

THE EARLY SONGS (1880–1885) OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY: AN ANALYTICAL
APPROACH TO DEFINING A REPERTOIRE

William Allan Waldroup, B.M.Ed., M.M.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2021

APPROVED:

J Stephen Slottow, Major Professor
Peter Mondelli, Committee Member
Diego Cubero, Committee Member
Benjamin Brand, Chair of Music History,
Theory and Ethnomusicology
Jaymee Haefner, Director of Graduate Studies
in the College of Music
John Richmond, Dean of the College of Music
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse
Graduate School

Waldroup, William Allan. *The Early Songs (1880–1885) of Claude Debussy: An Analytical Approach to Defining a Repertoire*. Doctor of Philosophy (Music), May 2021, 365 pp., 148 musical examples, 1 appendix, bibliography, 5 primary sources, 101 secondary sources.

The period between 1880 and 1885 was a significant time in Claude Debussy's life and compositional career. 1880 marks the date of his first published composition, "Nuit d'étoiles," and 1885 is the year in which he began his two-year tenure in Rome after winning the coveted Prix de Rome in 1884. During the intervening time Debussy composed about forty songs. Scholarly literature, especially analytical literature, tends to focus heavily on music in Debussy's mature style, often casting his early compositions in an unfavorable light. Writing on Debussy is scattered with references to the early songs but authors almost always situate them on one end of a continuum that shows an evolution of compositional style culminating in maturity. Such a view tends, if only tacitly, to regard early works as inferior instances of juvenilia rather than works worthy of study in their own right.

In this dissertation I establish a foundation for regarding Debussy's early songs as significant compositions in their own right, independent from anachronistic comparisons with his more mature compositional style, and provide justification for considering the songs as a unified, identifiable repertoire within Debussy's larger œuvre. Using a modified Schenkerian analytical approach, I identify consistencies among the songs that give them an independent identity and provide support for their classification as an identifiable collection of works. I consider the songs within a proper historical narrative and in close association with poetry, French musical culture, and issues related to Debussy's biography. Furthermore, I delineate Debussy's compositional aesthetic in the early songs and examine his relationship to other notable contemporary composers of the *mélodie*, thus showing how his early style emerged from the tradition of the

mélodie, how he participated in late-nineteenth century art-song culture, and how he ultimately pushed the genre of the *mélodie* forward.

Copyright 2021

by

William Allan Waldroup

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Hal Leonard LLC for granting me permission to reproduce many of Debussy's early songs on which this project is based, both as examples within the text and in full in the Appendix. I would also like to thank my advising professor Dr. Stephen Slottow for his invaluable guidance throughout this project as well as my committee members, Dr. Peter Mondelli and Dr. Diego Cubero, for their time, comments, and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES	vi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2. APPLYING SCHENKERIAN ANALYSIS TO DEBUSSY’S MUSIC	7
Survey of Schenkerian Approaches	11
Edward Laufer	11
Felix Salzer	13
Adele Katz	14
Matthew Brown	18
Avo Somer	21
Richard Parks	25
Olli Väisälä	28
Jeremy Day-O’Connell	30
Mark McFarland	35
Conclusion	36
CHAPTER 3. BIOGRAPHICAL FACTORS	37
The Conservatoire de Paris	37
A Duality of Style	41
The Vasniers	44
CHAPTER 4. FRENCH ART SONG IN THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY	51
The <i>Mélodie</i>	52
The Non-Debussyian <i>Mélodie</i>	60
Text	61
Accompaniment – Fauré	65
Accompaniment – Duparc	80
Melody	91
Conclusion	103

CHAPTER 5. DEBUSSY WITHIN THE MILIEU OF THE FRENCH MÉLODIE	106
Text	109
Accompagnement	125
Melody	146
Conclusion	172
CHAPTER 6. PUSHING THE GENRE FORWARD – DEFINING A REPERTOIRE	174
“Nuit d’étoiles”	178
“Beau soir”	191
“Fantoches”	213
“Pantomime”	234
“Fête galante”	242
“Clair de lune”	251
“La fille aux cheveux de lin”	276
“Regret”	287
Conclusion	296
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION.....	299
APPENDIX: SONG SCORES.....	304
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	359

