CHRISTIAN MEMORY IN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CREATION: TENSIONS AND TRANSITIONS*

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ABSTRACT

After a period in which secularisation as an explanatory model – linear and teleological – became hegemonic in the social sciences, it became necessary to find other ways of accessing the sites of religious reconfiguration in the context of multiple modernities. In this situation, it has become crucial to bring the scientific gaze, at different scales, closer to the places where new relationships between the sphere of the religious and other social worlds are established, mediated by the displacements of the sacred. This article explores contemporary musical creation as a laboratory for discovering these new configurations.

Keywords
Secularity; Sacredness; Music; Religion; Christian memory

Part of the sociological discourse on secularisation, hegemonic until the 1990s, was in danger of becoming a theory of religion that legitimated the narratives of modernity. The vigorous use of this model has backfired in that the very representations of modernity have been weakened. While the category of secularisation continues to describe crucial trajectories of change in societies, it has lost its linear

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and teleological character. In the cultural practices that describe multiple modernities, the religious sphere and other social worlds unfold in transactional interplays between secularities and sacralities in constructing meanings and values.[1] The universes of contemporary musical creation offer a privileged laboratory for building a model of secularisation in a minor mode.[2]

1. Theoretical Archipelagos

In the short essay entitled *Excursus* and his *Sociology of Religion* – a text included in *Economy and Society* – Weber, starting from his already much-discussed thesis of religious activity as the origin of rationalisation processes sets out on a journey to overcome the magical stage. In this journey, Weber tries to show that the relations between religion and the world are governed by a logic of 'tension' and 'conflict'. This logic is evident in five spheres of reality, a register in which the affinities of the different social spheres generate tensions: the economic sphere, the political sphere, the sphere of eroticism, what Weber calls the intellectual sphere and, finally, the aesthetic sphere.

Max Weber starts from the general observation that some of humanity's most influential creations have emerged from transactions between religion and aesthetics. However, as art developed its autonomy, tensions emerged that Weber saw crystallised in the diptych of 'content and form'. On the one hand, religions of salvation developed historically as complex sets of ways of giving meaning to the experience of the world (content). On the other hand, art, which emerged with similar functions, found new contexts facilitating the emancipation of form. According to Weber, the modern possibility of disarticulation between form and content finds its most explicit testimony in aestheticism. With this concept, Max Weber seeks to interpret cultural situations in which the overemphasis on the aesthetic experience of the world can be both a substitute for religion and an intellectual refuge for those disillusioned by rationalist excesses. Aestheticism would thus be a kind of

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[1] Alfredo Teixeira, 'Tension and Transaction: Dynamics of Religious Recomposition from a Multiscopic Perspective,' *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 1–21.

[2] Albert Piette, *Le mode mineur de la réalité: paradoxes et photographies en anthropologie*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique de Louvain 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992).

'intramundane salvation'. According to Weber, aestheticism replaces ethical judgements with aesthetic ones.[5]

In the circles of contemporary thought, the so-called Frankfurt School has become the banner of modern reformism, in the sense of recovering 'spiritual' modernity to the detriment of that 'material' modernity that has been radicalised and reduced to the market and the impulses of techno-science. In musical aesthetics, this critical heritage finds its most essential references in the thought of Theodor Adorno.[4] That is why he became a fundamental influence on the post-war avant-garde, legitimising an attitude of permanent search for the new and the affirmation of anti-conventionalism as a guarantee of aesthetic validity and distance from mass music. For Adorno, the avant-garde (represented by the 'new music' embodied in the so-called 'Second Viennese School') was a way of escaping the capitalist commodification of the aesthetic product. For Adorno, the authenticity of art is inversely related to its fruition, thus encouraging the composition of music without external motivations. We are therefore faced with the affirmation of a radical emancipation of the act of musical creation – Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, in its atonal and non-serial freedom, is a model for Adorno; Stravinsky, as a user of the past, is a counter-type in this discourse.

We are thus in the universe of the modern belief in the power of revolution as a critique of the normalising functions of tradition. The relationship with the material received is one of irony, satire, and distancing, sometimes through quotation or montage, sometimes through negation, and always through a process of re-contextualisation with structural consequences. However, according to Adorno, it is only in the avant-garde that we find the internalisation of musical autonomy. Art becomes a system that replaces concepts with formulas, makes technique or means an end, and abandons ideas, denying its essence as art. We are thus in the universe of the modern belief in the power of revolution as a critique of the normalising functions of tradition. The relationship with the material received is one of irony, satire, and distancing, sometimes through quotation or montage, sometimes through

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[5] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Severus Verlag, 2015); Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Hauptwerke der großen Denker (Paderborn: Voltmedia, 2006).

[4] Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno*. Selected, with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2009).

negation, and always through a process of re-contextualisation with structural consequences. However, according to Adorno, it is only in the avant-garde that we find the internalisation of musical autonomy. Art becomes a system that replaces concepts with formulas, makes technique or means an end, and abandons ideas, denying its essence as art.[5]

Adorno considered Alban Berg's music to be the one that could best represent 'the memory of the original unity of man and nature' and now proposed that 'the new music should become *musique informelle*, that is, a music that rejects all forms that are external, abstract, rigidly opposed to it, and that, completely free of what is heteronomously imposed on it and foreign to it, is nevertheless constituted in an objectively necessary way'.[6] The post-war musical avant-garde thus translated itself, as an aesthetic stance, into a broad movement to emancipate musical poetics from all kinds of heteronomies, either as forms of subordination to another symbolic system – religion, for example – or as updates of inherited norms.

Adornian hermeneutics inscribes the post-war musical avant-garde in the modern narrative of emancipation. However, as in other theoretical proposals, we do not find a way of understanding cultural productions that are not linked to celebrating this autonomy, nor do we find answers to the question of what remains or is transformed about the old alliance between religion and aesthetics. It is worth recalling what Michel de Certeau observed in his studies on the metamorphoses of belief in Western societies, those societies that have experienced the fragmentation of Christianity as a social body, the social disintegration of 'objective Christianity'. Certeau sought to understand this end of the structural articulation between the believer's personal experience and the community's social experience through the church as a 'body of meaning'.[7] The consequence of this disarticulation is the spread of the religion:

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[5] About this Adornian concept of art: Mário Vieira de Carvalho, *Pensar é morrer, ou, O Teatro de São Carlos: na mudança de sistemas sociocomunicativos desde fins do séc. XVIII aos nossos dias*, Temas portugueses (Lisboa: Impr. Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1993), 239–240, 286.

[6] Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music* (London: Verso, 1994), 271. In Mário Vieira de Carvalho's interpretation, the concept of *musique informelle* is close to the idea of the self-referentiality of the musical work (Carvalho, *Pensar é morrer*, 287–289). The expression *Vers une musique informelle*, coined by Adorno in French, recalls the attitude of Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) in his Futurist manifesto.

[7] Michel de Certeau, *Le christianisme éclaté*, En collaboration avec Jean-Marie Domenach (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 13.

