouvelle Revue Française*.
- P&P* André Gide, *Proserpine (drame): Perséphone (mélodrame)*, critical edition by Patrick Pollard (Lyon: Centre d'études gidiennes, Université Lyon II, 1977).
- SPD* Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).
- SPRK* Victor Varunts, ed., *I. F. Stravinsky: Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materialy k biografii*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2003).
- SSC* *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*, ed. Robert Craft, 3 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1985).

■ TRANSLATIONS

Alexandra Grabarchuk translated all Russian sources in this book, and I have used her system of transliteration for all Russian names, terms, and bibliographic entries. For consistency and in accordance with common practice, Alexandra has transliterated Russian names that should end in “skiy” according to her system with “sky.” I have referred to Stravinsky’s sons—Théodore (Fyodor) and Soulima (Svetik) Stravinsky—according to both their Russian and French names, depending on context. Stravinsky and his friends called his sons by their Russian names in the early 1930s. I have also referred to Pierre Souvtchinsky and Catherine Stravinsky according to their Russian names, by which they were still known in the early 1930s:

Pyotr Suvchinsky for Pierre Souvtchinsky
Ekaterina for Catherine Stravinsky

I use names in multiple languages in footnotes and bibliography in accordance with how sources are listed in North American library catalogues. I have also used French or English versions of Russian names if that is how the bearer of the name was better known. This is the case, for example, with Nathalie Krassovska and Nicolas Nabakov.

All translations from the French, German, Spanish, and Italian are my own unless otherwise indicated. Due to the book’s length I have not included quotes in the original languages or a complete bibliography of all sources used, but both are available in the original manuscript.

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■ Modernist Mysteries: *Perséphone*

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Introduction

Melancholic Modernism

Ida Rubinstein ran her long fingers absently over the initials engraved on her silver cup before raising it tentatively to her lips for a sip of pink champagne. Her eyes focused intently on the piano, where Igor Stravinsky and his twenty-three-year-old son Svetik (Soulima) sat playing a transcription of two of the three tableaux from the work she had commissioned for the 1934 ballet season: *Perséphone*. On this evening of 20 October 1933, they were playing through completed passages from the work in progress before a private audience gathered at Rubinstein's apartment.¹ The "Cyclopean power" unleashed by the rhythm of the two performing bodies mesmerized her.² Leaning into and away from each other in perfect synchronism as they followed the interlocking piano parts, the two men looked peculiarly alike yet different, separated only by age and by the "singular strength" of Igor's singing voice.³ Igor's good friend Pyotr Suvchinsky bent toward them, disrupting the flow of their duet with a "loud and abrasive" performance of the vocal line intended for the narrator, Eumolpus.⁴ The music was stern, unremitting, and potent.

From their cozy position in front of the fireplace, France's literary lights took in this spectacle of Russian passion with reserved caution. Paul Valéry smiled politely, Paul Claudel "glared," and André Gide turned his

1. Soulima recalled that Ida Rubinstein served pink champagne in silver cups during her social gatherings at this time. See the transcript of an interview with Soulima Stravinsky by Thor E. Wood, recorded 3 and 5 February 1977 and 14 January 1978, MGZMT 5-563, Dance Collection, New York Public Library (hereafter DC-NYPL). Information about which part of the score was ready in October 1933 is given in Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978; hereafter SPD), 315–16.

2. In a journal entry for 20 May 1934, Julien Green thus described the rhythms of a later performance of *Perséphone* that he attended at the home of the Princesse de Polignac on 18 May 1934. See Green, *Journal: 1928–1958* (Paris: Plon, 1961), 181–82.

3. Jacques Copeau, entry for 21 October 1933, *Journal: Deuxième partie, 1916–1948*, ed. Claude Sicard (Paris: Seghers, 1991), 356–57.

4. Stravinsky, quoted in Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, *Dialogues and a Diary* [1961] (London: Faber and Faber, 1982; hereafter *D&D*), 36; reprinted in Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, *Memories and Commentaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002; hereafter *M&C*), 177. Stravinsky confused the performance at Rubinstein's apartment in October 1933 with Nadia Boulanger's postpremiere performance at the Princesse de Polignac's home on 18 May 1934. On this confusion see Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring, Russia and France 1882–1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 535; 663n76.

head in disgust.⁵ “It’s curious, it’s very curious,” Gide remarked to nobody in particular.⁶ This was not how he had imagined the musical setting for his melodrama. Standing slightly to their left, Jacques Copeau, the designated director of the project, gave them an annoyed look. “Here’s something we can believe in and wholeheartedly embrace,” he whispered, before turning his attention back to the piano and nodding vigorously at Stravinsky in ecstatic support.⁷ From the other side of the room, Rubinstein observed the group’s dynamics with self-contented amusement.

Rubinstein had reason to want the evening to go well. By the time of this social gathering she had gone to great lengths to coax her illustrious partners into collaborating on the stage work with which she hoped to dazzle the Parisian public in the coming season.⁸ The odyssey had begun almost ten months to a day earlier, on 19 January 1933, when Gide showed her a “little ballet” on the subject of Proserpina (the Roman name for Persephone), which he had written for a proposed collaboration with Florent Schmitt in 1909.⁹ Gide had all but forgotten about this “symphonic ballet” until asked to prepare it for imminent publication in the fourth volume of his complete works in 1933.¹⁰ He may have been attracted by

5. Stravinsky, quoted in *D&D*, 36; reprinted in *M&C*, 177. In his diary Copeau mentions the presence of Valéry and Arthur Honegger (see note 3 above).

6. Gide, quoted by Stravinsky, in *M&C*, 176. Gide frequently used this phrase to express his discomfort with art he did not immediately like.

7. Copeau, entry for 21 October 1933, in *Journal: Deuxième partie, 1916–1948*, 357.

8. In the same season Rubinstein also intended to present Elisabeth de Gramont’s and Jacques Ibert’s *Diane de Poitiers*, Paul Valéry’s and Arthur Honegger’s *Sémiramis*, revivals of her old Ravel favorites *La Valse* and *Bolero* as well as a new ballet by Ravel titled *Morgiane*, and Florent Schmitt’s *Oriane, le sans égal*. Neither Ravel’s nor Schmitt’s new works were completed in time for Rubinstein’s season, in Ravel’s case because he was already suffering from the illness that would lead to his death in 1937. Rubinstein, one of his closest friends, used her private jet to consult specialists throughout Europe in the vain hope of finding a cure, and in 1935 arranged for Ravel to travel through Spain and Morocco to lift his spirits and improve his condition. See Marguerite Long, “Images d’Ida Rubinstein: Idole, amazone, princesse, mécène . . .,” *Le Figaro littéraire*, 21 January 1961.

9. Maria van Rysselberghe, entry for 19 January 1933 in *Les Cahiers de la Petite Dame: Notes pour l’histoire authentique d’André Gide 1929–37*, Cahiers André Gide 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1974; hereafter CPD), vol. 2, 283. On the history and dating of *Proserpine*/*Perséphone*, see Patrick Pollard, introduction to André Gide, *Proserpine (drame): Perséphone (mélodrame)*, critical edition by Patrick Pollard (Lyon: Centre d’études gidiennes, Université Lyon II, 1977; hereafter *P&P*), 3–54; and Jean Claude, “Proserpine 1909,” *Bulletin des amis d’André Gide* (hereafter BAAG) 10, no. 54 (April 1982): 251–68.

10. Gide frequently changed *Perséphone*’s genre designation over the course of its history. In his first letter to Stravinsky, dated 20 January 1933, he calls it a *ballet symphonique*, first writing *drame symphonique* but then crossing out the word *drame* (drama) and replacing it with *ballet*. See microfilm 102.1, p. 1021, and copy in microfilm 95.1, pp. 642–44, Paul Sacher Stiftung (hereafter PSS). Gide’s letter is quoted in Jean Claude, “Autour de *Perséphone*,” BAAG 15, no. 73 (January 1987): 25, and in English translation in Stravinsky: *Selected Correspondence*, ed. Robert Craft (New York: Knopf, 1985; hereafter SSC), vol. 3, 186; Craft’s translation of Gide’s letter is also included in the original edition of Igor Stravinsky’s and Robert Craft’s *Memories and Commentaries* [1960] (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 146. Craft did not, however, include the correspondence between Gide and Stravinsky on the subject of *Perséphone* in *D&D* or *M&C*.

the generosity of Rubinstein's offer.¹¹ Gide's close confidant Maria van Rysselberghe reported in her diary that Rubinstein immediately suggested staging Gide's *Proserpine* as a ballet with music by her much admired former collaborator Stravinsky and sets by José Maria Sert.¹² When Stravinsky's business manager, Gavriil Paichadze, wrote Stravinsky on 24 January he included a letter from Gide that extended Rubinstein's invitation to the composer to participate in the project.¹³ The two men met in what Gide called "perfect agreement" in Wiesbaden ten days later to discuss the project in person. Gide sent Stravinsky his libretto shortly after.¹⁴ By April Stravinsky had signed his contract with Rubinstein and received his first 25,000 francs in payment.¹⁵ He met at Rubinstein's apartment with Madame Debussy, Gide, and Nadia Boulanger on 7 April and then began to compose in May.¹⁶ Both Gide and Stravinsky felt confident at first about collaborating with Rubinstein, notwithstanding their reservations about her taste and talent, and despite their both having experienced failed collaborations with her in the past. But the pay was good, and Persephone intrigued them.

Once Stravinsky's participation had been secured, Rubinstein set about hiring the best theater director in France to organize the entirety of her

11. It was rumored that Gide received 200,000 francs from Rubinstein to write *Perséphone*; see "Les Danseuses de l'Acropole," *La Termine de France*, 6 July 1934. Another anonymous reporter remarked sarcastically that Rubinstein had paid Gide 200,000 francs, Fokine 40,000 francs, and Copeau 30,000 francs and that it was a shame her season didn't last all year. (See "Les Beaux Cachets," *Ecoute*, 12 May 1934.) One franc in 1930 was the equivalent of 0.63 euros in 2012 (with an inflation rate of 41385.9%). This would put Gide's remuneration at approximately 126,449 euros.

12. Maria van Rysselberghe, entry for 19 January 1933, *CPD*, vol. 2, 283.

13. Gavriil Paichadze wrote Stravinsky that, contrary to what they had assumed, Gide rather than Paul Valéry would be writing the libretto for the new ballet for Rubinstein. Paichadze felt he could get Stravinsky "better conditions" than originally planned and told Stravinsky, "It'll be entirely up to you to infect Gide with the corresponding enthusiasm. The more of this enthusiasm he has, the more it will be conveyed to Ida and the easier it will be to speak to her about conditions." At this point the premiere was planned for November 1933. Paichadze included in his letter Gide's letter from 20 January, mentioned in note 10. See Paichadze to Stravinsky, 24 January 1933, in Victor Varunts, ed., *I. F. Stravinsky: Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materialy k biografii* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2003; hereafter *SPRK*), vol. 3, 502.

14. Gide, entry for 8 February 1933, in André Gide, *Journal II 1926–1950*, ed. Martine Sagaert (Paris: Gallimard/La Pléiade, 1997; hereafter *J-II*), 400.

15. See Paichadze to Stravinsky, 26 April 1933, in *SPRK*, vol. 3, 512, and *SPD*, 315–16. Robert Craft noted that Stravinsky signed the contract on 22 April and received his first installment of 25,000 francs two days later, for a total of 75,000 francs (approximately 47,418 euros in 2012). It is not entirely clear how many installments Stravinsky received in total, but I believe there were three. By 29 June he had received his second installment and by 4 July his third; see *SSC*, vol. 3, 190. In 1959, Stravinsky remembered having earned "\$7500" for *Perséphone*. See Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, *Expositions and Developments* [1959] (London: Faber and Faber, 1962; hereafter *E&D*), 75.

16. Jacques Depaulis describes this meeting in *Ida Rubinstein: Une inconnue jadis célèbre* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), 403.

