

ORIENTAL OTHERNESS REPRESENTED IN FRENCH CHAMBER WORKS OF THE 19TH CENTURY: DAVID, BIZET, SAINT-SAËNS, DEBUSSY

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SUMMARY. The present article aims to reveal the methods used by 19th century French composers when representing Otherness. The concept of Otherness (alterity) was often associated with Orientalism, the representation of foreign cultures offering Western artists the possibility to depict the exoticism of far-away places, or certain behaviours and attitudes that could be subject to criticism in Western circles. Opera provided an extraordinary possibility for such depictions, because music endowed with exotic or strange sonorities was emphasised through the use of visual props (staging, costumes, etc). However, Otherness could be represented solely through sound, in chamber or symphonic works as well, as numerous examples testify. The authors of this paper focused their research on several chamber works of the 19th century, in which the composers aim to create a distinct, strange, or foreign atmosphere purely through music, without the use of visual elements: this Otherness is most often related to the depiction of exotic places, but it can also serve as means of evoking features that are different from the norm.

Keywords: Otherness, orientalism, French, 19th century, song, chamber music

Introduction – The Orient as the Other in 19th century chamber works

French chamber music and vocal miniatures composed in the first half of the 19th century, offer composers the possibility to create sound constructions that evoke the Orient mainly through music and the poetry that served as

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source of inspiration. Although there are no visual props to aid the representation, as is the case with operatic orientalist works, most often the composers succeed in creating a truthful evocation using particular melodic or rhythmic figures that could be perceived as exotic or strange by the 19th century Western audience. Thus, numerous *mélodies* belonging to French composers of the period are rich in musical images or motifs associated with the Orient, most of these miniatures expressing a particular melancholy atmosphere, alluding to the stereotype image of the Oriental woman (as described in the works of Western composers).

According to Locke, the 1830s and 40s form the moment within European music when the Middle East became marked as *female*.³ Through the images of women, as represented in 19th century orientalist paintings, the issue of carnal desire was addressed, ethnographic distance providing a means of deflecting criticism.⁴ Furthermore, the representation of the oriental woman was often associated with the representation of a weak, feminine Orient – embodied by oriental feminine characters, while the West was most often represented through European male characters (see Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*). The music that evoked this stereotype image was endowed with sensuality, undulating phrases, and figures or motifs that conveyed the musical discourse a particular strangeness. Thus, orientalism became associated with the idea of *Otherness*, an expression of that which is strange, different, exotic.

Orientalism can be closely related to exoticism, as Bartoli defines it: a combination of procedures through which the artist strives to evoke Otherness (defined by ethnic or geographical distance), by using elements borrowed from a foreign artistic idiom.⁵ Locke also states that exoticism evokes *in* or *through* a place or people that are profoundly different from the 'home' culture.⁶ The author emphasizes that the sound of these works may or may not be exotic or oriental: when representing the oriental Other, Western composer employ borrowed musical fragments, which are incorporated within a musical discourse conceived in an entirely Western idiom, with these foreign traces often losing their original exotic sound (which is due to their modal construction).

³ Locke, Ralph P. *Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands Musical Images of the Middle East in 19th-Century Music*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1998), University of California Press, p. 33.

⁴ Locke, Ralph P. *Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila" in Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Nov. 1991, pp. 270-271.

⁵ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. *Propositions pour une définition de l'exotisme musical et pour une application en musique de la notion d'isotopie sémantique* in *Musurgia* Vol. 7, No. 2, Analyse, Théorie, Histoire, 2000, p. 65.

⁶ Locke, Ralph P. *A Broader View on Musical Exoticism* in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 24, Issue 4, 2007, pp. 479, 483.

The following analysis strives to offer a clear image of the evolution of musical orientalism and the representation of the Other in orientalist chamber works, focusing entirely on French compositions from the 19th century. From the delicate suggestion of orientalism and otherness, the musical discourse gradually becomes more exotic in sound, the composers resorting to the use of specific musical procedures.

