ACTIVE STASIS: REPETITION AND THE FAÇADE OF DISCONTINUITY IN
STRAVINSKY’S HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT (1918)

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ABSTRACT

Igor Stravinsky’s (1882-1971) early works are often depicted as repetitive and regressive with regard to its thematic development and formal structure. His penchant for mosaic-like constructs that rely on the recurrence of unchanged blocks of sound and their subsequent juxtapositions defined his practice and enabled Stravinsky to seek out new ways of composing. In the music of other composers repetition was largely reliant upon differences in successive appearances that provided a sense of growth and direction from beginning to end. Stravinsky instead often depended on the recurrence of unchanged fragments and their interactions with other repetitive patterns across larger spans of his works.

This thesis focuses on the use of repetition as an agent of progress in order to dispel lingering myths of the discontinuous elements in Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat* (1918). Following the work of Peter van den Toorn and Gretchen Horlacher, I examine repetition and block form as both static entities and embryonic figures, and the roles they play in musical development. Through my analysis and my introduction of a new theory of shifting blocks, I ultimately offer an alternate reading of his compositional process, arguing that Stravinsky’s use of repetition contributes to narrative, development and form.
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INTRODUCTION

Many of Stravinsky’s works are characterized by the use of repetitive patterns as part of their motivic network. His approach to motivic repetition differed from his musical forbearers, peers, and successors, and was an integral part of Stravinsky’s concept of musical development. In the music of other composers motivic repetition was largely contingent upon rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic variances in successive appearances. Such variances provide a sense of growth and development, and a dynamic trajectory from beginning to end. Contrarily, much of Stravinsky’s music often relied on the recurrence of unchanged fragments and their simultaneous interactions with other repetitive patterns across larger spans of his works.¹

At first glance Stravinsky’s motivic reiterations might exude an air of passivity, containing no significant shifts in momentum that would suggest development of the repeated figures. Pierre Boulez criticizes this apparent immobility in a discussion of Stravinsky’s compositional language, saying that Stravinsky’s compositional style “has a less marked feeling of development. . . . This may be considered a weakness—and so it

¹ Peter C. van den Toorn and John McGuiness offer an insightful analysis into the use of fixed material where they consider the influence of the relatively unchanged opening section of Stravinsky’s Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1920) as a medium to connect larger areas of the piece, see Peter C. van den Toorn and John McGuiness, Stravinsky and the Russian Period (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 225-235. This type of repetition as it relates to Stravinsky’s sketches are examined through Three Pieces for String Quartet, Three Easy Pieces, and Pribaoutki (all from 1914) in Maureen Carr, After the Rite (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 44-63.
Boulez’s categorization of Stravinsky’s specious “failure” to display similar levels of organization and coherent dynamic trajectory echoes the sentiments of the composer’s detractors that make claims of his music’s torpor.\(^2\)

However, closer examination often exposes a greater sense of continuity and interconnection among the seemingly fragile systems of multiple levels of repetitive patterns. Where traditional theoretical applications have failed, more recent methods of analysis have articulated a network of interrelated patterns and shapes that reveal a unifying force of structural intent within Stravinsky’s oeuvre. Most notable are approaches centered on the repetitive nature of the material within segments of the music, or, “blocks.” Pieter C. van den Toorn defines “block structure” as “a framework [in which] two or more blocks of relatively heterogeneous content are repeatedly, and often abruptly juxtaposed.”\(^4\)

My exploration into this compositional technique focuses on the composer’s \textit{Histoire du soldat}. While much has been written about Stravinsky’s use of repetition and block form, the role of block form in \textit{Histoire} has seldom been explored, and to the extent that this feature has been noted, it has not been investigated over larger areas of the piece.

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as a whole.\textsuperscript{5} Through allusion and the interspersing of motives from other movements within the work, Stravinsky is able to envelop the ostensibly disconnected elements of the composition into a larger consciousness of overall development. Through shifting juxtapositions of material, a repeated motive can assume multiple functions without the constraint of replacing or diminishing its original conception. Although he eschews traditional techniques of harmonic and thematic development laid bare by his musical antecedents, Stravinsky’s formal structures exhibit an ambiguous facility with regard to form in that his repetitions contribute to larger, structural growth. In her theory of “ordered succession,” Gretchen Horlacher expands on the nature of Stravinsky’s repetitions where she advances the concept of block form, viewing motives and thematic recurrences “both as a fixed whole and as an emerging shape.”\textsuperscript{6} Through the use of block form and repetition in \textit{Histoire du soldat} (1918), Stravinsky is able to build cohesion between sections of the composition.

This paper will also explore \textit{Histoire’s} connections to other works, both by Stravinsky and other composers, and the influence these pieces may have had on the compositional process during its completion. Of particular importance is the link

\textsuperscript{5} Maureen Carr’s block analysis of “anticipatory gestures” found in the “Devil’s Dance” of \textit{Histoire} is used to reference similarities with the block form structure of a section in \textit{Renard}; Marianne Kielian-Gilbert also traces the bordering techniques through restatements of motives at the beginning and end of the “The Soldier’s March” of \textit{Histoire} in “The Rhythms of Form: Correspondence and Analogy in Stravinsky’s Designs,” \textit{Music Theory Spectrum} 9 (1987): 42-66. David Smyth and Don Traut, “Stravinsky's Sketches for the Great Chorale,”\textit{Intégral} 25 (2011): 89-120. The authors also explore faint connections to block form through sketch studies of the larger chorale.

between a melodic motive in the first movement of *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (1914) and several motives in *Histoire*. Making note of the dates of composition, it is interesting that in 1918 (the conclusion of World War I), Stravinsky returned to the melodic tetrachordal gesture of *Three Pieces*, composed in 1914 (the start of World War I). With *The Rite of Spring* (1913) and several other compositions completed in the decade following it, Stravinsky’s wartime compositions are often characterized as a turn to neoclassicism, or, in some cases, a conversion to the primitive.⁷ Adorno’s classification of this collection of works as a phase of “infantilism” beleaguered the notion of Stravinsky’s oeuvre around the first war as non-developmental, saying that he “was always prone to exploit children’s songs as messengers of the primeval to the individual.”⁸ Adorno references music by Beethoven and other earlier styles as evolvement while stating that more literal forms of repetition impede any perception of progress. His description of an implied regression to juvenile topoi within Stravinsky’s works completed during the First World War is an apt portrayal considering that the nature of literal repetition can often thwart any attempts of meaningful progression. However, to view Stravinsky’s repetitions as purely non-developmental would overlook a glaring contradiction in that repetition has always facilitated development, and that interconnection in a given piece of music has often been largely contingent upon reappearances of motives and harmonic progressions. What would Baroque music be without the sequencing of motives, or the absence of a thematic return in the Classical sonata form?