Convictions soften, lose their contours, and end up in the common language of a mental exoticism, in a *koinê* of fiction: convictions accumulate in that region where what *is no longer done is said*, where questions that can no longer be thought of are theatricalised, and where various 'needs' are mixed, still irreducible, but devoid of *credible* representations.[8] [*free translation*]

In these displacements of belief and how avatars of belief are produced, tactical figures are created who use religiosity as a reserve of fragments available to marketing agencies, aesthetic endeavours and the reinventors of the values of civility. The users of these relics are no longer believers; they are managers and consumers, creators who use the wreckage of a shipwreck according to certain needs, according to certain programs, within which churches can be 'museums of beliefs without believers'.[9] In this context, Christianity becomes an archive of vocabularies, a treasure trove of symbols, and a supplier of signs and practices that can be reused in an uncontrollable bricolage.

This is the context in which the symbolic elaboration of the sacred can be emancipated from the objects conventionally recognised as religious. These can become the material for new recompositions in a regime of symbolic parody. The mythemes and ritualities can no longer be explained by the logic of the *creed* that organised them or by the regulated practices that updated them.[10] Michel de Certeau's interpretive proposal unfolds in three ways. First, 'the folklorisation of objective Christianity'.[11] A few decades ago, Christian belief was still firmly

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[8]   Michel de Certeau, *La faiblesse de croire*, Collection Esprit (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 183.

[9]   Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1980), 264.

[10] 'Parody' here does not mean ironic commentary. It has the sense of *contrafactura*, as it was used in the 16th century to characterise compositional processes that started from a pre-existing model, a model that sometimes had nothing to do with the character or function of the final work. These appropriations could concern the text (an old text with new music) or the text and the music (the adaptation and development of a musical element with a new text). For instance, consider the use of Ockghem's *chanson* 'Malheur me bat' in Josquin des Prez's Mass of the same name. Historians therefore refer to this mass as a 'parody mass' or 'imitation mass', and in its time it would have been identified as an 'imitation mass (parody) of *Malheur me bat'*. Parody does not have a pejorative meaning here; it simply identifies a process of musical composition: Alfredo Teixeira and Cristina Delgado, 'A emancipação do sagrado e a paródia do religioso. Notas exploratórias sobre a criação musical na segunda metade do século XX,' *Revista Portuguesa de Ciência das Religiões* 2 (2003): 35–62.

[11] Certeau, *Le christianisme éclaté*, 9–13.

anchored in specific groups and behaviours. There was no room for fluidity of contours. One either adhered to a language or joined the ranks of those who fought against it. In a second way, Michel de Certeau considers the dynamics of the 'aestheticisation of the religious'.[12] The body of Christian writings and rites is used as a set of fine arts serving the interests of aesthetic creation, from the most secret poetics to theatrical and musical compositions, including the reinvention of Christian spaces and architecture practices. Finally, it is necessary to consider the erosion processes of the boundaries of symbolic systems. This issue stems from what Certeau saw as a widespread crisis in the credibility of institutions.[13] For at least three centuries, the status of truth-giver claimed by ecclesiastical institutions has been in deep crisis. This dissonance no longer takes contentious forms. Thus, 'Christians without a church' are multiplying, without this being translated into the constitution of peripheral groups – as in the 17th century – which renounce ecclesiastical mediation in the name of a more spiritualised religion. Deprived of the old guarantees – political, cosmological and others – symbolic systems are unprotected by the boundaries that defended them, leaving their symbolic heritage at the mercy of multiple reappropriations in multiple cultural contexts.

The metaphor of the 'fragment' used by Michel de Certeau – a figure of the shattering of an authorised memory – differs, albeit closely, from the metaphor of the 'remnant' proposed by Marcel Gauchet. Reinscribing the question of secularisation in Weber's thesis of the 'disenchantment of the world', Marcel Gauchet characterises Christianity as the religion of the 'exit from religion'. In Gauchet's view, a particular conception of the transcendence of God and the world's autonomy in terms of its foundation favoured a cultural trajectory of erosion of the lived religious as an experience of dispossession of the foundation of existence. Gauchet's secularisation thesis is based on the assumption of the inevitable erosion of the social function of religion:

> Should not the elimination of the fundamental *social function of* the religious end up bringing with it an inevitable loss or erosion, even if very slowly, of the possibility of a belief? We might be tempted to think so. Unless we argue against another problem, which complicates matters: the

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12 Certeau, 18–20.
13 Certeau, 27–31.

subjective function that religious experience retains - or acquires - when its social function is erased.[14] [*free translation*]

In his conceptualisation, Gauchet predicts that the age of religion as a structure has ended. Nevertheless, it would be naive to think that the same could be said of religion as culture. Gauchet speaks of a 'remnant' of 'singular experiences and belief systems' rooted in the ultimate core of religiosity, constituting an 'irreducible anthropological remnant'.[15] His reading ends with the assertion that the subjective experience of a religious type has no necessary connection with any content. The 'ineliminable subjective layer of the religious phenomenon' is the basis of religious experience and precedes any explicit formulation of religion. Thus, Gauchet affirms the fundamental character of religious experience and denies that the necessary character of any religion can be affirmed based on this irreducibility. Gauchet separates the experience he describes as religious from the sphere of religion. The subjective religious experience to which constituted religious systems refer can function independently. It does not need to be projected onto fixed representations articulated in a doctrinal and social body. It can be updated in another place, different from the one that has been its preferred territory.[16]

Gauchet sought to determine the theoretical structure of this 'anthropological substratum' by identifying the 'remains of religion'.[17] For the author, one of these remains is aesthetic experience. It concerns how we take in the appearance of things, the imaginary organisation of our perception of the world; it involves our faculty of imagination and not our faculty of intellection. Aesthetic experience is identified with the experience of the sacred, the irruption of the 'totally other' into the familiarity of things.[18] An experience of difference and rupture, aesthetic perception presents the world as an opening to an unknown mystery that is, offering itself as a mediation of the sacred:

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[14] Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: une histoire politique de la religion*, Bibliothèque Des Sciences Humaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 236.
[15] Gauchet, 133.
[16] Gauchet, 292.
[17] Gauchet, 293–303.
[18] Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde*, 296–97. We find some echoes of Rudolf Otto's notion of the 'sacred' (*Das Heilige*, 1917).

> The sacred is the presence of the absent […], the sensitive and tangible manifestation of what is normally beyond the human senses and grasp. Moreover, as we moderns understand it, art is the continuation of the sacred by other means. When the gods desert the world, when they cease to come and signify their otherness there, the world itself appears different to us, revealing an imaginary depth that becomes the object of a special search, endowed with an end in itself, returning only to itself. In this way, the imaginary grasp of reality, which was the anthropological support of religious activity, begins to function on its own, independently of the old contents that channelled it.[19]

Therefore, difference, otherness, and depth are not to be found within the world's limits because since the 'end of religion', the world has not signalled anything outside itself. In Gauchet's view, only aesthetic experience, which was once one of the pillars of the sacred – and in modern times has become art for art's sake – can break with the linearity of everyday life and manifest the presence of absence.[20]

More recently, Weber's theses have received other critical readings. According to Hans Joas, 'disenchantment' is a metaphor intended to interpret complex social processes.[21] But this goal has produced many ambiguities in Weber's works and posterity. 'Disenchantment' is a broad-spectrum concept. Joas notes that the notion agglutinates three phenomena not assimilable into a single process: *a)* de-magification, the decline of the influence of magical thinking; *b)* de-sacralisation, the rise of secular forms of understanding the world; *c)* de-transcendentalisation, the decline of narratives that invoke 'otherworldliness' (an extramundane otherness). According to Joas, the uncritical diffusion of Weberian conceptuality has contributed to deepening the disinterest in sacredness's role in modern social life. In general terms, Joas approaches the set of critics who read in the narrative of

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[19] Gauchet, 297.