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

	Page
Example 2.1: Debussy, <i>Bruyères</i> , Contrapuntal Background (adapted from Salzer Ex. 478)	14
Example 2.2: Debussy, <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> , Katz Ex. 77, Annotated	15
Example 2.3: Debussy, <i>Pour le Piano</i> – Whole-tone Prolongation (adapted from Katz Ex. 89)...	17
Example 2.4: Debussy, <i>L’Isle Joyeuse</i> , Deep Middleground (adapted from Brown Ex. 11).....	20
Example 2.5: Debussy, Cello Sonata, Prologue, Divergent Cadence.....	24
Example 2.6: Debussy, “Noël des enfants qui n’ont plus de maisons,” Neighbor-note motion.....	27
Example 2.7: Debussy, <i>L’Isle Joyeuse</i> , Background Structure (adapted from Väisälä Ex. 1).....	29
Example 2.8: Debussy, <i>L’Isle Joyeuse</i> , Deep Middleground	29
Example 2.9: Debussy, <i>La fille aux cheveux de lin</i> , Measures 1-4 – Plagal leading tone.....	31
Example 2.10: Debussy, <i>Prélude l’après-midi d’un faune</i> , Final Cadence, mm. 105-106 - Strings.	33
Example 2.11: Debussy, <i>Prélude l’après-midi d’un faune</i> , Measures 104–6.	34
Example 4.1: Fauré, “Chant d’automne,” Original Text and Alterations.....	63
Example 4.2: Fauré, “Les Matelots,” Accompaniment	65
Example 4.3: Fauré, “Les Matelots,” Gautier’s Poem and Faure’s Adaptations.....	67
Example 4.4: Fauré, “Barcarolle,” Text and Musical Form	68
Example 4.5: Fauré, “Barcarolle,” Rhythmic Motive.....	68
Example 4.6: Fauré, “Lydia,” More Sophisticated Piano Part	70
Example 4.7: Fauré, “Lydia,” Stanza 1 and Music.....	72
Example 4.8: Fauré, “Lydia,” Stanza 3 and Music.....	72
Example 4.9: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment	74
Example 4.10: Fauré, “Nell,” Piano Doubling Voice.....	74

Example 4.11: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Countermelody	75
Example 4.12: Fauré, “Nell,” Echo Countermelody.....	76
Example 4.13: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Countermelody	76
Example 4.14: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Connection between Stanzas 1 and 2	77
Example 4.15: Fauré, “Nell,” Melodic Bass Line	78
Example 4.16: Fauré, “Nell,” More Obvious Bass Line.....	79
Example 4.17: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Text and Translation	81
Example 4.18: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Melody in Voice	82
Example 4.19: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Reprise of Vocal Melody in Piano.....	83
Example 4.20: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Second Reprise of Vocal Melody in Piano....	83
Example 4.21: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Duparc’s Text and Translation.....	84
Example 4.22: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano melody.....	85
Example 4.23: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano Melody during Refrain.....	87
Example 4.24: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano Melody at End of Song	87
Example 4.25: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano Echo of Voice Melody	89
Example 4.26: Fauré, “Lydia,” Melodic Tritone	92
Example 4.27: Fauré, “Lydia,” Triplets and Melodic Alterations	93
Example 4.28: Fauré, “Lydia,” Repetition of Minor Mode Inflections.....	94
Example 4.29: Fauré, “Après un Rêve,” Character of Melody	95
Example 4.30: Fauré, “Après un Rêve,” Climax	96
Example 4.31: Duparc, “L’invitation au voyage,” Characteristic Melody.....	97
Example 4.32: Duparc, “L’invitation au voyage,” Second Melodic Tritone.....	99
Example 4.33: Duparc, “Le Manoir de Rosamonde,” Text and Translation	100
Example 4.34: Duparc, “Le Manoir de Rosamonde,” Expressive use of Larger Intervals	100
Example 4.35: Duparc, “Élégie,” Text and Translation	101

