

**WHEN DID STRAVINSKY BECOME A
'NEO-CLASSICAL' COMPOSER?**

TIM BENJAMIN

When did Stravinsky become a ‘neo-classical’ composer?

Stravinsky’s music is widely described in terms of a number of distinct periods¹. These periods may be geographically based, stylistically based, or based on the types and forms of composition prominent in Stravinsky’s output at a given time. Periods were assigned to subsets of Stravinsky’s work while Stravinsky himself was still alive (and presumably working in a subsequent ‘period’), and while he was able to comment on these historical and critical approaches to his work. In this essay, I will examine the extent to which Stravinsky commented upon and clarified definitions of ‘period’ in his work, and will contrast Stravinsky’s commentary with those of a number of prominent writers on Stravinsky. In particular, I will focus on the commonly proposed ‘neo-classical’ period, and will discuss this in terms of key works which lie at the opening boundary of – or otherwise define – the period in question. I will discuss the reasons given by historians and critics for these works’ situation as period-defining works, and consider Stravinsky’s own words in evaluating the extent to which he initiated a new, ‘neo-classical’ period in his output in the years 1914 to 1929. I accept that “Stravinsky’s own words” may not precisely be those spoken by him, and may be edited (for example by Robert Craft), or altered in translation. I have noted in footnotes or in the text where this affects the argument presented herein.

Among the many historians and critics who have written on Stravinsky, I have chosen to limit my survey to four of the most prominent: Walsh, writing in *The New Grove* (2001); Taruskin, in *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition* (1996); Druskin in *Igor Stravinsky: His Personality, Works and Views* (1983); and finally E. W. White in *Stravinsky: the Composer and his Works* (1980) and *Stravinsky’s Sacrifice to Apollo* (1930). Of Stravinsky’s words, I have chosen primarily to consider *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (1939-40), *An Autobiography* (1934), and three of the books of conversations with Robert Craft: *Conversations* (1958), *Memories and Commentaries* (1959), and *Expositions and Developments* (1959).

¹ This assertion is examined and elaborated upon in the essay which follows.

Druskin, in his *Igor Stravinsky*, identifies three periods in the life of Stravinsky:

1. The first three ballets “launch[ing] Stravinsky on his artistic career like a three-stage rocket”².
2. Immediately after World War I and during the 1920s, a “dazzling zig zag of bold, totally unexpected *volte-faces*”³.
3. From the mid-1930s, his “career became more tranquil, a kind of *diminuendo* until the 1950s, when the volcanic forces in him gathered strength again and there was a new eruption”⁴.

Druskin goes further to clarify his position, highlighting stylistic change as the principal factor: “a combination of disparate elements ... a single general characteristic ... imposes unity on the rich variety of figurative and stylistic *trouvailles*”⁵, and then puts dates to his three periods:

1. ‘Russian’: 1908 – 1923
2. ‘neo-classical’: 1923 – 1953
3. ‘late’: 1953 – 1968

One of Druskin’s main reasons for this choice of dates appears to be a desire (in Druskin) to see a ‘15-30-15’-year pattern in Stravinsky’s output. He also claims that geographical change had little influence on these periods:

“The singleness of purpose that marks his music was not disturbed even by the breaks in his existence caused by geographical changes of scene, from Russia to Switzerland during his Russian period and from France to the USA during the neo-classical.”⁶

This view is not in agreement with other commentators, notably Stephen Walsh (below). Druskin does, however, pointing out two “moments of [creative] crisis”, first “around 1920 ... less marked than the second and soon surmounted”, and second beginning “around 1935, [which] was protracted”. Finally he identifies the beginning of ‘neo-classicism’ as a “movement in the two generations ... divided by the catastrophe of the War”. Although Druskin does not cite a work which in his view marks the beginning of neo-classicism in

² Druskin, *Igor Stravinsky*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

Stravinsky, the work that defined Stravinsky’s 1923 (the start of the ‘neo-classical’ period according to Druskin) was the *Octet*; *Les Noces* was also completed in that year.