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In Stravinsky’s case, his music facilitates a sense of fluidity and mutability; although the repeated figures remain fixed in their own right, they eventually become an agent of continuity through superimposition, juxtaposition, and the shifting of differing strata. This “active stasis” engenders greater coherence through sections of his works, ultimately granting the composer more alternatives to bridge sections that may otherwise present themselves to be inert. Pierre Boulez references methods of apposition and motivic overlay in musical writing as the antithesis of the compositional process, but misses the point that these networks possess an interrelation entrenched in a larger, overarching narrative of structural cohesion. Boulez may have had a change of heart, considering his remarks in a series of lectures on the music of Stravinsky in the early 1980s. Edward Campbell notes that “[a]t the level of form, Stravinsky’s pieces begin to resemble Stravinsky’s sectional forms, and in lectures from 1983 to 1985, he commends the originality of Stravinsky’s discourse, which bases musical form on the permutation and return of recognizable sections.” He goes on to quote Boulez’s statements from *Leçons de musique* where he says “Stravinsky’s conception of melodic development is based on a psalmody and litany where deviation is minute in relation to the original model, but where the intervening extensions, contractions, displacement of accents … finds its profound force in accumulation.” This thesis will show how stasis and repetition in *Histoire* enables development. Through a series of transformations of static

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9 Boulez, “Proposals,” in *Stocktakings*, 49.
11 Ibid., 206. The quotation of Boulez is from the author’s translation.
fields within the composition, the discontinuous ultimately manifests into an ally of the continuous.¹²

Chapter one discusses the role of repetitions and the outcomes of perception in its use. The second chapter surveys the literature and methodologies used to analyze repetitions and block form in Stravinsky’s works. I will isolate specific instances where those theories reveal a deeper level of motivic organization within Histoire. I introduce two possible sources that may have contributed to the blocks in the second section (“Airs by a Stream”) of Histoire. My analysis demonstrates how Stravinsky uses repetition and ordered succession as a vehicle of development. In the final chapter I will show smaller levels of repetition, rotation, and their connections to the story and other works composed by Stravinsky that display similar repetitions of motives that he either forecasts or recalls in Histoire.

CHAPTER 1: AFFECTS AND EFFECTS OF REPETITION

“[S]omething has to occur again for it to occur at all.”13

The contribution of repetition to musical development, and its redeeming or adverse qualities, has been debated amongst many musicologists and theorists. The subject encounters added complexity when considering the changing styles and periods in music history, and the role in which repetition can exist in each. Yet, regardless of its chronological manifestations in the musical continuum, the properties of repetition ultimately rest within its ability to affect change in the environment in which it exists.

The use of repetition as a conduit of action is another view that has received some added attention as it relates to development. Daphne Leong and David Korevaar discuss the propagating comportments of repetition as “musical motion,” addressing this characteristic as a “generic conceptual blend of physical motion and musical structure,” arguing that “motion occurs when some parameter is held constant while others change, resulting from the action of some agent.”14 Stravinsky’s musical reiterations often personify this phenomenon as many of his works use repetition as a mirror by which other aspects of a piece can interact.

13 Catherine Pickstock, Repetition and Identity, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 44. Pickstock is paraphrasing a passage from Hegel’s Philosophy of History.
At times these thematic recurrences are veiled, operating on a sublevel of a composition beyond mere prolongation and augmentation. In his article on motivic parallelisms, Charles Burkhart uses Schenkerian theory to point out what Schenker describes as “hidden repetitions.” Burkhart’s analyses trace reiterations of motives as they occur on multiple levels of organization from the foreground to the background. In order to establish a repetition through multiple structural levels as motivic parallelism, Burkhart states that a motive must have at least two or more statements in order to be established as a musical corresponding entity. As the opening quote confirms, repetition and its importance are established through multiple soundings of the initial appearance. Referring to the original and its repetitions, the author signifies their soundings as “pattern” and “copy,” respectively, and goes on to elucidate the distinctions between multilevel parallelisms and surface transformations.15

Although my discussion of repetition is limited to surface level interactions, the concept of a theme (or thematic fragment) being manipulated across a composition through repetition has special relevance to the ensuing discussion. To deem a repetition as a copy is to deny the repetition an identity; its existence is none other than a consequence of something that transpired. However, this line of reasoning ignores the distinctiveness of the repetition in and of itself and relegates it to the status of an uninspired imitation of an original unit. This critique of pattern and copy is not to discredit Burkhart’s insights into repetition through parallelism; rather, it serves to gain a

deeper understanding of the concept of a repetition. What does it mean for a melodic or harmonic duplication to exist as a recurrence of something while maintaining an individuated element within its sounding?

Because the established perception of development relies on harmonic expansion and melodic variation, unaltered motivic reiterations present a problem for listeners expecting traditional variants such as registral shift, key or modal change, dynamic contrast, and so on. The theoretical nature of musical development requires that an idea be subject to expansion while preserving the identity of the original idea. Repetition in tonal music is goal oriented; the ear expects a progression to eventually reach a stopping point. However, this effect can only be achieved if the reiterations of certain motives undergo some degree of transformation either at the foreground, middleground, or background level. The essence of tonality is the gravitational pull towards a tonic, an attraction that is heightened through sequencing or imitation, ultimately concluding with the cadential power of a structural dominant to its tonic.