Example 4.36: Duparc, “Élégie,” Focus on Minor Intervals in Opening Phrase.....	101
Example 4.37: Duparc, “Élégie,” Melodic Tritone.....	103
Example 5.1: Three-Part Interpretive Process	107
Example 5.2: Debussy’s (Four-Part) Interpretive Process.....	108
Example 5.3: “Fête Galante,” Banville’s Original and Debussy’s Alterations	111
Example 5.4: “Apparition” – Text and Translation	112
Example 5.5: Debussy, “Apparition,” Repeated Text	112
Example 5.6: “Pantomime,” Text and Translation	114
Example 5.7: Verlaine, “En Sourdine,” Text and Translation.....	115
Example 5.8: Debussy, “En Sourdine,” Musical Connection Between Repeated Text	116
Example 5.9: Banville, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Text and Translation	117
Example 5.10: Bourget, “Regret,” Text and Translation.....	119
Example 5.11: Bourget, “Regret,” Form and Deep Middleground Structure.....	120
Example 5.12: Verlaine, “Clair de lune,” Text and Translation.....	121
Example 5.13: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Text, Translation, and Debussy’s Alterations	123
Example 5.14: Debussy, “Fantoques,” Text and Translation	124
Example 5.15: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Text and Translation	127
Example 5.16: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Text and Musical Form	127
Example 5.17: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Accompaniment Pattern.....	129
Example 5.18: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Break in Accompaniment Pattern	130
Example 5.19: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Countermelodies in Piano	131
Example 5.20: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Countermelody Supporting Voice	133
Example 5.21: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Text and Translation	134
Example 5.22: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Accompaniment Patterns	135
Example 5.23: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” St. 1 – Interrupted Accompaniment Pattern	137

Example 5.24: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Stanza 2 – Word Painting	138
Example 5.25: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Text and Translation	139
Example 5.26: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Accompaniment Patterns	140
Example 5.27: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Word Painting in First Stanza	143
Example 5.28: Debussy, “Rondeau,” “A Dream Passes...”	144
Example 5.29: Fauré, “Lydia,” Melodic Tritone (reproduced from Example 4.26)	148
Example 5.30: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Melodic Tritone.....	149
Example 5.31: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Melodic Tritone in Context.....	151
Example 5.32: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Analogous Passage without Tritone.....	152
Example 5.33: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Modal Mixture in Melody	154
Example 5.34: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Text and Translation	156
Example 5.35: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Introduction Neighbor Motives.....	157
Example 5.36: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Turn Figure	158
Example 5.37: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Turn figure and Voice	160
Example 5.38: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Melodic Motives.....	162
Example 5.39: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Two Types of Motives.....	164
Example 5.40: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Distribution and Placement of Motives.....	165
Example 5.41: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Motive Momentum Graph	166
Example 5.42: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Extended Motive Type 1A, Third Stanza.	168
Example 5.43: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” First and Third Stanzas of Text.....	170
Example 6.1: Banville, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Text and Translation	179
Example 6.2: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Form	181
Example 6.3: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Stanza 1 Music and Graph.....	182
Example 6.4: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Textual Repetition in Stanza 1	185

Example 6.5: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Deep Middleground Graph.....	190
Example 6.6: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Text and Translation	192
Example 6.7: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Option 1: 3-line <i>Urlinie</i>	193
Example 6.8: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Structural Predominant and Second Stanza of Text.....	194
Example 6.9: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Close of Structure.....	195
Example 6.10: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Deep Middleground 5-Line Reading	199
Example 6.11: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Neighbor Motive Structure	201
Example 6.12: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Resolution of Neighbor Motive	202
Example 6.13: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Surface Neighbors in Introduction.....	204
Example 6.14: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Burkhart’s Turn Figure	206
Example 6.15: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Burkhart’s Foreground Reading.....	209
Example 6.16: Verlaine, “Fantoche,” Text and Translation	214
Example 6.17: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Text with Debussy’s Alterations.....	214
Example 6.18: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Evocative Melody	219
Example 6.19: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Nightingale Vocalise.....	220
Example 6.20: Debussy, “En Sourdine,” Nightingale Reference.....	221
Example 6.21: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Four Main Motives.....	222
Example 6.22: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Beginning of Section B.....	224
Example 6.23: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Middleground Graph.....	226
Example 6.24: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Final Cadence.....	228
Example 6.25: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Tritone Substitution.....	229
Example 6.26: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Close of Text.....	232
Example 6.27: Debussy, “Pantomime,” Text and Translation	234
Example 6.28: Debussy, “Pantomime,” Complex Passages in Voice	235
Example 6.29: Debussy, “Pantomime,” Vasnier Vocalise	237