1934 ballet season. Gide recommended his old friend and longtime collaborator from *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, the former director of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, Jacques Copeau.¹⁷ By May, Rubinstein was tentatively negotiating with Copeau to perform the role of the emperor in a projected revival of Gabriele D'Annunzio and Claude Debussy's *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien* and to direct her 1934 season.¹⁸ She originally planned to hire the former Ballets russes stage designer José Maria Sert to assist him, and Toscanini to conduct.¹⁹ But Copeau recommended to her André Barsacq—a twenty-four-year-old stage designer of French-Russian ancestry who was related to Léon Bakst through marriage (and thus had a social connection to Rubinstein) and whose family had emigrated from the Crimea to France in 1919. Barsacq had made a name for himself in the late 1920s through the stage designs he created for the Théâtre de l'Atelier, which was managed and directed by Copeau's famous student Charles Dullin.²⁰ Copeau and Barsacq had also collaborated successfully on a major production in Florence in 1933; Copeau was hoping to build on this success when he urged Rubinstein to hire Barsacq for *Perséphone*. On 5 August Rubinstein made Copeau a formal offer, in which she stipulated that he would work solely for her for an uninterrupted period of six months, from 15 October 1933 to 15 April 1934, with an attractive salary of 30,000 francs per month, or 180,000 francs in total (she subsequently added a seventh month's payment upon realizing that her 1934 season would have to be delayed). Copeau agreed to his contract in a letter to Rubinstein's secretary, Pauline Regnié, dated 21 September 1933. He noted that he was still director of drama studies at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and that he would have to be away occasionally. He also demanded, as an "essential condition" of his contract, that his former collaborator Barsacq be hired as stage designer at a flat salary of 10,000 francs, with an additional 3,000 francs per month for five months' work as Copeau's "assistant" starting on 1 December 1933. Pauline Regnié agreed to these terms in Rubinstein's name in a letter to Copeau dated 23 September

17. Copeau mentions this to Gide in a letter dated 28 February 1933, *Correspondance André Gide Jacques Copeau*, ed. Jean Claude, Cahiers André Gide 13 (Paris: Gallimard, 1988; hereafter CGC), vol. 2, 401.

18. Rubinstein thought of hiring Copeau for this role because she had admired his performance as the *récitant* in Arthur Honegger's *Le Roi David* on 4 February 1933. See Jean Claude, "Perséphone, ou l'auteur trahi?," in Pascal Lécroart, ed., *Ida Rubinstein: Une utopie de la synthèse des arts à l'épreuve de la scène* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2008), 220.

19. Copeau to Gide, 3 May 1933, CGC, vol. 2, 413.

20. Jean-Louis Barsacq, *Place Dancourt: La Vie, l'oeuvre et l'Atelier d'André Barsacq* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 16–66.

1933. Copeau moved from Pernand to rue Moncey in Paris that fall and rented an office at the Cité Chaptal from 16 December 1933 to 1 January 1935 to facilitate his work with Rubinstein's company.²¹

Rubinstein must have smiled with satisfaction when she watched her newly hired, hard-won collaborators Gide, Stravinsky, and Copeau file into her luxurious home at 7 Place des États-Unis in the sixteenth *arrondissement* for the first run-through of *Perséphone* on that October evening in 1933. Her pleasure may have been clouded only by frustration over the one crucial position still to be filled in her production team: *Perséphone* lacked a choreographer. Although she herself was a dancer, she did not choreograph her own works and had in the past spent considerable money and effort hiring the best people in the business to do that for her. For *Perséphone*, she had hoped to hire Michel Fokine, with whom she had collaborated for decades; he had recently come out of semiretirement in the United States, leaving his "bourgeois life of fireplaces and cozy slippers" to choreograph the productions she planned for her 1934 season.²² But Stravinsky refused to collaborate with Fokine. "I have learned of your desire to entrust Fokine," Stravinsky telegraphed Rubinstein in September. "To collaborate with [Fokine] would be excessively painful to me. I see no other choreographer for my music for *Perséphone* except Massine or Balanchine."²³

It is difficult to determine why Rubinstein ultimately chose as her choreographer Kurt Jooss, a student of Rudolf Laban and an exponent of German expressive dance, or *Ausdruckstanz*, whose approach to movement was utterly foreign to the French and Russian ballet tradition in which she had been trained. She may have been responding to the general buzz around Jooss, who in July 1932 had taken Paris by storm with his pacifist work *Der grüne Tisch* (*The Green Table*), unexpectedly winning first prize in the Grand Concours International de Chorégraphie, the first international choreography competition organized by the former manager of the defunct Ballets suédois, Rolf de Maré, in connection with his

21. Copeau to Gide, 24 July and 27 August 1933, CGC, vol. 2, 414, 419–21; and Claude, "Autour de *Perséphone*," 36–37. Copeau's original contract and Pauline Regnié's letter to Copeau of 23 September 1933 are kept in folder 716, subfolder 3, p. 1 and pp. 17–19, respectively, Fonds Jacques Copeau, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter FJC-BNF).

22. Michel Fokine, quoted in Marie A. Levinson, "Un entretien avec Michel Fokine: Avant les spectacles de Mme Rubinstein," *Je suis partout*, 7 April 1934.

23. Stravinsky to Rubinstein, 1 September 1933; microfilm 102.1, p. 1032, PSS. Craft offers a slightly different translation in SSC, vol. 3, 480n4.

Archives internationales de la danse.²⁴ Jooss's success threw French critics for a loop, upsetting their deeply rooted, persistent suspicions about the artistic merits of German dance. In January 1933 Jooss's company gave a controversial repeat performance of *Der grüne Tisch* and other works at the Casino de Paris, a music hall venue.²⁵ A few months later, in April and May 1933, Rubinstein's impresario, Arnold Meckel, booked Jooss's company for several performances at the more prestigious Salle Pleyel, which all the French artistic elite, including Rubinstein, attended.²⁶ Those performances elicited a vivid and engaged response from a wide variety of French critics. A second series of performances followed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in January 1934, reviewed by none other than Rubinstein's new stage director, Jacques Copeau, one of Jooss's staunchest supporters in France.²⁷ Copeau had emphatically praised Jooss's *Der grüne Tisch* in the French press, easing the German dancer's entrance into French theatrical circles with his prestigious endorsement.

Rubinstein invited Jooss to join her production team some time after her party in October. He came for no more than a few weeks in February 1934 to rehearse with Rubinstein's "company"—a heterogeneous group of English, French, American, and Russian ballet dancers whom she had hired on temporary contracts for the 1934 season alone.²⁸ Rubinstein attended these rehearsals only occasionally.²⁹ During the many weeks of the preparation when Jooss was not in town, Rubinstein arranged for the dancers to rehearse with Fokine and to take daily lessons from renowned

24. See Clare Lidbury, "Le Grand Concours de Chorégraphie, 1932," in *Kurt Jooss: 60 Years of The Green Table, Proceedings of the Conference Held at the University of Birmingham 17–19 October 1992*, ed. Andy Adamson and Clare Lidbury (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 1994), 1–14; and Suzanne K. Walther, "The Dance of Death: Description and Analysis of *The Green Table*," *Choreography and Dance* 3, no. 2 (1993): 57–59.

25. See Legrand-Chabrier, "Ballets quasi-music-hall," *Carnet de la semaine*, 7 May 1933. An extensive collection of reviews of this and all other French performances by Jooss's company in the early 1930s is included in "Coupures de presse Kurt Jooss," A.I.D. Fol. XIV, Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BMdO).

26. Rubinstein's presence at one of these performances is noted in an untitled notice with no author, *La Griffé cinématographique*, 31 May 1933.

27. Copeau, "Le Théâtre: Les Ballets Jooss aux Champs-Élysées," *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 6 January 1934; reprinted as "Les Ballets Jooss aux Champs-Élysées," *Le Figaro*, 8 January 1934.

28. In rehearsals Jooss was accompanied by his assistant, Sigurd Leeder, and his pianist, Fritz Cohen. See Copeau to Gide, 19 February 1934, *CGC*, vol. 2, 433–35, and the photograph of Rubinstein's 1933 company in Pierre Laclau, "Perséphone-Diane-Sémiramis," *Je suis partout*, 19 May 1934; reprinted in Margaret Severn, "Dancing with Bronislava Nijinska and Ida Rubinstein," *Dance Chronicle* 11 no. 3 (1988): 360.

29. See Keith Lester, "Rubinstein Revisited," *Dance Research* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1983): 3–31; and Severn, "Dancing with Bronislava Nijinska and Ida Rubinstein," 333–64.

Russian ballet dancer and teacher Olga Preobrazhenskaya.³⁰ Jooss's choreography of *Perséphone*, danced by a company steeped in Russian balletic tradition and scheduled to premiere alongside Fokine's choreographies for Ibert's *Diane de Poitiers* and Ravel's *La Valse*, could not but be expected to stick out like a modernist German sore thumb.

From the start it was clear that the artists who gathered under Rubinstein's financial umbrella to create *Perséphone* at the Paris Opéra in April 1934 were divided from one another in age, nationality, personal experience, and history. Within months of their initial encounters they began feuding, disagreeing on everything from who should be involved in the project to its staging, music, and setting of texts. Musicologists have focused on the very public dispute between Gide and Stravinsky over the composer's controversial text settings, which broke with the standard rules of French versification. But there were other, more serious disagreements as well. Each of the collaborators had different notions about the central themes of faith, love, and hope embodied in the classical myth, and thus each envisioned *Perséphone* in ways that conflicted with everyone else's ideas. Soon all were trapped in a quagmire of acrimony.

The preparations were also haunted by a mood of melancholic regret. It was difficult for some of the collaborators not to succumb to the general despondency gripping the Parisian theater scene since the collapse of the French stock market. Economic hardship was visible everywhere in Paris, affecting the lives even of aristocrats as protected as Ida Rubinstein. Hitler's election to power in Germany in March 1933 had further destabilized the situation, leaving many frightened, cautious, and nostalgic for a past that looked safer in retrospect. There was a strong feeling in the air that war was imminent and that the postwar pleasures of the Roaring Twenties were a thing of the past. Political and social instability was also exacerbated by the general strikes of February 1934, which occurred squarely in the middle of *Perséphone* preparations. For six days, right-wing factions, including the Action française, Camelots du roi, and Jeunesses patriotes, rioted throughout Paris in opposition to the leftist coalition then in power, their actions seriously threatening the Third Republic and laying the groundwork for the formation of the Front populaire in 1936. These events further polarized the French Left and Right and created a pervasive feeling of fear that affected all aspects of life, including the stage production of *Perséphone*. One consequence was that most of the collaborators increasingly felt the

30. Severn, "Dancing with Bronislava Nijinska and Ida Rubinstein," 356.

desire to escape into the past, with its familiar social acceptance of aristocratic privilege and leisure. This created an extenuated sense of sentimental retrospection around every aspect of the *Perséphone* project.

All of *Perséphone*'s collaborators were, moreover, anxiously unsettled during the fifteen months of production, moving variously between Paris, the locus of the project's realization, and tourist destinations or temporary homes. Political instability in Russia and Europe had earlier condemned three of them—Rubinstein, Stravinsky, and Jooss—to the existence of émigrés. Ida Rubinstein habitually traveled widely between brief working stays in her luxurious apartment at the Place des États-Unis. Gide, who hated the trip to the capital, either escaped to his aristocratic home and garden in the French province (Cuverville) or traveled abroad. Copeau moved to Paris only temporarily at Rubinstein's behest. Stravinsky, who had left Russia in 1910, commuted between Paris and Voreppe in the South of France and traveled regularly to fulfill his commitments as a performer and conductor. Jooss restlessly searched for a safe and permanent new home for his company outside Germany.

Of all Rubinstein's collaborators, Kurt Jooss's life was by far the most unsettled. He had arrived in Paris to begin rehearsals on *Perséphone* just weeks after fleeing Nazi Germany, where he was in danger for his political affiliations and for having refused to fire his Jewish pianist, Fritz Cohen. He and his company performed extensively in the United States and Europe in the early months of 1934 and were in the process of settling in Darlington Hall, England, that spring, at the very time of *Perséphone*'s premiere.³¹ Jooss had accepted the engagement to choreograph for Rubinstein on his own, without his own dance company. Although he appears to have engaged fully in the artistic project of devising choreography for Rubinstein's company, he kept his artistic and physical distance from her and the other collaborators during the production period. Of all Rubinstein's collaborators, Jooss left the fewest historical traces of his involvement with the project. Afterward he neither perpetuated nor revived its choreography, and he rarely mentioned it in any of his extensive interviews.³²

31. Critics started to take note of Jooss's forced emigration from Nazi Germany during his company's tour in Switzerland in March 1934. See, for example, Gaston Bridel, untitled notice, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 19 March 1934; "Jooss-Ballett," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 21 March 1934; and Suzanne K. Walter, "Biography of Kurt Jooss," in *The Green Table: A Dance of Death in Eight Scenes*, ed. Ann Hutchinson Guest (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10–11.

32. I did not find any archival materials or primary sources related to *Perséphone* in the Kurt Jooss archive, Deutsches Tanzarchiv, Cologne, Germany. *Perséphone* is not listed in A. V. Coton's important first critical study of Jooss, *The New Ballet: Kurt Jooss and His Work* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1946).