[20] It should be noted that the use of the semantic field of 'creation' to qualify artistic activity clearly carries a biblical and Christian heritage, which for Gauchet is at the origin of the 'departure from religion'. The connotations can be manifold: artistic activity as producer of new objects and ideas; the contemplative relationship with the object; the articulation between work (transformation of the world) and jubilation (celebration of life); the correlations between technique and aesthetics; as well as the dissemination of the idea of artistic experience as a form of transcendence.

[21] Hans Joas, *Les pouvoirs du sacré: une alternative au récit du désenchantement* (Paris: Seuil, 2020), 163–187.

disenchantment an explanatory model that is too evolutionary, one-dimensional, and Eurocentric[22] – the West becomes the culminating place of a quasi-evolutionary trajectory of development, according to a teleological dynamic, that stretches between ancient Judaism and Protestantism. Joas's critique starts from the observation that the Weberian analysis of 'religion-modernity' tensions forgets that the experience of self-transcendence is constitutive of human beings. It is this experience that structures the processes of sacralization. Joas emphasises the human phenomenon of idealisation.[23] Human action, in its creativity, is influenced by various kinds of otherness – respected ideals, traumatic experiences, festive memories, the example of other human beings, etc. Forming these ideals as an expression of the creativity of human action takes very different historical forms. As an anthropological structure, the dynamism of self-transcendence does not translate into a one-way historical process. And modernity is not the place of its erosion but instead its proliferation.

2. Amnesia and Anamnesis

Norbert Elias' thesis on Mozart – one of the most influential attempts to build a sociology of musical genius – is well known.[24] Elias sees in Mozart's journey, particularly in his emancipation from the court and ecclesiastical power, the emergence of the individual composer as a social actor who asserts himself outside the institutional frameworks that regulated his trade – the 'independent professional'.[25] This is reflected in the music itself as the new social contexts allow the composer to assert his individuality in a way we did not know before. Musical forms became more emancipated from the ritual, religious or

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[22] Siniša Malešević, 'Disenchantment, Rationalisation and Collective Self-Sacralisation,' *Journal of Political Power* 15, no. 2 (2022), 369–79.

[23] Hans Joas, *La créativité de l'agir*, trad. de l'allemand (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999).

[24] Norbert Elias, *Mozart: sociologia de um génio* (Lisboa: Edições Asa, 1993).

[25] For a sociology of the artist's profession, from the perspective that interests this article, a reference classic: Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste: artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique*, Paradoxe (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1993). It is important to compare this approach with Bourdieu's thesis. For the sociologist, the emergence of a libertarian discourse in the field of artistic production, under the sign of autonomy, is nothing more than an adaptive response to a world that is changing and in which the old guardians are also losing their ability to exercise patronage: Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'Art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Libre examen (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1992).

political syntax that had given rise to them. In this line of analysis, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* often appears as a prototype. According to the Roman ordo, the text of the common mass supports a compositional programme that is unremarkable in the ritual scene itself – the scale of the musical work is not compatible with the duration of the ritual.[26]

On this path of cultural change, Hans Küng, in a theological essay on music and religion in Mozart, Wagner and Bruckner, presents the thesis of a radical incompatibility between musical modernity and the tradition of sacred music historically built up in Europe.[27] In this opposition, Hans Küng sees, on the one hand, a musical tradition that seeks to narrate a shared religious tradition and, on the other hand, the affirmation of an irreducible subjectivity in which religion becomes religiosity (or, according to more common codes today, 'spirituality'). Hans Küng maintains the Weberian tension model, based on the incommensurability that juxtaposes music as the practice of a shared narrative (community) and as a resource for self-affirmation (individual).

Hans Küng's observation does not seem sufficient to understand the many ways creators have made themselves autonomous. Indeed, the artist's status has undergone a major transformation in historical modernity. We have moved from the artist-craftsman to the artist-professional who seeks to produce himself.[28] In the artist-craftsman model, the role of the creator is to represent the religious narrative. The professional artist is a social actor with his margins of autonomy. When the artist appropriates something from the vast archive of the sacred from this external place of autonomy, it can be said that there is a logic of (re)use. In other words, the repertoire resulting from symbolising the sacred is put at the service of an artistic production. What can be intriguing is the fact that this (re)use of the sacred materials is sought to give value to the artistic work and demand a different attitude from the public.

In this context, part of social analysis tends to favour not the institutionally objectified religion but the fluid, implicit religion that crystallised in functional substitutes. In a famous 1968 article, the anthropologist

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[26]   William Drabkin, *Beethoven: Missa Solemnis*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[27]   Hans Kung, *Música y religión: Mozart, Wagner, Bruckner* (Madrid: Trotta, 2008).

[28]   Anne Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré: le cas de la Symphonie du Millénaire,' *Religiologiques* 22 (2000): 87.

Roger Bastide pointed out that the sacred does not die; it moves.[29] Roger Bastide's perspective on the displacement of the sacred had an important reception in Quebec religious studies in the 1980s and 1990s. Robert Tessier showed how discourses in various social fields (re)use religious vocabulary to propose new ethics or answers to social problems. In his hermeneutics – in which we can discover something of the Durkheimian heritage – the sacred is defined as a semantic function that manages the social tensions of human groups, weaves the bonds of solidarity and produces the symbolic representations necessary for the construction of collective identities.[30] In this model of analysis, the difficulties of reconstituting the configurations of the inherited sacred lead to new strategies of sacralisation. Artists, based on the *professional* model – in other words, beyond the game, the work – participate in the reflection and construction of new times and spaces of the sacred. The means of disseminating art opens up the space of creation to that of the exhibition, calling for contemplation.[31] Contemporary art creators can now use religion's old symbolic supports to legitimise their value proposition.

 Observing the relationship between the production of musical works in the post-war generation and religious narratives and myths from Föllmi's perspective underlines a direction that has already been documented: the affirmation of the subjective dimensions of musical creation takes place along a path of emancipation from liturgical rituality.[32]

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[29] Roger Bastide, 'Anthropologie Religieuse,' in *Universalis* II (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1968), 65–69.

[30] Robert Tessier, *Déplacements du sacré dans la société moderne: culture, politique, économie, écologie* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1994), 12.

[31] Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré', 90.