Example 6.30: “Pantomime,” Deep Middleground	239
Example 6.31: “Fête galante,” Text and Translation	243
Example 6.32: Debussy, “Fête galante,” Vasnier Vocalise	246
Example 6.33: Debussy, Additional “Vasnier Vocalizes.”	248
Example 6.34: Verlaine, “Clair de lune,” Text and Translation	253
Example 6.35: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Text and Translation	255
Example 6.36: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Characteristic Melodies	256
Example 6.37: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Vocalise-esque Passage	258
Example 6.38: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Form and Text	259
Example 6.39: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Substitute Dominant Harmonies	260
Example 6.40: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Additional Occurrences of the Tritone Substitution.	263
Example 6.41: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Middleground Graph	267
Example 6.42: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Repeated Text in Context – Annotated Music	268
Example 6.43: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Final Cadence – Option 1	270
Example 6.44: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Final Cadence – Option 2	272
Example 6.45: Leconte de Lisle, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Poem Text and Translation	277
Example 6.46: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Song Text and Translation	278
Example 6.47: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Beginning and Ending Vocalizes	280
Example 6.48: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Middle Vocalise	281
Example 6.49: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Form	282
Example 6.50: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Introduction and Refrain	283
Example 6.51: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Raised Scale Degree 3 in Top Line	285
Example 6.52: Debussy, “Regret,” Text and Translation	288
Example 6.53: Debussy, “Regret,” Examples of Vocal Melody	290
Example 6.54: Debussy, “Regret,” Ambivalent Key Areas	291

Example 6.55: Debussy, “Regret,” Form and Text	292
Example 6.56: Debussy, “Regret,” Transitional Second Stanza	294
Example 6.57: Debussy, “Regret,” Deep Middleground Graph.....	295

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Claude Debussy is among the most celebrated composers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout his career Debussy developed a unique compositional style that features a diverse palette of sounds; today, much of his music continues to defy systematic classification. Additionally, Debussy was intensely interested in poetry and visual art forms; he had a sophisticated understanding of contemporary poetry and was quite sensitive to the subtleties of the French language. Debussy's unique compositional style and his varied interests in music, poetry, and visual arts have made him a prominent figure in music literature. Much has been written on Debussy, but studies vary greatly in scope and content. His early songs are an especially underrepresented area of his *œuvre*.

Debussy's early works occupy a pivotal position within his larger biography and musical output and consist almost entirely of songs.¹ The period between 1880 and 1885 was a significant time in Debussy's life and compositional career. 1880 marks the date of Debussy's first published composition, "Nuit d'étoiles," and 1885 is the year in which he began his two-year tenure in Rome after winning the coveted Prix de Rome in 1884. During the intervening time Debussy composed about forty songs.² The songs are on a variety of texts by different poets and carry dedications to various people (Yates 2002, 108).³ Songs during this period are clearly set apart from other contemporaneous compositions – primarily those composed as a part of his

¹ By early works I am referring to those falling approximately between 1880 and 1885. Many scholars extend the dates of Debussy's early (or formative) period through the 1880s.

² Twenty-seven are available in published editions, four are unpublished manuscripts held in U.S. libraries, and the remaining nine are lost, in private collections, or in foreign libraries (most notably the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris).

³ Although there are a number of different dedicatees in Debussy's early songs, Marie Vasnier is undoubtedly the most frequent. Of Debussy's forty songs from this period, at least twenty-seven were dedicated to Mme. Vasnier.

studies at the Paris Conservatoire – and represent the earliest stage in what would develop into a successful career.⁴ Although the songs do not represent the pinnacle of Debussy’s compositional maturity, they do, as Eric Jenson (2014, 131) remarks, reveal some striking accomplishments to those who approach them with an open mind.

Scholarly literature – especially analytical literature – focuses heavily on music in Debussy’s mature style, often casting his early compositions in an unfavorable light. Literature on Debussy is scattered with references to the early songs; however, scholars almost always situate the songs on one end of a continuum that shows an evolution of compositional style culminating in maturity. Such a view tends, if only tacitly, to regard early works as inferior instances of juvenilia rather than works worthy of study in their own right.⁵ This stems from an anachronistic comparison with later works in which early works are overshadowed by the innovations that Debussy would ultimately become known for. Furthermore, the early songs fall victim to the misguided (and inaccurate) view that Debussy emerged in 1890s as a fully developed professional and that his career was one of unqualified improvement. The early songs are not in Debussy’s mature style, but they are still important and valuable works.

