The Rite Signs:
Semiotic Readings One Hundred Years On

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Abstract

One hundred years on from the infamous premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky's epoch-defining ballet continues to evoke controversy and contention in both musicological and performance circles. Even to call it a ballet is to overlook, or compound, its problematic identity. Throughout its life span, most audiences will have encountered, valorised and identified the work as a landmark of orchestral musical modernism heard primarily, perhaps even exclusively, in concert halls and on audio recordings with not a dancer, theatre stage or set in sight. Still to this day it thus remains one of music's more remarkable split personalities: bifurcated along formalist and contextualist lines by Stravinsky's retrospective and opportunistic assertion that he had written "un oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique."

Keywords: ballet; music; semiotics; Stravinsky; The Rite of Spring.

One hundred years on from the infamous premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky's epoch-defining ballet continues to evoke controversy and contention in both musicological and performance circles. Even to call it a ballet is to overlook, or compound, its problematic identity. Throughout its life span, most audiences will have encountered, valorised and identified the work as a landmark of orchestral musical modernism heard primarily, perhaps even exclusively, in concert halls and on audio recordings with not a dancer, theatre stage or set in sight. Still to this day it thus remains one of music's more remarkable split personalities: bifurcated along formalist and contextualist lines by Stravinsky's retrospective and opportunistic assertion that he had written "un oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique."[1]

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[1] The terms originated from an interview in which Stravinsky claimed that *The Rite* had been inspired by a musical theme, not as he had formerly stated by a vision of its final dance. Stravinsky went on to say that he had thus written "un oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique" (Georges-Michel 1920 quoted in Taruskin 1997: 370).

With this simple sound bite, Stravinsky replaced his earlier explanation that the idea of *The Rite* first came to him as a primordial, ethnographic vision of a woman enacting its final sacrificial dance, with the claim that the work was first inspired by the syntactic properties of a particular musical idea. This well-documented *volte face* saw a proto-constructivist Stravinsky re-inscribe *The Rite*'s aesthetic ideology and identity away from the originally-claimed anecdotic inception of the music (a narrative ballet emitting referential meaning), towards the architectonic, syntactic properties of the music itself (an abstract concert work foregrounding self-contained, introversive, structural properties). Replete with additive processes, abrupt block juxtaposition, fragmented cellular construction, polyrhythmic and polychordal brilliance, the architectonic *Rite* came to epitomise a new brand of twentieth-century musical modernism, eclipsing—almost totally—the more rarely performed, ethnological ballet of the anecdotic *Rite*.

Under these banners of the anecdotic (a ballet *about* a Russian pagan ritual constructed from identifiable folk sources, replete with contextual associations and populated intentions) and the architectonic (the self-referential, unpopulatedsound of pure music), *The Rite*, and Stravinsky's "authorial voice" along with it, has infamously come to embody *two* alternative and contradictory identities; *two* "readings"; *two* "authorial voices." At one extreme these personae are flagships of a great divide in Stravinsky scholarship between new-historicist readings of Stravinsky-as-Russian heir and formalist readings of Stravinsky-as-benefactor of Euro-American modernism; an evolving modernism later defined through a variety of "isms" (abstractionism, objectivism, neoclassicism, cubism); national identities (Russian, Swiss, French, American); and formalist aesthetics bent on treating music as a pure system of sounds isolated from their historical context; a modernism aligned to Stravinsky that has been critiqued by Richard Taruskin (1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2003) for its marginalisation and estrangement from the past traditions of nineteenth-century "romanticism." Indeed numerous polarised conceptions—or Stravinskianisms—flow from and through *The Rite* as a riven work: music-*as*-theatre vs. music-*as*-sound; music-*for*-theatre vs. music-*for*-concert hall or sound recording; music-as-embodied performance vs. music-as-score or "definitive" recording; music-for-interpretation vs. music-for-execution; music-as-humanised vs. music-as-dehumanised machine. Stravinsky's infamous self-contradiction over the origins of *The Rite* was thus a microcosm of his—and, by extension, much of twentieth-century music's—macro aesthetic world.

It was only towards the end of the century that Taruskin—*pace* those who saw the architectonic *Rite* as "the beginnings of a musical language" (van den Toorn 1987)—began to expose the mythic status of its perceived radicalism, relocating the work in both its anecdotic theatrical context and its etymological musical history. His compelling arguments that Stravinsky's innovative syntax should more accurately be understood as the "maximalisation" of past nineteenth-century Russian musical techniques rather than anything genuinely radical (Taruskin 1995, 2003, 2005) have brought about a rethinking of Stravinsky that fundamentally challenges the architectonic assumptions once held about it.

The timing of Taruskin's corrective work of the 1990s nonetheless meant that Stravinsky's retrospective re-engineering of *The Rite*'s conception and ideology held sway for much of its life. Its place as *the* emblematic icon of musical modernism in the wake of nineteenth-century Romantic expression set a formalist tone for the twentieth-century; a tone that would run its course with increasingly detached, semantic objectivity through neo-classicism and serialism both for Stravinsky and the prevailing European-American contemporary music scene. As Taruskin has argued (1995), *The Rite*'s conversion was motivated by a number of factors: a falling out with Roerich, his ethnographic advisor and scenographer for the ballet; an attempt to maximise financial revenue from the work in austere times—promoting his own gramophone recording and concert hall conducting career in the process; and an attempt to shrug-off an unhelpful Russian past while, exiled, he forged his way onto a European scene looking towards abstract modernism as a way out of the chaos associated both with the chromatic saturation of Wagner's music drama and the political undercurrents of a world war.