To an extent, literal repetition can have the same effect. A repeat of the opening theme of the A section in a piece using a binary or ternary format will seem innocuous and when heard, it can arguably go largely unnoticed. Is this because we have been prepared to hear the section again through a cultural inundation of art music, or is it due to the size and scope of having a large area of the piece, containing various internal manipulations, returning after listeners have retained a small portion of a musical statement? I would suggest that the repetitions in this case provide a balance, not only in the sense of form, but also in an aural domain.
On the other hand, what happens when these repetitions are shorter in duration, covering areas of the piece that are as small as a theme or motive? These continuous literal reiterations can appear to be directionless, effectively obscuring the sense of expectation. There is no sense of beginning or arrival when a repeated fragment occurs over and over while remaining entirely unchanged. Although it becomes predictable over each sounding, literal repetitions, especially those of shorter duration that contain entire statements of a theme may become disorienting and uncomfortable. As we listen to music, we want to be surprised and to have our sense of expectation thwarted—to a certain degree. We want to encounter something that sets a piece of music apart from others, but should the piece completely alienate our anticipation of an arrival, it ultimately creates an unhinged aural space where the traditional aspects of repetition that award our senses no longer exist.

Exact replication is acutely problematic in this sense because the idea presumably has no avenue to develop through external or internal manipulation, thus lending itself to the feeling of stagnation. Literal repetition presents itself as static because it is static. The part is restated not as a distant echo or allusion, but as an exact restatement of something that was previously sounded. Yet this view only acknowledges repetition as an unconnected entity, and it is precisely this reasoning that leads to an acuity of inaction. Lisa Margulis notes that “repetition tends to reify a passage,” and that its use serves “to
set it apart from the surrounding context as a thing to be mused on, abstractly considered, and conceptualized as a unit."\(^{16}\)

Viewed in a contextual framework these figures progress to preserve permanency and growth. Moreover, as a rhetorical entity, motivic repetition operates as a generator of continuity through its various soundings. Its motivic identity is manifested only through recurrence, and its role in a work’s development only comes through its interactions with other aspects of the piece. The question of what definitively constitutes a “block” or a repetition in *Histoire* must be addressed as we consider Stravinsky’s concept of development.

CHAPTER 2: REPETITION AS AN AGENT OF CONTINUITY

Following *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky became increasingly fascinated with the idea of literal repetition as the driving force in his music. Although always a feature of his compositional style, these repetitions were no longer subject to layering across non-fixed melodies and harmonies, and the composer’s technique changed considerably, although it retained his spirit through this adjustment. Stravinsky was caught between two worlds: the traditions of his mentor Rimsky-Korsakov and others who embraced a tonal enterprise containing rules that governed the compositional practice, and the world of his peers who thrived in a time where these conventions became increasingly relaxed as composers sought alternative ways of expanding (or abandoning) tonality.

In this chapter, I examine the approaches to repetition and block form and offer my interpretation of these systems within the second section, “Airs by a Stream,” of *Histoire*. I also posit a source for the blocks, illustrate their connection to *Histoire*, and show how they contribute to a network of shifts that ultimately craft an overall realization of traditional form and development.

Completed in the fall of 1918, *Histoire du soldat* was the last of Stravinsky’s compositions to be completed during World War I, a period that saw the completion of *Five Easy Pieces* (1916-17) and *Renard* (1916), two works that employ block form or repetition. Stravinsky’s technique and realization of repetition as a developmental channel was in full force by the time he began work on *Histoire*, yet he would not rely on
this technique alone in his compositional process. Though the concept of block form can indeed be open to multiple interpretations, the general premise of the repetitive nature of patterns and blocks within Stravinsky’s works is that they contribute to the structural integrity of his forms. The block structure used in Histoire is akin to the configurations of this technique used in both Stravinsky’s earlier and later works, in that he frequently used repetition as a conduit for motivic development.

Continuity in “Airs” is generated by the repetition of motives that participate in block structure. Edward Cone delves into Stravinsky’s repetitions when he discusses the sensitivity of the gaps between repetitions, or “sudden breaks,” and argues that these “interruptions” may correspond to stage movements in his theatre productions, noting their effects can still be felt even during their absence.17 His method was one of the earliest attempts to assess the deficiencies in using traditional analytical tools to decipher formal aspects of Stravinsky’s structures in order to explain the outwardly abrupt associations. Maureen Carr’s study of block form resembles this approach as her analysis describes the evolution of motives from Stravinsky’s sketches and shows how motives were replicated in different compositions.18

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17 Edward T. Cone, “Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method”, Perspectives of New Music 1, (1962): 18-19. While commenting on Histoire’s genesis, Stravinsky states that the idea of having the musicians perform on stage with the actor and narrator had the added benefit of seeing the musician’s gestures in Igor Stravinsky, An Autobiography (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962, reissued 1998), 72. This conflicts with another of his retellings regarding the initial inspiration for the music of Histoire, and will be further discussed in chapter three.

18 Carr, After the Rite, 44-47, 51-63
In accordance with the work of Pieter van der Toorn and others, my definition of block form in *Histoire* relates to passages in which Stravinsky uproots sections of the composition and places the unaltered fragments alongside other motives in the composition. In his description of repetitions found in *The Rite of Spring*, van den Toorn categorizes the constructs as one of two forms: Type I and Type II. Repetitions of a Type I classification function through fluctuating meter, with contrasting blocks continuously exchanging sonorities. The blocks can be comprised of one or more measures and although the blocks are offered in “rapid juxtaposition,” growth is only achievable “between blocks.”\(^{19}\) Type II repetitions are different primarily since they occupy spaces within a fixed metrical environment and are assembled through the superimposition of multiple blocks. Both categorizations are primarily rhythmic; any awareness of development in Type I is a result of “lengthening, shortening, or shuffling of blocks,” whereas growth in Type II depends on “vertical or harmonic shifts in alignment.”\(^{20}\)

The repetitions and blocks in *Histoire* follow this logic, as they are in part dependent upon the interactions between soundings of each fragment. However, these blocks are not always found in their full form and often contain small fragments of the total motive. The block analysis in Musical Example 1.1 (along with the preceding Figure 1.1 that defines the motives) shows the repetitions and various motives throughout the “Airs” of *Histoire*. Due to the frequently changing time signatures throughout the section, a Type I label would be most fitting. Yet, when surveying the vertical


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 99-100.
alignments of different repetitions, the various iterations of superimpositions would lead one to classify this section as a Type II block form. The concurrent interaction of formal designations furthers the complexity of Stravinsky’s attention to structure and cohesion, and necessitates supplementary identifying characteristics to distinguish interactions amongst repetitive organizations.

