

Sunset Harvest



5. Memory

May 5, 2022

Memory

AS THEY GET OLDER, people seem to dwell on their early memories; this is as true of artists as for the rest of us. What is different is the nature of those memories, and how they are used in different media. So we have a poet and a couple of filmmakers going back to their childhoods, an angry but unusually innovative artist dealing with family trauma, a displaced Greek returning to the cultural memory of his people, two composers in old age returning to work written decades earlier, and a French *flâneur* who made memory—and his entire life—the subject of seven mesmerizing novels. *rb.*

A. Childhood

Public dabbling in childhood memories runs the risk of sentiment, and indeed the famous poem by **Thomas Hood** seems to begin that way. But the ill and short-lived poet had a more melancholy purpose. Among filmmakers, **Sir Kenneth Branagh** avoids the trap by setting his childhood memoir against the violence of Protestants and Catholics in his native Belfast, while **Federico Fellini** uses his virtuoso technique and eye for the absurd to season his own youth in Rimini.

- ♪ **Fellini**: liner scene from *Amarcord* (1973)
- ♪ **Hood**: “I remember, I remember,” read by David Baillie
- ♪ **Branagh**: *Belfast* (2021), two excerpts
(Jude Hill, Buddy; Judi Dench and Ciarán Hinds, his grandparents;
Olive Tennant, Catherine)

B. Trauma

Louise Bourgeois spent the first quarter of her long life in Paris, but came to America in 1938. She never lost her accent, or lost her need to come to terms with the memory of being devalued by her father, as a woman,

as a human being, and as the extraordinarily talented creative artist who sustained a multi-media career well into her nineties.

- ♪ **Video:** *Louise Bourgeois peels a tangerine*
Bourgeois: *Destruction of the Father* (1974)
- ♪ **Video:** *A Prisoner of her Memories*, with Robert Storr
Bourgeois: *Structures of Existence* (c.2000)

C. Culture

Four poems by **Constantine Peter Cavafy**, the Alexandrian Greek poet whom EM Forster famously described as “standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe.” We shall look at two sides of his work: a private one dealing with memories of erotic encounters, and a slightly more public one calling upon the long cultural history of his people.

- Cavafy:** *From the Drawer* (1923)
- ♪ **Cavafy:** *The City* (recited in Greek)
- ♪ **Cavafy:** *The God Abandons Antony* (1910), reader uncredited
- ♪ **Cavafy:** *Ithaca* (1910), read by Sean Connery
- ♪ **Fellini:** opening sequence of *Amarcord* (1973)

D. Music & Madeleines

Following on from a famous poem by **Shelley** describing the evocative power of music and scent, we look at the late work of two long-lived composers, **Elliott Carter** and **Joaquín Rodrigo**, and at the use of both music and taste in the great masterpiece of **Marcel Proust**.

- ♪ **Shelley:** “Music when soft voices die,” read by George Hibb
- ♪ **Bridge:** “Music, when soft voices die”
(Marjorie Maltias, mez; Hsin-Yun Huang, vla; Matan Porat, pno)
- ♪ **Carter:** *Retracing II*, for solo horn (2011), Jeff Fair
- ♪ **Rodrigo:** “Aranjuez, ma pensée”
(Fleur de Bray, voice, Thu Le, guitar; text by Victoria Kamhi)
- ♪ **Ruiz:** **Time Regained**, concert scene
(with the *Violin Sonata* by César Franck, 1886)
- ♪ **Proust:** tasting the madeleine, read by Tom Hiddleston

E. An Entire Life

Continuing our glimpses of Proust’s seven-novel sequence *In Search of Lost Time*, we look at two extended scenes from the 1999 film *Time Regained* by the Chilean director Raúl Ruiz.

- ♪ **Ruiz:** *Time Regained*, postwar meeting with Charlus
(Marcello Mazzarella as Proust, John Malkovich as Charlus)
- ♪ **Ruiz:** *Time Regained*, closing scenes

Full Names of Artists, Composers, and Writers

Louise **Bourgeois** (artist, 1911–2010), Kenneth **Branagh** (filmmaker, b.1960), Frank **Bridge** (composer, 1879–1941), Elliott **Carter** (composer, 1908–2012), Constantine Peter **Cavafy** (poet, 1863–1933), Federico **Fellini** (filmmaker, 1920–93), César **Franck** (composer, 1822–90), Thomas **Hood** (poet, 1799–1845), Marcel **Proust** (novelist, 1871–1922), Joaquín **Rodrigo** (composer, 1901–99), Raúl **Ruiz** (filmmaker, 1921–2011), Percy Bysshe **Shelley** (poet, 1792–1822)

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