The lives of Marcel Proust (1871–1922) and Maurice Ravel naturally invite comparison with one another, and not only because they created bodies of work that place them at the pinnacle of their respective arts. Born four years apart, these two inveterate Parisians were both mummy’s boys, dandies, queer (arguably), salon denizens, night owls, and insomniacs that showed admiration for each other’s work in two gestures: Proust wanted Ravel’s *Pavane pour une infante défunte* played at his funeral, while Ravel had Proust’s complete, multi-volume novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* bound in hardcover and incorporated into his compact but select library at Montfort-l’Amaury.\(^1\)

Subsequent efforts to sketch out a shared life are soon confounded, however, as there appears to be no record of their interaction. In fact, the only mention of one in the correspondence of the other appears in a letter Proust wrote to Mme Jean Cruppi in 1914. Apparently responding to her request that he introduce her to the editors of the *Nouvelle Revue française*, Proust refers her instead to Ravel, the composer of ‘remarkable’ music whom he understands to be both friendly with her – she was, after all, the dedicatee of *Noël des jouets* and *L’Heure espagnole* – and well respected at the *Nouvelle Revue*.\(^2\)

If this polite and expedient reference to Ravel betrays little of Proust’s estimation of Ravel, hope for further revelation surges momentarily upon learning that the artists’ paths crossed posthumously in the figure of Céleste Albaret. Albaret, Proust’s maid and confidante during the last decade of his life, gave tours of Ravel’s home in Montfort-l’Amaury and tended to its upkeep when Ravel’s brother, Edouard, could no longer do so. Unfortunately, her tour commentary did not reveal any relationship or artistic affinity between the two, but rather was said to have focused on Proust almost to the exclusion of Ravel!\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Proust’s semi-autobiographical novel seemingly formed part of Ravel’s collection of memoirs by French authors, which also included those by Bourrienne, Madame de Caylus, Madame d’Epinay, Chateaubriand, and Saint-Simon.


\(^{3}\)Albaret mentions this episode briefly in her autobiographical reminiscences: ‘For several years I was occupied with the Musée Ravel at Montfort-l’Amaury, near Paris. People came to see me there; I confess to having spoken more about Mr Proust than Ravel to
Rumours persist to this day that Proust disliked Ravel, in which case Albaret’s unusual conduct as a volunteer guide for what is now the Musée Maurice Ravel might have demonstrated partisanship more than ignorance or lack of interest in the composer’s life. However, instead of giving undue credence to these rumours – which may derive as much from Proust’s close friendship with Reynaldo Hahn (1875–1947), a rival composer and the author of some trenchant reviews of Ravel’s music, as from any deep-seated feelings on his part – it is better to devote our attention to the sole passage in A la recherche in which Proust refers to Ravel.

**Ravel’s cameo in Proust**

The passage in Time Regained in which Proust refers to Ravel begins with a young man listening to a recital who rises to find another seat after no longer being able to tolerate the distraction caused by the narrator chatting nearby with the Duchess of Guermantes. Having lost his place in the programme, he mistakenly believes that Beethoven’s ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata is a composition by Ravel, ‘which he had been told was as beautiful as Palestrina but difficult to understand’. As he moves around in the darkened room in search of a different seat, he accidentally bumps into a writing desk. Rather than being troubled by the noise, the other audience members are actually happy to be relieved from the ‘torture’ of having to listen ‘religiously’ to the Beethoven. After witnessing the ‘unfortunate little incident’ that they helped to cause, the narrator and the Duchess leave the room, which brings the scene to an end.

Clustering together several ironies, this quintessentially Proustian comic vignette illustrates how certain social rituals and circumstances can transform music from a source of pleasure into a source of obligation. The first irony arises from the discrepancy between the serious young man’s imposition of these obligations upon himself and his basic inability to fulfil them, since he apparently cannot distinguish Beethoven from Ravel, much less evaluate the complex claim that the latter is ‘as beautiful as Palestrina’. The second results from his inadvertent collision into the desk, which ends up...
disrupting the reverential silence the was trying so hard to honour and pre-
serve. The third stems from the audience’s surprising reaction to this distrac-
tion, in responding with relief rather than the exasperation that the young
man had felt toward his chatting neighbours. With these three ironies, Proust
exposes the tyranny which such rituals exert over salon audiences that want –
and can cope with – little more from music than mere diversion.