Figure 1.1: Blocks of “Airs” (transcribed to concert pitch)

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Example 1.1 continued
Example 1.1 continued
Figure 1.1 highlights various iterations of the motives that unite to form the repetitions within “Airs.” As a departure from van den Toorn’s definition of block repetition, I suggest that a different methodology would offer a sharper rationalization of the figures contained within the movement. Viewing these repetitions through the lens of ordered succession may prove to be a much more valuable tool, especially when considering that some of the recurrences reside in a larger block or line. There are instances in which the initial sounding of a line presents itself as a distinct entity, only to have a subsequent entrance of the complete and longer block. In the opening A section, block A2 enters first, sounding twice before the entrance of the A1 fragment. As it will be shown later in this paper, A1 and A2 are actually part of one block that has been separated. The connection between B1 and B2 is shared in the lower voice of B2’s harmony. As a stepwise upper voice enters on the downbeats, the lower harmony of B2 includes a leap followed by a stepwise descent just like the B1 motive. The meandering C blocks are ascending and descending lines that move mostly by step with no added harmonies, and the entrances of the Devil are marked by announcements of C1. The purpose motive D is a brief, bridging movement between the B and A’ sections. The bass ostinato, identified as motive X, functions as a foundation by which juxtaposed and superimposed fragments can interact and neither changes nor stops, except at the closures of A and A’.

Horlacher’s theory of ordered succession expands the discussion of repetition and block form. Her models account for single lines and their manifestations as they move through a composition. Because repetitions in single lines can present themselves as
fragments of fragments, her method serves to reveal the relationship amongst reiterations of the same motive and show how they relate to previous statements.

Figure 1.2: Horlacher’s list of ordered succession in multiple iterations. (Only the first two iterations are included.)

Ordered succession within a single line

Ordered succession within a single superimposition

*Histoire’s* repetitions are unique because fragments of a line or block are declared before a complete statement of the intact entity. The principal of ordered succession reasons that motivic reiterations operate simultaneously as evolving and immobile

21 This figure is a reinterpretation of the figures in Horlacher, *Building Blocks*, 26.
figures, and that these structures (functioning as lines or blocks) are perceived paradoxically as both dynamic and inert. In Figure 1.2, the first column which denotes the ordered successions within a single line illustrates the different iterations of a line in which the first exists as a complete statement, while the second or third either completes the ending gesture or it begins but does not end. The second column of the figure shows the interactions through superimposition where a line relates to material (the X’s) through the various alignments over the course of the composition. Referring back to the A1 and A2 motivic fragments in my discussion of Histoire with the descriptions of ordered succession brings a higher level of understanding to the roles of these repetitions. Their soundings fit the characterization of ordered succession within a single line wherein A1 is the ending gesture of the complete line and A2 is the beginning.

As we examine the interactions of the blocks contained in Histoire, the question of the origin of the blocks must also be addressed. During the years after The Rite of Spring, particularly 1914-1920, the Stravinsky’s ensembles became noticeably smaller compared to his previous large-scale orchestral works, such as The Firebird (1909-1910) and Fireworks (1908). What factors provoked this shift to the more intimate nature of a chamber group, and how did these influences inform the composer’s practice? A formalist’s rendering of Stravinsky’s turn might dismiss the nature of this shift as a nostalgic ideology harbored by the composer during his neoclassical period. To some extent I agree, however, I offer another perspective and propose that parts of Histoire were influenced by specific chamber pieces, particularly string quartets. Stravinsky refers

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22 Horlacher, Building Blocks, 27.
to the concept of the string quartet as “the most lucid conveyer of musical ideas ever fashioned, and the most human and singing of instrumental means; or, if it was not thus, Beethoven made it that way.”

Stravinsky’s borrowings have also been the subject of debate as the composer often gave conflicting accounts of his inspirations. This reduction in instrumentation eventually bled into his theatrical productions, although for the purposes of this section my discussion will center on the effects of chamber works on *Histoire*. In instances where the composer would reveal the source of his inspirations for certain pieces, the responses would often obstruct or, in some cases, dissolve any attempt to use his words to forge a true connection between his ideas and the music he created. I will examine two possible sources that Stravinsky may have used as models for the motivic repetition contained in the “Airs” of *Histoire*.

In his conversations with Robert Craft, Stravinsky often spoke of Beethoven’s influence on his compositional process, particularly referencing Beethoven’s string quartets. Though he reserves a great deal of his admiration for the Op. 133 fugue, I believe Stravinsky also incorporates motives found in the first movement of Beethoven’s quartets, Op. 18, no. 2, in the second section of *Histoire*.

My analysis will focus on “Airs” to demonstrate the apparent connection between Beethoven’s second string quartet and the first movement of Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces*

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for String Quartet, and the influence these two quartets had on its structural components, particularly the formation of blocks. As of yet, there has been no mention of these two influences on Histoire, and most of the commentary has centered on the influence of abandoned projects and fragments found in Stravinsky’s sketches. Through my analysis, I suggest that the two string quartets mentioned above were an integral part of the formation of the repetitions in “Airs”.