Debussy’s early songs (ca. 1880–1885) represent the first clearly definable repertoire in the composer’s career. They were composed within a fairly short time frame (as noted above) and share consistencies in compositional approach, biographical details, and extra-musical factors. The songs exhibit a complex, thoughtful, and coherent compositional aesthetic (this is especially true when they are examined in the context of the French *mélodie* that evolved over

⁴ James Briscoe (1979) distinguishes between Debussy’s “academic” compositions for the conservatoire and his “rebellious” compositions not affiliated with the conservatoire.

⁵ Briscoe (1979) focuses on Debussy’s early compositions and early compositional style in his dissertation but he structures a large portion of the document around compositional techniques that would later become characteristic of Debussy’s mature style. Thus, while he takes the early works as the subject of his dissertation, he privileges Debussy’s mature style by revealing the origins of that style in earlier works.

the middle to late nineteenth century⁶); they are similar in construction and structure; they are aurally identifiable as belonging to the time in which they were composed; and they are noticeably different from other compositions in Debussy's larger œuvre. The musical similarities combined with additional consistencies in Debussy's life (perhaps most notably the people with whom he associated) and in contemporary art culture (especially poetry) give the early songs an independent identity and provide support for their classification as a definable repertoire.

Throughout my study of the early *mélodies* I establish a foundation for regarding these songs as significant compositions in their own right by examining important and compelling compositional features – often in close association with poetry, French musical culture, and issues related to Debussy's biography – and by considering the songs within a proper historical narrative, independent from anachronistic comparisons with the composer's later, more mature, style. I also identify consistencies among the songs that unify them as an identifiable repertoire within Debussy's larger œuvre. By examining this underrepresented repertoire using a more rigorous analytical approach than has been yet applied to the early songs, I hope to begin to fill a gap in Debussyian analytical literature.

As related goals, and as avenues for addressing my main points, I delineate Debussy's compositional aesthetic in the early songs and examine his relationship to other notable contemporary composers of the *mélodie*. Revealing a consistent compositional aesthetic helps unify the body of songs and identify characteristics that qualify them as an independent repertoire. In comparing Debussy's songs and compositional procedures with the songs and creative processes of contemporary composers I situate Debussy's work within the

⁶ The *mélodie* is a genre of musical composition that evolved from the *romance* and became popular in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The genre emerged as the result of several factors including the decline in the artistic level of the *romance*, the influence of Schubert's *Lieder*, and the rise of a new Romantic poetry (Noske 1970, 1). See Chapter 3 for more on the *mélodie*.

compositional milieu of the late-nineteenth century French art song, thus showing how his early style emerged from the tradition of the *mélodie*, how he participated in late-nineteenth century art-song culture, and how he ultimately pushed the genre forward.⁷ Considering Debussy's songs alongside his contemporaries reveals Debussy's place in the French art song tradition, but also establishes the significance of his songs based on a proper historical chronology.

There is no clear reason why analysts have avoided Debussy's early songs or why the songs have gained a reputation as valuable only in illustrating an evolution of the composer's style. One possibility is that Léon Vallas, one of Debussy's earliest biographers, set a precedent for modern views shortly after the composer's death. Following a brief and cursory examination of several of Debussy's early songs that were published posthumously in the 1920s, Vallas formed a negative opinion that became widely adopted and persists to the present day (Jensen 2014, 131). Indeed, in his biography on Debussy, Vallas (1973, 20) comments that many songs published in the 1920s should have been left unpublished.

Paul Yates (2002) links the association of Debussy's early songs as juvenilia to a particular publication from 1926. Several of the early *mélodies* were published as a supplement to the May 1, 1926 issue of *Revue musicale*; the issue was dedicated to "La Jeunesse de Debussy." First of all, Yates contends that a posthumous collection carries less weight than a publication made during the composer's lifetime. Secondly, Yates suggests that, as a supplement, the songs were given a subordinate position within the publication that led to them being regarded as valuable only for academic interest.⁸ Additionally, qualifiers such as "jeunesse" and "anciennes" that were appended to the issue promoted a view that the songs are of lesser quality

⁷ My survey focuses on works that Debussy would likely have known and that were (and perhaps still are) highly regarded as representative of the genre in the mid-nineteenth century, roughly between 1860 and 1885.

⁸ Such musical supplements were fairly common in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Pasler 2016 for more information.

than those published in Debussy's life (200). Yates supports his hypothesis by showing that "Mandoline" (composed in 1882 and published many times during Debussy's life) enjoys a much higher status than most other songs written around the same time (166–67).