While this passage may appear in a work of fiction, it nevertheless shows a
reasonably good understanding of Ravel’s music. The fact that Proust chose
to contrast Ravel’s music with Beethoven’s – represented here by the middle-
period ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata, an especially non-Ravelian piece for its earnestness,
ferocious physicality, and symphonic proportions – demonstrates a clear
awareness of its aesthetic profile.6 Next, the notion that Ravel’s music is ‘as
beautiful as Palestrina but difficult to understand’ is not simply a red herring
introduced to tax further the young man’s musical understanding for
the reader’s amusement, but rather seems to have held a particular meaning
for Proust, a clue to which appears in his ‘Fragments of Commedia dell’arte’.
Here, Proust explicitly associates Palestrina with an ‘artificial return to
nature’ – a renunciation of modern music (including Wagner, Franck, and
d’Indy) for Renaissance and Baroque music, represented by Handel, Haydn,
and Palestrina.7 Thus, the comparison between Palestrina and Ravel in A la
recherche seems to imply a rejection of Wagnerian influence and an ‘artifi-
cial return’ to more traditional tonal materials and forms, both indisputable
aspects of Ravel’s work. The additional qualification that Ravel’s music is
more ‘difficult’ than Palestrina’s places this commentary squarely within the
contemporary discourse surrounding Ravel’s music, which often cracked its
teeth on the novel harmonies of such works as Miroirs and the Valses nobles et
sentimentales.8

Imagination and transposition

In comparison to the slim pickings offered by biography and commentary,
aesthetics and poetics provide more opportunities to interrelate Ravel and
Proust. Nourished in their youth on trends alternately dubbed Symbolism,

6In case we might think that Proust was
implicitly contrasting the ‘Kreutzer’ with
Ravel’s Sonata for Violin and Piano, we
should recall that the latter had not yet been
composed when Proust died in 1922.

7Marcel Proust, ‘Fragments of Commedia
dell’arte’, in The Complete Short Stories of
Marcel Proust, compiled and translated by
Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Cooper
Square Press, 2001), 53.

8Philip Kolb, the editor of Proust’s collected
correspondence, has identified this episode
as an example of Proust ‘satirizing a type of
snobbery of the musical avant-garde’, and
has grouped it with similar scenes from The
Guermantes Way and Cities of the Plain.
My brief explication tries to show that its
citation of music is not merely satirical, but
in fact demonstrates substantial musical
understanding. See Proust, Correspondance,
vol. IX [1909], 239.
Decadence, or Aestheticism, both prized the imagination as the artistic faculty and prerogative *par excellence*. A direct declaration of this principle appears in ‘Contre Sainte-Beuve’, where Proust asserts that ‘when the art that claims to be realistic suppresses that inestimable truth, the witness of the imagination, it suppresses the only thing of value; and on the other hand, if it records it, it enriches the meanest material’.

In Ravel’s work, the same principle manifests itself in an unabashed love for travelling back in time (the antique), across great distances (the exotic), and into fantastical spaces (the oniric, or ‘dream-like’); the opening song of the cycle *Shéhérazade*, which invokes ‘Asie’ three times before launching forth into a litany of literary and musical orientalisms, is an exemplary instance of the Proustian ‘place-name’, which typically evokes vivid associations and arouses pungent desire despite – or, rather, because of – its dissociation from real, first-hand experience. The great value that both artists ascribed to the imagination led them, on the one hand, to devalue the utilitarian for its contact with vulgar reality and, on the other, to entertain the idea of translating aesthetic experience from one medium into another, especially the audible. Near the beginning of *The Captive*, the narrator echoes in the following passage earlier sentiments made by Swann about sound being able to reflect ‘like water, like a mirror’.

There were days when the sound of a bell striking the hour bore upon the sphere of its sonority a plaque so spread with moisture or with light that it was like a transcription for the blind or, if you like, a musical interpretation of the charm of rain or the charm of sunlight. So much so that, at the moment, as I lay in bed with my eyes shut, I said to myself that everything is capable of transposition and that a universe that was exclusively audible might be as full of variety as the other.

Inherent in the neologistic title of Ravel’s *Sites auriculaires* – an early work for two pianos which contains its own bell music in the movement entitled ‘Entre cloches’ – Ravel’s ambitions for transposing the nonmusical into music became explicit in his comments on two related works: the opera *L’Heure espagnole* and his setting of five prose poems from Jules Renard’s *Histoires naturelles*, which served as preliminary studies for the opera. On 12 January 1907, the day that the composer’s *Histoires* were to be premiered, Ravel visited Renard to invite him to the concert, allegedly remarking that he had tried ‘to say in music what you say in words when you’re gazing at a tree’. Ravel’s comments in an interview that appeared a few days prior to the May 1911


10This remark is made by Swann in *Within a Budding Grove* as he notes how the personal meaning for him of Vinteuil’s sonata – and particularly its synecdochical petite phrase – has changed over time. See Proust, *Remembrance*, vol. I, 575.