[32] Beat Föllmi, 'Spiritualité et musiques contemporaines: entre expression personnelle et exigence liturgique,' in *Spiritualité Contemporaine de l'art*, ed. Jérôme Cottin, Wilhelm Gräb, and Bettina Schaller (Labor et Fides, 2012), 278. It should be noted that according to one of the most influential theses of the 1980s, that of Habermas, religious practice, beyond its ethical orientation, would tend to become obsolete as a ritual. Habermas interprets religious symbolism as the 'pre-linguistic' root of communicative action (archaic sacred symbols express a traditional normative consensus that is prolonged and renewed in ritual practice). The functions associated with the symbolic reproduction of the lived world – cultural reproduction (culture), social integration (society) and the socialisation of individuals (personality) – gradually left the sacred domain for the profane structures of communication through language. This 'linguistification' (*Versprachlichung*) of the sacred is a process in which the authority of belief is replaced by the authority of the rational consensus sought by communication, in other words, a consensus resulting from free and reasoned discussion between subjects capable of speaking and acting: Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des*

As liturgy takes on a public character in the more formalised Christian institutional universes, institutional grammar and community syntax are prominent, reducing the space for individual creative freedom. The persistence of the religious comes at the cost of a *poiesis* of individualisation, in a relationship of divergence with the communal ritual scene – which does not mean that the aesthetics and politics of ritual cannot be recomposed in a new context of bringing musical works closer to audience participation, as will be shown below. Generally speaking, the individual creator occupies the space of the mediating institution. However, this does not exclude strategies aimed at creating a community.[35]

As has already been pointed out, this social landscape is not homogeneous. It is necessary to find a hermeneutic that explains both the persistence of religious referentiality in the creation of music in the European tradition, both in the first and in the second half of the 20th century and the unprecedented fact of discovering composers whose catalogue we cannot find any trace of explicit references to biblical narratives or Christian rites, an essential resource for the grand tradition of sacred music of European origin. For example, in the context of musical modernism in the first half of the 20th century, the last work written by Arnold Schönberg in 1950 was entitled *Modern Psalms*.[34] But it should also be pointed out that there are composers whose archives we do not find any relevance to the European tradition of sacred music, such as the case of Webern.[35]

The hypothesis pursued here points to a correlation between the use of religion and the place of memory in compositional processes. In the words of Jean-Marc Chouvel, memory is the possibility of time moving from pure fluidity to form.[36] Based on this guiding principle, we

Kommunikativen Handelns. 2: Zur Kritik der Funktionalistischen Vernunft (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 118, 292, 487.

[33] Alfredo Teixeira and Luísa Almendra, 'A memória religiosa entre estética e política: o *Magnificat* de João Madureira,' *REVER – Revista de Estudos de Religião* 17 (2018), 52–75.

[34] *Moderner Psalm für Sprecher, Gemischten Chor und Orchester*, Op. 50C (1950).

[35] However, the British composer John Tavener – one of the most recognised in the world of contemporary Orthodox music – considers Webern's music to be one of the most spiritual. Its conciseness and abstraction are seen as indicative of spiritual sublimity. Narrative and ritual are dispensed with in the symbolic creation of an inner space, which John Tavener reads as a trace of a mystical attitude, as he explained in an interview with the BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04pddst>.

[36] Jean-Marc Chouvel, 'Avec le Temps, il n'y a pas de Forme sans Mémoire…,' in *Musique et Mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 47.

can find a particular mapping of compositional processes. It should be noted that much of the music created in the 20th century adopted the attitude of claiming an autonomous theory for each work. This is where some of the audience's problems lie. Our listening skills do not seem to have such radical versatility. In any case, a work written in time cannot fail to require a relationship with memory.[37] Studying musical works from the perspective of their relationship with memory can be effective if we pursue the nuances of their religious referentiality. Approaching religion as a form of belief that establishes a tradition highlights a frequently observed fact: there is no religious belief that does not refer to a symbolic material received, to a legacy, to a memory that solidarises the past and the present, thus helping to reduce the risks of transitoriness or aggressive change. In this sense, religious belief creates a communicative space in which the believer is called upon to respond to precedence made up of images and narratives. The religious dynamic declines genealogically, as a relationship with a founding memory, recited and practised transmission. From this perspective, being religious is knowing how to be generated – or, in more individualised societies, wanting to feel generated.[38] A methodological focus on this perspective can contribute to constructing a comprehensive model of the use of religious memory in contemporary compositional practices.

In this context, it is curious to note that Stravinsky's path posed some problems for the post-war avant-garde. The metamorphoses of his compositional work were firmly anchored in a relationship with the memory of European musical creation. In the softer interpretations, the composer was not seen as a traditionalist because he did not canonise any tradition. In other words, his relationship with memory degenerated into a game in which he was the protagonist – he chose the tradition. From this perspective, 'choosing' tradition is not a traditional gesture.[39]

In musical modernity after 1945, Makis Solomos emphasises the predominance of the desire for amnesia in the face of socio-historical memory. Xenakis is an example of a total asceticism of memory, and Boulez represents partial voluntary amnesia.[40] Xenakis biographically

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[37] Chouvel, 'Avec le Temps, il n'y a pas de Forme sans Mémoire…,' 48–51.
[38] Alfredo Teixeira, *Um mapa para pensar a religião* (Lisboa: UCEditora, 2015), 37–58.
[39] Boris de Schloezer and Marina Scriabine, *Problèmes de la musique moderne*, Aesthetica (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016).
[40] Makis Solomos, 'Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,' in *Musique et Mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 239–41.

conveys the figure of a migrant from a region plagued by the traumas of the 20th century, forced into a process of extensive identity reconstruction. The scenarios concerning the place of traditional materials in the compositional process involved a confrontation with the Greek 'popular' tradition (which he describes as demotic), jazz, traditional European music, dodecaphony and electronics. His response was radical. In his works *Metastasis* and *Le Sacrifice*, we find a desire to renounce all traditions. This is modernity *ex nihilo*, with the ambition of achieving a new universalism through a high degree of abstraction. This emptiness of memory is understood as a space of freedom in which all references can be reconstructed.[41]

In *Jalons (pour un décennie)*, Boulez exposes this problem in a dilemmatic way.[42] This is a period in which avant-garde tendencies have already been undermined by the various waves of postmodernism, according to a widely used categorisation.[43] Boulez observes that we live in a time that is increasingly full of memory and that forgetting is becoming urgent. His position is expressed in a tricky balancing act. He opposes two extremes: those who live on the glorification of the musical archives of the past and the competitors of the *tabula rasa*, for whom the present has no origin. For Boulez, there is no tradition, only a chain of individuals who have used each other's models and tools. This emphasises the *de-authorisation* of tradition or, in other words, the non-necessary nature of tradition.

In other universes, there is a different logic, which Makis Solomos characterises with the category of anamnesis.[44] In their heterogeneity, Adams, Pärt, Penderecki, Górecki or Rihm can exemplify this will to memory. In the case of John Adams, his transition from the American minimalism of the 1970s to more hybrid models aims to perpetuate what he calls universal musical laws: periodicity, pulse and tonality.[45] In the case of Arvo Pärt, in the period of works such as *Tabula rasa* (1977), the desire to visit a particular representation of medieval music

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[41] Iannis Xenakis, *Musiques Formelles: nouveaux principes formels de composition musicale*, Stock-musique (Paris: Stock, 1981), 185.

[42] Pierre Boulez, *Jalons (pour une décennie): dix ans d'enseignement au Collège de France (1978–1988)*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Paris: Bourgois, 1989).

[43] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Musique et Postmodernité,' *Surfaces* 6 (1996): 4–16.

[44] Solomos, 'Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,' 241–44.