One hundred years on, one might imagine, then, that a restorative process—not dissimilar to that advocated by Gritten (2002)—is called for to reinstate *The Rite* to its rightful anec-dotic, balletic and etymological contexts. Indeed Taruskin's historicist musicological work of the 1980s and 1990s has very effectively achieved this already, exposing and debunking the myth of the architectonic, concert hall pedestal on which *The Rite* sat for much of the twentieth century (Taruskin 2003); a pedestal from which it attracted much analytical attention in a sequence of landmark monographs reifying it as the exemplar of new rhythmic (Boulez 1991), octatonic (van den Toorn 1987), and pitch-class (Forte 1987) formalist methodologies. While Taruskin has eloquently and compellingly demonstrated that such restorative processes are necessary correctives to the powerful and numerous Stravinsky mythologies of the twentieth century, such historicist insights are most fruitful, however, when they allow one to apprehend *The Rite*, not as a work in need of restorative care or correction—art historian-like removing the falsely tinted (if not tainted) over-layered pigment of Stravinsky's formalist propaganda—but as a work fundamentally at odds with itself; a work fundamentally in anecdotic–architectonic dialogue with itself. To really understand *The Rite* one has to read the plurality of its signs across these competing and opposed hermeneutic and analytical voices.

This notion of *The Rite* as a meta-dialogised work bifurcated between two strongly demar-cated conceptual identities (audio-visual, semantic, narrative, Russian-ethnographic ballet vs. audio-only, syntactic, abstract, Western-European concert work or notated score) draws on Bakhtin's literary theory notion of double-voiced dialogism formulated in works such as *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin 1981) and *The Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin 1984). In particular, it epitomises what Korsyn—in his application of Bakhtin's theory to Brahms' music—highlights as Bakhtin's concept of "vari-directional discourse": one that pulls in different directions (Korysn 1999). Furthermore, those differ-ing directions belong to, and underscore, aesthetically opposed ideologies: contextualism (expressive, historical, narrative) and formalism (the negation of expression, history and narrative). At this meta-identity level, then, *The Rite* comprises what Bakhtin would term

a dialogised vari-directional discourse. Viewing *The Rite* through this Bakhtinian prism reminds us that, as with Bakhtinian dialogics in general, the key to unlocking genuine hermeneutic insight for the work, is not to seek a hierarchical, colonising, dialectical resolution between these opposed aesthetic ideologies (to read *The Rite* as fundamentally a ballet *or* a concert work), but to allow its competing value systems to converse with, and interanimate, one another in dialogical exchange. One hundred years of reception on from the infamous premiere of *The Rite*, despite Stravinsky's attempt at aesthetic demarcation and conversion, it remains *un oeuvre* that is fundamentally and simultaneously both architectonic *and* anecdotic; *un oeuvre* at odds with itself; *un oeuvre* in constant hermeneutic dialogue with itself.

Music Semiotics & Topic Theory's Architectonic–Anecdotic Dialogue

As one of the most analysed works in the musical canon, *The Rite* is also *un oeuvre* that draws a striking parallel with one of the last, major music analysis methodologies to emerge (somewhat belatedly) in the twentieth century: music semiotics. Like *The Rite*, music semiotics exhibits its own existential methodological split personality between architectonic and anecdotic ideologies. Unlike *The Rite*, music semiotics originated in the architectonic structuralism of the former—epitomised in the 1970s and 80s work of Nattiez's paradigmatic charts (1992), building on Ruwet's earlier methods of distributional analysis (1987)—before undergoing its hermeneutic-semantic drift towards anecdotic topic theory—exemplified in the work of Ratner (1991), Agawu (1991), Allenbrook (1983), Hatten (1994) and Monelle (1992, 2000, 2006). Agawu himself (1999) draws this distinction in music semiotics, contrasting "hermeneutics" (Ratner-inspired topic theory readings of music) and "analysis" (Nattiez/Ruwet-esque neutral level, distributional music semiotics), as a manifestation of music's "ultimately false," "extrinsic–intrinsic dichotomy": music's fundamental polarity between referring outside of itself [the domain of hermeneutics] vs. its self-referential tendency [the domain of analysis]). Agawu further lists "rough equivalents" of this extrinsic–intrinsic opposition: "semantic–syntactic," "subjective–objective," "extra-musical–musical," "extroversive semiosis–introversive semiosis" (Jacobson 1985), "extra-generic–congeneric" (Coker 1972), and "exosemantic–endosemantic" (Dahlhaus 1991). They are in essence all manifestations of Stravinsky's anecdotic–architectonic dichotomy articulated over *The Rite*.

A more detailed discussion of this "hard," analytical, architectonic vs. "soft," hermeneutic, anecdotic split in music semiotics can be found in my earlier article, "On Topics Today" (McKay 2007). As I have argued there, the distinction is a little more nuanced than first meets the eye: it is a common misconception that topic theory seeks to eradicate analytical formalism altogether. In fact its practitioners navigate a precarious path through both semantic interpretation *and* structural analysis. As Cook has observed—in a statement that could equally have been directed to Taruskin's corrective work on the architectonic *Rite*— "what is at stake" in topic theory "is nothing less than the rehabilitation of music as meaning, which a generation of formalism did its best to repress, but failed" (Cook 1996: 123).