Like many German émigrés, Kurt Jooss was received in France by a sourly anti-German French public, who associated him with Nazism rather than recognizing him as one of its victims. Jooss remembered how frightened he was to perform at the Grand Concours International de Chorégraphie in 1932 because of what he knew would be strong anti-German sentiment in the hall.³³ His reception at the Casino de Paris six months later proved even more hostile, shocking his still sympathetic German reviewers at home. The critic Kurt Ihlefeld concluded that the Casino was a “stronghold of hatred towards Germany” and asked the French to tone it down, given that there were still so many German tourists in France and that such antics would ruin their tourist industry. “The whole gallery whistled, screamed, and rioted. Many people in the orchestral seats participated in the storm of protest as well. It’s possible that a few ‘Camelots du Roi’ of the nationalistic Action française had been ordered into the theater to disturb the peace.”³⁴ Rubinstein may have shared this French prejudice. She allowed her secretary, Pauline Regnié, to call Jooss “the one flower from the German dung heap” in front of her dancers.³⁵ And she tolerated that the dancers themselves made fun of him constantly, asking him to repeat movements incessantly as if they had not understood them and referring to his choreography as “osteopathic dancing.”³⁶

Jooss suffered most from the ruthless animosity and insensitivity of the highly influential André Levinson, the Russian doyen of French dance criticism. Drawing on stereotypes that had circulated in France for decades, Levinson spoke of Jooss’s German dancers’ innate ineptitude for dance and heavy, awkward, ugly bodies.³⁷ In a brutal and scathing critique in *Les Visages de la danse*, Levinson admonished Jooss’s company for their gymnastic training, pretense at being intellectuals, simplicity of movement, and failure to explore the rich reservoir of popular dance. “There was incontestable evidence,” Levinson concluded, “of the disconcerting

33. Interview with Kurt Jooss, MGZMT 3-565, transcript of interview by Tobi Tobias recorded 26 September 1976, DC-NYPL.

34. Dr. Kurt Ihlefeld, “Kurt Jooss im ‘Casino de Paris,’” *Hamburger Anzeiger*, 26 October 1932. These and other reviews were written before Jooss became a persona non grata in Germany.

35. Keith Lester, quoted in Michael de Cossart, *Ida Rubinstein (1885–1960): A Theatrical Life* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1987), 170.

36. Severn, “Dancing with Bronislava Nijinska and Ida Rubinstein,” 359, 362.

37. André Levinson, “Les Ballets Jooss: *La Grande Ville*, *Un bal dans le vieux Vienne*,” *Comœdia*, 29 April 1933. See also Dominique Sordet, “Les Ballets Jooss au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées,” *Action française*, 6 January 1934.

inferiority of these Westerners descended into barbarism.”³⁸ Like many other critics, he thought the Germans were mechanistic and performed in a collective spirit that lacked individuality.³⁹ Beryl de Zoete compared such discipline and assembly line precision to the Krupp weapons factories, remarking on the fact that Jooss and Krupp came from the same town, Essen.⁴⁰ The Belgian critics went even further, treating any German performance as a potential military threat.⁴¹ German expressionism was too “morbid” and “pathological,” some critics thought, a sign of “retarded avant-garde-ness.”⁴² For months on end Jooss was left to defend himself against these accusations, but he seems to have acquitted himself throughout with particular patience and grace.⁴³

Rubinstein faced similar expressions of xenophobia, though mitigated by having lived in France since 1909 and never having to worry about earning a living because she was independently wealthy. She thought of herself as French “by choice” and went to great lengths to express her artistic allegiance to her new country whenever she could. In her 1934 season she planned to play the role of a French heroine in the nationalist ballet *Diane de Poitiers*, for which she had commissioned music on historical French sources by Jacques Ibert. Thanks to supporters like Jacques Rouché (of the Paris Opéra) and Gabriel Astruc, she received the Chevalier de la légion d’honneur for her contributions to French culture that summer.⁴⁴ In February 1935 she became a French citizen.

Yet French allegiance did not bring acceptance. Journalists questioned Rubinstein’s nationality and the legitimacy of her wealth, which they associated with the money, bad taste, and errant modern ways of *nouveau riche* Russian and American émigrés. Rubinstein didn’t attract the usual opera public, one reviewer commented, but rather

38. André Levinson, *Les Visages de la danse* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1933), 302.

39. See Fernand Divoire, “Les Ballets de Kurt Jooss,” *A Paris*, 5 May 1933; Lucienne Florentin, “A la Comédie: Les Ballets Jooss,” *La Suisse* (Geneva), 5 May 1933; and Robert Brussel, “Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: Les Ballets Jooss,” *Le Figaro*, 3 January 1934.

40. Beryl de Zoete, “The Jooss Dance School at Essen,” *Monthly Musical Record*, October 1933, n.p.

41. Unsigned notice, *Nation Belge*, 25 January 1933.

42. “Le Fils prodigue,” *Le Figaro*, 16 January 1934.

43. Jooss stressed his dancers’ individualities and spoke of personality as a “sacred thing” in Chamine (Alexandre Vialatte), “Les Ballets d’Essen: II. La Vie privée des danseurs,” *Beaux-arts*, 27 January 1933. He emphasized the apolitical nature of his company in Marc Augis, “Une école moderne de danse: Chez Kurt Jooss à Essen,” *La Meuse* (Liège), 23 August 1933. And Jooss argued “we don’t have political ideas” in Francis Silvart, “La Danse et les Ballets Jooss,” *La Wallonie* (Liège), 25 January 1933.

44. Depaulis, *Ida Rubinstein*, 418.

Russian taxi drivers and cleaning ladies who took out their old jewels and old furs, their badges and uniforms from before the “affair,” and went looking there for what the Russian Ida Rubinstein gave them: the pleasure of luxury, the taste for dance, bright lights and rhymed music, an entire forgotten world of happiness, power, and music. Their words (I was standing very close to them) translated their spiritual state: “Her crown was real.” “Her shirt was woven silk, sown in one piece.” “She spends several million on each show.”⁴⁵

These “anonymous pearl- and lamé-laden” Russians had “gained a bit of weight” since the “exodus,” creating a notable contrast to the “thin Americans doing footing in the lobby.” Several reviewers commented on how dangerously international this public was, a “tower of Babel” that felt like a novel by Paul Morand or tourist attraction.⁴⁶

Although Stravinsky worked hard to distinguish himself from this group, he could not entirely shake the negative aura of being a Russian émigré. He had won the favor of many important French critics by shifting to an ethnically neutral neoclassical compositional style, but uncertainties about him remained. During the production of *Perséphone* his émigré anxiousness was compounded by the turmoil in his life. In October 1933 Stravinsky moved from Voreppe in southeastern France to the apartment that Rubinstein had arranged for him at 21, rue Viète in the seventeenth *arrondissement* in Paris.⁴⁷ In June 1934 he received French citizenship. In an interview that month he commented that he had left Russia at the age of twenty-seven years, before the war, that he had just turned fifty-two, and that he wondered why he had waited so long to become a French citizen when he had clearly long since found in France his “intellectual climate.”⁴⁸ The date of this interview implies that during the production of *Perséphone* Stravinsky and his family were struggling to deal emotionally

45. Chamine (Alexandre Vialatte), “La Première des ballets d’Ida Rubinstein à l’Opéra,” *L’Intransigeant*, 2 May 1934.

46. Notice in *La Vie est belle*, 11 May 1934. See also Louis Léon-Martin, “Ida Rubinstein devant tout Paris,” *Paris-Midi*, 1 May 1934.

47. In July 1934 Stravinsky moved to the upscale 125, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in the eighth *arrondissement*. See Stravinsky to Paichadze, 7 July 1933, in *SPD*, 316; and Paichadze to Stravinsky, 25 July 1933, in *SPRK*, vol. 3, 521. See also Pierre-Olivier Walzer, introduction to Charles-Albert Cingria, *Correspondance avec Igor Strawinsky*, ed. Pierre-Olivier Walzer (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 2001), 38; Claude, “Autour de *Perséphone*,” 38; Théodore and Denise Stravinsky, *Au cœur du foyer: Catherine et Igor Strawinsky, 1906–1940* (Bourg-la-Reine: Zurfluh, 1998), 136; and Walsh, *Stravinsky, A Creative Spring*, 528.

48. See Ruth Léon, “Le Célèbre Compositeur Igor Strawinsky est désormais citoyen français,” *Le Journal*, 4 June 1934; and “Le Grand Musicien Igor Strawinsky nous dit pourquoi il s’est fait naturaliser français,” *Excelsior*, 16 June 1934.

with their emigration to France. His children had also just experienced the shock of finding out about their father's long-standing affair with Vera Arturovna de Bosset Sudeikina, of whom his wife, Ekaterina, had long known and who was about to become a more vivid presence in all of their lives. Despite this personal turmoil, Stravinsky continued to move in French society with relative ease.

For some of the collaborators the melancholy they felt about *Perséphone* was also linked to their ambivalent and anxious feelings about aging. Only Stravinsky, at fifty-two, appeared calm about middle age. Rubinstein was around forty-five and knew that *Perséphone* would have to be her "swan song."⁴⁹ In the interviews she gave that year she spoke nostalgically about the beauty and successes of her youth and the spectacular days of the prewar Ballets russes. At fifty-nine, Jacques Copeau shared her feeling of remorse over the end of his theatrical career. He yearned to revive the achievements of his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and the outdoor festivals that had celebrated French culture at the turn of the century. Yet he, too, resented having sacrificed so much to the theater, and by July 1933 he was so depressed that he wanted to break off all contact with the world.⁵⁰ The oldest member of the production team, André Gide, at sixty-four, also suffered from melancholia. The sight of a destitute old man on a Parisian street corner in the spring of 1933 plunged him into a state of despair over the "intolerable" state of the world. "How will I find the peace of spirit I need for my work? I think I've lost it for always," he wrote in his diary.⁵¹

The greatest nostalgia to grip the Parisian stage occurred in the realm of modern dance and ballet. The unexpected deaths of Jean Börlin, Sergei Diaghilev, and Anna Pavlova in the late 1920s and the subsequent demise of the Ballets suédoises and Ballets russes had created a vacuum from which the dance world found it difficult to recover. The Parisian public mourned the loss of these companies for years, idealizing their achievements and magnifying their memory by attributing to them qualities they may never have possessed. Rehearsals for *Perséphone* in February 1933 coincided with a memorial exhibit for the much loved and now deceased mythical spirit of Terpsichore, Anna Pavlova, organized by the Archives internationales de la danse and accompanied by three concerts at the

49. It is uncertain when Rubinstein was born. Jacques Depaulis speculates that her birth date was 5 October 1888; see Depaulis, *Ida Rubinstein*, 42. For Gide's comment on Rubinstein calling *Perséphone* her "swan song" (*chant du cygne*), see Maria van Rysselberghe, entry for 19 January 1933, *CPD*, vol. 2, 283.

50. Copeau to Gide, 16 July 1933, in *CGC*, vol. 2, 418.

51. Gide, entry for 14 April 1933, in *J-II*, 409.

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Everybody remembered Vaslav Nijinsky as well, whose mental illness still made headlines and whose tortured, entrapped body occasionally appeared on the front pages of the daily newspapers.⁵² As the living movements of these dancing geniuses became a thing of the past, their place in collective memory became ever more mythical and fantastic. Nothing in the present seemed to offer comparable promise of such transcendent kinesthetic bliss.

Turning away from that bitterly realistic present, critics scrutinized new productions for any potential features that might help them to escape into the recent modernist past. "Indeed we had the feeling we were searching for a lost paradise," an unidentified critic wrote. "The current state of affairs," he went on, demonstrates "our mental disarray, the impatient passion with which we pursue an ideal of dance that escapes us and our regret over and nostalgia for the vain dream of a few beautiful nights! In the concert hall, theater, and music hall, everybody tries to recapture that almost legendary treasure: the successors of the Ballets Russes."⁵³ Diaghilev's ghosts certainly haunted the reception of Kurt Jooss.⁵⁴ "Ever since the Ballets Russes, nothing has appeared on the stage in the realm of dance that has brought as much novelty, quality and above all possibility," one anonymous reviewer wrote about Jooss's company.⁵⁵ "In the international history of modern theater, this troupe of incomparable virtuosi will be ready to capture victoriously the place left vacant by the demise of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes," the critic Emile Vuillermoz forecast. "I don't know of another company with such an ensemble of profoundly musical dancers, animated by such a communicative faith, and so miraculously disciplined."⁵⁶

Performances by Rubinstein's company mixed salt in the wounds of the grieving French balletomane. Rubinstein, once one of the greatest stars of the Ballets russes and known primarily for her youthful beauty, insisted on continuing to dance into middle age, her fading charisma a persistent reminder of a tradition irrevocably lost. Saddened critics repeatedly compared her older figure to that of the young girl whose spectacularly slen-

52. Nijinsky had attended Ida Rubinstein's productions in 1928 and made a "scene" that was discussed in the press; see de Cossart, *Ida Rubinstein*, 143.

53. Unidentified clipping "La Danse et la musique" [1934], included in "Coupures de presse Kurt Jooss," A.I.D. Fol. XIV, BMdO.

54. Jooss is compared to the Ballets russes in A.P., "Théâtre et musique: Les Ballets Jooss à la Comédie," *Journal de Genève*, 5 May 1933; Anita Esteve, "Les Ballets Jooss," *Germinal*, 6 May 1933; and Brussel, "Théâtre des Champs-Élysées."

55. "Des Ballets Jooss a 'Jeunesse,'" *Le Mois*, 1 June 1933.