11Ibid., vol. III, 78.

premiere of *L’Heure* acknowledge more strongly the mediating presence of language in the opera’s gestures towards transposition. There, Ravel says that he intended the harmonic setting of the libretto ‘to seem funny, like puns in language’, a notion he then elaborates by claiming that he even ‘heard funny’ while composing it – a deliberate wordplay that captures the strangeness of intermedial transposition by not only describing it, but also emulating it.  

**A penchant for pastiche**

Proust and Ravel were two artists so heavily invested in the power of the imagination to transform experience, hybridize media, and transport the self, that it makes full sense that they shared an interest in pastiche, which allows an artist to adopt a historical style and genre in order to inhabit virtually another time and place – and even to slip into the skin of another artist. Although Proust had long dabbled in literary pastiche, his ‘Lemoine’ series, based on a real diamond-fabrication hoax that had taken him and several others for dupes, appeared in *Le Figaro* in early 1908 when he was in his late thirties. Including short pastiches of Honoré de Balzac, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, and Gustave Flaubert, among others, this series followed on the heels of another collection entitled *A la manière de…*(In the Style of…) by Paul Reboux and Charles Müller, which was quite influential in its day; the 1913 edition can be found in Ravel’s library at Montfort-l’Amaury. For his series, Proust chose writers for whom he felt a special affinity, explaining that his pastiches allowed him not only to come to grips with that influence, but also to purge himself of it. In addition, literary pastiche gave him the opportunity to exercise a peculiar talent, which he liked to describe in musical terms:

> When I began to read an author I very soon caught the tune of the song beneath the words, which in each author is distinct from that of every other; and while I was reading, and without knowing what I was doing, I hummed it over, hurrying the words, or slowing them down, or suspending them, in order to keep time with the rhythm of the notes, as one does in singing […] My ear for this sort of thing was sharper and truer than is common, which was what had enabled me to produce literary imitations; since when one picks up the tune the words soon follow.

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While most accounts of this work focus on Proust's pastiche of Flaubert, we can get a sense of Proust's skill in this domain − which he might have called his 'musicality' − by reading an excerpt from one of his lesser-known pastiches. Written about 1911 but unpublished in his lifetime, this pastiche transposes the quotidian scenario of the loss of a hat into the language of the libretto for Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*:

**Markel:** You were wrong to leave this hat! You will never find it again!  
**Pelléas:** Why won't I ever find it?  
**Markel:** We never find anything again… here… It's lost forever.  
**Pelléas:** As we're leaving, we'll just take one − that looks like it!  
**Markel:** There is none that looks like it!  
**Pelléas:** So what did it look like?  
**Markel:** very softly:  
It was a poor little hat  
Like everyone wears!  
No one could have said whose home it came from… it seemed to come from the end of the world…!

[...]

**Pelléas:** What is that noise?  
**Markel:** It's the cars leaving.  
**Pelléas:** Why are they leaving?  
**Markel:** We will have scared them off. They knew that we would go very far away from here and they left. They will never return.  

While the pastiche is a distinct and relatively isolated phenomenon in Proust, it is widespread in Ravel, and can be applied to many pieces he composed during the thirty years that separate the archaizing *Ballade pour la reine morte d'aimer* (c.1893) from the ‘Blues’ movement of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1923–7). Although it is not possible here to survey pastiche in Ravel comprehensively, we can nevertheless gain insight into it by examining his subtle but masterful *A la manière de…* Borodine, which was composed in 1913, together with the somewhat slighter *A la manière de…* Emmanuel Chabrier.

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**Markel:** Vous avez eu tort de laisser ce chapeau! Vous ne le retrouverez jamais!  
**Pelléas:** Pourquoi ne le retrouverai-je pas?  
**Markel:** On ne le retrouve jamais rien… ici… Il est perdu pour toujours.  
**Pelléas:** En nous en allant, nous en prendrons un, − qui lui ressemble!  
**Markel:** Il n'y en a pas qui lui ressemble!  
**Pelléas:** Comment était-il donc?  
**Markel,** très doucement:  
C'était un pauvre petit chapeau  
Comme on porte tout le monde!  
Personne n’aurait pu dire de chez qui il venait… il avait l’air de venir du bout du monde…!

[...]

**Pelléas:** Quel est ce bruit?  
**Markel:** Ce sont les voitures qui partent.  
**Pelléas:** Pourquoi partent-elles?  
**Markel:** Nous les aurons effrayées.  
Elles sauvèrent que nous nous en allions très loin d’ici et elles sont parties. Elles ne reviendront jamais.
The impulse to write a pair of pastiches appears to have come not from Ravel but from his friend and fellow composer-pianist Alfredo Casella (1883–1947). Two years earlier, Casella had performed and published a set of musical pastiches of six contemporary German (Wagner, Brahms, and Richard Strauss) and French composers (Fauré, Debussy, and Franck); the title of this collection, *A la manière de…*, indicates that it drew inspiration from the same literary anthology by Reboux and Müller that had helped to motivate Proust to write his Lemoine sketches.