1. Félicien David's *Mélodies orientales* (1836)

The works of Félicien David (1810 - 1876), main composer of the Saint-Simonian movement, are considered extremely important for the evolution of French musical orientalism. He was one of the first French composers to incorporate fragments borrowed from or inspired by the oriental music he had listened to and wrote down during his voyages to North Africa and the Middle East. Certain sources regard him as the “inventor” of musical procedures that express musical exoticism.⁷

In 1833 the Saint-Simoniens embarked on a voyage to Egypt, in search for the fulfilment and embodiment of their doctrine, the *Femme Messie*. Their trip led them through Turkey (Constantinople and Smyrna) and Palestine, to Egypt, where David stayed until his return to France in 1835. During his voyage and Egyptian sojourn, the composer transcribed numerous oriental tunes he heard. This musical sketchbook would later provide him with inspiration in the composition of such orientalist works as the *Mélodies orientales* (1836) or the *ode-symphonie* in three parts *Le Désert* (1845).

Bartoli considers that the piano pieces that form the *Mélodies orientales* (1836) constitute the departing point for musical orientalism in France.⁸ These pieces did not enjoy great public success, owing mostly to the mediocre circulation of the score. It was with the vocal and orchestral work *Le Désert* that the composer finally attained success, initiating the construction of a certain exotic or oriental *couleur locale* in music, which strives to create the impression of authenticity, despite the faint oriental allusions.⁹

Mélodies orientales were published in three books, with some pieces also published in the volumes *Les brises d'Orient* (six books published in 1845)

⁷ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. *A propos de deux ouvrages sur Félicien David et les Saint-Simoniens: une lettre inédite de David* in *Revue de Musicologie*, T. 75, No. 1 (1989), pp. 65-76. Published by: Société Française de Musicologie, p. 75.

⁸ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. *L'orientalisme dans la musique française du XIXe siècle: la ponctuation, la seconde augmentée et l'apparition de la modalité dans les procédures exotiques* in *Revue belge de Musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap* Vol. 51 (1997), pp. 137-170. Published by: Societe Belge de Musicologie, p. 139.

⁹ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. *Exotisme musical en France et modernité à l'époque de Berlioz* in *Les colloques de l'Opéra Comique* “La modernité française au temps de Berlioz”. Février 2010, sous la direction d'Alexandre Dratwicki et Agnès Terrie, en-ligne, p. 13.

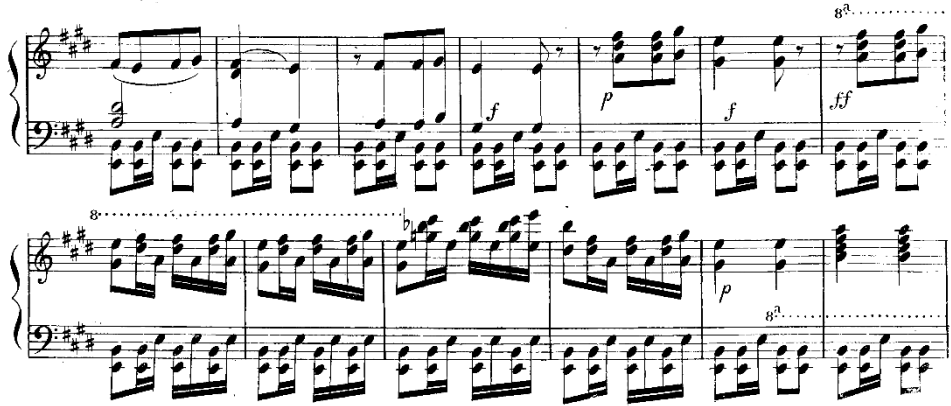
and *Les minarets* (3 fantasias published in 1845). Book 1 of the *Mélodies orientales* contains such titles as *Une promenade sur le Nil* (le Caire, Décembre le 20 1833), *Smyrne A H* (Juin le 8 1833), or *Fantasia harabi* (le Caire, Février le 7 1833), while in Book 3 the composer alludes to certain stereotype images associated with the Orient, *Égyptienne* (à C...) (le Caire, 16 Avril 1834) or *Le harem* (Constantinople, 18 Avril 1833).