Whittall is even more insightful in defining the objective of Hatten's topic theory as "not a complementary 'repression' of formalism" but "a dialogue between it and 'expressive discourse'" (Whittall 1996: 116); a very similar objective to the hermeneutic dialogue I advocate between the anecdotic and architectonic *Rite*(s).

To illustrate what such an interpretative dialogue between these meta-ideological discourses surrounding *The Rite* might look like in practice, I will illustrate three topic theory influenced examples from the score where the interplay of the architectonic and anecdotic is writ large. One of these examples (the "Jeu du Rapt" or "Ritual of Abduction") is borrowed, with some adaption, from an earlier chapter of mine in a collected series of essays in honour of Raymond Monelle's inspiring work on topic theory (McKay 2012). The other two take their cue from the structure of the same chapter which, following the structure of Monelle's last monograph on topic theory (2006), complement this discussion of the hunt topic in *The Rite* with examples of the military and pastoral.

Hunt: "Jeu du Rapt"

I begin on the faint scent of a trail left in Monelle's discussion of the musical hunt. In a brief aside on the exceptional use of topical references to the early signal calls of the *cornet de chasse*, he finds the simple, purely rhythmic horn calls spanning a fourth in the "Jeu du Rapt" section of *The Rite of Spring* (see Figure 1)—"even more surprising" than their "rather astonishing" nineteenth century appearance in Franck's *Le Chasseur Maudit* (Monelle 2006: 37).

Figure 1. Paradigmatic chart of the "Jeu du Rapt" horn call.

The surprise of these calls is twofold: i) The *stikhíya*[2] dialect and primitive ethnography of *The Rite* are unlikely homes for the noble, heroic and aristocratic associations of the hunting topic; ii) The imitation, not of the prototype melodic calls of the much later brass *trompe*, but of the early hunting horn (primarily rhythmic and practical for use in hunting), is an unusual exception to Monelle's rule that musical topics rely on a fundamental separation of signifier from their signified. In other words, the hunting topic is rooted in a musical style seldom, if ever, produced on horns used in horseback hunting. It evoked instead a cultural ideal of the noble, heroic parforce hunt that bore little resemblance to contemporary hunting practices.

> The topic of the hunt … is perhaps the classic case of a separation of signifier and signified in the world of musical topics. … The signifier was a musical style rooted in the calls of the great brass hunting horn, which was a relatively new instrument in the eighteenth century. At the same time, the heroic parforce hunt of the Middle Ages was in decline … much hunting was ignoble, squalid, and cruel during this period. … The cultural hunt—the *chasse écrit*—remained heroic and glorious. (Monelle 2006: 35)

Almost as surprising as Stravinsky's marked use of the horn calls is Monelle's very act of extroversive commentary about the anecdotic *Rite*, identifying and reading a referential topic against the prevailing analytical hegemony of the architectonic *Rite* that seldom sees beyond the constructivist additive processes highlighted in Figure 1. Furthermore, the romance of the *chasse écrit*—even as rendered in Stravinsky's stark, rhythmic calls—seems particularly at odds with either a ballet depicting "pictures from pagan Russia" or a formalist icon of twentieth-century modernism. The "Jeu du Rapt" ("Ritual of Abduction") depicts a hunt, but one in which the quarry is a "wife." Stravinsky translates it, rather innocently, as "Game of Chasing a Girl" but also warns choreographers that it is "a Sabine-type mass-rape and not an action that can be symbolized by a single pair of dancers" (Craft 1969: xxi). With a nod to the anecdotic *Rite*, Hill describes it as "the most terrifying of musical hunts"—before surveying it in purely musical, architectonic, terms as a "struggle to establish rhythmic coherence in the face of every disruption" (Hill 2000: 66). Specifically Hill charts the typical polychordal, octatonic, tritone, irresolvable, "dialogized" (in the Bakhtinian sense) dissonances that are the hallmarks of most tonal analyses of Stravinsky's music, *The Rite* in particular:

> The relationship is triangular: two overlapping complementary harmonies (Eb7 and C7) with the thudding low F#, rhythmically an intruder but still part of the prevailing octatonic collection. …The octatonic geometry of the opening page is particularly neat, the F# at fig. 37 being answered at the tritone by C: thus F#/C act as a hinge linking the opening C7/Eb7 harmonies with the symmetrical response (at fig. 38) on Ab7/B7.A second crisis

[2] Taruskin relates the primitivism of *The Rite* to the aesthetic principle of *stikhíya*: a dialect of "elemental or natural dynamism." It stands in marked, dysphoric, contradistinction to *kul'túra*: the "civilized culture" of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music—the euphoric norm *against* which Stravinsky's modernist language was forged and the more natural home of musical topics explored by Ratner, Agawu, Hatten and Monelle (Taruskin 1996: 951-966).

> (at fig. 45) takes the form of a pincer movement: one jaw consists of superimposed diminished seventh arpeggios in a descending sequence; the other, deriving perhaps from the horns' fifths, is also a sequence, which arrives with logical inevitability on the low F at fig. 46 … Here the harmony, essentially F minor-major, is the final unresolvable collision, with the tritone—C-F# (Gb)—still very evident. (Hill 2000: 66–67)

The "intruder," "pincer movement" and "collision" metaphors of Hill's description play sportingly to the anecdotic notion of the hunt, but this is a gloss on the otherwise pure architectonic analytical structuralism. Boulez's rhythmic analysis of fig. 46 (the "scattering fanfares," as I label the choreographic-music paradigm in the chart below) is equally fixated on unearthing dialogised syntax in the architectonic *Rite*. Describing the "antagonism" when "two rhythmic forces interact" (a simple rhythmic pedal point bass note or chord [B] and the rhythmic-melodic structure [A] "set against it" in five sequences), Boulez summarises the passage in three parts: 1) "group A is mobile, B immobile, and the organization assymetric [*sic*]"; 2) "groups A and B are immobile and symmetrical"; 3) "group B is mobile" and A is eliminated. "There is thus a general post between the two groups as regards rhythmic mobility or immobility, each doing the opposite of the other" (Boulez 1991: 74–75).