The completion of Three Pieces came just one year after the premiere of The Rite of Spring, and is very much similar to the repetitive structures housed in Stravinsky’s other compositions completed around the same period. Where Three Pieces differs from other works is in the construction of literal repetitions of the opening material. In the first movement, Horlacher describes how Stravinsky offsets the effects of the duplications through various shifts and layering of the four parts, and also points out that this level of exact thematic recurrence is uncommon, even for Stravinsky’s music. 25 Stravinsky dismisses the notion of his music precluding or being partial to the techniques of the Second Viennese School, saying that his quartet was not influenced by Schoenberg and Webern and that his quartet is “thinner and more repetitive than Schoenberg of the same date.” 26

Corresponding to a Type I block form, the first of Stravinsky’s Three Pieces for String Quartet does not adhere to a single continuous meter. Yet, the shifting of meter is

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25 Horlacher, Building Blocks, 11.
26 Stravinsky and Craft, Memories and Commentaries, 265.
steady, even as it changes: the piece is made up of three-measure successions of one \( \frac{3}{4} \) measure and two \( \frac{2}{4} \) measures. In Example 1.2 the opening 13 measures contain complete statements of each ostinato, and because of varying lengths, the superimpositions of the parts cause the voice alignments to shift upon successive repeats of the ostinato.

Example 1.2: Stravinsky, “Three Pieces,” mvt. 1, mm. 1-13

Notable among the shifts is the descending F\#-E-D\#-C\# tetrachord of the second violin part beginning in measure 7. Each of the statements of this four note motive enter earlier and earlier against the first violin melody as if it is trying to escape the monotony of its own soundings. Jonathan Kramer suggests that this attention to metrical alignment
“is a deliberate exploration into proportion control.” Figure 1.3 shows the second violin alignments with the five repetitions of the first violin melody in what I refer to as a “static shift.” A static shift occurs when a block (or line) moves against a fixed repetition in order to complete a gesture to align itself with either the beginning or the end of the complete unit. The movement is analogous to Horlacher’s ordered succession within a single superimposition (shown the second column of Figure 1.1) except that it has a specific goal to move to a boundary position. This seemingly arbitrary movement actually serves to give shape to a piece and generally signals the end of a section or entire work. The shift in the first movement of Three Pieces finally occurs early enough so that the final repetition of the second violin part is sounded simultaneously with the beginning of the final statement of the first violin melody, thus completing its effort to reach the beginning of the primary melody.28

28 Horlacher also points out the shifting superimpositions of the second violin ostinato in Horlacher, Building Blocks, 18.
Figure 1.3. “Static shift” through the first movement of *Three Pieces* between the first and second violin parts

As illustrated in Figure 1.3, the aftereffect of this technique is a conflicting environment containing qualities that, when emphasized, reveal Stravinsky’s astute attentiveness to formal groupings and offers supplementary processes for approaching comparable works that exhibit similar interactions. As explained later in this chapter, this shifting technique appears in “Airs” of *Histoire* and its function is not only to facilitate development, but also serves to imbue the section with the function of conventional form.

The most prominent repetition in the first movement of the *Three* is the G-A-B-C tetrachordal ostinato. Curiously, a motive from this theme makes its way to the “Airs”
section of *Histoire* and is presented in different iterations as an A-B-C♯-D. Although not an exact copy, Stravinsky alludes to the tetrachord by placing its fourth note in the clarinet after the bassoon begins a motive with the first three as shown in Example 1.3. The spirit of the tune is present in the downward gesture of the final two notes of each melodic group. Stravinsky treats this descending motion to diminution when compared with the violin line from *Three Pieces*, but on its last entrance in the clarinet part of *Histoire*, the original balance is restored when the motive ends with two quarter notes. This practice of “self-quotation” was not uncommon for Stravinsky as many of his works contain references to past compositions.

Example 1.3 “Airs,” mm. 30-35

Stravinsky ironically makes statements about Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony that mirror the criticisms and analyses of Adorno and assertions by others of developmental lethargy within his own works. Stravinsky proclaims that

\[ \ldots \text{nothing in the Ninth is as perennially surprising and delightful, } \ldots \]

Consider the Adagio without prejudice—or try to. The echo-dialogue of winds and strings lacks variation, and the Andante moderato, with the pedal A and the repeated octaves, sixths, thirds, is harmonically heavy \ldots

I find the movement rhythmically monotonous—for Beethoven—except in its finest episode, the E flat Adagio, but the effect even of that beautiful
passage is deadened by the rhythmic inanity of the subsequent 12/8. Another weakness, or miscalculation, is the repetition, after only six measures, of the heroics at measure 121. What has happened to Beethoven’s need for variation and development? The movement is the antithesis of true symphonic form.29

Stravinsky’s reading of Beethoven’s final symphony exists as an odd characterization, especially considering his own penchant for composing pieces that convey a feel of motivic immobility. The contradiction within the criticisms leveled at Beethoven’s work is further compounded when taken into account alongside Stravinsky’s own statements concerning the nature of repetition. In response to a question concerning the repetitive component of his works and its purpose, Stravinsky responds, “It is static—that is, antidevelopment; and sometimes we need a contradiction to development. However, it became a vitiating device and was at one time over-employed by many of us.”30 Though he acknowledges that overuse of a particular compositional device can transform something remarkably novel into nothing more than an ineffective exploit, Stravinsky also admits that the recurring aspects of his technique is a necessary evil to combat the traditional notion of motivic development.

Alternatively, Stravinsky’s polemics may have been his attempt to provide a level of social counterpoint to the popular opinion of Beethoven’s works. Clive Bell recalls attending a party in which Stravinsky attended along with Pablo Picasso, James Joyce,

29 Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Dialogues (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 112-113. These statements are reprinted in Stravinsky and Craft, Memories and Commentaries, 284.
and Marcel Proust. He describes a “tense” encounter between Proust and Stravinsky after Stravinsky criticizes some of Beethoven’s compositions when approached by Proust to engage in small talk.\(^{31}\) In spite of these statements, the reasoning may have been explained when Robert Craft inquired about the details of the event in one of his numerous talks with the composer. Stravinsky recalled discussing the quality of Beethoven’s works, saying that he would have participated in [Proust’s] interest “were it not a commonplace among the intellectuals of that time and not a musical judgment but a literary pose.”\(^{32}\) Nevertheless, the composer goes on to praise Beethoven’s string quartets, singling out the Op. 59 set and the *Grosse Fuge* in a lengthy discussion of their complexity and their anticipation of the techniques found in the music of Schumann and Mendelssohn.\(^{33}\)

The impression made by Beethoven’s string quartets on Stravinsky is noteworthy when examining the progressively smaller ensembles employed by the composer after *The Rite*. While he does not mention Beethoven’s opus 18 quartets in his chats with Robert Craft, Stravinsky would have undoubtedly known the scores; his son, Soulima, owned the entire opus 18 set.\(^{34}\) I assert that the motivic cells that contribute to the formation and interaction of specific blocks in “Airs” in *Histoire* are modeled on the material found in the transition section of the first movement of Beethoven’s Op. 18, No. 2, shown in Example 1.4.