56. Emile Vuillermoz, "Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: Les Ballets Jooss, 'Le Fils prodigue,'" *Excelsior*, 11 January 1934.

der, long limbs, translucent white skin, and outrageous blue wig had dazzled them in Diaghilev's *Cléopâtre* in 1909. It did not help that Rubinstein had commissioned Michel Fokine, the star of the early Ballets russes, to choreograph three of the four new productions in her 1934 season. Fokine ignored recent developments in dance, instead reviving all the shocking spectacle of his early ballets, especially in the crowd scenes in *Diane de Poitiers*, which reminded such critics as Maurice Brillant of the famous fair scene from *Petrushka*.⁵⁷ Rubinstein's old friend and former Ballets russes set designer Alexandre Benois exacerbated the outdated effect of Fokine's choreography of *Diane de Poitiers* with sumptuous fin de siècle stage designs and costumes. Older Parisians gazed nostalgically at the programs, whispering to each other, "Do you remember, in 1910 . . ."⁵⁸ But Rubinstein's "frivolous" desire to perpetuate the traditions of the Ballets russes also embarrassed the Parisian elite. "Why do these spectacles, like everything derived from Diaghilev's ballet, always seem so retrospective, no matter what their splendor?" Michel Georges-Michel asked.⁵⁹ André Rivollet described Picasso as being "red with emotion" as he leaned over to his friend Madame Sert and whispered the single word: "Remember."⁶⁰



I open this book with images of the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of those who created and experienced *Perséphone* as a means of highlighting the historical uniqueness of the 1934 production. Whereas musicologists have tended to consider *Perséphone*, and rightly so, as an aesthetic object or score created by one author (Stravinsky), or at the most two (Stravinsky and Gide), I focus on the history of *Perséphone* as a performance event resulting from a multitude of actions and conflicting intentions of a disparate team of collaborators. In presenting this microhistorical analysis of the premiere of the melodrama *Perséphone* at the Paris Opéra on 30 April 1934, I engage above all with the collaborative, transnational nature of this production, critically interpreting the contributions of the two Frenchmen, the writer André Gide and stage director Jacques Copeau, the two

57. Maurice Brillant, "Les Fêtes dansées et Mme Ida Rubinstein," *L'Aube*, 1 May 1934; and Gabriel Marcel, "Décombres," =1934=, 23 May 1934.

58. Léon-Martin, "Ida Rubinstein devant tout Paris."

59. Michel Georges-Michel, "Ballets," *Noir et Blanc*, 13 May 1934.

60. Picasso, quoted in André Rivollet, "Le Retour de l'Ida prodigue," =1934=, 9 May 1934.

Russians, composer Igor Stravinsky and dancer Ida Rubinstein, and the German choreographer Kurt Jooss. The aesthetic and intent each of them brought to the collaboration were often at complete variance, even fundamentally conflicting, with the aesthetic and intent of the others. In the course of investigating the aesthetic and political consequences of their diverging perspectives, and the fallout of their titanic clash on the theater stage, I found myself having to dismantle myths about neoclassicism as a musical style. My objectives are revealed in the book's title, a double entendre that refers both to the Eleusinian mysteries as a sacred tradition perpetuated through Christian reinvention in 1930s neoclassical music and to the "mysteries" or unresolved questions and untold secrets of modernism itself. The result of my engagement with this collaborative work is a revisionary account of modernist neoclassicism.

■ SCHOLARSHIP ON *PERSÉPHONE* AND NEOCLASSICISM

Perséphone has remained little more than a footnote in music and literary history. Since Patrick Pollard completed a thoroughly annotated edition of the libretto in 1977, Gide scholars have virtually ignored the work.⁶¹ The few musicologists interested in *Perséphone* have tended to dwell on the conflict between Gide and Stravinsky over the latter's errors in French pronunciation and versification. Robert Craft, Eric White, and others set this interpretative tradition in motion when they focused on the awkward and contrary text settings of *Perséphone* in their summaries of the piece, though this feature of Stravinsky's compositional approach is by no means unique to that work. In his classic monograph on the composer, White included the article Stravinsky wrote for *Excelsior* in 1934, in which he stated that he had deliberately set syllables instead of words as a means of evading the "discursive" aspect of Gide's text. This so-called manifesto served for decades as evidence of Stravinsky's linguistic priorities and anti-expressive aesthetic creed.⁶² Many scholars thereafter trusted that

61. *P&P*, 3–54; Claude, "Proserpine 1909," 251–68; Jean Claude, *André Gide et le théâtre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

62. "Ce que les 4 compositeurs des ballets de Mme Ida Rubinstein disent de leurs propres oeuvres," *Excelsior*, 29 April 1934; corrected in "M. Igor Stravinsky nous parle de 'Perséphone,'" *Excelsior*, 1 May 1934. The article from 1 May is included in French (with indications of variants in comparison to the article from 29 April) in Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 579–81.

Perséphone was all about syllables, and the article has been cited in various contexts ever since to prove Stravinsky's abstract attachment to language.

Musicologists have also tacitly assumed that *Perséphone* is neoclassical, but this thesis has rarely been tested. In 2002 Maureen Carr presented one of the first extended discussions of the work in English, in the context of a study of Stravinsky's compositions on Greek subjects (*Oedipus Rex*, *Orpheus*, and *Perséphone*). She did a tremendous service to Anglo-American musicology by introducing the literary, philosophical, and artistic sources for *Perséphone* and by discussing its unpublished sketches and typescripts (samples of which Craft had printed years earlier in facsimile in his edition of the Stravinsky correspondence). Carr aimed primarily to explain the continuity between Stravinsky's early and late compositional process.⁶³

The subject of neoclassicism has enjoyed an equally curious, if more robust scholarly tradition. Neoclassicism, which Boris de Schloezer famously associated with Stravinsky in 1923, became the catchword for distinguishing Stravinsky and Schoenberg in the new music marketing wars of the 1920s and for defining Stravinsky's "second" style. In 1949, Theodor Adorno solidified this way of thinking in the classic dialectic of *Die Philosophie der neuen Musik* by identifying Stravinsky as the "regressive" neoclassic in opposition to the "progressive" Schoenberg.⁶⁴ Adorno's arguments had remarkable staying power, scaring people away from the topic of neoclassicism for decades and distorting many strains of its original history. In the 1980s, just as musicology faced the shake-up now known as New Musicology, scholars began clamoring to define the term—as if they felt it might hold secrets to the fierce battle between "ancients and moderns," or "tradition and progress," once again plaguing their discipline. Scott Messing set the stage with an influential study of the word's etymology in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe.⁶⁵ In a

63. Maureen Carr, *Multiple Masks: Neoclassicism in Stravinsky's Works on Greek Subjects* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002). Craft reproduces in facsimile selections from Gide's draft typescripts for *Perséphone* with Stravinsky's notes and sketches in Robert Craft, ed., "Appendix B: *Perséphone*: The Evolution of the Libretto," in SSC, vol. 3, 475–507. Carr's and Gretchen Horlacher's insightful analyses represent almost the extent of the interest music theorists have brought to bear on *Perséphone*. See Horlacher, "Superimposed Strata in the Music of Igor Stravinsky," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1990; "The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky's Ostinati," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 171–87; and *Building Blocks: Repetition and Continuity in the Music of Stravinsky* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

64. Theodor W. Adorno, *Die Philosophie der neuen Musik* [1949], in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), vol. 12, 7–126; translated into English by Anne G. Mitchell and Welsey V. Blomster as *Philosophy of Modern Music* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

65. Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988).

flood of encyclopedia entries and extended studies, European and North American scholars thereupon struggled to define a term that many agreed remained unsatisfying as a means of defining a style or aesthetics and unreliable as a signifier of any kind.⁶⁶ Historical research reveals “a collection of usages [that] produced such a variety of meaning,” Messing wrote, “that the expression seems to possess no syntactical weight whatsoever.”⁶⁷ “So what was it,” Richard Taruskin echoed in a 1993 review, “hardboiled modernism or futile nostalgia? Can we define it, or can we only ‘know it when we see it’? . . . Should we call it a musical style at all? A concept? A practice?”⁶⁸ The term appeared impossible, and yet inevitable. “Despite many reports to its demise as a category in our professional discourse,” Martha Hyde concluded a few years later, “neoclassicism shows a persistent, if messy and equivocal life.”⁶⁹

Musicologists and theorists focused their discussions of neoclassicism in the 1990s on two pressing topics. The most controversial and difficult was that of how neoclassical composers related to the past, and whether such retrospectivism could be reconciled with the project of modernism. Joseph Straus contributed in an important way by setting the tone for this debate in *Remaking the Past*, in which he analyzed how composers reworked or used past musical techniques and styles, interpreting their psychology in terms of Harold Bloom’s then popular “anxiety of influence.”⁷⁰ Numerous theorists speculated with or against him on how such “imitation” could work within the aesthetic of modernism, their essays fraught with anxiety about neoclassicism’s tendency to stretch beyond the confines of the

66. Among the vast literature on this topic I would mention here *Canto d’amore: Classicism in Modern Art and Music 1914–1935*, ed. Gottfried Boehm, Ulrich Mosch, and Katharina Schmidt (Basel: Paul Sacher Foundation, 1996); Markus Bandur, “Neoklassizismus,” in *Terminologie der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie 1, ed. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1995), 289–94; Michel Fauré, *Du néoclassicisme musical dans la France du premier XXe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1997); Ruth Piquer Sanciemento, *Clasicismo moderno, neoclasicismo y retornos en el pensamiento musical español (1915–1939)* (Berlin: Editorial Doble J, 2010); and Gianfranco Vinay, *Stravinsky Neoclassico: L’Invenzione della memoria nel ‘900 musicale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1987).

67. Scott Messing, “Polemic as History: The Case of Neoclassicism,” *Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 481.

68. Richard Taruskin, “Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology,” *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 287.

69. Martha Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 202.

70. Joseph Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Kevin Korsyn, “Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence,” *Musical Analysis* 10, nos. 1–2 (1991): 3–72; and Richard Taruskin, “Revising Revision,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 114–38.

autonomous work.⁷¹ Many tacitly assumed that neoclassicism was a modernist style and consequently focused on its characteristics of montage, parody, imitation, and “estrangement.”⁷² A small group in Germany had even associated neoclassicism with Russian formalism, though this is an unlikely association unsupported by historical evidence.⁷³ Many of these studies, which in hindsight appear trapped in less than adequate analytical and stylistic frames, forced modernist classicism into a formalist straight-jacket that erased its broader cultural history.

A second pressing theme was that of how neoclassicism reflected nationalist ideology—a topic Jane Fulcher has most emphatically argued in her research on it as a Third Republic doctrine in France.⁷⁴ Fulcher followed on a decade-long practice of analyzing neoclassicism within the context of nationalist chauvinism in Europe in the early twentieth century. In 1993 Taruskin had shaken musicologists out of their complacency by arguing that neoclassicism hid an ideology far more dangerous than mere nationalism: musical autonomy and form were intrinsically ideologically tainted, he had ominously declared. Taruskin called neoclassicism the “N-word,” implying a depth of injury behind the mask, for he recognized its function as a flashpoint for phobic anxieties about modernism.⁷⁵ His work became a singular source of inspiration for me as I researched this book. Yet his words also virtually ended the North American debate on neoclassicism, which for the past decade has remained shrouded in silence.

71. J. Peter Burkholder, “Musical Time and Continuity as a Reflection of the Historical Situation of Modern Composer,” *Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 411–29; and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, “Stravinsky’s Contrasts: Contradiction and Discontinuity in His Neoclassic Music,” *Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 448–80. Pieter van den Toorn disagreed with some of these approaches in “What Price Analysis?,” *Journal of Music Theory* 33 (1989): 165–89.

72. Richard Taruskin, “Pathos Is Banned: Stravinsky and Neoclassicism,” in *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vol. 4, 447–95.

73. See Rudolf Stephan, “Zur Deutung von Strawinskys Neoklassizismus,” *Musik-Konzepte* 34–35 (1984): 80–88; and Wolfgang Osthoff and Reinhard Wiesend, eds., *Colloquium Klassizität, Klassizismus, Klassik in der Musik 1920–1950* (Würzburg, 1985) (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1988). Alan Lessem picks up this subject in “Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism: The Issues Reexamined,” *Musical Quarterly* 68 (1982): 527–42. Hermann Danuser also perpetuates this idea in “Rewriting the Past: Classicisms of the Inter-War Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 260–85.