In his orientalist works, David draws on several methods to suggest oriental “displacement” (and Otherness): static harmonic constructions, pedals in the bass, and rhythmic ostinato often represent the support for a melody that recalls the oriental tunes he had listened to. A similar construction may be observed in the fragment from *Une promenade sur le Nil*, piano piece from the *Mélodies orientales*.

E.g. 1

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It is divided into three systems. The first system has a tempo marking 'Metr: 100 = ♩' and a dynamic marking 'p'. The second system has a tempo marking 'Air arabe' and dynamic markings 'p sempre' and 'staccato'. The third system has a dynamic marking 'p'. The score features a prominent rhythmic ostinato in the bass line and a melodic line in the right hand.

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Félicien David: *Mélodies orientales* (1836)
Une promenade sur le Nil, excerpt from the *Air arabe* (bars 59-78), preceded
by the rhythmic ostinato suggesting the accompaniment
of the goblet drum – *le tarabouka* (bars 52-58)

In his ode-symphonie *Le Désert*, David re-uses the tune employed in the *air arabe*, which will eventually undergo several changes until it reached its final form in *Rêverie du soir*.

E.g. 2



La Rêverie du Soir.





**Félicien David: *Le Désert* (1845)
2 Partie: *La Nuit – La rêverie du soir* (bars 1-6 of the section)
(excerpt from the voice and piano reduction)**

Analysing the compositional methods David employed to create and enforce musical orientalism, Bartoli refers to a text in which the title choice for the volume of these piano miniatures is explained – the source of this text is not certain. According to this source, the term *mélodies* refers to the fact that oriental music focuses mainly on melody and its preservation, ignoring harmony.¹⁰ In the example above, David strives to create a sound that seems authentic for the 19th century Western listener, despite the simplicity of the methods employed – the augmented second, often employed to suggest the Orient, is avoided by David. The fragment bearing the title *air arabe* is preceded by 5 measures of rhythmic ostinato suggesting the sound of the goblet drum (*tarabuka* or *darbuka*), as also noted by the composer: *le tarabouka*. The composer is faced with the difficult task of inserting an oriental tune within a composition constructed using the rules of Western music composition. Thus, he refrains from writing an intricate harmonic accompaniment, instead he reduces the harmonic foundation to the role of rhythmic ostinato, placing the melody to the foreground. Bartoli recognizes in this compositional procedure one of the two means of creating musical exoticism: *l'emprunt adapté*, the adjustment of the borrowed musical material (more or less accurate) to the possibilities and rules of Western music.¹¹

David also wrote *mélodies* for voice and piano on oriental themes, such as *Le Bédouin*, *Le Tchibouk*, *L'Égyptienne*, or *Tristesse de l'odalisque*.

¹⁰ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1989. *Op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

¹¹ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1997. *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

In these vocal miniatures as well, the composer strives to create local colour through the adaptation of the transcribed oriental tunes, melodic fragments, or rhythms. In writing these songs, David was inspired by the poetry of Jacques Cognat, Louis Jourdan, or Théophile Gautier. In *Le Bédouin*, for example, the composer often resorts to the use of rhythmic ostinato accompaniment, while the vocal melody is sinuous and undulating, the ornaments suggesting the melismas in oriental music.