\(^{33}\) Stravinsky & Craft, *Dialogues*, 113-114.
\(^{34}\) Housed in the Igor and Soulima Stravinsky Collection (Series 5) of the Juilliard Manuscript Collection.
Example 1.4: Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 2, mvt. 1, mm. 21-35

When viewed together in Example 1.5, the resemblance is brought to bear even more when considering, in addition to the striking rhythmic mirroring, both works share the same $\frac{2}{4}$ meter, make use of the violin to invoke the statements of the thematic material, and employ similar piano dynamic markings. In the Beethoven quartet, the transition theme is stated twice, followed by entrances of the sixteenth note motive that are separated by rests. Stravinsky mimics these entrances by beginning “Airs” with the sixteenth note entrances and presents the full statement last.
Another conspicuous parallel between both works is the presence of G as a tonal center; the excerpt by Beethoven is rooted in G major (although it quickly modulates because of the nature of the transitory passage), while Stravinsky’s does not establish a key, but embraces G as a focal point, noticeably in the bass ostinato. In the opening section of Stravinsky’s “Airs,” G is the highest and lowest written pitch of both the violin (G⁢³-G⁢⁴) and the contrabass (G⁢³-G⁢⁴, [sounding G⁢²-G⁢³]), and the violin invokes F#, the leading tone of G, in measure 17 as the only altered tone from an otherwise entirely natural note passage. Horlacher also notes the “G-centered” melody of the string quartet discussed earlier.³⁵

³⁵ Horlacher, Building Blocks, 8.
the upbeat of the second measure, resembling the upbeat of the second measure of Beethoven’s transition section where the sixteenth notes of the violins are written over eighth notes. While Beethoven’s excerpt does not employ the use of an ostinato, there is a continuous succession of eighth notes found in the viola that are exchanged with the cello during a rest.

Example 1.6: “Airs,” opening, mm. 1-11
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The static shift mentioned earlier in the first movement Three Pieces returns in “Airs” and is also employed as a form-defining signal of closure. The goal of this movement is for the violin motive to complete a shift against the four notes of the bass ostinato, starting with the last and moving one pitch backwards in each appearance. The 16th note stops of the violin motive of Op. 18 are sounded three times against the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd notes of the bass, however the static shift is interrupted, causing the gesture to end unfinished. Thus when this section returns at the end of the composition, the static shift reappears and the expression is allowed to complete its movement successfully alongside the four bass notes.
Example 1.7: “Airs,” closing, mm. 88-107

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Figure 1.4: Static shift in “Airs” between the 16\textsuperscript{th} notes of the violin and and bass ostinato

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Static Shift of A</th>
<th>Static Shift of A’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>through opening 11 measures</td>
<td>through closing 17 measures</td>
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1

<table>
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<th>4</th>
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<td>3</td>
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Shift Interrupted
Upon completion of the shift, the violin continuously repeats the motive for four measures, unabated, until stopping abruptly just two measures shy of the end of the movement. The veneer of discontinuity is ultimately thwarted upon an examination of the return of the opening motives, and as a result of the variants within the violin superimpositions, the piece is allowed to finally come to an end.

As shown in the block analysis of Example 1.1, the first section of “Airs” begins with G-centered thematic material over a bass ostinato that engages in a static shift and is interrupted before a new theme is offered. At rehearsal 5 the new theme, embracing a different tonal center of A, cycles through an A-B-C#-D tetrachord as the bass ostinato halts and motives from the first theme resound below it. The tetrachord is subsequently developed in a new section as a primarily stepwise entity and progresses until thematic recurrences of the second theme curtail its progress. The original theme and bass ostinato return at rehearsal 13, completing the static shift as a means of closure, and even continues sounding the theme as a “pseudo-coda” in the last seven measures.

Could we dare call this sonata form? Stravinsky’s neoclassicism was in full-force during the completion of *Histoire*, and if the paradoxical tenets of the neoclassical aesthetic ring true, the composer would have been observing the past as he eyed the future. If not sonata form, the piece could be viewed as an echo of the binary or ternary structures of the past. Regardless, the formulaic conventions of Stravinsky’s repetitions permeate the composition and cohesion is established through the structural markers of the reiterations. This “active stasis” engenders a greater sense of unity through sections.
of his works and ultimately grants the composer alternative means to development material.
CHAPTER 3: CONNECTIONS TO THE STORY AND OTHER STRAVINSKY WORKS

The implications of stasis are far reaching and can be viewed as a compositional aesthetic that is demonstrative of the Soldier’s actions; the repetitive nature of the thematic material is a possible allegory for the futile efforts of the Soldier after making his deal with the Devil. Focusing on the initial encounter (“Airs”) and the final meeting between the two characters (“Grand Choral”), a connection between what the Soldier assumed and the reality around him offers another reading of the music as it relates to the narrative.

The “Airs” section of *Histoire*, where the Soldier first encounters the Devil, begins and ends with the same repetitive material. In this part of the story, the Soldier rests by a stream to take a break from his journey home after war. He removes a fiddle from his backpack and begins to play as the Devil listens from afar. As the movement ends, the Devil approaches the Soldier and convinces him to trade his violin for a book of untold riches. However part of the deal rests on the Soldier spending three days with the Devil in order to teach him to play the violin. When the Soldier protests that this would delay his arrival to see his mother and girlfriend, the Devil offers him food and housing, reiterating that a mere three days would go unnoticed compared to the time he spent in battle. The Soldier gives in to the Devil’s charms and after three days, he sets out to continue his journey home. Upon arriving in his town, he sees his neighbors but is confused when they do not respond to his greetings. Brushing off the strangeness of the public encounters, he goes to his mother, but after seeing him, she runs away, petrified by
the sight of her son. The Soldier finally tries to locate his fiancé only to find she has married another man and has two children. The Soldier finally realizes that the Devil has kept him for three years instead of three days.