'Every pastiche,' as Richard Dyer has noted, ‘has its particular group that gets it.’ In the case of Casella’s *A la manière de…*, the intended audience was not simply the broadly literate listener of the time – as Proust’s pastiches for *Le Figaro*, for example, targeted the broadly literate reader of the time – but more specifically those in attendance at the concerts of the newly founded Société musicale indépendante (SMI). In tune with the mandate of the SMI to provide provocative alternatives to the more earnest, tradition-bound programmes of the Société nationale de musique (SN), Casella’s first series flagrantly violates the latter’s tenets of seriousness and originality to offer, instead, spot-on imitations of six major composers that land just on the gentler side of parody – with the possible exception of the brutal Strauss pastiche, entitled tellingly ‘Symphonia molestica’.

By alternating pastiches by Casella with those by Ravel, the second series of *A la manière de…* gives an even stronger sense of the project’s embeddedness within the SMI community by including contributions from its unofficial ringleader, Ravel. At the same time, the juxtaposition of pastiches highlights their individual differences in tone. While Casella’s pastiches of d’Indy (‘Prélude à l’après-midi d’un Ascète’) and Ravel (‘Almanzor ou le mariage d’Adélaïde’) continue unapologetically the parodic practice of the first series, Ravel’s pastiches of Chabrier and Borodin are better described as homages. For one reason, they unfold and develop just as smoothly and sweetly as they taper off, as if they issued from nostalgic reverie upon their models. For another, they bear witness to the artistic genealogy both of Ravel and of the generational subset of composers to which he belonged, a group well represented within the founding committee of the SMI.

Painting a portrait of Chabrier improvising a ‘paraphrase’ on an aria by Gounod, *A la manière de… Emmanuel Chabrier* might seem, at first glance, to be more significant than the Borodin pastiche for its double gesture of homage, with the one nested within the other; certainly it was the more

18Premiering these pieces himself at the SMI concert of 6 March 1911, Casella also used the cover page of their publication to dedicate the first series to Fauré and the other members of the SMI’s committee, including A. Z. Mathot, the committee’s secretary who published both series and whose long-standing musical coterie had formed the basis for the society’s founding membership.
popular of the two pastiches at the premiere performance, where the audience called for its encore. Upon closer inspection, however, we cannot so easily dismiss *A la manière de… Borodine* as the ‘purely superficial’ rendering of the Russian composer that one of the concert’s reviewers would have us understand it to be. Granted, the opening phrase of this *ABA*, as reproduced in Example 3.1, does cluster together elements typically associated with Borodin: pedal points, a gently undulating melody, and a streak of chromaticism towards the end. These elements belong to the Russian musico-literary topic that Richard Taruskin has identified as *nega*: ‘sweet bliss’, connoting a blend of the erotic and the exotic. As Taruskin as shown, while this topic dates back at least to Glinka’s *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, it reaches ‘maximum strength’ in Borodin, especially in the orientalist Polovtsian music from *Prince Igor*, which Diaghilev and his Ballets russes had helped to popularize in Paris several years before Ravel composed his pastiche.

*A la manière de… Borodine* does not rest content with creating a pastiche of Borodin through general citations of *nega*, however, but strives beyond them in three respects. First, Ravel renders the sound of Borodin even more closely by penetrating its harmonic and melodic details. A good potential model for Example 3.1 is the closing chorus of the Polovtsian maidens from Act II of *Prince Igor* (No. 17 in the Belaieff vocal score of 1889), whose first phrase is reproduced in Example 3.2. The debt of one to the other should be clear upon comparing the two: they both begin off-tonic and swerve into a cadence on the submediant harmony that coincides with a distinctive, descending three-note formula in the melody. The initial chorus of the Polovtsian maidens from Act II (No. 7), one of whose internal phrases (bars 25–8) is reproduced in Example 3.3, supplies a good model for the second half of Example 3.1: both open with a move to the dominant of the subdominant, followed by a series of diminished seventh chords in the upper voices which add pangs of longing to the slow chromatic fall of the inner voice. While these features may participate equally with the pedal points and the melodic undulation in the projection of *nega*, they add a further level of detail that may be even more effective if it remains subliminal.