E.g. 3

Allegretto moderato. (♩ = 134)

- vir, Au. jour d' hui -

comme il ne ga - zel - - le Dans le dé -

**Félicien David: *Le Bédouin* (paroles de Jacques Cognat)
Excerpt (bars 9-16)**

In order to recreate the oriental music, he had transcribed, David rendered the harmonic accompaniment as static as possible, favouring the use of harmonic pedals. At the same time, he sought to replicate the rhythmic particularities of oriental music, using rhythmic formulae and ostinatos. His example was soon followed by such musicians as Ernest Reyer or Camille Saint-Saëns, who also employed the technique proposed by David when representing the Orient: the double harmonic pedal (on the interval of fifth) integrated within a rhythmic ostinato pattern¹² (as exemplified in the excerpts presented above).

¹² Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1989. Op. cit., p. 75.

David's *mélodies* are not based on transcriptions, as far as we know. The composer strives to create an oriental atmosphere using certain compositional techniques: harmonic pedals that support the floating melody, ornaments that suggest the melismas in oriental music. However, French composer and ethnomusicologist Francisco Salvador-Daniel (1831 - 1871), who also travelled to North Africa and the Middle East, and even lived there, transcribed numerous songs from various regions (Algiers, Morocco, Egypt, etc) and added harmonic accompaniment, striving to preserve the modal flavour of these songs.¹³ The lyrics of these pieces was translated into French, transforming these into charming exotic pieces to be performed within the Parisian circles.

The evocation of the Orient as the Other would gradually capture the attention of 19th century composers, leading to the evolution and transformation of these means of musical orientalism.

2. Georges Bizet: *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe* (1867)

In the first half of the 19th century, musical orientalism was obtained most often through the adaptation of authentic oriental tunes, their simple harmonization, and the use of harmonic and rhythmic ostinato constructions to support the melody, as well as the use of minor modes (that suggest the feminine image of the Orient) and descending scales (ornamental or chromatic). Gradually, influenced by the works of such composers as Ernest Reyer or Francisco Salvador-Daniel, French musical orientalism strived towards more accurate representations, influenced by certain traits that were perceived as typically Arab or oriental (by the 19th century Westerns audience).

The musical devices employed by David in his orientalist chamber works are further emphasized by Georges Bizet (1838 – 1875), using a pronounced modal language and the augmented second, in his well-known *mélodie*, *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe* (1868).

¹³ Karácsóny, Noémi. *The Evolution of French Musical Orientalism in the Works of Francisco Salvador-Daniel* in *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov - Series VIII: Performing Arts* • Vol. 12 (61) No. 2 SPECIAL ISSUE – 2019, pp. 151-160.

E.g. 4

Victor Hugo (1802–1885)
Les Orientales (1828)

Georges Bizet (1838–1875)
Op.21 No.4 (1866)
Original key: C minor

Andantino melanconico. $\text{♩} = 72$ *p semplice*

Voice

Puis-querien ne t'ar-rête en_ cet_ heur-eux pa-

Piano

pp

bien rythmé

8

ys, Ni l'om-bre du pal-mier ni_le jau - ne_ ma-is, Ni le re-pos, ni l'a-bon-

**Georges Bizet: *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe* (1868)
Excerpt (bars 1-14)**

Bizet employs the musical devices proposed earlier by David: the rhythmic ostinato figures and harmonic accompaniment that support the sinuous melody. However, Bizet further explores the possibilities of musical orientalism, through adding modal inflexions to his discourse, emphasizing the idea of Otherness, the differences between the Western audience and *the Other* – here, as well, represented by a feminine character (*l'hôtesse arabe*). The sinuous line of the melody, with its ascending and descending undulations, is further intensified through the use of chromaticism, while the augmented second (bar 7 of E.g. 4) suggests the exoticism of the oriental scene and idea of Otherness: the stereotype image of the oriental woman and the differences between East and West.

The augmented second is an interval much favoured by Bizet when representing Otherness, as can be observed in his opera *Carmen* as well. Scott argues that Bizet employs augmented seconds in *Carmen* for signifying

the cultural Other.¹⁴ The devices through which French composers of the 19th century evoke the Orient also suggest the idea of representing Otherness: through the use of music constructions that have a foreign or strange sound (as compared to the Western tonal language to which the audience of the period was accustomed), composers strove to evoke differences (cultural, moral, etc.) between *us* and *the Others*.