Stephen Walsh’s period-led approach to writing a history of Stravinsky is probably the most commonly seen among commentators: he describes Stravinsky’s works in chronological order, in the context of primarily geographical changes in Stravinsky’s life. The periods which Walsh identifies are:

1. The early years (1882 – 1905)
2. Towards Firebird (1902 – 1909)
3. The early Diaghilev ballets (1910 – 1914)
4. Exile in Switzerland (1914 – 1920)
5. France: the beginnings of neoclassicism (1920 – 1925)
6. Return to the theatre (1925 – 1934) [and four further periods to]
7. Final years (1959 – 1971)⁷

Walsh identifies a key divide marking the beginning of a fundamentally new (‘neo-classical’) period in 1920, and supplies several arguments to support this assertion, which to a greater or lesser extent are also put forward by the other historians discussed in this essay.

A change of geography and personal situation

The Stravinsky family moved from Switzerland to France in June 1920; after brief stays in Brittany (where the *Concertino* and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* were completed) and with Coco Chanel in Garches, Paris (*Le Sacre* was revised, *Les Cinq Doigts* composed), they settled in Biarritz in 1921, and then finally in France, in Nice in 1924. Walsh argues that a main reason for the relocation to Biarritz – away from Paris – was to escape a string of love affairs, and that the move was for Stravinsky’s “emotional convenience”⁸. Stravinsky was then able to live an open “double life” with Vera Sudeykina, later to become his second wife.

Of the historians surveyed here, only Walsh supplies a detailed account of Stravinsky’s various relocations at this time. As will be shown, these changes were of great importance to Stravinsky’s own views of changes in his life and work.

⁷ Walsh, “Stravinsky, Igor”, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, OUP, 2001

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

An adoption of 'classical Russianism'

Walsh identifies Stravinsky's first major work in Biarritz as *Mavra* (1922), which was "consciously designed as a refutation of [the] old neo-nationalist Russian style"¹⁰. The aims of this refutation, according to Walsh, were to reject 'The Five' and to replace their "folkishness" with a "tonal rather than modal" "classical Russianism"¹¹ modelled on Tchaikovsky and Glinka. To quote Walsh in detail, this break:

"...must be regarded as the start of that peculiarly Stravinskian neo-classicism in which decisions about style and language are as much a part of the argument as decisions about material and form ... form *was* content"¹²

These formalist ideas were set out – ostensibly by Stravinsky, although he was not yet a fluent English speaker – in the Brooklyn journal *The Arts* (January 1924), which followed the *Octet* (1922-23). According to Walsh, the *Octet's* models are "more openly those of high-classical German tradition"¹³ (sonata, variation, fugue), and that this work is "more generally regarded as the start of neo-classicism in his music"¹⁴.

Taruskin also argues that a change in Stravinsky's opinion on Russian traditions marked a new period, and also highlights *Mavra* as the key work in this context. Taruskin describes a growing preoccupation with folklore beginning soon after the outbreak of World War I with Stravinsky's 'exile' in Switzerland. He highlights a "Eurasianist" point of view, led by Souvtchinsky, which saw Russia "as a thing apart from Europe"¹⁵, and which was "wholly a product of postrevolutionary emigration"¹⁶. Taruskin argues that Stravinsky's change of allegiance from Rimsky-Korsakov to Glinka and Tchaikovsky was cemented with Soviet consolidation at the end of the Russian civil war. Stravinsky himself gives a detailed analysis of this new

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

position in lectures III and V of *Poetics of Music*, highlighting “two Russias ... of the right and of the left”¹⁷, i.e. those who follow Belyayev and those who follow Tchaikovsky.¹⁸ Stravinsky does not claim membership of either tradition – although he claims a change of identification from Rimsky-Korsakov’s “academicism” to the “mawkish lyricism” of the Tchaikovsky-ists – he claims that he merely “wanted to try [his] hand at the living form [of the Glinka tradition]”¹⁹, and that he “had not the slightest intention of reestablishing (*sic*) this tradition”²⁰.

Taruskin concludes his discussion of a new ‘Eurasianist’ period by claiming *Mavra* as the first new work of the period:

“The pivotal work in this connection was *Mavra*, the real “epiphany” as Stravinsky put it (though he had *Pulcinella* in mind) “through which the whole of my late work became possible”.”²¹

Taruskin cites *Expositions and Developments* as the reference for this quotation from Stravinsky. However, examination of the reference reveals that Taruskin is being perhaps deliberately misleading; Stravinsky is clearly not referring to *Mavra* and the quoted passage is explicitly about *Pulcinella*:

“*Pulcinella* was my discovery of the past, the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible ... it was a backward look, of course, the first of many.”