[45] John Luther Adams, *The Place Where You Go to Listen: In Search of an Ecology of Music* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).

is evident, identifying with the figure of the anonymous composer – as if in an exercise of authorial asceticism. Within the framework of the current functioning of the musical field, authorial anonymity is a symbolic fiction, but it nevertheless produces meaning.[46] The densification of the explicit presence of the archives of music from the past is particularly visible in music labelled 'sacred'. Because the label 'sacred music' refers to forms inscribed mainly in the history of European music, it can attract the attention of a wider audience. This aspect can facilitate reading new languages.[47] Appealing to ritual memory or received religious imagery can provide a mediating context for new languages.[48] Under the sign of amnesia, as mentioned above, other composers refused to reuse this memory in the name of a rupture or as an expression of radical autonomy.

The third constellation proposed by Makis Solomos concerns the impact of globalisation on the idea of tradition.[49] In this case, it is not about amnesia or anamnesis in the sense mentioned above. It is about integrating the memory of cultures into the compositional process. This sense of ethnicisation has been present, in different ways, in some of the work of composers as diverse as Bartók and Berio. In the example of Makis Solomos, the desire to renew compositional structures based on processes discovered in a multiplicity of cultural references is more evident.[50] Works such as *Drumming* (1970–71), *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (1976) or *Tehillim* (1981) by Steve Reich can document this attitude. The term 'extra-European influences' is perhaps not very apt. Reich does not seek the exotic. It is not the strangeness of the sound he is after but the discovery of structural processes. Furthermore, in this context, all traditions are available: the European tradition from 1200 to 1750, the gamelan music of Java and Bali, the surviving music of West Africa, American jazz between 1950 and 1965, the modernity of the first half of the 20th century or the traditional cantillation of the Hebrew

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[46] Alfredo Teixeira, '"Cantus Firmus": persistences et métamorphoses du sacré musical,' in *Persistence de l'Œuvre: Art et Religion*, ed. Tomás Maia (Lisboa: Documenta, 2020), 141–78.

[47] Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré,' 86.

[48] Alfredo Teixeira, 'Religion and Cultural Mediations: Perspectives from Contemporary Portuguese Society,' *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023), 1–25.

[49] Solomos, 'Stratégies contemporaines de construction de la mémoire musicale,' 244–46.

[50] Solomos, 244–46.

Scriptures.[51] The structures he discovers there establish a constructed relationship with the heritage of organology European music, without having to resort to non-European instruments as a fiction of this global-isation. Steve Reich works within a certain abstract universalism frame-work, in which cultures are a vast *stock* available without any particular authority or need for reproduction. They are available as heteroclite fragments that only make sense in the compositional programme.

This is the centre of the social dynamics that define multiple moder-nities[52] and witness the emergence of the 'time of the globe'.[53] Many interpreters of our contemporaneity emphasise the centrality of this social dynamic. Nestor Canclini[54] uses the term 'border cultures', and Arjun Appadurai[55] proposes the neologism 'ethnoscape' to describe a human landscape marked by different kinds of mobility. Peter Burke,[56] one of the leading exponents of so-called cultural history, has tried to show that cultural hybridity, in its pluriformity, is one of the most characteristic phenomena of historical modernity. This is the terrain of the metaphor introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss – the metaphor of *bricolage*, used to translate how the mythical imagination explores the play of possible recompositions of the stock of fragmented, hetero-geneous and heteroclite materials assimilated by tradition, import or deviation.[57] Within this social framework, composers who integrate the practices of symbolic transhumance into their creative process, creat-ing new possibilities of contact between different cultural fragments, are, in a way, composers between worlds, taking the literal meaning of their professional name. The interval, the diaspora, the transit, the border, and the interstitial spaces constitute their creative habitat. This path is particularly represented in many current interpretative trends in so-called 'early music'. The creolisation effect has become a wide-spread resource in this context.[58]

[51] Steve Reich, *Writings on Music, 1965–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[52] S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publish-ers, 2002).
[53] Peter Sloterdijk, *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals: Für eine Philosophische Theorie der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).
[54] Néstor García Canclini, *Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados: mapas de la intercul-turalidad* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2004).
[55] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minne-apolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[56] Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).
[57] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, Agora 2 (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1962).
[58] Alfredo Teixeira, 'O compositor entre mundos,' *Glosas* 15 (2016): 9–10.

3. Tension and Deviation

As we have seen, in societies marked by Christian religious memory, the sacred and art have undergone metamorphoses that can be correlated.[59] Tension, in the Weberian model, can take the form of the itineraries of artistic autonomisation mentioned above. But it can also take the form of cultural conflict – which in other historical moments would be 'blasphemy'. The religious meaning and practice sphere is relativised in societies that have experienced secularisation in all its diversity. It can no longer establish itself as the organising centre of the perception of limits. The possibility of social identification of the 'blasphemer' or 'blasphemy' is thus reduced since the operations that allowed the religious identification of the ultimate boundaries have no chair. It is no coincidence that the current tensions between freedom of expression and the right of religious groups to have their heritage respected end up being transferred to the sphere of ethical and axiological argumentation, where, despite ideological struggles, a certain consensus can be built.[60]

In this new context, sacrilege no longer typically consists of an act such as desecrating a sacred place. From a certain point of view, sacrilege has become the mission of art that presents itself as contemporary. To use Marcel Duchamp's term, the aesthetic attitude proper to this art would be 'deviation' (*détournement*). In this explanatory horizon, art consists of placing something (artefact, idea, act, saying, writing) outside its context in a place outside its received legibility.[61] This 'deviation' aims to invest it with a different meaning, or at least to give it food for thought. In this context, contemporary art makes what would be blasphemy in another social context the new critical morality, the new sacred. True blasphemy would now be the censorship of this 'deviant' power of art, and the defence of this 'transgression' becomes a public service – not least because a significant part of artistic production in

[59] Alfredo Teixeira, '*Cantus firmus*: Persistances et métamorphoses du sacré musical,' in *Persistance de l'œuvre, II: Art et Religion*, ed. Tomás Maia (Lisboa: Sistema Solar, 2020), 141–178.

[60] Alfredo Teixeira, 'Uma política da imagem: leitura antropológica da blasfémia visual a partir de Pierre Legendre,' *Revista Portuguesa de História*, no. 40 (2009): 143–74. doi: 10.14195/0870-4147_40_6.

[61] Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe: écrits* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013).

European societies depends on the state.[62] In this order of analysis, the disputes between religious groups and the field of contemporary art would be close to the figure of the 'war of religion'. It is no coincidence that these public disputes have been called 'cultural wars' in the USA.[63]

It should be noted, however, that certain sensibilities can read particular artistic creations that are the subject of the blasphemy controversy as works that highlight aspects of Christianity that are considered essential but overshadowed by the weight of historical incorporation. Paradoxically, what some interpret as an insult is perceived by others as rehabilitation – in this case, the mechanism of *deviation* produces an effect of unveiling. The essential argument concerns that they do not seek transgression as an end but as an effective means of criticising the *mainstream*, including ideologies and religious practices.[64] The work *Piss Christ* (1987) bears witness to these ambiguities. Andres Serrano photographed a banal crucifix of no apparent artistic value immersed in its urine – the work is part of the *Immersion* series, a cycle in which various objects suffer the effects of immersion in different fluids.[65] The work has caused quite a stir. When it was exhibited in Avignon in 2011, it was vandalised.[66] One of the most talked about cases in the European Catholic sphere concerns the dialogue that the Bishop of Poitiers, Albert Rouet, established with a group of works and artists selected by Gilbert Brownstone. Among them was the photographer Andres Serrano. Albert Rouet's commentary confronts the core of the Christian message – the 'flesh of God' as the 'flesh of dialogue' – with a group of works that typically carry the label of provocation. The bishop tends to praise the ability of these works to bring their interlocutors face to face with the most crucial aspect of human life and, in this capacity,

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[62] Aude de Kerros, *Sacré art contemporain: évêques, inspecteurs et commissaires* (Paris: Godefroy, 2012), 21.