The second testament to the ambition of *A la manière de… Borodine* also involves modelling on a *nega*-drenched Polovtsian number from *Prince Igor*, but is located instead in the B section of the pastiche. The climax of the piece, which occurs at bar 57 and is reproduced in Example 3.4, seems to be based on the love duet between the daughter of the Polovtsian Khan and Igor’s son...
Michael J. Puri

Example 3.1 Ravel, *A la manière de... Borodine* (bars 1–16)

Example 3.2 Borodin, *Prince Igor* (Act II, No. 17, bars 1–4)

(No. 12), whose pertinent bars – the declaration of their passion for each other at bars 4–9 after rehearsal letter D – appear in Example 3.5. As we can see from the two examples, both moments are marked ‘appassionato’ (an unusual direction in Ravel that immediately suggests external influence or

University Press, 1997), 170. As Taruskin points out, *nega* signified the sensual and seductive Eastern Other for Russian audiences, whereas French audiences would have understood it as representing the Russians in their Eastern otherness.
allusion) and feature a chromaticized series of first-inversion chords that descend stepwise from the dominant to the tonic. The B Section, therefore, is not just an internal episode incorporated for the sake of contrast with the surrounding A sections, but rather offers a complementary perspective on Borodin’s Polovtsian music that exchanges the mass choral sentiments of nega for more intimate declarations of desire. Whether wittingly or not, the climax in Ravel’s pastiche ends up occupying the same relative position as the love duet in Borodin’s opera: both are the hearts that beat at the centre of their respective works.

The careful design of the B section, which cycles through the same phrase four times until the high, delicate tinklings of the initial statement have metamorphosed into the robust outpourings of the climax, is an instance of the

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22 Taruskin remarks of this passage that the bass line ‘gives out one of those complete chromatic descents that signal nega at full sensual strength’: ibid., 176.
third respect in which A la manière de... Borodine commands attention as a pastiche: its seamless commixture of the styles of the two composers. In this case, the initial and final presentations of the B theme are clearly indebted to Borodin, while the theme’s gradual intensification and registral behaviour (in particular, a slow registral descent across its length, coupled with a quick ascent at its end, as in Waltz IV of the Valses nobles et sentimentales) are Ravelian hallmarks. Moreover, the waltz that is A la manière de... Borodine could pass for a member of either the Valses nobles or Borodin’s Petite suite, whereas the abundant use of hemiola in the A sections, as well as the metronomic discipline required by the marking ‘Allegro giusto’, pulls the pastiche slightly closer to Ravel. The coda, which wedges out texturally while attenuating dynamically, is a Mendelssohnian vanishing act that is as characteristic of one composer as the other. In short, Ravel has fulfilled magically in this piece one of the earliest definitions of pastiche: that it be neither an original, nor a copy, but a fascinating tertium quid.

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Example 3.5 Borodin, Prince Igor (Act II, No. 12, letter D+4)

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23Ravel may, in fact, have taken the opening motive of A la manière de... Borodine almost note by note from the beginning of the coda in the Mazurka from the Petite suite, which is also in D, major.

24Dyer cites the following definition of pastiche by Roger de Piles from 1677: ‘Tableaux, qui ne sont ni des Originaux, ni des Copies’: Dyer, Pastiche, 22.
The resurrections of memory

Memory, the third and final topic of this chapter, might very well be the least obvious way to interrelate Proust and Ravel since it would seem to mean different things in the separate contexts of their work. In Proust’s novel, it is primarily a phenomenon that takes place in the mind of the narrator, while in Ravel’s music it manifests itself mainly as an abiding dependence on the distant historical past, most noticeable in his avid use of antique forms: the minuet, the waltz, the pavane, the passacaglia, and the tombeau (with its individual movements). As we will see, however, some moments in Ravel make use of the same trope of memory favoured in Proust: the miracle of resurrection and reanimation, which brings the dead to life and pulls the past into the present. In Proust, the key context for the use of this trope is the *moment bienheureux*, or ‘felicitous moment’.

The *moment bienheureux* results from a chance encounter with a sensation that seems to refer the present to a special moment in the narrator’s past, thereby triggering a ‘search for lost time’;\(^{25}\) instances of such precipitating sensations in *A la recherche* include a stumble across uneven paving stones, the clattering of spoons in a dining room, the glimpse of a book from childhood in another person’s library – and the classic example of the taste of a cake dipped in tea. In the scene involving the latter, the narrator is overcome by vague feelings of nostalgia upon tasting a madeleine soaked in some lime-blossom tea. After two unsuccessful attempts to conjure up the source of this sensation by sheer will, a recollection begins to stir of its own accord. When it finally emerges to reveal a moment from his childhood in Combray, the narrator experiences the past as resurrected in his mind, rather than merely as recollected:

As in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann’s park, and the water lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{25}\)Roger Shattuck defines the *moment bienheureux* as ‘a moment of pleasure and communion caused by involuntary memory,’ whereby one ‘recognizes the past inhabiting the present’: Shattuck, *Proust’s Binoculars* (New York: Random House, 1963), 27. The catalogue of these moments that he offers in *Proust’s Binoculars* (69–79) reappears, in slightly varied form, in an appendix to his *Proust’s Way* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2000).