This quote from Stravinsky is part of an answer to a question, in which Stravinsky does not mention *Mavra* at all; neither is *Mavra* mentioned for many of the preceding and following questions-and-answers.

The selection of *Mavra* by both Walsh and Taruskin as a beacon neo-classical – or at least ‘classical Russian’ – work is not convincingly supported by Stravinsky’s own words in *Poetics of Music* (q.v.). Stravinsky had previously set out his views on Glinka and folklorism six years earlier in *An Autobiography*, citing his “great admiration”²² for Tchaikovsky and “that wonderful line which began with Peter the Great”²³, of which

¹⁷ Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, lecture V

¹⁸ Stravinsky does not specify which of these camps he considers “of the left” and which is “of the right”.

¹⁹ Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, lecture III

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition*

²² Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

²³ *ibid.*

Pushkin is the “most perfect representative”²⁴. Stravinsky identifies the two trends of the “academicist”²⁵ Five and the “bourgeois atheism” of Rimsky-Korsakov²⁶ on the one hand and the “cosmopolitan”²⁷ Glinka, Pushkin and Tchaikovsky on the other:

“I resolutely took up my position beside them [i.e., Pushkin et al.]. I thus clearly defined my tastes and predilections, my opposition to the contrary aesthetic, and assumed once more the good tradition established by these masters.”²⁸

This apparently unequivocal stance is clearly at odds with the position asserted by Stravinsky just six years later (q.v.: “I had not the slightest intention of reestablishing this tradition”²⁹). In neither context does Stravinsky discuss Eurasianism or Souvchtinsky. Later still (in *Expositions and Developments* – 1959) Stravinsky redefines the dedication to Tchaikovsky as “a piece of propaganda”³⁰, saying that he wanted to “protest against the picturesque in Russian music”³¹.

Although it is clear that *Mavra* was an important work in Stravinsky’s projection of himself as a post-revolution Russian, it would also appear that this issue was somewhat on the periphery of Stravinsky’s thinking and did not remain important in his creative mind, and which therefore cannot absolutely and objectively be identified as marking the boundary of a new ‘neo-classical’ period. The position develops rapidly from that held in 1914-15 (“I steeped myself in Russian folk poems”³²) which led to *Les Noces* and *Pribaoutki* and reaches a *ne plus ultra* in *Mavra*. *Mavra*, after all, is Stravinsky’s only entirely original work (*The Fairy’s Kiss* is more of a reworking of Tchaikovsky than an original composition) that is consciously written in this ‘classical Russian’ tradition of Glinka, Pushkin, and Tchaikovsky: the overt ‘classical Russian’ ideal of *Mavra* is conspicuously absent in Stravinsky’s next major works – the *Octet* and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* – lending weight to Stravinsky’s later argument that he had no intention of “reestablishing the tradition”.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Stravinsky & Craft, *Memories and Commentaries*, 1959

²⁷ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, lecture III

³⁰ Stravinsky & Craft, *Expositions and Developments*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

A new career: Stravinsky the entrepreneur

Walsh identifies 1923 as marking another period-defining boundary in Stravinsky's life: this year marked the first première (of the *Octet*, in October at the Paris Opéra) of a work by Stravinsky, conducted by the composer; he then conducted a whole concert one month later. Moreover, Stravinsky began a career as a solo pianist, performing his *Piano Concerto* in May of 1924:

“Thus the music in which Stravinsky claimed to expunge the interpreter, a music that pretended to be dry, mechanical and objective, became the basis of his own career as an interpreter.”³³

It is not clear which claim of Stravinsky's Walsh is referring to here. Stravinsky's lecture VI in *Poetics of Music* is a discussion of the ideal conductor (or more generally, the ideal performer) as executor rather than interpreter:

“It is taken for granted that I place before the performer written music wherein the composer's will is explicit.”³⁴

Indeed, Stravinsky then refers to interpretation as “sin”³⁵. However, while Stravinsky does condemn the interpreter and does praise objectivity, this polemic is not obviously connected with any 'neo-classical' (Apollo/Dionysus) ideology.