These dialogised tonal and rhythmic syntactic accounts of the "Jeu du Rapt" contrast markedly with Roerich's ethnological (anecdotic) conception of the "hunt" as a "Khorovod (singing, clapping, stamping) game ending in exhaustion" (the letter to Nikolai Findeyzen 2/15 December 1912; see Craft 1969: 32–33); one of a number of ancient ceremonial "extramural games leading to exogamous wedding abductions" to facilitate cross-tribal breeding in pagan times (Taruskin 1996: 873). This game of ritual abduction thus appears to have far more in common with the ignoble eighteenth-century form of hunting, the *chasse aux toiles* (the encircled herding of a collective group of game from which numerous quarries are taken *en masse*). Its noble parforce (single quarry, long distance pursuit) counterpart—the conventional topical signified—is ill-suited to Stravinsky's context. Monelle contends that "the dysphoric aspects of the *chasse aux toiles*," however, "are nowhere present in the musical topic"; reminding us that topics are prototypically deployed in euphoric states (Monelle 2000: 62–63) because "the signification of the topic is a myth, a cultural convention that lives not in social life but in the imagination" (Monelle 2006: 95). Stravinsky's calls are perhaps not so far off this dysphoric mark, however. Not in themselves (rhythmic fourths in compound meter), but in their ("Sabine-type mass-rape") theatrical context and alienating musical environment.

Stage Blocking	Stamping Timp & G.C. (♂)	Scattering Fanfare Tr. (♀); & variant (47⁺)	Horn Shriek or Agitation (♂)	Horn Call: synched to thrusting arm 'threat' gesture (♂)	(♀) Fleeing arps. Cl.; (♂) chasing [chords] Vl. & Tr.	(♂)Triumphal tutti capture: arms on necks [notes] *Umïkaniya*	Shimmering string tremolo	(♀) Dim 7th 'sturm und drang' tutti (♀) Horn & brass 5ths	Brutal Ambush chords 'conquest' tutti (♂)
♀B ♂B / ♂A ♀A	37[1] ♂A hunters stamp	37[3] ♀A quarry flee & crouch							
♀B ♂B / ♀A ♂A	38[2] ♂A stamp & face ♀A		38[3] ♂B rotate & face ♀B	40 ♂A move to threaten ♀A					
♀B ♂B / ♀A ♂A		40[2] & 40[4] ♀B move to face ♂B		40[3] & 40[5] ♂A & ♂B threaten ♀A & ♀B					
♂A ♂B / ♀A ♀B X / ♂A ♀B / ♂B ♀A ♀B	40[7] ♂B stamp, facing ♀B		41 ♂A rotate; go behind ♀A		42 ♀A & ♀B chased by ♂A & ♂B	43 Swap quarry; ♂B trap ♀A; ♂A trap ♀B			
♂A / ♂B ♀AB				44 ♂A & ♂B threaten ♀AB			44[4] ♀AB move to centre stage undulating	45 ♀AB cower; ♂A & ♂B surround	
♂B ♀AB ♂A		46; 47[2, 7, 9, 12] ♀AB cannot flee							47; 47[6, 8, 11, 13] 2 of ♂B threaten, lift, turn & throw 2 of ♀A

Figure 2. "Jeu du Rapt" "hunt" paradigmatic chart and stage blocking.

Figure 2 traces the narrative and musical trajectory of the theatrical "hunt," with an outline sketch of the stage blocking (drawn in "house view") from the 1987 Joffrey Ballet revision of *The Rite*. This production attempts to reconstruct Nijinsky's lost choreography, originally devised in close analogue to Stravinsky's music and Roerich's staging (Pasler 1986: 67–81). The broad narrative of the hunt is as follows: i) male "hunters" from groups A and B (rival tribes) pursue their respective female "quarry" [37–42]; ii) A and B males exchange female groups and the men ensnare women from their rival group [43]; iii) the two male groups "herd" both female groups into one, surrounding them from both sides [44–46], before two men from group B lift, turn and throw two women from group A in a closing choreographic act of symbolic conquest [47].

The key musico-choreographic gestures are highly physical and gendered. They include intimidating male "stamping"; "scattering fanfares" (borrowed from *Petrushka*); the horn call (synchronised to thrusting gestures; the men raising both arms and jabbing at the women); fleeing and chasing gestures; and a triumphal homophonic rendition of the *Umïkaniya* folk theme (celebrating the ensnaring of their female quarry, arms locked around their necks).

At odds with the noble ideals of the hunt, the horn calls embody the most threatening male gestures of this primitive abduction ritual. The dysphoria is encoded as much in the choreography as the music. Influenced by Dalcrozian eurhythmics and Roerich's ethnography, Nijinsky devised "'stylised gestures' … based on the physical embodiment of rhythms contained in the music." The dead weight of contorted bodies responds to the gravitational pull of the earth, shattering the illusion of weightlessness sought in traditional ballet (Pasler 1986: 70, 74).