[63] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[64] This interpretative approach can be in dialogue with Metz's perspective on Christianity as a 'dangerous memory': Petr Jandejsek, 'From Dangerous Memory to Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz,' *AUC Theologica* 13, no. 2 (2024): 47–63. doi: 10.14712/23363398.2023.25.

[65] Tyler Shine, 'Taboo Icons: The Bodily Photography of Andres Serrano', *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 4 (3 August 2015): 24–44. doi: 10.5195/contemp.2015.141.

[66] The trail of controversies can be seen in the media archives. For example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/18/andres-serrano-piss-christ-destroyed-christian-protesters>; <http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2011/04/18/la-destruction-de-piss-christ-uvre-impie_1509185_3246.html>.

to share the core of the Christian incarnation and paschal narratives: 'I call a *work of art* that which opens me up, which passes through me so that I accept to go towards the mystery that inhabits me.'[67]

Romeo Castelluci's equally controversial *Sul Concetto di Volto nel Figlio di Dio* (2010) documents the same ambivalence. The dramaturgical work unfolds in three independent sequences that, according to the author, aim to materialise the moment Christ enters human flesh. The Italian director is interested in understanding the abandonment of the divine state. Dialysis, incontinence, faeces and the stoning of Christ's face – in a reproduction of the work by the painter Antonello Da Messina, *Salvatore Mundi* (1465) – embody an eschatological reflection that has been labelled as Christianophobia by some. In an interview with *Le Monde*, the director said: 'I make a theatre of questioning, of restlessness, which plays with ambiguity […]. Art rests entirely on the condition that it raises problems, otherwise it's purely decorative […]. Today, religion has lost its ability to raise questions, and art has taken its place' (*Le Monde*, 27-10-2011).[68]

The figures of these *cultural wars* do not find such apparent public records in the musical archive. They are more easily reproduced in the mediasphere of visual cultures. This kind of aesthetic attitude finds perhaps more complex, more abstract resources in music, which is why public confrontations are not so often documented. However, the aesthetic of *détournement* finds parallels in the musical work of some of the most distinctive composers of the second half of the 20th century. Mauricio Kagel's (1931–2008) work can be seen as an important parallel in some of its registers. One work in particular stands out: *Sankt-Bach-Passion* (1985). Commissioned in 1979 for the *Berliner Festwochen*, it was first performed in 1981 and premiered on 9 September 1985. It is a Passion in terms of its architecture – choruses, recitatives, arias, etc. But it is not a narrative of the Passion of Jesus

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[67] Gilbert Brownstone and Albert Rouet, *L' Église et l'art d'avant-garde: de la provocation au dialogue* (Paris: Michel, 2002), 107.

[68] The work passed through Portugal without public reactions comparable to those documented in other national contexts: <http://www.teatrosaoluiz.pt/catalogo/detalhes_produto.php?id=591>; <http://www.teatromunicipaldoporto.pt/PT/programa/romeo-castellucci-it-sobre-o-conceito-do-rosto-do-filho-de-deus-sul-concetto-di-volto-nel-figlio-di-dio/?categoria=teatro>.
<https://www.publico.pt/2015/12/17/culturaipsilon/noticia/previsoes-para-2016-romeo-castellucci-divide-o-rivoli-com-um-espectaculo-de-choque-1717591>.

Christ according to one of the Evangelists or any other source. This is Bach's Passion:[69]

> I have been dealing with him [Bach] intensively for some time now, the culmination of which was the Chorbuch (1978). To this day, the amount of emotion in a simple Bach protestant chorale has remained a mystery. In 1975 or 1976, I began to cherish the idea of carrying out a project on the person of Bach. [*free translation*]

If Bach's biography invades the narrative, the same cannot be said of his musical language. The work falls within the limits of Kagel's compositional grammar:

> I started with what I did not want, and it is often what a composer rejects that stimulates his imagination. So, no Bach quotes [...]. I only wanted to confront the super-father Bach with my music. [*free translation*]

However, Kagel does not renounce the opportunities that his serial idiom finds in numerological schemes and combinatorial formalisations of technemes (such as those allowed by the lexeme B-A-C-H itself), in a straightforward approach to the more rationalist dimension of Bach's work. The recourse to the secrets of the combinatorial art, in this and other musical itineraries of the 20th century, makes it possible to overcome the arbitrariness of the system. This problem is even more acute now that musical languages cannot be articulated based on a consensus grammar:

> I would like to be a real Kabbalist. I am only intuitive and raw, trying better to understand the hidden meaning of numbers and proportions. The same can undoubtedly be said of Bach: he used a numerology known in his time in the art of composition, which nevertheless hints at mysterious relationships [...]. I deduced rhythms from the numbers in Johann Sebastian Bach's name, which gave rise to new structures. Vowels, consonants, numbers of syllables and words, I transformed all this into series of durations, intensities and heights, and formal proportions. [*free translation*]

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[69] The quotes from Kagel collected here are part of an interview conducted by Werner Klüppelholz and included in the *booklet* that accompanies the CD: Mauricio Kagel, 'About the "St. Bach Passion" (Conversation with Werner Klüppelholz),' in *Sankt-Bach-Passion* (CD Audivis/Naïve, 2002).

As in Bach's Passions, the textual montage is essential in organising the musical narrative. In the case of *Sankt-Bach-Passion*, we find a plurality of sources that form part of the *Bach-Dokumente*. The result is an assemblage of heteroclite textual elements that bring together the necrologies left by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Johann Friedrich Agricola, as well as fragments of the texts of Bach's cantatas, adapted, recomposed according to combinatorial logics that provide Kagel with the primary syntactic material:

> This piece falls into the category of pure music with text, as is often the case with Bach. Pure music is not music that avoids words, but music in which words become music. [*free translation*]

The work recounts a life marked by suffering, exploring the contrast between the painful conditions of existence of a singer who did not reach the top honours of his time but who produced a musical work capable of surviving any era. This material is organised according to the architecture of the Passions performed by Bach in a play of 'parody' that is the inverse of what Bach himself knew: the use of a folk or so-called profane theme in a religious composition. In the case of *Sankt-Bach-Passion*, it is a religious form that is now the object of 'profane' bricolage. Kagel 'believes' in Bach, in the sense suggested by the work's epigraph:

> For
> HIM
> *with all humility*
> *in deepest devotion*
> *and*
> *dedicated*
> *to his memory*
>
> Mauricio Kagel
> [*free translation*]

In this effect of substituting the figure of Jesus Christ, Bach is not, in the first instance, as he could be for Messiaen, a Christ figure. In other words, a figure who, under the impulse of spiritual exegesis, would present himself as an *alter Christus*, a transparent being in whom the traces of the imitation of Christ can be discovered – in the case of Olivier Messiaen, for example, the figure of St Francis. In Kagel's work, it is

predominantly a Promethean type of substitution. The human individual takes the place of God.[70] In Feuerbach's posterity, God is the most essential thing that can be discovered in the human condition.[71] Or, in a language closer to Kagel's, the reflex of the human condition. The musical work thus has the effect of self-revelation of humans.