Stravinsky's “career as an interpreter” can perhaps be thought of as part of a wider new career as an entrepreneur, with its origins in Switzerland in 1917. Stravinsky describes this time in his life as the “period ... the hardest I have ever experienced”³⁶. The apocalyptic horsemen of death and bereavement, war, revolution, and financial difficulty combined to make the lives of Stravinsky and his fellow *émigrés* tougher than they had hitherto been accustomed. Stravinsky (together with C. F. Ramuz) conceived of *The Soldier's Tale* as a conscious attempt at a new beginning, a business venture planned out in meticulous detail which would bring new prosperity (“we elaborated our project to the last detail, even to the itinerary of the tour, and all this on empty pockets”³⁷). It was unfortunate that the carefully-planned tour was cancelled after the first performance, due to a further apocalyptic horseman: the international Spanish 'flu epidemic of 1918.

³³ Walsh, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

³⁴ Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, lecture VI

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

³⁷ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

The untimely failure of the *Soldiers Tale* tour led Stravinsky to Diaghilev once again, who proposed a project based on the music of Pergolesi, following on from commercial success with a production based on the music of Scarlatti. This project led to Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, claimed by many commentators including Walsh, E. W. White and Druskin as a work to define a new 'neo-classical' style in Stravinsky's music. Stravinsky, however, does not always see *Pulcinella* as such a definitive work. In a self-contradictory passage in *Expositions and Developments*, Stravinsky claims that "*Pulcinella* was the swan-song of my Swiss years"³⁸ (a swan-song – i.e., an end rather than a beginning), and that (with admitted hindsight) *Pulcinella* was a satire: "who could have treated *that* material in 1919 without satire?"³⁹. These slightly dismissive remarks are immediately followed and contradicted by: "*Pulcinella* was ... the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible"⁴⁰.

At the time, however, there is a strong sense that *Pulcinella* was primarily a money-making venture, one which a richer Stravinsky might have refused. In a further effort to raise money, Stravinsky accepted in 1921 what today would be called a sponsorship and endorsement contract with Pleyel, a manufacturer of player-pianos. This netted Stravinsky – in a pun on the 'Pleyela pianola' – "considerable 'payola'"⁴¹. 1920, according to Stravinsky, was "filled with excitement"⁴²: preparations for performances of *Pulcinella*, and performances of *The Soldier's Tale*. There was a clear new beginning in financial, health and emotional terms, and following the resumption of peace, from the nadir of Stravinsky's fortunes in 1917. It was against this backdrop and in the light of a new, entrepreneurial career that Stravinsky "resolved to take [his] *lares* and *penates*"⁴³ to France"⁴⁴ (q.v.) which subsequently manifested itself in the fields of conducting and solo performance, and later still in

³⁸ Stravinsky & Craft, *Expositions and Developments*

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

⁴³ Which, along with *genius*, were the household spirits considered to move house with the family in Roman times.

⁴⁴ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

rearrangements of popular works which would better be able to earn royalties in the USA, which Stravinsky was not able reliably to collect in the 1920s.

A religious conversion

The time in Stravinsky's life which marked a change to a 'neo-classical' period is linked by E. W. White in *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works* to a religious 'conversion' (or, at least, a rediscovery). White does not offer periods with titles such as 'Russian', 'neo-classical', etc., but instead presents a catalogue of works split mainly by geographical era into chapters: "The Russian Exile in Switzerland (1914-1920)" and "The Russian Exile in France (1920-1929)" are the relevant chapters to this discussion.

White concentrates on a "spiritual crisis" which faced Stravinsky in 1923, and quotes Serge Lifar:

"In 1923 we find [Stravinsky] finally repudiating the ballet, his religious convictions no longer permitting him to employ in his art anything so base as theatrical ballet. (Indeed in a letter to Diaghilev at this time speaks of the ballet as "l'anathème du Christ")."⁴⁵

According to White this letter to Diaghilev was never published, and that, moreover, this phrase is "sufficient to show that Stravinsky was then in a state of acute religious tension". When Stravinsky left Biarritz for Nice in 1924, White notes that the important figure of Father Nicholas entered his life (and also his home, on numerous occasions, according to Stravinsky) and comments that this was a key influence on Stravinsky's religious state of mind.