Musical (architectonic) dysphoria is encoded in two principal ways, both markers of the *stikhíya* dialect. Tonally, the horn call mirrors the split subjectivities (euphoric male hunters; dysphoric female quarry) stratified on D–A in a highly dissonant polychord with its surrounding hypostatic agitation on Eb^7 [40] and F^7 [44]. Rhythmically, though ostensibly in 9/8 (a close substitute for the prototypical hunt in 6/8), the horn call is built from Stravinsky's hallmark additive cell structures; each engineered to create maximum variance and unpredictability (see Figure 1).

The "Jeu du Rapt" is thus replete with over-coded rhetorical gestures intent on thwarting all signs of organic *kul'túra*—the natural habitat of the Romantic (parforce) hunt topic. The dysphoric state of Stravinsky's hunt—signalled musically, choreographically and in the uneasy contextual deployment of the horn call—celebrates the terror, not the nobility, of the hunt; a dysphoria encoded in *both* introversive (architectonic) *and* extroversive (anecdotic) signs.

Military/Processional March: "Procession of the Sage"

At first glance or hearing, the "Procession of the Sage" strikes one as having sufficient signifiers of the military topoi to evoke the topic of a processional march. Its opening 4/4 meter at fig. 67 with strong downbeat bass articulation on beats one and three combined with rock steady, regular quaver-beat pulsating timpani are more than enough to offset any dialogised concerns one might have over the asymmetrical bass drum sustaining a *sempre marcato* relative/implied downbeat strike on an undercutting 3/4 waltz rhythm. (One can refer to this as a relative or implied downbeat because its cyclical, repeating ostinato pattern acts as a "surrogate stimulus" (Eco 2000: 356) for a barred meter. As such it enters into dialogical friction with the prevailing 4/4 groupings and time signature environment in which it finds itself, establishing a 4/4 vs. 3/4 vari-directional discourse. Such polyrhythmic frictions can be highlighted using the analytical technique of re-barring Stravinsky's music that surfaced in Van den Toorn's (1988) corrective to Meyer's assertion that much modern (i.e. Stravinsky's) music could be re-barred (Meyer 1956: 119).

As the section progresses to fig. 70, however, the validity of the march topic is brought more concertedly into question when the time signature changes to 6/4 time, even if, as Bernstein observes, "there is not a bar on this page that has anything to do with a sextuple rhythm" (Bernstein 1976: 351). Not that the absence of a 4/4 time signature alone should threaten the military signifier: Monelle cites the famous (and very contemporaneous) example of the 5/4 march meter in Holst's "Mars, the Bringer of War" from *The Planets* as an example of "how a change in the social code" can bring about "a new kind of musical representation" (Monelle 2000: 20). Soldiers may struggle to march in 5/4 but the military, martial qualities of the piece are palpable even without the anecdotic anchorage of its programmatic title.

Monelle does, however, raise an important observation that is pertinent to the distinction between the military march of Holst's "Mars" and the processional march of Stravinsky's "Sage":

> It may be that we should identify another topic, that of the *processional march*, with references to ceremony, solemnity, or high occasions. This is not primarily a military signification … the topic of "processional" march is assumedly in play in many operatic marches: marches for priests (in Die Zauberflöte), for pilgrims (Berlioz's Harold in Italy), for guild leaders (Die Meistersinger). Such pieces tend to be slow, as were most marches before about 1770; the pas ordinaire might be regarded as a primary ingredient of this amorphous topic.

> We may dismiss these types as representing separate genres, however. They are merely the application of a ceremonial style to stately moments. (Monelle 2006: 127)

Indeed, there appear to be fewer overt military signifiers in the "Sage" march, compared, for example, with Stravinsky's slightly later "Soldier's March" of *The Soldier's Tale*, replete with its military hallmark drum ritiriton and marching melody in addition to its "left–right" march step and fanfare flourishes. While the "Sage" march has clear analogues of the latter two military signifiers (i.e. a brass section routed in fanfare style

motives and a percussion section articulating regular step-beat cycles in 4-beat articulations, albeit in relative meters running asymmetrically to the prevailing 6/4 bar line) it steers clear of the clichéd former two—which, as I have argued elsewhere (McKay 2012: 257–258), are present in the "Soldier's March" largely to confirm its parodic qualities through over-coding and "quantitative exaggeration".[3] There is little parody encoded or intended in the "Sage" march, however, and to understand its march step and fanfare military signifiers (albeit within the context of a processional march), one first has to understand its architectonic polyrhythmic construction, replete with multiple subject-ivities—the antithesis of the single, controlling, regulating objectivity of the prototype military—or for that matter processional—march.

Bernstein highlights the architectonic polyrhythmic complexities of the procession as it runs on full steam at fig. 70: "all by itself a whole essay on polyrhythm" built on "the enormous complexity" of its "mathematical turmoil." He charts the polyrhythm as "two sets of rhythms embedded one within the other." (Figure 3 reproduces Bernstein's musical example and Table 1 summarises his analysis.) Set A contains "groupings of fours and eights," superimposed on the basic meter of six (Tubas and Trumpets in differently accen-tuated groupings of four combined with Horns in groupings of eight). Set B contains "groupings of twos and fours, not superimposed over the meter of six, but operating *within* it" (percussion in varied rhythmic groupings highlighted in Figures 3 and Table 1) (Bernstein 1976: 351–357).

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[3] For a discussion of "quantitative exaggeration" of musical signifiers see Sheinberg 2000: 120.