4. From Tension to Transaction

Various studies have shown that despite the decline in the capacity of churches and other religious institutions to oversee the economy of the sacred, there is still evidence of a demand for the satisfaction of spiritual needs.[72] The ability to respond to this demand mobilises many actors and institutions, even in a context of tremendous fluidity, to meet this demand. The ability to respond to the demands of this needs circuit is still a possible way to build social credibility. The social impact of these initiatives depends on investment in rebuilding 'spaces of convergence',[73] making these experiences not just a context for individual enjoyment but a social manifestation.[74] This is why the contexts in which people position themselves about artistic production are, as we have seen, a practical laboratory for understanding the interplay of tensions and transactions. In the most widely reproduced research models, the gaze is recurrently distributed between two scenarios: on the one hand, the ritual-liturgical scenario, which continues to mobilise aesthetic mediations; on the other, the public sphere as a place of tensions, often resulting from processes of re-using religious memory, in new forms of *contrafactura*, detached from the authorities and institutions that manage the transmission of this memory.[75]

However, there are other scenarios with equal social relevance in which religious actors and institutions establish unprecedented

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[70] 'It turns out that not all musicians believe in God, but they all believe in Bach.'

[71] Ludwig Feuerbach, *L'essence du christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

[72] Alfredo Teixeira, 'Religion and Cultural Mediations: Perspectives from Contemporary Portuguese Society,' *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 534. doi: 10.3390/rel14040534.

[73] Here, the concept of *'espaces de rassemblement'* proposed by Alberto Melucci is taken up again: Alberto Melucci, 'Mouvements sociaux, mouvements post-politiques', *Lien Social et Politiques* 75 (2016): 173–90. doi : 10.7202/1036303ar.

[74] This is the case studied by Anne Robineau, *Symphonie du Millénaire*, a musical project created in Quebec, with state support, to celebrate the turn of the millennium: Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré'.

[75] Only this second logic of action is the subject of this article.

relationships with the field of artistic production. Moreover, they construct the 'artistic field' (in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu[76]) by including religious memory in the processes of cultural transmission. Roger Caillois stressed that religious groups mobilise to make their values more accessible through symbolic objects.[77] Nevertheless, historically and socially, this investment can have different meanings. In certain ways of analysis, these logics of action give rise to internal secularisation itineraries. In other perspectives, the support of religious institutions for artistic creation is interpreted as a way of adapting to the contemporary displacement of the sacred. In this context, it is essential to take into account the transaction regimes that are established between religious institutions and the field of artistic producers. On the one hand, religious universes provide materials (constellations of narratives, images and forms) inscribed in the medium and prolonged course of cultures. This happens through the heritageisation of religious signs, narratives, and practices, as well as other forms of transaction in which the symbolic-religious stock becomes available for the most varied aesthetic recompositions. On the other hand, since it is not a question of 'church art' (like the *musica da chiesa* in the past), but rather the constitution of border-places, churches have seen their place of inscription extended – a space of shared citizenship – open to new senses of public relevance.

Access to these strategies differentiates religious institutions and groups. In Christian geography, it is possible to distinguish between logics that favour the dynamics of individual conversion and those that favour strategies of Christianisation through cultural mediation. Although not exclusive, the latter is more likely to be found in churches that value their heritage as a medium, in the sense of a vehicle or a bridge, favouring inclusivity strategies. The historiography and sociology of the reception of the Second Vatican Council highlight the persistence of the Roman Catholic Church's strategies of 'reconciliation' with artists.[78] This institution underwent a transformation in which the initiatives for dialogue with non-believers (Pontifical Council for

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[76] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Libre examen (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1992).

[77] Roger Caillois, *L' homme et le sacré* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

[78] Isabelle Saint-Martin, 'Entre commandes officielles, résurgences et provocations: le catholicisme en France face à l'art contemporain,' in *Catholicisme en tensions*, ed. Céline Béraud, Frédéric Gugelot, and Isabelle Saint-Martin (Paris: Éditions EHESS, 2012), 266–68.

Dialogue with Non-Believers) were incorporated into a new organic model in 1993, becoming the Pontifical Council for Culture under the active guidance of Cardinal Poupard. Since 2007, Cardinal Ravasi has renewed the role of this body. This renewal can be documented in initiatives such as the 'Patio of the Gentiles' or the participation, since 2013, in the Venice Biennale. We should also mention a document issued under the authority of John Paul II, the 'Letter to Artists' of 1999, and the meeting with artists in the Sistine Chapel in 2009, promoted by Benedict XVI.[79]

Several initiatives that bear witness to this logic of action can be identified within the Catholic institutional structure in Portugal. First, the Portuguese Bishops' Conference has valued the National Secretariat for Cultural Pastoral Care. Between 2003 and 2014, its director was the priest, poet and theologian José Tolentino Mendonça, a personality who is widely known in Portuguese intellectual circles and who is present in various sectors of society, whether through his presence in one of the leading Portuguese weeklies or through the presence of his works on spirituality in the large book trade. As part of the Portuguese Bishops' Conference, the 'Árvore da Vida – Padre Manuel Antunes' (Tree of Life – Father Manuel Antunes) award was created, as well as his participation in the IndieLisboa film festival, also with an award.[80] Based on the local dynamics of the Roman Catholic Church, these initiatives can be integrated into cultural projects for regional development. This is the case of the 'Festival Terras sem Sombra de Música Sacra do Baixo Alentejo'[81], an initiative of the Department of Historical and Artistic Heritage of the Diocese of Beja, with various partnerships, whose programming concept brings together music, cultural heritage and biodiversity, with strategies for attracting audiences that have extended to the Iberian space.[82]

However, this approach must be read in the light of the reciprocities it describes. Isabelle Saint-Martin, who has done extensive research on the relationship between churches and contemporary visual arts, speaks of a resurgence of religious motifs in the repertoires of creators

[79] URL: <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pt/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html>; <https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pt/speeches/2009/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091121_artisti.html>.
[80] URL: <http://www.snpcultura.org/>.
[81] URL: <http://festivalterrassemsombra.org/>.
[82] Ana Santos, 'Festival *Terras Sem Sombra* de Música Sacra do Baixo Alentejo,' *Invenire* 2 (2011): 64–65.

in a context of free circulation and access to artistic and religious goods.[85] As she notes, there is no single meaning to this resurgence: neither the provocative effect nor the confessional logic exhaustively describes the persistence of the religious in contemporary art. It should even be stressed that in many cases, this reinvestment in religious motifs coincides with an aesthetic attitude of reinventing art inherited from the past – in the form of commentary, deconstruction, allusion, and so on. Sometimes, the aesthetic attitude of revaluing religious materials is no different from valuing the artistic production of the past as a support for new forms of artistic communication – along the lines of the processes of anamnesis mentioned above.