According to Stravinsky, his religious 'conversion' took far longer than simply one year. He had not had a very religious upbringing, claiming his parents were "indifferent"⁴⁶ to the Church, although he notes that "fasts and feasts were strictly observed"⁴⁷ in the Stravinsky household in St. Petersburg. His one memory of religious experience came at school, when in an encounter with a priest Stravinsky recalls that he was "so full of Grace that I was ... overcome"⁴⁸. He further recalls

⁴⁵ Serge Lifar: *Diaghilev*, London, Putnam, 1940

⁴⁶ Stravinsky & Craft: *Expositions and Developments*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

that he began to rebel at the age of 14 or 15, and abandoned the Church completely “for almost three decades”. This takes us well past 1920, perhaps to 1926. Stravinsky relates that at this time he experienced a “mood of acceptance”⁴⁹ before an “actual ‘conversion’”⁵⁰; this was finally brought on from reading the Gospels, other religious literature, and the encounters with Father Nicholas in Nice. If there was just one moment of change, it came in 1926: in April 1926, Diaghilev replies (in a letter published in *Memories and Commentaries*) to an unpublished letter (possibly the letter referred to by White and Lifar) from Stravinsky informing Diaghilev that he intended to re-enter the Church. This dialogue is reported by Stravinsky in *Expositions and Developments*.

Walsh, on the other hand, identifies the Damascene moment as a performance given by Stravinsky of his *Sonata* in September of 1925, in Venice, after which Stravinsky reported the ‘miracle’ of an abscess disappearing from his hand as he sat down to play. Walsh also introduces the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, and describes Stravinsky’s desire to “return to humble artisanship”⁵¹ after reading Maritain’s *Art et Scholastique* in 1920. Stravinsky indeed extols the virtues of the artisan as described by Maritain, in *Poetics of Music*, lecture III, but does not mention religion at all in this context. Stravinsky became personal friends with Maritain in 1929, and in *Expositions and Developments* definitively states that: “Jacques Maritain ... certainly had no role in my ‘conversion’.”⁵²

A stylistic revolution

Although it is not treated specifically by Walsh, Druskin or Taruskin, E. W. White concentrates on the stylistic – i.e., compositional technique – changes in Stravinsky’s music in the 1920s. The *Epilogue* of White’s *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works*, and several chapters of his *Stravinsky’s Sacrifice to Apollo* address this topic, for example:

“When in the 1920s [Stravinsky’s] growing interest in classical procedures led to a change of style, he had to reconsider his attitude to metre and rhythm.”⁵³

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Walsh, *The New Grove*

⁵² Stravinsky & Craft: *Expositions and Developments*

⁵³ E. W. White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works*

White charts the change in technique, specifically changes in the use of metre and pulse, from *Le Sacre* to *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, and identifies the key moment of change in *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy's Kiss* (where Stravinsky was constrained by the original metre) to *Mavra* and the *Octet*, which have regular metres underpinning rhythmic freedom. White contrasts this with earlier works (such as *Le Sacre*) which tend to employ a regular pulse but irregular beat groups (and metre). Furthermore, White tracks changes in the use of form through *The Soldier's Tale*, *Pulcinella*, to the *Octet*, which he claims show "indications of the real direction of Stravinsky's coming change of style"⁵⁴; White offers Stravinsky's own words, published in *Un Avertissement* in 1927, in support of his argument. White is very clear in his opinion on the start of a 'neo-classical' period: "The *Piano Concerto* is the first original full-scale work of the neo-classical period." – The *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* to which White refers dates from 1925.

Finally, Stravinsky offers his own account of experimental composition at this time. In the *Autobiography*, he describes the composition of *Le Chant du Rossignol*, which in his view was an important new orchestral experiment, because:

“... in this symphonic poem, written for an orchestra of ordinary size, I treated the latter more as a chamber orchestra, and laid stress on the *concertante* side, not only of the various solo instruments, but also gave this role to whole groups of instruments.”⁵⁵

Le Chant du Rossignol was completed in 1917, but did not receive a first performance until December 1919. The technique of using small chamber-scale groups within an “ordinary” (or in some cases, large) -sized orchestra is employed in many later Stravinsky works, not least *Agon* (1957), *Threni* (1958), and *Requiem Canticles* (1966); this technique is not seen in any significant sense before *Le Chant du Rossignol*.