Figure 3. Bernstein's polyrhythm analysis of the "Procession of the Sage" fig. 70.

Table 1. Summary of Bernstein's analysis of polyrhythm in the "Procession of the Sage" fig. 70.

6/4 meter but not a single sextuple rhythm	
SET A Groupings of 4s and 8s	SET B [43] Groupings of 2s and 4s
[40] Tuba fanfare (main motif) regular pattern of 4 beats superimposed over meter of 6	[44] Timpani polyrhythm in itself: 4 (counter-rhythm) against 6 (meter) Steady quavers: i) 4 accents per bar ii) subgroups of 3 iii) against a meter of 6
[41] Trumpets shrieking regular pattern of 4 beats	[45] Bass drum & Tam-tam reinforce the 4 accents
[42] Horns counter-fanfare High register Regular pattern of 8 beats	[46] Guiro reinforces 4 accents But doubles the speed to 8 per bar

	So in a single bar:
	
	6 beats: crotchet meter
	
	12 beats: timpani quavers
	
	4 beats: Timp
	            Bass Drum
	            Tam-tam
	
	8 beats: Guiro

In essence, Bernstein's analysis charts one of the fundamental rhythmic innovations with which the architectonic *Rite* is associated. Passages such as this mark a shift from a Newtonian conception of rhythm—in which musical passages are governed at any given moment by the gravitational pull of a singular, universal meter—to a more Einsteinian notion of the relativity of rhythm—in which multiple (relative) meters, aligned and misaligned with one another coexist in polyvalent dialogue; such that the perception of whether a particular note is on-the-beat or off-the-beat is no longer an absolute but depends on the relative position of the observer. The relative "downbeats" of the tubas' 4/4 pattern, for example, bear no relation to the actual downbeats of the 6/4 barring or the relative "downbeats" of the timpani's triplet-groupings in four, yet it is possible to perceive any of these three rhythmically dialogised voices or multiple subjectivities as the prevailing meter; as if re-barred in their unique time-signature against which everything else would subsequently appear syncopated.

Bernstein's reading of the "Procession of the Sage" as "complexity" and "turmoil" differs notably from Hill's. Hill describes "the march itself" as "some vast turbine in which every part of the mechanism moves with disciplined purpose" (Hill 2000: 69). As with the "Jeu du Rapt," Hill's description seems deliberately inflected with metaphors inspired by reference to the anecdotic *Rite*: machine-like movement with disciplined purpose being the very essence of the march; subjugating multiple subjectivities into a singular governing objectivity—whether that march be military or processional. It is perhaps a slight misreading on Hill's part, *pace* Monelle, conflating the military and processional march into one and the same topoi. Yet the "Sage" march appears to be so dialogised: a kind of bi-isotopic military and processional march simultaneously at play. It likewise appears to be simultaneously in Bernstein's dysphoric Dionysian state of complex turmoil (leaving you "all but out of your skin with polyrhythmic ecstasy") (Bernstein 1976: 355–357)—and Hill's euphoric Apollonian state of "disciplined purpose"; both simultaneously a march and the negation of a march; both simultaneously a military and processional march.

To this extent, the "Procession of the Sage" constitutes an "allotropic" march. (I have previously applied the concept of allotrope—borrowed from chemistry to indicate the property of certain elements to exist in two or more distinct forms: e.g. carbon exists within nature as graphite and diamond—in a reading of Piece No. 2 of Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* as simultaneously both quartet and anti-quartet) (McKay 2003: 502). Here the "Procession of the Sage" appears allotropic both from its anecdotic and architectonic perspectives. As a processional march, it is somewhat dysphoric[4] and marked[5] for its failure to observe anything approximating the "'grave'… tempo of about 60 beats to the minute, the normal *pas ordinaire* pace" Monelle associates with the prototypical processional march (Monelle 2006: 127–128). On the contrary, its "complex turmoil" of polyrhythms with competing asymmetrical accents on virtually every beat create instead the impression of musical chaos—one of the moments Myaskovsky referred to as "sonic porridge" while disparaging Koussevitsky's failure to conduct the work adequately (Myaskovsky quoted in Taruskin 1996: 1023). The march is less a stately procession, more the Dionysian excesses of an uncontrollable carnival.

The architectonic musical sound world is thus fundamentally dialogised with the anecdotic notion of a procession of a sage. Even the visual counterpart witnessed in the choreography of the "procession" undermines any sense of the *pas ordinaire* prototype processional march topic articulated by Monelle. Turning again to the Joplin revision as the nearest marker of Nijinsky's original choreography, highlights a simple two-part choreographic interpretation. Drawing on the stable 4/4 meter and steady timpani quaver articulation, Fig. 67–70 is the most overtly processional moment but here prototypical grand spectacle or solemnity gives way to hobbled dancers physically propping up a visibly frail, elderly

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[4] For a discussion of topics employed in their euphoric and corresponding dysphoric states, see Monelle, 2000: 62–63.

[5] For a discussion of markedness theory in music, see Hatten 2004 and 1994.

Sage. They break away at Fig. 70, first to an encircling strutting motion before the entire cour de ballet fitfully convulse as if undergoing some form of Dionysian, shamanic possession. Nijinsky's choreography here brings to mind Harvey's reading of *The Rite* (or more specifically Stravinsky's authorial voice within it) as having "connotations of shamanism, of Dionysian ecstasy … in a trance, possessed" (Harvey 1999: 18–19). It also resonates well with Bernstein's sense of polyrhythmic turmoil, but it dialogises itself with Hill's more Apollonian reading of the march topic as a "vast turbine in which every part of the mechanism moves with disciplined purpose."