74. Jane Fulcher, “The Composer as Intellectual: Ideological Inscriptions in Interwar Neoclassicism,” *Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 197–230; and *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

75. Taruskin, “Back to Whom?,” 290.

■ PERFORMING MODERNISM: A NEW APPROACH

The interpretive potential of my approach in comparison with those described above lies in my emphasis on the performance of neoclassicism and modernism and in my shift from formalist or stylistic analysis to a microhistorical investigation of music as performed historical event. In the 1930s, journalists acknowledged a concert or composition as an “event” by reporting on it, advertising it, announcing it, photographing it, and conducting interviews with the people involved in it. Individual listeners enjoyed the aesthetic experience of listening to music, of course, but their private moments of musical communion attained historical significance largely because mediated through the printed or broadcast word and image. “The media transforms into an act what would otherwise remain a word in the air,” Pierre Nora comments. Although this was true of music reception for centuries, the pattern accelerated after World War I, when “the monopoly on history went to the mass media.”⁷⁶

My understanding of how music functions as an “event” has been influenced by my long-standing engagement with the writings of Michel Foucault, who first defined the term in the early 1970s as a means of distinguishing his genealogical approach to history from the traditional “history of events” (which battle happened when) and from the “non-event-oriented history” of the structuralist *Annales* school.⁷⁷ Foucault thought of the event as a means of breaking away from text-based accounts of historical meaning, or what he called the “regime” of “scientifically true statements.” He believed that historians should stop trying to find meaning in history on the basis of texts, symbolic fields, or signifying structures and instead document relations of power as revealed in active moments of change.⁷⁸ In his view the event was not the historical action itself but rather the reversal in power relations or shift in discourse created by it (e.g., by means of vocabulary appropriated from and turned against those

76. Pierre Nora, “Le Retour de l'événement,” in *Faire de l'histoire: Nouveaux problèmes*, ed. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 212, 214.

77. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge/Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972/1980); “Questions of Method: Michel Foucault [1980],” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 73–86; Thomas Flynn, “Foucault’s Mapping of History,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29–48; and “Michel Foucault and the Career of the Historical Event,” in *At the Nexus of Philosophy and History*, ed. Bernard P. Dauenhauer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 178–200.

78. Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 112–15.

who had once used it).⁷⁹ In his “genealogies” he examined the origin of practices as a series of jolting, coincidental, surprising, contingent, and pluralistic events. I take up his challenge by exploring the relationship collapses and moments of failure permeating the production of *Perséphone* rather than the work’s historical successes.

My interpretive approach to *Perséphone* as an event is likewise shaped by the discourses in dance history and performance studies. From the former I have gained an appreciation for reading the symbolic and representational meaning of the performing body without reducing it to text or losing sight of somatic experience, and for situating the body in the context of dance history, taking into account not only aesthetic and stylistic frameworks of dance but also individual dancers’ theories of bodily expression. I have been most motivated by the work of Ann Cooper Albright, Susan Foster, Jane Desmond, and Mark Franko.⁸⁰ From performance studies I have gained theoretical insight—models for piercing the event of performance in search of new sources of knowledge and alternative histories. I am guided particularly by the scholarship of Sue-Ellen Case, Peggy Phelan, Joseph Roach, and Diana Taylor.⁸¹ Each of these scholars questions the illusions of symbolic representation and comfortable identity politics; they push toward histories that take into account oral memory, lived experience, presence, and corporeal sensation. These areas of research are just beginning to resonate in the musicological community, although interest in dance has been increasing in the discipline for years. Within musicology my greatest source of inspiration has been Elisabeth Le Guin’s work on corporeal memory, “carnal” hermeneutics of music, and the performer’s relation to history.⁸²

79. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), 160; translated by Donald F. Bouchard into English as “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 154.

80. See in particular Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997); Jane Desmond, ed., *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and off the Stage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

81. Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* [1988], foreword by Elaine Aston (New York: Palgrave, 2008); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

82. Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Inspired by carnal musicology, performance studies, and Judith Butler's paradigm-shifting perspectives on the possibilities of the performative, I depart in my analysis of *Perséphone* from the premise that theatrical meaning reveals itself in *aporias*: moments that appeared to original spectators to be out of the ordinary or stand out in some way. Many critics remarked on those features in the 1934 premiere of *Perséphone*. They pointed to rhythms that were out of sync with actors' stage movements, exaggerated opulence of props and costumes, incomprehensible declamation of text, illogical twists of plot, the audience's bored and suspicious response to the music and its suitability to the drama, the offense they took at Gide's interpretive liberties with the myth, their discomfort with sexual innuendo, and their surprise about Rubinstein's awkward gestures and lack of talent in comparison to other dancers. Most of the stage actions on which these original spectators commented left virtually no mark on published scores, libretti, or recordings. Much of the impact of utterances, gestures, movements, actions, and staging is recoverable only through archival research. There was much to learn, I realized, from reading reviews against the grain, analyzing stage directions, secondary texts, and archival documents for clues to theatricality and corporeal experience, and studying eyewitness accounts and recollections that document audience expectations and reactions. By searching through a variety of records directly and indirectly related to the production, I was able to recover traces of the sensual and theatrical experience of the performance that, collectively, provide a persuasive picture of a one-time event and its significance for 1930s modernism.

My method for investigating theatrical aporias and music as an event has been influenced by reflections on microhistory that took place around the millennium.⁸³ The work of Matti Peltonen and István Szjártó, in particular, convinced me to undertake a severely limited investigation—in this case a single performance of one piece—as a means of understanding a broad spectrum of themes related to modern music and what is known as the style of neoclassicism. By exploring in depth the concrete and specific evidence that has survived to document the premiere performance of

83. My understanding of microhistory is influenced by Carlo Ginzberg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 10–35; Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 93–113; Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History and Theory* 40 (October 2001): 347–59; and István Szjártó, "Four Arguments for Microhistory," *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (2002): 209–15.

Perséphone, and by developing what Peltonen calls a “method of clues” to investigate aspects of the performance that did not fit or that seemed odd and needed to be explained, I hoped, in Giovanni Levi’s words, to “reveal factors previously unobserved” and give new meanings to phenomena previously considered “sufficiently described and understood.”⁸⁴

In my microhistorical investigation of *Perséphone* I follow Jean-Jacques Nattiez in departing from the premise that the meaning of performed music in the past can best be reconstituted, or brought back to life, by examining the intentions of those who created it, the neutral texts that survive (as they are mediated in the event of performance), and the opinions expressed by those who originally witnessed it. I differ from Nattiez only in exploring the live experience of music heard in the past, rather than, as he sometimes does, reducing stage productions to music, and music to text.

I decided to return to the exploration of authors’ intentions, and to the study of poietics, or the genesis of a work, and its staging, in spite of criticism that has been leveled at these approaches within the field of musicology since the 1990s. I have returned to the “author” because I believe that the history of musical modernism has suffered from his “death.” Letters and papers hold valuable clues to authors’ and performers’ aesthetics and artistic and theatrical visions. I have therefore analyzed Copeau’s notes on the staging, Gide’s drafts and typescripts for *Proserpine* and *Perséphone*, Stravinsky’s sketches and commentaries, photographs and film documentation of Jooss’s choreographies and performances, contemporaneous literature, newspaper reviews, friends’ and acquaintances’ letters and diaries, and all available written sources on the elusive Ida Rubinstein (who left no archive). I have placed particular emphasis on the countless interviews Rubinstein and Stravinsky gave for the press in the interwar years—many of which have escaped scholarly attention, despite their historical significance in articulating the story of neoclassicism as a media event. I explore these authors’ and performers’ intentions not with the goal of proving the value of the work made (a Romantic and modernist bias Richard Taruskin famously dismantled as the “poietic fallacy”) but rather to gain insight into the meanings performed on the theatrical stage and in public discourse at the 1934 event.⁸⁵ A large part of my work has involved linking biographical motivation (whether religious belief, personal trauma, or political conviction) to aesthetics, thereby

84. Peltonen, “Clues, Margins, and Monads,” 349; and Levi, “On Microhistory,” 97–98.

85. Richard Taruskin, “The Poietic Fallacy,” *Musical Times* 145, no. 1886 (Spring 2004): 7–34.

connecting the personal to the communicative realm representing the social. In this I follow Anne Anlin Cheng, who has argued for an intimate link between “interior patterns” and “psychical experiences” with “social and subjective formations of minority groups”; and Heather Love, who has argued for a “politics of affect” that allows “personal encounters and the feelings that they elicit [to] stand in for theories of history and of the social.”⁸⁶ My approach to poietics differs from traditional approaches because I consider the intentions of a wide range of collaborators involved in a first production rather than just those of a composer or librettist, the individuals who created the “work.” I have refrained from judging the value of the collaborators’ expressed intentions—restraint made easier by the fact that *Perséphone* failed at its premiere in Paris.

My choice to study intentions is a consequence not only of the intellectual beliefs with which I began the project but also, and more so, of the evolving process of doing historical research on *Perséphone*, which drew me ever more intensely into the debates over autobiographical writing, self-revelation, and the role of the writer in 1930s France. I came to see *Perséphone* as a symbolic product of these debates, which centered on the person of André Gide. French identity, I learned, was intrinsically linked to the literary practice of acute self-observation and documentation that Gide and many other French intellectuals of the time, including Jacques Copeau and Michel Leiris, developed in their published diaries and correspondence. Writers deliberately began to record minute details of their lives, seeking justification for their thoughts and actions through a practice of extreme—and public—self-revelation. Their extensive records resemble today’s blogs or “reality shows” for the manner in which they transformed the private sphere into a matter of public record, medializing even the most intimate aspects of human existence. My narrative on *Perséphone* mirrors and takes into account this unparalleled documentary source, which I came to consider emblematic of identity construction within the French hexagon in the 1930s.

One consequence of my approach to the author is my realization that figures previously considered ancillary by those who studied the music alone—stage designers, dancers, the choreographer, even journalists—in fact played a far more active role in the history of the melodrama, and of musical modernism, than was hitherto understood. The meaning of

86. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), x; and Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 11–12.

Perséphone emerges not from the score but rather from the collaborators' multidimensional involvement in philosophical, sociopolitical, and artistic debates of their time and the intersection of their ideas in the event of *Perséphone's* performance. My close, detailed examination of the dynamics of personal interaction resulted in a salutary counter to depictions of modernism that emphasize deterministic processes, analogies between musical and social structures, monolithic interpretations of style, identity, and *Zeitgeist*, or teleological views of history. *Perséphone's* collaborators articulated their intentions and actions in the mass media in a manner that prevented a single interpretation of their enterprise; their pluralistic enunciations complicate traditional stylistic and structural interpretations of what has come to be known as neoclassical style.

The multiple discourses in which *Perséphone's* collaborators engaged caused me to question the identity politics of modern music as they have come to be understood since the New Musicology battles of the 1980s: *Perséphone's* collaborators did not formulate their artistic subjectivities and narrative strategies within a national context, as is often assumed in musicology, but rather in the local framework of overlapping subcultures in Paris and in dialogue with individuals operating across transnational communication networks. My microhistorical approach is inspired by the idea of "transnational encounters"—a term I use to describe the pluralistic cultural contexts created when dancers, writers, stage directors, composers, critics, and intellectuals from different nations, or from distinct subcultures within those nations, come into contact and dialogue or collaborate with one another. I have come to understand the music, literature, and dance of the interwar years of transnational capitalism in Europe as the product of such encounters, which historians such as Karl Schlögel have made the center of their work and which also became part of the East German historiographic tradition.⁸⁷ I developed my historical methodology also in part in response to Brigid Cohen's call to move the study of musical modernism "beyond the nation" by accounting for "cosmopolitan boundary crossing and urgent post-national cultural identifications that gesture beyond the national models of belonging that often frame the study of Western art music."⁸⁸ One of my primary objectives

87. See, for example, Fritz Mierau, *Russen in Berlin 1918–1933: Eine kulturelle Begegnung* (Weinheim: Quadriga, 1988); and Karl Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin: Ostbahnhof Europas* (Munich: Hanser, 2007).

88. Brigid Cohen, "Musical Modernism beyond the Nation: The Case of Stefan Wolpe," in *Cross-currents: European and American Music in Interaction, 1900–2000*, ed. Felix Meyer, Carol Oja, Wolfgang Rathert, and Anne Shreffler (Basel: Paul Sacher Stiftung, 2012). Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha

was to rediscover these often hidden or silenced local and transnational subcultures and, in so doing, reveal the limitations of style, compositional history and the geopolitics of the nation state as frameworks for the investigation of modern music.

■ FAITH, LOVE, HOPE

Many of the themes of my investigation of the event of *Perséphone* emerge from the content of the melodrama itself, which Gide based on the myth of Persephone as articulated in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* of 650–550 B.C., which had been discovered in a stable in Moscow in 1777.⁸⁹ Classicists recognize the Homeric *Hymn* as a primary source of information on the secretive ancient cult of the Eleusinian mysteries and female fertility ritual of the Thesmophoria.⁹⁰ Homer opens with an evocation of the goddess Demeter and a description of how Hades abducted her daughter Persephone into the underworld while the girl was innocently plucking a narcissus flower, which Hades, with the permission of Persephone's father, Zeus, had planted as a trap. Tormented with grief over the loss of her daughter, Demeter roamed the earth, casting curses of famine and infertility. Zeus thereupon sent Hermes to the underworld to fetch Persephone back. Before letting her go, however, Hades tricked her into eating a pomegranate seed, thereby binding her to him. Persephone returns home but may stay there for only two-thirds of each year, being obliged to reside in the underworld for the remaining third as the queen of the dead. The mature Persephone thus possesses a rare dual knowledge of life and death, her regenerative power metaphorically linked to the image of grain, the seasons, and the invention of agriculture.

and Bruce Robbins, Cohen adopts the term “migrant cosmopolitanism” to describe the state of displaced persons who have lost the comfort of national affiliation and engage in multiple and hybrid forms of new attachments to new practices and communities. She prefers this term to the traditional notion of “exile,” which implies a struggle between a lost and a new homeland and thus keeps the idea of the nation state intact as the basis of historical inquiry. I agree wholeheartedly with Cohen's approach, yet I prefer the term “transnational” within the context of *Perséphone* because not all of the people involved in my story were migrants, and some of them lived in the country in which they had been born and yet grappled with the nation state.