In addition to associating memory with resurrection, the madeleine scene introduces three further paradigmatic aspects of the moment bienheureux that will prove useful to us when considering similar moments in Ravel. First and foremost, as already suggested in the brief description of the scene above, it provides the moment with a detailed phenomenology. The moment usually catches the subject of memory in the midst of an ongoing process, whose repetition often breeds disenchantment; just before the narrator raises the madeleine ‘mechanically’ to his lips, he describes himself as feeling ‘dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow’. Against this backdrop, the momentary encounter with a past sensation is all the more extraordinary, taking the narrator by surprise and compelling him to devote full attention to it by suspending physical movement, turning his mind inwards and clearing it of distracting thoughts and sensations. As he does so, he sharpens his sensitivity to the feeling of a mystical correspondance between him and the object that caused the precipitating sensation, imagining that it is a soul ‘calling’ out for him to recall it, and thereby deliver it from a state of limbo. Access to any such recollection is possible only through ‘involuntary memory’, which allows the reminiscing individual during the moment bienheureux to re-experience the past in its full, sensual presence, in contrast to ‘voluntary memory’, which, as the author himself described in an interview, ‘belongs above all to the intelligence and the eyes [and] offers us only untruthful aspects of the past’. Although these efforts to remember might very well come to nothing (as in the episode with the three trees near Balbec), in the madeleine scene they eventually succeed after several failures; as the memory gradually nears consciousness, the narrator seems to feel ‘the resistance’ of the long-forgotten memory and hear ‘the echo of great spaces traversed’ as it rises from the murky depths of his psyche. When the memory is finally revealed, the density and richness of the experience that it bears trigger feelings of elation that overwhelm the narrator.

The remaining two aspects of the madeleine scene that make it the paradigmatic moment bienheureux supplement its phenomenology. Firstly, its haphazard occurrence in the life of the narrator does not mean that it occupies a random position within the rhetorical design of the narrative; on the contrary, the madeleine scene is a pivotal event that creates the climax of the introduction to A la recherche while launching simultaneously the main account of his childhood. Secondly, the narrator leaves open the possibility

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27Ibid., 48.
28On the ‘souls’ that ‘call out’ from material objects, see Proust, Remembrance, vol. 1: 47–8, 622, 733.
29This interview, conducted by a reporter from Le Temps in the autumn of 1913, has been translated into English and included in the Appendix to Roger Shattuck, Marcel Proust (Princeton University Press, 1974), 166–72.
30Proust, Remembrance, vol. 1, 49.
for the operations of memory to involve acts of imagination – in other words, for memory to be creative, rather than merely reproductive. His acknowledge-
ment, during the madeleine scene, that the remembering mind is ‘face
to face with something which does not yet exist, to which it alone can give
reality and substance’\textsuperscript{31} expands into more ambitious thoughts towards the
end of the novel. There, he suggests that mnemonic activity offers a general,
heuristic model for poetics, which compels us to make ‘efforts of the same
kind as those that we make to recall something that we have forgotten, as if
our finest ideas were like tunes which, as it were, come back to us although
we have never heard them before and which we have to make an effort to hear
and to transcribe’\textsuperscript{32}.

The most obvious candidates for a Proustian moment bienheureux in Ravel’s
music appear in his score for the Russian ballet \textit{Daphnis et Chloé}. Beginning
work on this piece in 1909 – the same year in which Proust began to write \textit{A
la recherche} – Ravel would later describe this ‘choreographic symphony’ as an
attempt to ‘compose a vast musical fresco, less concerned with archaism than
with faithfulness to the Greece of my dreams’\textsuperscript{33}. On the one hand, the dis-
avowal of ‘archaism’ expresses the divergence of opinion between Ravel and
his librettist and choreographer Mikhail (Michel) Fokin(e) (1880–1942), who
originally wanted \textit{Daphnis} to be as historically accurate as possible, repro-
ducing not only the text of the third-century-CE Greek novel by Longus, but
also authentic rhythms and melodies from Ancient Greece\textsuperscript{34}. On the other
hand, the allusion to ‘the Greece of my dreams’ implies the intermingling of
memory and imagination in \textit{Daphnis}, even the prioritizing of imagination
over memory. As in Proust, the faculty that gives shape to Ravel’s fantasies
about the past is a mnemonic imagination\textsuperscript{35}.