The Soldier’s predicament mirrors the static nature of the music. His three days are nothing compared to the three years that have passed, and although his time spent with the Devil contained a sinister proportionality to the surrounding environment, he still progressed alongside it. The Soldier remains physically unchanged compared to his family’s aging and his relative stasis embodies the tragedy of his alienation. Yet, he is still aware of the repercussions of his dalliances with the Devil; his development is realized through his unchanged time moving adjacent to the continuing time of the world around him. Just as the themes recur over an ostinato with little to no changes in the score, so too does the Soldier persist unaffected (as an individual), but transformed by his existence amongst his surroundings. When this interaction between events returns in the “Grand Chorale,” the connection of the music to the plot are just as potent as in “Airs.” However, before delving into the formulaic comparisons between the two sections of *Histoire*, I offer commentary on another Stravinsky work that proposes a connection between both movements.

Stravinsky’s turn to the “infantile” tendency of using repetitive structures as a means of development would also reveal itself in his 1921 composition, *Les cinq doigts.*

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36 The completion of these pieces may have been influenced by Debussy’s *Children’s Suite* (1908).
This work, comprised of eight miniature movements, was akin to his previous piano composition, “Five Easy Pieces,” and featured a recurring thematic fragment as its primary vehicle for development. For the purposes of this discussion, my analysis of this work (shown in Example 1.8) as it compares to *Histoire* and other Stravinsky works will be limited to the sixth movement of *Les cinq doigts*, “Lento.”
Example 1.8: Stravinsky, “Lento,” *Les cinq doigts* (1921)
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As with all of the movements in the set, the principal theme of “Lento” begins the first section and is contained within a five-note set encompassing a perfect fifth, D-E-F#-G-A. The melodic and rhythmic components of the theme bear a remarkable likeness to the thematic designs of “Airs” and the first of Three Pieces, analyzed earlier in this paper. Although it is formed from a five-note set, most of the movement is within a tetrachord with the uppermost note (5\textsuperscript{th}) acting as an intermediary amongst soundings of the thematic repetitions. Stravinsky’s fascination with the folk melody Perepyolushka continues to make its way into his compositions not only as a source, but also as a medium.\textsuperscript{37} The bass begins by sounding a descending D minor triad, a tonal realm that contradicts the primary theme’s F#. The F-natural and F# never fall on the same beat, however its effect is unwaveringly prominent. The bass repeats itself for 5 measures before a series of descending 9\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} intervals to G\textsubscript{2} offer a temporary reprieve for two measures only to have the descending triad enter for a final time before the B section commences.

At the beginning of the second section, the second theme uses a similar harmonic structure a minor third higher on the notes F-G-A-B♭-C. Now the uppermost note of the five-note set, C, is used conspicuously, both as part of the opening gesture of the transposed theme, and as part of the downward gesture to the F. The bass voice oscillates between D\textsubscript{4} and a harmonic tritone on E\textsubscript{3}-B♭\textsubscript{3} that would seem to crash against the F major theme if it were not for that specific tritone’s tendency to resolve inward to an F-A

tonic dyad. By sounding a tritone and its consequential tonic resolution, Stravinsky again 
adds a feeling of stasis not only through the repetitiveness of the melody, but also through 
the harmonic motion of the piece. The D minor/D major clash in the A sections brings 
the (4-17) [0347] set class to mind, as Stravinsky frequently exploited the tonal 
uncertainty of the major/minor tonal opposition in his compositions. The final section is 
simply a return to the opening section, unchanged, save for the duration of the last notes 
being extended to three and a half beats.

The undercurrent of harmonic ambiguity makes its way into the “Grand Chorale” 
of Histoire just after the moral of the tale is spoken by the narrator. Example 1.9 shows 
the rotation of the two chords through the two and a half measure progression. Although 
they are not presented or functioning in a traditional tonal context, the chords’ 
constituents are evident when built using tertian structure.

Example 1.9, “Grand Chorale,” Histoire mm. 18-20

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Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany.
The sequence progresses with alternating 9th and split-3rd chords, and although the harmonic movement implies direction, it still produces a level of harmonic stasis through the chordal repetitions. The Soldier, excited about the prospects of returning home to meet with the princess by his side, has his hopes dashed by the devil once again in the exact fashion as the beginning of the tale. The narration details his futile efforts in escaping his fate:

They’re on their way, they’re nearly there,
A scent he knows hangs in the air.
He has gone on ahead to find
The frontier. She is a little way behind.

He calls her, he turns back, then changes his mind...

The soldier hangs his head.
He begins to follow the Devil, very slowly, but without resisting.
A voice calls from the wings.
He stops for a moment. The Devil waves.³⁸

³⁸ Histoire du soldat © 1987 & 1992 Chester Music Limited, 14-15 Berners Street, London W1T 3LJ, United Kingdom, worldwide rights except the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, Canada, South Africa and all so-called reversionary territories where the copyright © 1996 is held jointly by Chester Music Limited and Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany. Reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher.
The Soldier finds himself in the same position as he did during “Airs;” just as he thinks he has finally conquered the ills that have plagued him since his initial encounter with the Devil, he comes to realize that he is ultimately consigned to repeating events and ending up back where he started. Stravinsky would return to this gesture two years later in *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920), another of his compositions that uses block form and repetition as a source of development.\(^{39}\) The chorale-like progression that enters in measures 11-12 have the exact same rotating chord structure of alternating split-third and 9\(^{th}\) chords.