89. For dating and history of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, see Helene P. Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); and N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

90. See Kevin Clinton, *Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Stockholm: Svenska institutet i Athen, 1992); and Ann Suter, *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate: An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

The key theatrical aporias I see as having emerged during the premiere of *Perséphone* stem from the collaborators' divergent responses to the myth's central themes of faith, love, and hope. These three virtues, which Saint Paul (Corinthians 13:13) and Thomas Aquinas made the foundation of Christian ethics, became the point of greatest moral contention among those involved in the 1934 production. Across many religions, *faith* refers to a belief in transcendent reality—an idea many secular modernists rejected outright in favor of materialism; *love* is interpreted as *agape*, or charity, in opposition to Eros; and *hope* implies eternal life, salvation, and resurrection—possibilities many skeptics refused as irrational or unproven in the scientific years of the early twentieth century.

These three mythical/theological virtues are important for understanding neoclassical aesthetics. They also haunt modernism, both as an affirmative ethics embraced by believers (as evident, e.g., in Alban Berg's essay "Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe [Faith, Hope, Love]"), as the mottos for Stravinsky's *Symphonie de psaumes* and part 3 of *Canticum sacrum* (where he uses the Latin equivalents *Caritas*, *Spes*, and *Fides*), and as parodied hypocrisies, as in Ödön von Horváth's 1932 drama *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung*. I reflect on each of these virtues with critical distance and awareness of their modernist ambivalence, allowing them to inspire my titles, yet not denying the doubt and anxiousness that surrounded them in the interwar years. This framework allows me to work in stages through the process of trust, attachment, loss, and potential for recovery described in the myth of Persephone; understanding this process helps us to gain insight into 1930s neoclassicism.

Each of the three main parts of *Modernist Mysteries* opens with a detailed description of a key theatrical aporia in *Perséphone*. The length of these three parts reflects the proportions of *Perséphone*: part 1 has the feeling of an overture, part 2 is weighted with gravitas, and part 3 ends with a lighter, speculative touch. Part 1, "Faith," begins with the theatrical moment at the opening of *Perséphone* when Ida Rubinstein as Persephone struggles to outshine the youthful and charismatic Nathalie Krassovska as Demeter as the latter entrusts her to the nymphs. Demeter's gesture raises the questions of how religious faith shapes artistic practice and what happens to that practice when faith is called into question, or when it relinquishes its claims to universal appeal and ties with national identity, as occurred in 1930s France. In the three chapters of part 1, I explore how all of *Perséphone*'s collaborators expressed their religious faith through their contributions to the work and its premiere performance. I begin with André Gide, whose involvement with *Perséphone* spanned a period of

more than forty years, from his first poetic musings in 1891 through his two drafted scenarios, from 1909 and 1913, on the subject of *Proserpine* (the French version of Persephone's Roman name) to the final melodrama, based on revisions of these earlier materials, that he wrote for Ida Rubinstein in 1933. I continue in chapter 2 with an analysis of Stravinsky's poietics of Christian faith as revealed in the music he composed for *Perséphone* that year. Finally, I conclude part 1 with an exploration of how questions of faith affected the staging and production of *Perséphone* through the contributions of Copeau and Jooss, who joined the production team only a few months before the premiere in 1934.

The lapse in time between the moment when Gide first imagined *Perséphone* in 1892 and its premiere in 1934 is significant: although the work embraced the traditional values and emotional restraint that characterized *l'art des années trentes* it remains, like modernism itself, haunted by and nostalgic for the trespasses of its nineteenth-century youth. The historical disjunctions created when Copeau layered Christian teaching and Stravinsky Orthodox dogma onto Gide's dated Symbolist mysticism contributed greatly to the work's religious lability and can be seen as emblematic of a loss of unified tradition and faith in 1930s modernism generally. Moreover, Gide had matured during the forty years of *Perséphone*'s gestation, and in the process of rewriting the work multiple times he had abandoned the Nietzschean hedonism of his youth. By the early 1930s he was on the threshold of old age, his identity, like that of modernism, now shaped by a lifetime of fond and tragic memories.

The religious battle in *Perséphone* crystallized around an age-old question that had divided French Catholics and Protestants for centuries yet acquired new relevance in the 1930s: should one accept the Catholic Church's dogma as ultimate truth and universal law or, rather—as Gide thought one should (according to his interpretation of Protestant tradition)—develop one's morals individually based on life experience. In French literary circles in the 1930s this question became bound up with issues of sexuality and political engagement, especially in relation to Gide's "coming out" as a *pédéraste* and "conversion" to communism in the late 1920s. Among *Perséphone*'s collaborators, Copeau, Stravinsky, and Rubinstein all aligned themselves more or less with the Catholics and in opposition to Gide. The ecumenical dispute between them left its mark most tellingly on the 1934 performance of *Perséphone* in the awkward moment of representational disjunction between Persephone (as the embodiment of Protestant individualism) and her mother, Demeter (as the keeper of Christian dogma). Personal religious belief determined for each collaborator which

figure—Persephone or Demeter—was to be allowed to prevail in their interpretations of this modernist mystery.

Part 2, “Love,” opens with a description of Rubinstein’s disruptive performance in plucking the narcissus. Most critics attending the premiere on 30 April 1934 noticed with consternation that for this scene Gide had changed the plot of the well-known myth.⁹¹ In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* the narcissus functions like a trap, ensnaring Persephone in the ravenous clutches of Pluto, who abducts her into the underworld. There she succumbs to him, but only after having been tricked into biting the pomegranate; with that, her marriage to him becomes symbolically consummated. Karl Kerényi and others later identified this passage of the myth as a profound allegory of female heterosexual initiation, marriage, and death.⁹² By eliminating Persephone’s ravishment at the moment when she plucks the narcissus and by allowing her to descend into the underworld of her own free will, Gide symbolically disrupted the foundation of Western patriarchy and opened the door to a revolution in the literary, musical, and performative expression of sexual desire.

Gide’s radical rewrite not only transforms the nature of Persephone’s desire but also alters the meaning of her subsequent sojourn in the underworld. Without her abduction, there is no legitimate reason for her mother, Demeter, to mourn. Rather than form attachments that will provide her with the foundation for her experience of loss, Gide’s Persephone has evaded connection to those around her by displacing her desire into the abstract sphere of purported charity toward people she does not know. Gide emphasizes this deferral of desire by also altering the symbolism of the pomegranate seeds from that of the original myth. In the *Hymn to Demeter* Persephone, while in the underworld, consumes pomegranate seeds offered her by Pluto (the Roman name for Hades), thereby binding herself to him and symbolically consummating their marriage. In Gide’s text it is Mercury (the Roman name for Hermes) rather than Pluto who offers Persephone the pomegranate. The fruit thereby loses its erotic symbolism and becomes instead a conduit that restores Persephone’s memory of the earth, which had been disrupted by her sojourn into the underworld. But because her narcissus-plucking and pomegranate-eating actions have precluded the formation of erotic attachment to others out of desire, Gide’s Persephone is unable to mourn.

91. See, for example, Paul Le Flem, “Les Ballets de Mme Ida Rubinstein,” *Comœdia*, 13 May 1934.

92. Karl Kerényi, “Kore,” in Carl Jung and Karl Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 141–43.

In the four chapters of part 2 I explore representations of desire and loss in the 1934 performance of *Perséphone*. I shift gears from my focus on the genesis of the production, which dominated in part 1, to a historically based hermeneutical analysis of the performance, in which I draw on poetic criticism. In part 2 the curtain has been raised and we find ourselves in medias res as spectators of the production. If in this part I focus almost exclusively on Gide's libretto, Stravinsky's music, and Rubinstein's performance, this is only because information and material on Copeau's production and Jooss's choreography for the second tableau is scant. The Gide-Stravinsky-Rubinstein triangle provides a rich constellation: in the moment of narcissus plucking, Gide communicates a *pédéraste* vision of desire, Stravinsky manifests his dual character by promulgating Orthodox dogma through his musical dramaturgy while secretly expressing existential fear as the inverse of desire through his historic dances, and Rubinstein fails in her performance of Sapphic ecstasy. These diverging representations of desire lead to diverging interpretations of loss. Yet in spite of their differences, these three central collaborators found common ground in the collective melancholy they symbolically represented once they had landed in the underworld. Whereas desire forced differences between them into the open, death united them.

My views on the interrelatedness of love, desire, and loss in the four chapters of part 2 were shaped by psychoanalytical and philosophical explorations that informed the French discourse of the 1930s (including those of Kierkegaard, Freud, and Melanie Klein); the writings of Georges Bataille, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida; Heather Love's and Jonathan Flatley's close readings of modernist literary texts; and contemporary views on Greek mythology.⁹³ In particular I build in these chapters on the idea, psychoanalytically explored by Melanie Klein, that love by its very nature contains the seeds of guilt and fear of loss.⁹⁴ In a very different context, both Roland Barthes and Derrida suggest that friendship and love are always necessarily haunted by the possibility of loss—a binary

93. See Love, *Feeling Backward*; Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Shadi Bartsch and Thomas Bartscherer, *Erotikon: Essays on Eros, Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). In my analysis I do not adopt Freud's theory of Eros (or libido) and the death drive—the two competing drives or instincts that he thought motivated human behavior—or any other psychoanalytic theory of the relationship between desire and death. I prefer to follow the logic of *Perséphone* in determining how desire and loss interrelate in this work.

94. See Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 16, pt. 2 (April 1935): 154.

opposition that Derrida further complicates with the introduction of specters and a mode of historical attentiveness that he calls spectrality.⁹⁵ This “thanatoerotic” anxiety, as Henry Staten labels it, has also been the subject of recent inquiry among queer theorists who seek to reaffirm the historic connections among desire, loss, and melancholia in the wake of the AIDS crisis.⁹⁶ In the myth of Persephone the pomegranate symbolizes the ineluctable bond between desire and mourning: it both links Persephone’s sexual fate with Pluto and assures her place in the realm of the dead. For Gide, Stravinsky, and Rubinstein love is accompanied by the specter of irremediable loss.

My analyses in part 2 led me to conclude that the neoclassical aesthetics of *Perséphone* are determined by a dialectic of desire and loss that can be traced back to the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who established an enduring and remarkably resilient European neoclassicist tradition in the eighteenth century. Winckelmann’s aesthetic was motivated by deferred homoerotic desire and rooted in the experience of loss and absence. Winckelmann compared the art historian who studies Greek sculpture to a maiden who waves good-bye to a departing lover. The lover, like the authentic Greek sculpture, has disappeared from sight and is forever lost yet leaves behind a trace, like a ghost, that the art historian studies all the more fervently:

Just as a beloved stands on the seashore and follows with tearful eyes her departing sweetheart, with no hope of seeing him again, and believes she can glimpse even in the distant sail the image of her lover—so we, like the lover, have as it were only a shadowy outline of the subject of our desires remaining. But this arouses so much the greater longing for what is lost, and we examine the copies we have with greater attention than we would if we were in full possession of the originals. In this, we often are like individuals who wish to converse with ghosts, and believe they can see something where nothing exists. . . . One always imagines that there is much to find, so one searches much to catch sight of something. Had the ancients been poorer, they would have written better about art: compared to them, we are like badly portioned heirs; but we turn over every stone, and by drawing inferences from many tiny details we at least arrive at a probable assertion that can be more instructive than the accounts left to us by the ancients, which, except for a few

95. See Roland Barthes, “Absence,” in *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 19–24; and Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

96. Henry Staten, *Eros in Mourning: Homer to Lacan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). See also chapter 7.

moments of insights, are merely historical. One must not hesitate to seek the truth, even to the detriment of one's reputation; a few must err so that many may find the right way.⁹⁷

Here Winckelmann compares himself, the art historian, to a fictional abandoned lover who seeks in Roman copies, or in the phantom images on the sails of a departing ship, substitutes for a lost object of desire, the Greek original. "The art historian's efforts thus produce a love object," literary scholar Richard Block writes, "a third party to this affair, who serves as the surrogate recipient for affections forever barred access to the real thing."⁹⁸

Thinking of Winckelmann's practice as an art historian in terms of deferred homoerotic desire has numerous consequences for how we interpret his aesthetics. An eerie emptiness emerges in his neoclassicism—an "absent center" that masks a hidden trauma, or death itself.⁹⁹ Eighteenth-century theorists understood the dichotomy created by absent trauma and present beauty and thus contrasted Winckelmann's Greek ideal with the medieval or baroque image of a gruesomely tormented dead Christ. Gotthold Lessing, for example, was mortified by corpses and abhorred the dead body, and he evoked both as the binary opposites of the beauty he aspired to in his classical aesthetics.¹⁰⁰ Thus neoclassicism, or strange classicism, came to require its absent opposite—the disgusting corpse, crucifixion, trauma, and pain.