The sinuosity of the melodic line suggests the sensuality of oriental dances and invokes awareness of the body. This trait is particular for Bizet's music, as can be remarked in the opera *Carmen* as well. McClary observes that the principal numbers of *Carmen* are constructed in a manner that indicates the character's awareness of her body, engaging the lower body and demanding hip swings (for example the *Habanera*, the *Seguidilla*, or the *Gipsy song*).¹⁵ In the following sections of the song *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe*, Bizet includes a culmination on the note E, followed by a chromatic descent (which recalls the chromatic descent in the opening of the *Habanera*), that further emphasizes the idea of sensuality (and possibly danger), associated with the mysterious oriental female – *the Other*.

E.g. 5

¹⁴ Scott, Derek B. *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology: On Critical Musicology*. Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 166.

¹⁵ McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.57.

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55 *sempre f* *dim.* *p con slancio* *cresc.*
soir, de - vant leur porte as - sis, De s'en al - ler dans les é -
di - mi - nu - en - do

**Georges Bizet: *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe* (1868)
Excerpt (bars 50-59)**

19th century Western art often employed exoticism and orientalism as canvas for projecting the moral or erotic qualities denied by the Western society of the period. What was considered wrong in the West, could become acceptable if the characters were racial others. According to McClary, the racial Other became a favourite *feminine* zone within 19th century European narratives, where the Other could be viewed with desire or contempt. The author also observes that a remarkable number of Bizet's works belong to this brand of exoticism.¹⁶ However, the composer did not strive for musical authenticity or accuracy, as other contemporary composers did. What seems to have mattered far more for Bizet is the fact that the characters portraying the Other belong to a different ethnic group or could be considered exotic when compared to Europe.

3. Camille Saint-Saëns: *Mélodies persanes* (1870)

In his study regarding orientalism in 19th century French music, Bartoli makes a clear distinction about the techniques employed by composers to represent the Orient in their music: *l'emprunt adapté* and *la re-création pseudo-authentique*. The latter consists in the "invention" of melodies and rhythmic structures that could be perceived as *exotic* or *oriental* by the listener, because the composer employs the techniques of adjustment and adaptation (*l'emprunt adapté*) previously described.¹⁷

Before his sojourn in Algiers, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921) made use of this technique of simulated creation in oriental style in his *Mélodies persanes* (1870), inspired by Armand Renaud's *Nuits persanes*. Within this

¹⁶ McClary, Susan. 2002. *Op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1997. *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

volume of *mélodies* the composer employs the rhythmic ostinato and harmonic pedals introduced by David, the undulating and ornamented melody that is supported by the static harmonic pillars, along with a pronounced modal savour of the musical discourse, as illustrated in the most vivid manner in the songs *La brise* or *La solitaire*. Even though the entire volume evokes the exotic odour of oriental tales, with the last song *Tournoiement (Songe d'opium)* suggesting the delirium induced by opium, the aforementioned two songs distinguish themselves due to their exotic sound.

Unlike Félicien David (in his *Mélodies orientales* for piano) or Francisco Salvador-Daniel (in his transcribed songs), Saint-Saëns does not employ transcribed music as source of inspiration for his songs, but rather creates a musical discourse that *seems* oriental, using rhythmic and harmonic pedals as support for the sinuous melody – as exemplified in *La brise*, dedicated to Pauline Viardot:

E.g. 6

Allegretto Insiungando.