Here again what is called for in hermeneutically reading the "Procession of the Sage" is a dialogical exchange between the competing architectonic analysis of its polyrhythm (itself double-voiced between notions of "polyrhythmic ecstasy" and "disciplined purpose") and the anecdotic interpretation of its march topoi (itself double-voiced between the military and the processional encoded as dysphoric versions of both).

Pastoral: Part I "Adoration of the Earth" Introduction

The literature on Stravinsky's pastoral topic is more extensive than that of the hunt or military, as is the composer's use of it. Cone (2009) mentions the early genre works—*The Faun and the Shepherdess*, the wordless *Pastorale* for soprano and piano (reformulated into the *Duo Concertant*'s *Dithyrambe*)—as well as the *Pastorale* in Scene 2 of *L'Histoire du Soldat* (which emits a dysphoric bass drone on a C-B seventh in place of the conventional "pastoral" perfect fifth). Chew (1993) reads *The Rake's Progress* in pastoral terms; as does Strauss (along with other later Stravinsky works), though the latter's concept of pastoral is rooted firmly in an introversive signifier (a "clash of A major/minor and C/C#"); a private idiolect far removed from the stylistic commonplaces of topic theory (Straus 1991, 2001: 16).

As for *The Rite*, a primitive version of the "pastoral" is heard in the mock Ukrainian *dudki* (the peasant horns and pipes of wood and bone) of the famous bassoon opening. Again this confirms Monelle's caveat on the separation of signifieds from signifiers. The topical prototype for the shepherd's pipe is the misappropriated flute (a surrogate for the ancient panpipe *syrinx*). The actual shepherd's instrument, the *aulós* or *tibia*, is closer to an oboe or shawm (a double reed instrument of great power, usually played in pairs and very hard to blow). This instrument is nearer to Stravinsky's *dudki* than the soft, caressing flutes Debussy and Mallarmé imagined their pastoral fauns to play (Monelle 2006: 207–208). Though more practical in shepherding, powerful reed instruments are seldom reflected in the pastoral topic. *The Rite*'s mock *dudki* pipes—evocative of nature's primordial awakening of spring—are therefore in breach of topic theory convention by rooting themselves more in social ethnography than cultural imagination. As with the "Jeu du Rapt" hunting horns, this is again a dysphoric topical reference at play in Stravinsky's native *stikhiya* dialect: the usual *kul'túra*: signifiers of musical pastoralism (perfect fifth musette drones,

6/8 dotted Siciliana rhythms and simple scalic melodies moving in step) are notably absent; replaced here with an obsessively fixed, repeated sustained C falling to A (a linear surrogate stimulus for a vertical bass drone, set on a minor third in place of the musette's fifth). This displacement of topical conventions with a *stikhíya* dialect grounded in social ethnography comes as little surprise given *The Rite*'s anecdotic origins as an ethnological ballet under the guidance of Roerich. Nonetheless, this ungrammaticality of rhetorical topic constitutes a stylistic analogue of the syntactic "dissonance" of Stravinsky's polychordal, polyrhythmic, dialogised language.

This turn to social reality in place of topical pastoral evocation is by no means unique to *The Rite* in Stravinsky's output. An actual shepherd resides in Act 2 of *Oedipus Rex*. His simple, pastoral aria at first conceals its dysphoric state. The drone is not that of a prototype zampogna (the Sicilian peasant shepherd's instrument) or musette (the refined, delicate, pastoral-imitating instrument of the French nobility) but a curious ranz des vaches (the traditional alpine horn music of Swiss herdsmen) (Walsh 1993: 53). As with *The Rite*'s mock *dudki* pipes, the shepherd's pipes of *Oedipus Rex* highlight Stravinsky's marked predilection for substituting conventional topical evocation with social reality: an off-the-peg pastoral signifier deracinated from the Alps to Ancient Greece. The deep percolating double reeds of the bassoons in the Shepherd's aria—a marked contrast in register to the high asthmatic bassoon of *The Rite*'s "Adoration of the Earth"—better reflect the shepherd's *aulós* pipes of Sophocles' time than would pastorally figurative flutes.

Of course, Stravinsky's turn to social reality in *The Rite* may well have been inspired as much by earlier Russian stage music as it was by folkloric echoes, as Taruskin has keenly observed. Citing the "*leit-timbres*" of the woodwind colours in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada* and *Snegurochka* ("springtime fable") he quotes Rimsky's use of a stage band "to represent the peasants' horns (*rozhki*) and reed pipes (*dudki*)," noting that Rimsky "even prefaced his latter opera with an Introduction that depicts the awakening of spring" through a "process of formal growth by the progressive accrual of timbrally contrasting motifs." He thus concludes that the influence "must have been in the back of Stravinsky's mind as he composed the Introduction to Part I of his ballet" (Taruskin 1996: 934).

The extroversive referential style of Stravinsky's primitive *dudki* pastoralism is only part of the hermeneutic picture. This anecdotic conceit is fundamentally dialogised by the architectonics of the passage. Two landmark analyses in particular have foregrounded the "hard" introversive semiosis of these evocative opening phrases not for their extroversive signifiers, but as an introversive paragon of linear additive construction; a kind of "pure sign" structuralist mechanical counter to their "referential" lyrical pastoralism[6]: Boulez's detailed, cell-structure, rhythmic analysis (Boulez 1991: 60–62) and Nattiez's (1975: 281–285) subsequent, Ruwet-inspired, paradigmatic distributional chart analysis of Boulez's cell sequences (reproduced in Figure 4).