Example 1.10, *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, mm. 11-12

\(\text{Example 1.10, Symphonies of Wind Instruments, mm. 11-12}
\)

\(\text{Oboe}\)

\(\text{Cor Anglais}\)

\(\text{Horn in F}\)

\(\text{Horn in F}\)

\(\text{Horn in F}\)

\(\text{Tuba}\)

---

\(\text{39}\) Jonathan Cross notes that the interaction amongst the segments that contribute to the mosaic like configuration of *Symphonies* “operates horizontally (successively) rather than vertically (simultaneously),” as opposed to the superimpositions I have alluded to within other works. Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy*, (New York: Cambridge University, 1998), 34.
In the above example, the rotations show that the harmonic indistinctness of the split-third chord’s interaction with the internal repetitions of the 9th chords smaller within a particular block. This chordal movement is part of the overall static effect lamented by Stravinsky’s detractors and the aural ambiguity could lead one to a conclusion that produces thoughts of instability and nondevelopmental sequences. Yet, it is exactly this repetitive motion that contributes to the continuity: the shifting of blocks in *Symphonies* allows the material to connect on a larger scale while the repetitions in the “Grand Chorale’s” personify an equivalent spirit, albeit with more programmatic connotations. Referring to connective elements that contribute to temporal obscurity, Christopher Hasty remarks that

> We are accustomed to thinking of a continuous change as one involving no internal articulation, no discrete stages. . . . But when we begin thinking of the complex connections of apparently discrete units, connections that give rise to melody, phrase . . . the mark of continuity does not reside in the absence of internal articulation, but in the unification of events.\(^\text{40}\)

Hasty’s discussion is largely concerned with the role of internal discontinuities as they relate to an overarching, structural goal. Viewed as individual entities, he argues that events in time can present themselves as disconnected, but when examined as a whole, their function becomes more apparent. Hasty also discusses the role of continuity and succession as events in time, arguing that

Time is neither a substance independent from events, nor itself a change or process. It is rather a form of relationship between events. And this relationship or order is expressed in the terms before and after. But the apprehension of difference, far from separating discrete events requires that we bring events together into a relation, otherwise we could not be aware of the difference.  

It is this viewpoint that grounds an alternative approach to viewing Stravinsky’s discontinuities not as incoherent ramblings, but as a new way to view development as “active stasis.”

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41 Ibid., 60.
CONCLUSION

Stravinsky’s search for an identity apart from his predecessors mirrored Russia’s plight in its struggle to establish itself as a nation with its own artistic culture at the turn of the century. His Janus-faced gazes to the past and future were simultaneously nostalgic and prophetic, and his music emulated the changing character of his innermost self along with the shifting musical epochs in which he composed. Although he would not resign himself to repeating the efforts of common practice, Stravinsky realized that he could tap into some of the greatest conventions of repetition from his predecessors while creating an entirely new experience free from the strident rules of the same period.

Arnold Schoenberg, a pedagogue who frequently commented on compositional aesthetic, gives differing opinions about the merits of repetition. Although the composer primarily concerns himself with espousing his beliefs in the avoidance of repetition, Schoenberg provides commentary on repetition and the monotonous tendencies of utilizing it too often, saying “[t]oo many repetitions of tones or melodic figures are annoying, if they do not exploit the advantage of a repetition—emphasis.”\(^\text{42}\) (Italics mine.) In the case of Stravinsky’s music, his repetitions, though seemingly dull as compared to the varied systems of his earlier music and earlier periods, function on a larger level of organization and form building motions. The importance of themes and motives do not gain significance through variation, rather, it is through a continuous

\(^{42}\) Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1967), 116. He also acknowledges that while literal repetition can be monotonous, too much variation can cause musical elements to become disconnected (20).
sounding of unchanged blocks or lines and their resultant positions throughout the work that gives them true meaning.

The primary purposes of this paper were twofold: to address the façade of discontinuity present in *Histoire du soldat* and other related works, and to offer an alternate reading of the musical structures as they unfolded throughout the composition. In detailing some of the approaches to Stravinsky’s repetitive structures, I show a variated narrative that speaks to the nature of his compositional process and the different analytical tools used to illuminate (or discredit) the superficial disjunction amongst thematic elements. Through my analysis of selected movements within *Histoire* and comparative works, I established a connective thread that showed both allusion and structural cohesion through literal repetition. My theory of a “static shift” reveals a deeper understanding of the supposedly meaningless juxtapositions of repeated fragments and offers an alternative lens through which works of a comparable nature can be analyzed. As themes and motives recur throughout *Histoire*, the possibility of Stravinsky utilizing this technique in an effort to bridge sections is very high. Additionally, this analytical approach has explicit implications for many other 20th-century composers who use repetition as a primary vehicle for formal development.

An alternate reading of Stravinsky’s perceived discontinuities may point to the repetitive aspects of his compositions as calculated efforts to establish a new way of experiencing linear intransience. The possibility of the spasmodic characteristics of the composer’s juxtapositions serving as intentional protests against the outmoded models of
the past are not without instance, at least when viewed within a broader musical framework. For example, as it pertains to harmony, we can look to the evolved perception of dissonance within tonal systems based on tertian structures where a work can end on a 9th chord or a suspension can proceed to another harmony without resolution. Just as dissonance can be accepted as consonance without a change in meaning, repetition and interruption could conceivably engender the same response with regard to developmental continuity if any discourse of aesthetics are allowed to run their course.

When theorists speak about “deviations” or “deformations” of tried and true formulaic ideas, it is as if these were truths to be regarded as the highest and most revered practices, and to break away from the models used by musical giants is almost certainly considered treasonous and rebellious. However, why is it that these explorations into the unknown are seldom deemed evolutionary as opposed to the customary labels of being eccentric or abhorrent until a lifetime after the composer’s death? Perhaps this answer lies in our own understanding of what art is supposed to personally communicate and our steadfast desire as human beings to condemn risk that does not offer any immediate cognitive recompense. Stravinsky, by most accounts, was a risk taker, albeit a very calculated one. His compositional process, as seen through various sketch studies, often reveals a man who can see the end in the beginning, and any attempt to drudge a new path was crafted unlike anyone before or since.
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