Winckelmann's aesthetics were torn not only between the extremes of beauty and pain but also between rationality and sensual pleasure. They functioned as a model of rationality by controlling viewers' feelings and passions (an important aspect of French and German classicism since the eighteenth century) and yet at the same time encouraged sensual indulgence by encouraging the contemplative observation of art. Harold Mah

97. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, with introduction by Alex Potts, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 351. I have replaced "spirit" with "ghost" as a translation for *Gespent*. For the original, see Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Joseph Eiselein (Osnabrück: O. Zeller, 1965), vol. 6, 365.

98. Richard Block, *The Spell of Italy: Vacation, Magic, and the Attraction of Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 38; see also chap. 1, 17–48.

99. Alex Potts has equated the expression "still grandeur" (*stille Größe*)—taken from Winckelmann's famously coined phrase that classicism is characterized by "noble simplicity and still grandeur" (*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*)—with the actual stillness of death, or absence of signs of life; Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 1–2. Simon Richter developed a theory of the classic aesthetics of beauty as an aesthetics of pain in *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). See also Harold Mah, *Enlightenment Fantasies: Cultural Identity in France and Germany 1750–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

100. Richter, *Laocoon's Body*, 72–73.

argues that the conflict between “moral inwardness and corrupting sensual forms” is reflected in the distinction Winckelmann made between the “glance” (aesthetic appreciation of the classic whole) and the “gaze” (a meditative pleasure that opened up the viewer to hallucinations, the liminal, the undulating line, and dispossession of self).¹⁰¹ Classicist subjectivity is characterized, Mah postulates, by an ability to resist the physicality of the material world to attain rational self-possession. This sublimation is rarely complete, however, or even remotely successful, as resistance is in part futile. These contradictions lead the classical subject to have difficulty enacting itself as proscribed; instead, the subject is characterized by its contradictions. As a consequence, classicism oscillates between Platonic ideals and fetishism.¹⁰²

The discovery of hidden undercurrents of sensuality and pain in Winckelmann’s neoclassicism has led scholars to conclude that the eunuch or castrato (*der Verschnittene*) better represents his ideal of beauty than the more famous model with which he has long been associated: the Laocoön statue unearthed in 1506 and housed in the Vatican. Castration left eunuchs with the “uncharacteristic” features (*das Unbezeichnete*) that made them perfect models for Winckelmann’s androgynous ideal of beauty.¹⁰³ Winckelmann loved the castrato’s ambiguity—the simultaneous presence and absence of the markings of gender.¹⁰⁴ The beauty of the castrato, he wrote, “consists therein that the forms of lasting youth in the female sex are incorporated into the masculinity of a beautiful young man.”¹⁰⁵ Winckelmann tried to recreate the “unnatural” ideal of the castrato body by reassembling the dismembered and reconstituted parts of ancient Greek statues—such as that of Apollo—to create an illusory whole.¹⁰⁶ And yet he knew that the beauty of the castrato masked the hidden pain of castration—the cut that disrupted aesthetic pleasure by leaving the bodily trace of the scar. Simon Richter believes that the eighteenth-century castrato became the point of reference for all subsequent theories of classical beauty and that it gave evidence of aesthetic theory’s persistent cruelty to the body.¹⁰⁷

101. Mah, *Enlightenment Fantasies*, 86–97, quote at 89.

102. *Ibid.*, 73–86; 199–200n35–36.

103. Richter, *Laocoön’s Body*, 58–59. See also Catherine MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 30–32.

104. Block, *The Spell of Italy*, 45; Richter, *Laocoön’s Body*, 50.

105. Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 201; *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, 75.

106. Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 118–32.

107. Richter, *Laocoön’s Body*, 58–59.

In part 2 of this book, I explore how the contradictions inherent in Winckelmann's neoclassical aesthetics reach a breaking point in *Perséphone*. The extreme tension that is evident in this work between sensual experience and rational appreciation of beautiful forms in art is in part a consequence of the profound shifts in the discourse on desire and loss that had taken place in France since Winckelmann's time. Same-sex desire in 1930s France no longer remained unspoken as it had been for Winckelmann. Rather, as a consequence of the anthropological, criminal, and psychiatric categorization of "nonconformist" sexualities that had begun in France in the late nineteenth century, same-sex desire increasingly found precise and varied literary, visual, and theatrical forms of expression.¹⁰⁸ Michael Lucey describes the period in France from the 1870s to the 1940s as a "reasonably fierce episode in the ongoing social and taxonomic struggle over the modalities of reference that would be permissible as regards same-sex sexualities. How these sexualities could be named and perceived was at stake, as was how the sexualities would be conceptualized—by means of what categories and social divisions."¹⁰⁹ Michel Foucault has famously argued that homosexuality was "invented" during this period and that it did not exist as such before this modern drive toward categorization began. Critics in 1920s France began to use the umbrella term "homosexual" to describe male same-sex love in its binary relationship to the "heterosexual"—a term less often used but almost always assumed.¹¹⁰ This process of fixing sexualities accelerated after World War I, when natalists anxious about France's declining birth rates blamed homosexuals for destroying the French family and subjected them to ever more ruthless scrutiny.¹¹¹ In the late 1920s virtually hundreds of books and

108. I am cautious throughout my analysis to use historically specific terms to describe sexuality. People used the term *nonconformist* frequently in French texts of the 1920s and 1930s to describe their feeling of standing outside the norm of heterosexuality. On the history of homosexuality in interwar France, see Laure Murat, *La Loi du genre: Une histoire culturelle du "troisième sexe"* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); Florence Tamagne, *Histoire de l'homosexualité en Europe: Berlin, Londres, Paris, 1919–1939* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); and George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, eds., *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

109. Michael Lucey, *Never Say I: Sexuality and the First Person in Colette, Gide, and Proust* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 29. See also David M. Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality," *Representations* 63 (Summer 1998): 96.

110. In this way the hetero/homosexual binary became solidified and naturalized. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1–63.

111. Martha Hanna, "Natalism, Homosexuality, and the Controversy over *Corydon*," in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant Ragan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 205. Gilles Barbedette and Michel Carassou call this an era of "uncontrolled chatter" in *Paris Gay 1925* (Paris: Presses de la renaissance, 1981), 101. They emphasize that natalist propaganda and fears of repopulating France after the war profoundly influenced the debate on homosexuality (142–47).

articles on same-sex sexuality appeared, many of them by faux doctors and most of them by people who did not identify or associate with the populations or behaviors they were categorizing and labeling. Monique Nemer speaks of a “semantic flowering” of names for same-sex love. “Because if this love [did] not dare speak its name,” she writes, evoking Oscar Wilde’s famous phrase, “it’s truly not for lack of names being attributed to it.”¹¹² Gender trumped sexuality as the key category for constructing difference and determining prestige and social worth in these debates. Women served in many of these discussions as nothing more than a symbolic foil against which to affirm male sexual politics.

The French debates about sexual desire arose in part as a consequence of the reception of Freud’s ideas and the development of modern psychiatry in France, which coincided with the over forty-year gestation of *Perséphone* (1892–1934).¹¹³ In these years French commentators shifted from considering homosexuality a “criminal act” to defining it as “a sickness” or mental illness. The German psychiatrist Kurt Westphal had initiated this “medicalization” of homosexuality in 1869 when he described it as a “congenital” condition in need of a cure. In France the “epistemological caesura” between criminal and medical interpretations of same-sex sexual relations was marked by the publication of Georges Saint-Paul’s (aka Dr. Lauphs) *Tares et poisons* of 1896. “Where our predecessors saw criminals we see sick people,” Saint-Paul had written, “where the philosophy of long ago discovered a misdeed, we diagnose indeed a ‘mental defect,’ or ‘nervous illness.’”¹¹⁴ A second seismic shift occurred with the French translation in 1923 of Sigmund Freud’s *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905). And yet the criminal verdict on homosexuals by no means disappeared after this date. Gide had grown up aware of both interpretations of his sexuality: as a young man he sought the advice of doctors on how to “cure” his desire for men while at the same time collecting extensive clippings on famous criminal trials involving homosexuals.

112. Monique Nemer, *Corydon citoyen: Essai sur André Gide et l’homosexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 46. François Tamagne argues that this proliferation of terms blinded the French to the larger issue of gay rights; in contrast to England and Germany, there was no gay movement in France between the wars; see *Histoire de l’homosexualité en Europe*, 138–169, and especially 158.

113. See Alain de Mijolla, *Freud et la France 1885–1945* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010).

114. Dr. Lauphs, *Tares et poisons, perversion et perversité sexuelles, une enquête médicale sur l’inversion, notes et documents, le roman d’un inverti-né, le procès Wilde, la guérison et la prophylaxie de l’inversion*, with a preface by Emile Zola (Paris: Georges Carré, 1896), 280. This book was published in a second edition as *Homosexualité et les types homosexuels* (1910) and in a third edition as *Invertis et homosexuels* (1930).

In part because of this legal ambiguity, discussions of sexual desire in this period were almost invariably bound up with moral judgments. French modernist writers articulated their same-sex desire in response to these moral debates, rather than expressing it between the lines as Winckelmann once had.

As a consequence of increased awareness of and interest in same-sex relations, Gide, Proust, Colette, and other writers of the period between the wars began actively exploring how to write about same-sex desire and construct nonconformist sexual subjectivities within the literary frame of the novel. They challenged the neoclassical ideal of literary aesthetic autonomy by writing in the first person, though by doing so they sacrificed their objective stance as writers.¹¹⁵ This issue took on acute importance in the reception of Gide's work in the late 1920s. Critics could not reconcile Gide's deep investment in articulating his sexual subjectivity through the first-person pronoun with his modernist allegiance to the literary ideals of the French Symbolists, who had challenged the first-person perspective by celebrating the aesthetic objectivity of poetry as art in itself (*l'art pour l'art*). As I was to find, the fraught question of the "I" in literature played a key role in determining the nature of subversive expression of neoclassical desire in *Perséphone*.

Neoclassic aesthetics had changed by the 1930s not only because of modernist redefinitions of sexualities but also because the absent object of the art historian's desire had shifted from Greece to the colonies—and that of émigrés to their lost homelands. The French no longer consistently defined their national culture in relation to Greece as the cradle of European civilization but rather increasingly understood themselves dialectically in relation to the ideal "primitive" they had discovered in their colonies. French ethnographers had described performance styles they discovered in Africa in terms of Greek tragedy at the turn of the century; in the wake of the fad of *art nègre* in the 1920s, a wider range of commentators began blurring the distinction between Greek and colonial artistic ideals. Gide and Rubinstein follow this trend by mimicking in *Perséphone* desire they had discovered in the French colonies. Their practices demonstrate that desire in 1930s neoclassicism was intimately related to colonial and imperial relations. Leo Bersani writes in this respect that "there is no perspective on the real that goes untouched by desire; conversely, sexual desire itself may be nothing more than the appetitive form of the subject's

115. Lucey, *Never Say I*, 9.

painful consciousness of difference. It would be something like an appropriating reflex, a gesture designed to bring into the self what the self recognizes as alien."¹¹⁶

By addressing imperial desire in *Perséphone*, I complicate the current view of relationships to alterity in musical modernism. Much research on this aspect is still framed theoretically by Edward Said's now classic *Orientalism*, which has proven tremendously fruitful in unveiling imperial attitudes in a wide range of musical repertoire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁷ Yet the methodological emphasis on Said has also led to a lack of subtlety, to a structuralist tendency to identify colonial difference based on musical and linguistic signifiers in scores and libretti, and to broad assumptions about the political meaning of such signs within Said's general framework. There has also been a tremendous concentration on "musical exoticism," which I would argue is a problematic term, at best applicable in modernism only to a range of European musics composed before World War I. As an aesthetic, "exoticism" limits interpretation and confines historical analysis.¹¹⁸ Stylistic features of musical exoticism remained entrenched well after World War I and continue to be perpetuated today. But other aesthetic and musical relationships to alterity also developed in this period, including those that replicated the attitudes of missionaries, colonial administrators, tourists, émigrés, minorities in Europe, and others. Colonialism created not only an exoticizing gaze in art and music but also dramatic and musical equivalents for a variety of political relationships, including assimilation, association, exploitation, transculturation, and subaltern identification. Artists living in France in the 1930s expressed numerous distinct attitudes toward colonialism, their perspectives reflecting their faith, relationship to God, personal priorities, sexualities, philosophies, social values, and the degree to which they felt they belonged in France.