The Introduction (opening–Fig. 4) of \textit{Daphnis} corresponds to the mad-
eleine scene in Proust’s novel insofar as both are not only the first but also
the paradigmatic moments bienheureux within their respective works. The
Introduction falls into two halves (opening–Fig. 2 and Figs. 3–4), each of
which describes registrally an arc. The first half begins as a \textit{creatio ex nihilo}
with an almost inaudible rumble on a low A in the timpani and double
basses. After an indeterminate length of time (with a pause marking), the
music begins to ascend slowly from the A via a series of perfect fifths in the
muted \textit{pianississimo} strings and harp; the resulting sound evokes playfully

\textsuperscript{31}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{32}\textsuperscript{Ibid., vol. III, 912.}
\textsuperscript{33}\textsuperscript{Roland-Manuel, ‘An Autobiographical
Sketch by Maurice Ravel’ 1928, in \textit{Orenstein
(ed.), A Ravel Reader}, 29–37: 31.}
\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{Fokin relates his original intentions for
\textit{Daphnis} in Michel Fokine, \textit{Fokine: Memoirs
of a Ballet Master}, ed. Anatole Chujoy,
trans. Vitale Fokine (Boston: Little, Brown,
1961), 196. (On Fokin, see too the opening of
Chapter 8.)}
\textsuperscript{35}\textsuperscript{Ravel’s alleged description of \textit{Tzigane} as an
attempt to ‘bring the Hungary of my dreams
to life’ (‘\textit{la difficulté diabolique} fera revivre
la Hongrie de mes rêves’) is even more explicit
about the power of the imagination to resurrect
the (imagined) past; cited in Marcel Marnat,
the tuning of a cosmic lyre, whether that of Orpheus or Apollo. At the raising of the curtain midway through the series of fifths, we see an unpopulated Grecian meadow and sacred grove at the same time that we hear the first statement in the muted horns of the primary motive, labelled ‘Appel’ (Call) in Example 3.6a. This undulating motive, which in the first half of the Introduction passes several times between the orchestra and the invisible chorus, introduces into the landscape a mysterious animism that we may relate to Proust’s souls, who call out to be recalled (‘rappelé’) to life. Indeed, the participation of music in the (re)-enchantment of the world is an integral part not only of Daphnis, but also of Ravel’s aesthetic in general, for, as Emile Vuillermoz once mused, ‘The orchestra for Ravel is, in effect, a forest of Brocéliande whose every tree imprisons a fairy.’

The D♯ that marks the end of the series of ascending fifths is the same note that begins the first statement of the ‘Nymphes’ (Nymphs) theme in the solo flute. As is evident from Example 3.6b, the simple, sinuous line of the Nymphes, unfurling within a static harmony and inevitably bringing to mind the opening melody of Debussy’s Prélude à L’Après-midi d’un faune, evokes a shepherd’s improvisatory piping en plein air on a lazy afternoon – a quasi-diegetic music emitted seemingly by the antique, pastoral landscape itself, since there is no actual shepherd in sight. Counteracting the leisurely affect of the Nymphes line is a palpable tension introduced by the first violins

Example 3.6 Ravel, Daphnis et Chloé: thematic material in Introduction
(a) ‘Appel’ (Fig. 1−1)
(b) ‘Nymphes’ (Fig. 1)
(c) ‘Daphnis/Chloé’ (Fig. 2−3)

36Emile Vuillermoz, ‘Le Style orchestral de Maurice Ravel’, La Revue musicale, 6 (April 1925 [special issue]), 22–7: 26. ‘L’orchestre est en effet pour Ravel une forêt de Brocéliande dont chaque arbre emprisonne une fée.’ Brocéliande is the name of an enchanted forest within Arthurian legend.
(Fig. 1ff.): a high tremolo on A, at the octave in harmonics, presented presque imperceptible ('almost imperceptible') at pianississimo dynamic; a piquant dissonance also arises from the tritone between the incipit D♯ of the theme and various occurrences of the tonic A in the accompaniment. As soon as the Nymphes material comes to a close, 'Daphnis/Chloé', the love theme of Daphnis and Chloé, appears in the solo horn (Example 3.6c). Migrating into different instruments and harmonic fields, like the peregrine ‘Appel’, this thematic pairing of the Nymphes and Daphnis / Chloé alternates one more time before the first half of the Introduction comes to an end.