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[6] Agawu (1991: 23) draws the distinction between extroversive referential signs of musical style and introversive pure signs of musical syntax.

Figure 4. Nattiez's paradigmatic distributional analysis of additive processes in the Introduction to the "Adoration of the Earth" (part 1).
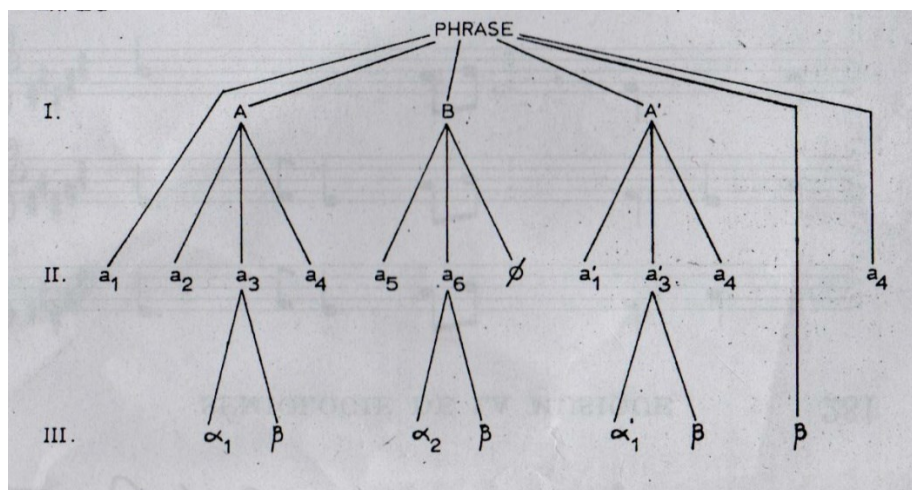
Figure 4. Nattiez's paradigmatic distributional analysis of additive processes in the Introduction to the "Adoration of the Earth" (part 2).

Boulez's analysis of what he terms "fragment I"—the first four cells (a1, a2, a3 and a4 (as reproduced in Nattiez's charts shown in Figure 4)—alone methodologically dialogises Stravinsky's compositional processes, conflating his native Russian principles of additive, asymmetrical sequences with serialist terminology and ideology: observing that "a4 is symmetrically a retrograde—in sound-time, that is—of cell a1, however, with a rhythmic acceleration in a4 which distinguishes them, as does the number of units. On the other hand cells a2 and a3 are related by inversion in sound-time and by symmetry in sound-space." He further observes that there is an "increasing number of unit values which supports these structural symmetries and parallelisms" (a Stravinskian additive process hallmark) and that "no value or subdivision in any one cell is repeated in any other" (a Stravinskian trait of juxtaposing cells with variability and unpredictability) (Boulez 1991: 61–62).

Nattiez's paradigmatic alignment of Boulez's analysis better discloses the iterative, additive, permutational processes at play in the bassoon melody: a kind of lyrical monody version of the abrupt block juxtaposition principle of construction essayed in the first tableau of *Petrushka*, Stravinsky's previous ballet. The processes of altered repetition in Stravinsky's mock *dudki* pipes draw obvious parallels with those highlighted in Nattiez's paradigmatic analysis of Debussy's *Syrinx* (Nattiez 1975: 330–354) and carry with them a similar quasi improvisational feel befitting its pastoral topic; albeit one dialogised against the constructivist precision engineering articulated by Boulez and Nattiez's analyses.

The sophisticated, architectonic, mathematical, calculated engineering of the bassoon's opening cell structures thus dialogise against the free improvisatory feel of the anecdotic, dudki pipe's primitive pastoralism. Rather like siding with one particular meter over another in a polyrhythmic texture such as the "Procession of the Sage," to hear one without the other of these irreconcilable sound worlds is to misapprehend the music; to misread *The Rite*; to glimpse only a partial picture of *The Rite*'s signs.

Conclusion

This brief survey of *The Rite*'s introversive, "hard," architectonic, analytical, "pure" signs and its extroversive, "soft," anecdotic, hermeneutic, "referential" signs highlights both the dialogised and dysphoric states of Stravinsky's hunting, marching and pastoral topics. Their substitution of social realism in place of imagined evocation and their deviation from the prototypical norms of topical conventions highlight semiotic mechanisms by which expressive *kul'túra*: utterances are subsumed into Stravinsky's *stikhíya* dialect. The dialogised dysphoria of these (prototypically euphoric) topics encodes itself in a number of inter-animating ways: syntactic, stylistic and contextual; and through differing rhetorical strategies. The expressive import of these musical moments conveys differing semantic meanings: the terror of a group hunt *en masse*, the processional march and Dionysian ecstasy honoring the Sage and the mock *dudki* pastoral primitive evocations of spring, all of which dialogise with the syntax of paradigmatic, additive construction and polyrhythmic complexity. One hundred years on, *The Rite* is neither an architectonic nor an anecdotic work but an allotrope of the two in constant dialogical interchange. *The Rite* signs through both introversive and extroversive semiosis. The challenge for future hermeneutic readings of Stravinsky's masterwork over the next one hundred years is to simultaneously grasp and grapple with its pure and referential signs, moving beyond attempts to privilege one over the other to better comprehend the primitive sophistication of its anecdotic–architectonic dialogues.

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