In part 2, I also discuss the gulf that opened up in neoclassical modernism between the sensual expression of desire and the attitudes toward the laws controlling it—an aesthetic split that Adorno noted but I believe incorrectly analyzed in Stravinsky's music in *Die Philosophie der neuen Musik*. Gide, Stravinsky, and Rubinstein were not only much more self-reflective than Winckelmann about the deferred desire implied in

116. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 134.

117. Edward Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (New York: Vintage, 1994).

118. See Tim Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

neoclassical aesthetics but also more willing and able to question, challenge, or explicitly confirm (in the case of Stravinsky) the state and Church laws that policed sexual behavior in their time. The disconnect between the sensual expression of desire and the recognition of its social regulation reflects the conflict between individual will and dogma that motivated the thesis on faith in part 1 of this book.

In part 2, I create a story within a story by comparing the ways Gide, Stravinsky, and Rubinstein variously interpret the relationship between desire and the law in the mythical stories of Eurydice and Antigone. As George Steiner has documented, Antigone played a key role in the articulation of political theory for artists in twentieth-century France and Russia.¹¹⁹ In Sophocles's play, Creon tries to secure the laws of the modern state by forbidding the burial of Antigone's brother Polyneices. Antigone rejects his order and appeals to a higher natural law, the duty to god and her family, to justify her disobedient act of burying her brother against Creon's orders. She manifests her anger in what Walter Benjamin calls mythical violence, whereas Creon commits lawful violence (*Rechtsgewalt*) in service of the preservation of the state. Hegel thought the conflict between Creon and Antigone was morally symmetric and would be resolved in history. This is what Steiner refers to as "the conservative, pro-Creon Hegel paradigm." Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, in contrast, championed Antigone's disobedience and interpreted her as the hero of the story.¹²⁰ Gide, Rubinstein, and Stravinsky took different sides in this debate. That their perspectives coexist, albeit uneasily, in *Perséphone* reflects the open possibilities and fluidity of expression possible in modernist neoclassicism.

The gap between Antigone's desire and Creon's law is evident in Stravinsky's music and Gide's text for *Perséphone*, where it results in a fragmentation of classical forms. Wolfgang Schadewaldt explains such fragmentation in a different context in terms of a shift from Winckelmann's "cyclic-centralizing" description of the parts that make up the torso of Apollo to Rilke's "explosive-energetic" description of the same torso in terms of the diverging energies that risk destroying its unity.¹²¹ Schadewaldt argues that classical models became "commodified" shortly after Winckelmann's death, when they already could no longer be enjoyed

119. George Steiner, *Antigones* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

120. Steiner, *Antigones*, 41.

121. Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Winckelmann und Rilke: Zwei Beschreibungen des Apollon* (Stuttgart: Neske, 1968), 26–28.

naively and had rather become the object of distanced reflection. In Walter Benjamin's terms, one could say that neoclassicism shifted at this moment away from the Romantic symbol and toward modernist allegory.

Benjamin first presented his theory of allegory in his *Habilitations-schrift* (professorial dissertation), titled *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, which appeared in 1928, just five years before the production of *Perséphone* began, and yet remained largely unknown in this period.¹²² A victim of Nazi persecution, Benjamin spent much of the early 1930s, and especially the spring and summer of 1934, in Paris, where he familiarized himself like no other with the ideology and forms of French modernism. He revisited allegory in several essays on Baudelaire and in his *Passagenwerk*, in which he linked baroque allegory explicitly to modernist aesthetics and late capitalism.¹²³ On the night of *Perséphone*'s premiere, Benjamin lay depressed in a hotel room just a few blocks away from the Opéra.¹²⁴ Benjamin's familiarity with French culture, and his perspicuity on modernism and modernist expression generally, makes his theory of allegory an ideal point of departure for analyzing the neoclassical aesthetics of *Perséphone*.

In *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, Benjamin distinguished between ancient Greek tragedy and the German baroque *Trauerspiel*. These two genres had erroneously been equated with each other, he thought, largely because of the false presumption that Aristotle had continued to influence poetics into the baroque period. Many philosophers

122. Walter Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), vol. 1, pt. 1, 203–430; *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977). George Steiner notes that the book was ignored and became “extinct” after 1931 with the rise of National Socialism (7).

123. Benjamin discusses the allegorical in “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire [1939]”; reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 605–54, and translated by Harry Zohn as “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations*, ed. with an introduction by Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), 157–202; and in “Zentralpark [1938–39]”; reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 657–90, and trans. Lloyd Spencer with Mark Harrington as “Central Park,” *New German Critique* 34 [Winter 1985]: 32–58. See also the following excellent editions: Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Vol. 4, 1938–40*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). Benjamin returns to allegory in an unpublished manuscript, “Baudelaire as Allegorist,” kept in the Bibliothèque nationale. See Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 19–20, 215–19; and Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 151–83.

124. See Willem van Reijen and Herman van Doorn, *Aufenthalte und Passagen: Leben und Werk Walter Benjamins, Eine Chronik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 117–52; Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français*, ed. Jean-Maurice Monnoyer (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); and Heinz Wismann, ed., *Benjamin et Paris: Colloque international 27–29 Juin 1983* (Paris: Cerf, 1986).

had followed Nietzsche in aestheticizing tragedy in the late nineteenth century, thereby ignoring the historical-philosophical insights of the myth of tragedy and the teachings of tragic guilt and tragic atonement (*tragische Schuld und tragische Sühne*). As a result, they had freed tragedy from morality.¹²⁵

Tragedy in Benjamin's view is based on the conflict between a hero and his surroundings and rooted in sacrifice. The hero's defiance grows from speechlessness, which enabled what Lukács described as the "pure experience of selfhood."¹²⁶ The hero provides tragedy with its frame, within which laws are neither causal nor magical. In this context, the chorus creates a "speech edifice" beyond the conflicts of moral and religious communities.¹²⁷

The Trauerspiel, unlike tragedy, is a "melancholic" genre. Like Baudelaire's poetry (with which Benjamin later associated it), the Trauerspiel is rooted in history, not myth, and focused on a flesh-and-blood king and his power rather than on a mythical hero.¹²⁸ History takes place in the courtroom.¹²⁹ Benjamin called the Trauerspiel melancholic because he believed that it originated with the rise of Protestantism. The Protestants feared death, opposed everyday life, and were dismayed by the world in which they lived. This stance toward life allowed the rise of melancholia, which caused people to lose a direct connection to objects and instead become absorbed in their contemplation—an activity Benjamin famously referred to as "brooding" (*grübeln*). As a consequence, the Trauerspiel became trapped in the world of things and fixated on props, which had had no place in ancient tragedy. Trauerspiele were haunted by ghosts and involved communal rather than individual death.

Alienation from the world and the act of contemplating things led baroque dramatists to speak in the language of allegory rather than symbol. In *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, Benjamin distinguished allegory

125. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 283; *On the Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 104–05.

126. György Lukács, *Die Seele und die Formen: Essays* [1911], quoted in Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 287; *On the Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 108.

127. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 294–95, 300; *On the Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 114–15, 121–22.

128. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 242–43, 249; *On the Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 62–63, 69; see also Steiner's introduction, 9, 16–17.

129. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 267–70; *On the Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 88–91.

dialectically as a “form of expression” from the theological “symbol,” which he defined by “unity of the material and the transcendental object.” The unity of the theological symbol—as in the symbol of Christ—eliminated the need for representation, and remained paradoxical. Such symbols occurred in a momentary flash, or what Benjamin called the mystic “Nu” or “instant.” They promised a total unity of sign and meaning and evoked a feeling of transcendent purpose. Benjamin thought the Romantics had misinterpreted the theological symbol by aestheticizing it as the literary manifestation or “appearance” of an idea in the work of art.¹³⁰ He traced this Romantic misreading back to Winckelmann and Georg Friedrich Creuzer. The Romantics, Benjamin argued, had established a false “mythology of presence” and a problematic form of criticism by adopting the symbol uncritically and by relying on the “momentary, the total, the inscrutability of the origin, [and] the necessary” associated with it. As a consequence, the symbol had become intertwined with appearances, beauty, aura, and the phantasmagoria. Most musicologists presume this Romantic symbol when they interpret music based on the signs or appearances they perceive in musical texts.

In contrast, the baroque or “borderline” allegory was a heterogeneous and dialectic mode of expression. Benjamin studied its use in more than 600 examples of baroque Trauerspiele that he found in archives and researched exhaustively.¹³¹ The allegory he discovered there was ridden by “antinomies,” or what he described as arbitrary references or profound disruptions in the relationship between an image and the idea or concept it potentially signified. This form of allegory had developed as a consequence of the discovery of Egyptian hieroglyphs, which Benjamin interpreted within the context of the turn-of-the-century work of the art historian Karl Giehlow.¹³² The allegorist arbitrarily assigned meanings to objects, transforming them into the keys to a realm of hidden knowledge. Benjamin recognized the violence in this appropriation of objects for the sake of arbitrary signification and compared the allegorist to the rule of a “stern sultan in the harem of objects,” or to a “sadist” who “humiliates his object and then—or thereby—satisfies it.” “And that is what the allegorist

130. Benjamin *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 336–37, 342; *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 159–60, 165. See also Matthew Wilkens, “Toward a Benjaminian Theory of Dialectical Allegory,” *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 285–98.

131. On borderline allegory, see John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 132.

132. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 344–48. *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 167–71.

does in this age drunk with acts of cruelty both lived and imagined,” Benjamin concluded.¹³³

Benjamin also emphasized allegory’s artificiality. He thought that the constructed quality and displayed craftsmanship of allegory made it impossible to consider it within the context of the “radiance of transcendent effect” typical of the symbol. Allegories lacked the feeling of the “intimate and mysterious” associated with the symbol, which they replaced with the “enigmatic and concealed.” Moreover, allegories did not create coherent wholes but, rather, piled up like ruins or fragments. Their purpose was “moral edification,” or what Benjamin called a “hidden theology.”¹³⁴

Allegories do not occur in the mystic instant as symbols do. In this sense they evince, in Max Pensky’s words, “a tremendous alienation from immediacy” just as neoclassical music did.¹³⁵ By disrupting the relationship between sign and signified, allegories draw attention to and acknowledge the temporal dimension of the profane world:

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face—or rather, in a death’s head. And although such a thing lacks all “symbolic” freedom of expression, all classic proportion, all humanity—nevertheless, this is the form in which man’s subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, of secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline.¹³⁶

Benjamin considered the corpse to be the epitome of all the emblematic props of baroque allegory because it reminds us of the historical reality of death through its alienation as an allegorical object. The corpse represents nature in decay rather than nature transfigured. It does not

133. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 359–60. *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 184–85.

134. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 353–58; *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 172–73, 177–82.

135. Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 116.

136. Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 342–43; *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 166.

symbolize or represent death but rather gives unmediated physical evidence of it. And yet, when situated in allegorical arrangements, the corpse both denies profane meaning and elevates it by purporting to hint at something higher. John McCole has interpreted Benjamin as saying that “death ‘prepares’ the body for allegorical dismemberment, for an emblematic ‘distribution’ of its parts ‘to the manifold regions of significance.’”¹³⁷

When Benjamin reinterpreted baroque allegory within the context of French literary modernism in the 1930s, he suggested replacing the allegory of the corpse with that of the “souvenir” (*Andenken*), which he thought served a similar function to it in modernity. The souvenir is the product of an alienated world of capitalism that leaves memories hollowed out, objects dislocated, and experiences sucked of their life and meaning—a world, in fact, first described in Baudelaire’s poetry.¹³⁸ The souvenir is a commodity that is no longer in circulation and can therefore remind of the mythic character of capitalism. According to Susan Stewart, souvenirs have no need or use value and arise solely out of the “insatiable demands of nostalgia.” They give buyers or listeners the feeling of possessing an authentic trace of experienced events “whose materiality has escaped [them], events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative.” As exchangeable, commercial products, souvenirs substitute for lived experience, to which they relate *metonymically* as a *sample*.¹³⁹ In Benjamin’s words:

The *souvenir* is the complement to the “experience” [*des “Erlebnisses”*]. In it the increasing self-alienation of the person who inventories his past as dead possession is distilled. In the nineteenth century, allegory left [*hat geräumt*] the surrounding world, in order to settle in the inner world. The relic derives from the corpse, the souvenir from deceased experience [*Erfahrung*], which calls itself euphemistically “experience” [*“Erlebnis”*].¹⁴⁰

Benjamin’s allegories, and especially the images of the corpse and souvenir, prove invaluable in analyzing the form that results from the dialectic of desire and loss in *Perséphone*. The conflict between tragedy and Trauerspiel—between the Romantic symbol and Benjamin’s allegory—is

137. McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, 141. See Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 390–93; *On the Origin of German Tragedy*, 215–20.

138. Benjamin, “Zentralpark,” 681; “Central Park,” 48–49.

139. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 134–35, 151.

140. Benjamin, “Zentralpark,” 681; “Central Park,” 49.