Like the first half, the second begins with a gradual registral ascent (Fig. 3) that culminates in a statement of the Nymphes theme; unlike the static and quiet first half, however, the second is dynamic and climactic. A billowing texture of triplet quavers starts quietly low down in the cellos, but soon increases in volume and register to figure the gradual filling of the stage with young men and women, who carry votive offerings for the Nymph statues in the sacred grove. The arrival at Fig. 4, which features a return to the tonic harmony at the same time that the invisible chorus comes onstage, is superseded three bars later by a climactic harmonic shift that supports simultaneous, fortissimo statements of both the Appel motive in the full chorus and that for the Nymphes in the flutes and trumpets. Each facet of the musical texture seems to correlate to an onstage action: the Nymphes theme coincides with the crowd’s reverence before the Nymphs’ altar, the Appel figure sounds the crowd’s praise of the deities, and the high, scintillating, heterophonic refraction of the Appel motive in the harps and violins swirls around the Nymphes material just as the flower garlands, placed by the young women, encircle the pedestals of the Nymphs. As the texture subsides, the Introduction gives way to the ‘Danse religieuse’ (Fig. 5ff.).

From this overview, we can see that the Introduction not only presents the main motivic-thematic material of the ballet, but also follows the basic phenomenology of the moment bienheureux. Interrupting an ongoing process (the series of ascending fifths), a fascinating event (the sound of the Nymphes theme with its spellbinding D♯, together with the sight of the landscape) engenders a state of enthralment (rhythmic and harmonic stasis in the accompaniment, made suspenseful by tremolos in the high strings and low timpani). Deserted except for a few grazing sheep, the pastoral setting nonetheless seems alive, calling out audibly for recognition and release from its state of limbo (created by the Appel motive and alternating Nymphes and Daphnis/Chloé themes). The stasis, distance, and disembodiment in the first half then yields to the dynamism, proximity, and embodiment of the second as the sound grows, the stage fills, the invisible chorus comes into view, and the texture and tempo are enlivened ‘Animez progressivement’ at Fig. 3).
‘musical time warp’\(^{37}\) fusing the past with the present, the second half crowns this *moment bienheureux* with a climax that is overwhelming in its sublime, synaesthetic fullness.

Similar to its role in Proust’s novel as a ‘starting point’ or ‘foundation stone’ for the narrator’s life,\(^{38}\) the phenomenon of the *moment bienheureux* is crucial to the large-scale structure of Ravel’s most extensive score. The initial resurrection of an idyllic past plays the same role in Ravel as the madeleine scene did in Proust, bringing the Introduction to head while also launching the main body of the work. The Introduction then recurs in altered form in both the Nocturne (Fig. 70) and the ‘Lever du jour’ (Daybreak; Fig.152), which begin, respectively, the second and third panels of this triptych. Like the Introduction, both feature scenes of reanimation: in the Nocturne – whose conspicuous evasion of a climax at the invocation of Pan makes it more of a ‘failed’ *moment* – the three Nymphs are brought back to life, descending from their pedestals to perform a ‘slow and mysterious dance’, while the Lever du jour represents the dawn as the joyous restoration of the pastoral world, along with the even more ecstatic reunion of the couple. In fact, if Fokin’s early draft scenario for *Daphnis* had become its definitive libretto, there would have been an additional scene of reanimation; in this version, Act II opens on a trampled garden which one of the Nymphs restores to life, suddenly and magically, with a simple wave of her hand.\(^{39}\)

The reliance upon *moments bienheureux* in both Proust’s novel and Ravel’s ballet score may lend shape and coherence to the overall design of these extended works, but it also betrays a fundamental anxiety that the past – miraculously made present by the mnemonic imagination – will soon become past once again. Neither artist is oblivious to this threat. When the narrator’s lover dies suddenly in *À la recherche*, he immediately makes a conscious effort to preserve her memory from imminent oblivion, searching in particular for a ‘sweet’ recollection, since he knows it will continue to resonate in his mind ‘like a sort of vibration, prolonged by a pedal’, long after he will have forgotten many other details about her and their lives together.\(^{40}\) In *Daphnis*, just as the concluding, frenetic Bacchanale is about to obliterate all traces of the idyllic romance, Ravel presents us with just such a ‘sweet’ scene to vibrate in our memories: ‘Daphnis and Chloé embrace tenderly’ (‘s’enlacent tendrement’) to a fragment of their love theme (Fig. 195). Valedictions in both Proust and

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Ravel do not forbid mourning, but foster it; after all, if we felt no sadness over the loss of experience, we could not feel the joy of its involuntary recollection in the moment bienheureux. As Proust wrote so famously – a bittersweet truth which applies just as well to the Greece of Ravel’s dreams in Daphnis – ‘the true paradises are the paradises that we have lost’.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 903.