Com-me des chevreaux pi- qués par un taou, Dan-sent



Camille Saint-Saëns: *Mélodies persanes* (1870)
La brise (excerpt, bars 1-15)

In the *Caprice arabe* Op. 94 for two pianos (1894) Saint-Saëns employs the technique of adapting borrowed musical material to the particularities of Western music, the composer stating that in the composition of this opus he was inspired by Arabic sources, as Bartoli mentions. Furthermore, Bartoli considers that the rhythmic treatment of the piece, as well as the incorporation of modal inflexions is compatible with the particularities of traditional Arabic music, the composer striving to emphasize the *couleur locale*, the entire process remaining within the confines of the exoticism proposed by Félicien David.¹⁸ Throughout the work, the composer employs modal inflexions and rhythmic ostinato (in the manner of David), however the exotic suggestions are not as sharp as in the *Bacchanale* (from *Samson et Dalila*), for example – where the augmented second clearly emphasizes the exoticism of the scene and the otherness of the Philistines.

E.g. 7



¹⁸ Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1997. *Op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.



**Camille Saint-Saëns: *Caprice arabe pour deux pianos* Op. 94
Excerpt (bars 1-11)**

4. Claude Debussy's orientalism and representation of otherness

The evolution of French exoticism and orientalism was impacted in its first stages by Turkish and Middle Eastern influences, and gradually progressed to the incorporation of African rhythmic and melodic patterns, joined by the development of musical *chinoiserie*, towards the end of the nineteenth-century. According to Pasler, French orientalism of the *fin du siècle* was closely related to the dichotomy of Self-Other, projected onto foreign cultures.¹⁹ Thus, exoticism was considered one of the most common terms for signalling Otherness.

Debussy's encounter with the exoticism of South-East Asia, Africa, or Spain had a transformative effect on his works, due to the musical particularities of these regions, assimilated by the composer. Nonetheless, Jankélévitch argues that for Debussy Otherness could also be represented by the West or by "a country that doesn't exist", as is the case with his opera *Pelleas et Melisande*.²⁰

According to Pasler, Debussy's experience with Otherness can be linked to his activity as piano accompanist of Madame von Meck, Tchaikovsky's patron, between 1880 and 1882. During this period, the young composer travelled and spent time in various regions of Austria, Italy, France, or Russia. His contact with various cultures, with Otherness inhabiting a space between sameness and difference, contributed to Debussy's openness to Otherness and his

¹⁹ Pasler, Jann. *Revisiting Debussy's Relationships with Otherness: Difference, Vibrations, and the Occult in Music and Letters*, Volume 101, Issue 2, May 2020, Pages 321–342. Accessed on-line: <https://music-web2.ucsd.edu/~jpasler/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Revisiting-Debussy%E2%80%99s-Relationships-with-Otherness-Difference-Vibrations-and-the-Occult.pdf> – p. 2.

²⁰ Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *Préface* to Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionisme et symbolisme*, trans. From the Polish by Thérèse Douchy. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970, p. 10.

willingness to cross the line between *us* and *them*, hereby enriching the Self.²¹ These assumptions are clearly illustrated by Debussy's music, which constitutes the proof that the contact with foreign cultures was considered by the composer an opportunity for growth, artistic and spiritual enrichment.

During the *Exposition Universelle* in 1889, Debussy's encounter with Javanese music and the *gamelan* ensemble influenced his subsequent works, contributing to the development and evolution of his compositional style. Debussy incorporated certain characteristics of Javanese music in his works, thus creating a unique musical language, through which the composer strives to suggest the meaning that lies beyond the depicted images or concepts. Some of the compositional features inspired by the composer's contact with the oriental Other are the gradual departure from Western musical structures and a novel approach to form, the incorporation of polyrhythms and pentatonic scales, the use of repetitive constructions, ostinato techniques.²²

In his works, Debussy employs titles that evoke Asian or exotic images, such as *Pagodes*, *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fût*, or *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*. The composer also observes the similarities between Western polyphony and the gamelan: the existence of a *nuclear theme* and *counter melody*. Inspired by this, in his works Debussy employs a *nuclear theme* (similar to a *cantus firmus*) and a *counter melody*.²³