⁵⁴ E. W. White, *Stravinsky's Sacrifice to Apollo*

⁵⁵ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*

Conclusion

In addressing the question, “When did Stravinsky become a ‘neo-classical’ composer”, the views of four prominent historians have been compared and contrasted with the words of Stravinsky himself. All of these historians agree that there was an important new ‘period’ to Stravinsky’s life and work, beginning at some point in the early 1920s; I have discussed above the main arguments put forward by the historians for the beginning of a distinct ‘neo-classical’ period, which are – in summary – as follows:

1. A change of geography and personal situation.
2. An adoption of ‘classical Russianism’.
3. A new career: Stravinsky the entrepreneur.
4. A religious conversion.
5. A stylistic revolution.

As has been discussed above, the adoption of ‘classical Russianism’ – while important to Stravinsky at the time – was fundamentally transient, and did not lead to a lasting change in his output, as, almost by definition, a ‘new period’ must. Furthermore, Stravinsky’s religious conversion, of great and growing importance particularly later in Stravinsky’s life and compositions, does not appear to have been a strong catalyst for change in the early 1920s.

Stylistically, Stravinsky admits to a major change in direction, and this is identified by E. W. White and considered above. However, it is more valuable to examine the reasons for this stylistic or technical change: it is not enough simply to state that Stravinsky began a new period with a relatively sudden change in compositional technique, without considering the causes of this change.

Such causes may be found in the ‘new career’ of Stravinsky as entrepreneur: the need to earn money, the composing of *Pulcinella*, and conducting and performing engagements which led to an aesthetic (re-)examination of the roles of executor and interpreter. These efforts, which begun with the business plan for *The Soldier’s Tale*, were forced on Stravinsky by the financial problems resulting from World War I and the Russian revolution, and the change of geography and personal situation which resulted from these events.

Stravinsky was reluctant to be considered a revolutionary. He felt ashamed, along with his fellow *émigrés*, to be associated with the revolutionaries in Russia; undoubtedly Stravinsky had been considered a musical revolutionary since the time of *Le Sacre*. The reaction against all things ‘revolutionary’ or in some way associated with the Russia of the Revolution was

the artistic companion to the forced 'career' changes: replacing the 'revolutionary' Stravinsky of *Le Sacre* with – at first – the 'classical Russianism' (i.e., not pagan Russia, and not the near-contemporary nationalist Russia which preceded the Revolution), followed by the abstraction and Apollonian ideals of what is called by the historians 'neo-classicism'.

In identifying a specific date or work – not necessarily a productive exercise, as is clear from the range of arguments, dates and works given above – it is perhaps best to consider the division of parts one and two of Stravinsky's *An Autobiography*. Here Stravinsky gives a very clear opinion, describing "the ensuing period ... second part of my *chronique*"⁵⁶ beginning in June 1920, when he left Morges in Switzerland and settled in France. The first work completed after this date is the *Concertino* for string quartet (reworked in 1952 for twelve instruments); the major works completed in 1920 are *Pulcinella* and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*.

In conclusion: locating a precise point in Stravinsky's life for the beginning of a 'neo-classical period' is at best unproductive. The answer to the question: "When did Stravinsky become a 'neo-classical' composer" is not, for example: "in 1923", "in 1920", or "upon composing the *Octet*". The historians considered here all attempt to supply, to a greater or lesser extent, precise points of change based on differing arguments, but Stravinsky does not clearly support such hypotheses in his own words. Rather, he is clear that the move to France in 1920 marked a personal renaissance, a point of inflection from the nadir of his post-Revolution fortunes. This was a time of great change for Stravinsky, changes which can be viewed as a sequence of causes and effects: the Revolution, a change of financial circumstances, ultimately causing a move to France, a reaction against previously favoured influences, and a focus on fee-earning work; all leading on to the compositional style changes which are the hallmarks of Stravinsky's 'neo-classical' works and his aesthetic, philosophical Apollonian ideal.

⁵⁶ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*