These creative itineraries can have a remarkable public impact. It is often the case that state institutions, even in countries with stricter models of secularism, end up supporting art with explicitly religious references. The results are often far from consensual or can even be seen as provocative or blasphemous.[84] However, in many cases, reactions to certain forms of re-use of religious references are not easily distinguishable from a rejection of contemporary art languages themselves.[85]

In the interpretive framework pursued in this article, artistic creation can be a place of dialogue for religious institutions and groups – to make their message relevant – and religious memory, specifically ritual, can be a context of interface between the creator and the public. Classically, from its etymology, *ars* denotes the conscious and intentional capacity to produce objects, but also the set of norms and techniques that must be used to represent reality. In this way, art is understood as a technique of conception and a form of knowledge. In order to legitimise this form of knowledge, the creator's individuality may not be enough; it needs a critical mass.[86] As Balandier observed in his essay on power and modernity, the reference to a horizon of sacredness symbolically validates cultural, social and political experiments that aim to create meaning.[87]

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[85] Saint-Martin, 'Entre commandes officielles, résurgences et provocations,' 272–74.
[84] Eleanor Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art* (New York, NY: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004).
[85] Nathalie Heinich, *L'Art Contemporain exposé aux rejets: études de cas* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).
[86] Audiences or a group of peers, in the case of creations that focus more on the virtuosity of the technique itself and are therefore less accessible to a broader audience: Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré,' 90–91.
[87] Georges Balandier, *Le Détour: Pouvoir et Modernité*, Espace du politique (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 205.

Strategies can include extending the action to the public and valorising 'places of memory', 'sacred places', as *mise-en-scène*. This favours practices that abolish or attenuate the classic distinction between spectacle and rite since the exteriority of the audience is mitigated. In other words, everyone is a *practitioner* – characteristic of ritual action. Attempts to abolish the distance between spectacle and play or ritual involve creating a relationship, a game of collage-reunion-assembly of different elements, which are re-appropriated, undergoing adjustments in meaning or destabilising boundaries. As Andrée Fortin observed, 'the encounter between the playful and the aesthetic is favoured by the fact that, in both cases, one is included in something broader that surpasses, encompasses or fuses us'.[88] These creative contexts do not celebrate a break with tradition like some avant-gardes. Instead, it is a utopian gesture that gives the floor to everyone. In this utopia of participation, art objects are no longer untouchable but can be handled – it could be said that this is the secularisation of art itself.

Within the framework of the interpretative hypotheses explored here, revisiting the case study Anne Robineau presented is beneficial. The research focused on a musical project presented on 3 June 2000 at the Oratory of Saint Joseph in Montreal. Under the name *Symphonie du Millénaire*, the project took on the dimension of a significant event mobilising institutions, composers, professional and amateur musicians and a vast audience – whose presence was integrated into the very performative conception of the work. The contours of the mega-event were unique: 19 composers, 333 performing musicians, 15 instrumental groups, pre-registration of 15 sets of bells from the city's churches, and 2000 public members who were given small bells. The relationship between electroacoustic materials and the music produced on-site unfolds in a commentary on the liturgical hymn *Veni creator*.[89]

Anne Robineau collected the material produced in the communicative mediasphere, studying the categories of journalistic reception and the speeches of the event's protagonists. She focuses on certain qualities that she considers crucial for the characterisation of the event: the large gathering, its festive nature and the desire to celebrate

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[88] Andrée Fortin, 'L'exposition du public à l'art,' *Cahiers de Recherche Sociologique* 28 (2011): 92. doi: 10.7202/1002528ar.

[89] Robineau, 'Les nouvelles stratégies sociales des artistes contemporains dans l'utilisation du sacré,' 85, 93.

two thousand years of shared culture.[90] We are, therefore, faced with a device that appeals to the effects of festive behaviour in its ability to reduce social distance and promote a sense of collective belonging, as Durkheim's descendants have noted. Anne Robineau sums up her interpretation of the artistic practices in question as follows:

> The new social strategies of artists, especially those that involve the public in the creation of the work, bringing them together across their differences, using the ancient resources of collective memory, lead artists to reconceptualise the sacred punctually and ephemerally.[91] [*free translation*]

It is important to emphasise that the means of constructing the work-event, to celebrate two thousand years of shared culture, makes use of liturgical and ritual heritage, reusing Christian memory in a context that is no longer that of the experience of an *objective Christianity*, to return to Michel de Certeau's emblematic expression. The work-event is realised in a context of fragmentation of Christianity as a social body, taking up Michel de Certeau's perspective (1974, 1987).[92] In this cultural situation, the work-event Millennium Symphony is marked by a logic of reuse that calls for a different game with established memory.

Michel de Certeau's anthropology of everyday life can provide a perspective on these logics of reuse.[93] In his proposal, the culture of everyday life is marked by two dynamics: that of the producers and that of the consumers. Producers have strategic power – control of the means of production. Tactical operations define the consumers' regime of action. In the wake of Michel de Certeau's anthropology of cultural practices, research is discovering a renewed interest in the combinations of operations beyond those models that made *usagers* simply passive and dominated consumers. This poetics of everyday life, of which de Certeau spoke, is disguised – perhaps like camouflage techniques of other kinds – in the very places occupied by institutionalised production, the logic of which is to control the production and use of the product. In the present situation, religious institutions and artists can establish transactions according to regimes of action in which the qualities that describe this zone of tactics become predominant. This plasticity

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[90] Robineau, 93–96.
[91] Robineau, 96.
[92] Certeau, *Le Christianisme éclaté*; Certeau, *La Faiblesse de Croire*.
[93] Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*.

allows for greater inclusivity regarding the diversity of languages and guarantees an interval of autonomy between religious symbolic capital and the artistic *medium*. The results can be unexpected.

Epilogue

The itinerary we have travelled can contribute to constructing a comprehensive approach capable of considering the emergence of a new field, beyond tensions and conflicts, within the framework of the transactions established between religious institutions and the artistic field. The sites of this encounter have the qualities of borderlands because they allow transactions between different worlds – they involve conflict, compromise, exchange and cooperation. New social dynamics unfold.

Among the theoretical models explored, the one that emerges from Michel de Certeau's anthropology deserves particular attention. In a context in which a vast space is opened to the plasticity of reuse tactics, the *objects of* belief can undergo profound remodelling, with results not foreseen by the institutions that had strategic power over the construction of orthodoxies and orthopraxies. Resistance or deviations from an authorised memory should not only be seen from the perspective of a theory of the avant-garde or a sociology of minorities. Instead, using the paradox figure suggested by Michel de Certeau, we should speak of the marginality of a majority.[94] This is because these 'arts of practice' are incorporated into the zone of elasticity of cultural practices and not in the context of dissidence or simple obsolescence (a perspective that was quite recurrent in some theories of secularisation until the 1990s). These 'arts of doing', typical of the tactical zone, also create meaning. Within a framework of autonomy of spheres, religious institutions and groups can find in artistic mediation a frontier place that allows a zone of contact with signs of displaced or diffuse sacredness.

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[94] Certeau, XLIIIs.