Throughout the gamelan performance the mentioned nuclear theme is paraphrased (and not developed), suggesting polyphonic treatment – a technique that inspired Debussy. In the *2 Arabesques*, composed before 1889, the nuclear theme cannot be clearly traced (as one would expect when compared to the gamelan), however it is interesting to observe the two melodic ideas employed by the composer in Arabesque No. 2: these melodic ideas (supported by chords and arpeggios) are polyphonically treated, developed and varied:

²¹ Pasler, Jann. 2020. *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

²² Tamagawa, Kiyoshi. *Echoes from the East. The Javanese Gamelan and its Influence on the Music of Claude Debussy*. Lexington Books, 2020, p. xv.

²³ Rucsanda, Mădălina Dana; Karácsony, Noémi; Belibou, Alexandra. *Shades of Indonesia in the Works of Claude Debussy in Proceedings of the Education, Research, Creation Symposium*, Vol. 9 No. 1 – 2023 (pp. 376-390), p. 382.

E.g. 8

Allegretto scherzando

The musical score for E.g. 8 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system (bars 9-11) is marked *pp* and features a right hand with eighth-note patterns and a left hand with sustained chords. The second system (bars 12-14) shows a dynamic shift to *p* and then *mf*, with the right hand continuing its melodic flow and the left hand providing harmonic support.

Claude Debussy: 2 Arabesques, No. 2
Excerpt, bars 9-14

However, in the works composed after 1890, the composer employs more than one nuclear theme, paraphrased and treated in a manner that reflects the gamelan practice (for example in *Nocturne*). The composer employs various methods to double and imitate the parts, obtaining juxtaposition of textures. Debussy also juxtaposes contrasting musical material, such as the *counter melody* of the left hand (a melodic material that is independent from the one expressed in the nuclear theme) that appears below the nuclear theme (of the right hand), in the last bar of the following example from *Pagodes*:

E.g. 9

Modérément animé

The musical score for E.g. 9 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system (bars 7-8) is marked *a Tempo* and features a right hand with eighth-note patterns and a left hand with sustained chords. The second system (bars 8-9) shows a dynamic shift to *Rit.* and features a right hand with eighth-note patterns and a left hand with sustained chords.

Claude Debussy: Estampes
I. Pagodes (Excerpt, bars 7-9)

In the works of Debussy, alongside the incorporation of pentatonic structures and modal harmony, another oriental reminiscence is the use of ostinato patterns, held pedals and static harmonies – as also illustrated in the *Prélude* from the work *Pour le piano* (1901).

Conclusions

In Western art and music, the representations of the Orient range from the idealistic and possibly fantastic, to the evocation of marked differences between *us* and *the Other(s)*. Most often, musical orientalism is associated with the representation of different cultures (geographical displacement created through sound) or different forms of artistic expression. However, the contact with the Other may lead to introspection and enrichment of the Self, as argued in the case of Debussy's encounter with Asian art.

French musical exoticism and orientalism had an interesting evolution, from the simple suggestion of exoticism and investment of a composition with *couleur locale* due to the use of rhythmic ostinatos, static harmonies and sinuous melodies, to the gradual incorporation of chromaticism, the augmented second, or modal inflexions as means of emphasizing the idea of Otherness, of tension that must be resolved – as metaphor for the dissolution of differences, either through the fusion between the self and *the Other*, or the elimination of the latter (as McClary argues²⁴ in her work). Finally, in Debussy's works, the idea of Otherness and exotic representations step beyond the desire to create works that are endowed with an exotic savour, to the assimilation of foreign influences to the point that these contribute to the evolution of the Self.

It could also be argued that the evolution of French musical orientalism, in chamber works but also in works of larger scale, led to the crystallization of a particular musical language, within which the influence of *the Other* has penetrated and created precise constructions and connections, beyond the border of the Self.

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²⁴ McClary, Susan. 2002. *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

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