It seems likely that the view of Debussy's early songs as juvenilia took shape not long after the composer's death. In a brief letter written for the same edition of *Revue musicale* mentioned above, Paul Vidal reflected on the time he and Debussy spent in Rome after winning the Prix de Rome.⁹ He mentions that Debussy's songs, namely "Mandoline" and "Fantoche," were popular among the Prix laureates. Vidal (1926, 111) further mentions that Debussy later revised "Fantoche" but suggests that the earlier version is the superior composition.¹⁰ This perhaps lends credence to what Yates identifies as a reason the early songs are undervalued. "Mandoline" was subsequently published many times and retained its reputation while the early version of "Fantoche," although initially highly regarded, was not subsequently published and fell out of favor.

In the following chapters I delineate my points in greater detail. In Chapter 2, I examine literature concerned with applying Schenkerian methodology to Debussy's music. Debussy's music – and indeed most French music in general – falls outside the traditional Schenkerian canon. It is well known that Schenker did not hold Debussy or his music in high regard. Nonetheless, with some adaptations, Schenkerian analysis can appropriately explain much of Debussy's music. Chapter 2 includes some of the more prominent analytical studies that support my choice of the Schenkerian methodology. Chapter 3 focuses on Debussy's biography during the time in which he wrote his early songs (1880–1885) and provides necessary information for

⁹ Vidal won the Prix in 1883, the year before Debussy. Thus, their residencies in Rome overlapped.

¹⁰ Debussy published a different version of "Fantoche" in the 1890s that is better known than the earlier song (published in 1882). Yates (2002, 180) notes that the two versions of the song are almost the same. The final stanza of the later song is almost completely rewritten but other revisions are minimal.

understanding many of his compositional choices. Notable among such biographical issues are his diverse and often contrasting styles, which stem from his dual roles as a student at the conservatoire and as an independent artist searching for his unique compositional voice. Debussy inside the conservatoire was not necessarily the same Debussy outside the conservatoire; in fact, the two personas are markedly different on almost every level. Another area that receives special attention in Chapter 3 is Debussy's relationship with Marie Vasnier and, to a lesser extent, the Vasnier household. Marie Vasnier was the dedicatee of most of his songs from the early 1880s and, along with her husband, a major benefactor for the young Debussy. She was also a major, if scandalous, love interest.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the *mélodie* and includes a brief account of how the genre evolved from its predecessor, the *romance*, to become the premiere form of French art song in the late nineteenth century. Chapter 4 also includes a survey of characteristic features of songs by Debussy's contemporaries – most notably Gabriel Fauré and Henri Duparc. This chapter is designed to establish some standard compositional approaches and procedures that serve as a base line for comparing Debussy's songs. Chapter 5 builds upon the previous chapter, focusing on how Debussy participated in the tradition of the *mélodie* as it was defined by his predecessors and contemporaries. And in Chapter 6 I discuss how Debussy pushed the genre of the *mélodie* in new directions and address some consistent compositional characteristics found across many of the early *mélodies* that allow the songs to be considered a unified repertoire. Chapter 7 is a brief conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

APPLYING SCHENKERIAN ANALYSIS TO DEBUSSY'S MUSIC

“Il n’ya pas de théorie! Suffit d’entendre. Le plaisir est la règle” [There is no theory! Just listen. Pleasure is the law] (Branger et al. 2012, 284). This short phrase comes from a conversation between Debussy and Ernest Guiraud that took place in the late 1880s and is a poignant yet insufficient summary of Debussy’s approach to composition. Debussy was concerned above all with finding the right sound and cared little for systems or tradition; he notoriously rejected harmonic and, to a large extent, formal systems but was less critical toward contrapuntal and voice-leading systems. Given Debussy’s concentrated effort to avoid the rules and procedures of many conventions of tonal composition, to let pleasure guide his compositional goals, to search first and foremost for the ideal sound, it proves difficult to choose a single analytical method that works well in Debussy’s music. By distancing his music from systematic conventions Debussy endowed his music with a complexity that is not always easily explained.¹¹

Schenkerian analysis is a viable avenue for examining Debussy’s music;¹² however, the method cannot be applied uncritically.¹³ Debussy’s music is generally tonal but many of the

¹¹ Stephen Slottow (2009) addresses a similar issue in his study of the music of Carl Ruggles. Ruggles, like Debussy, was very anti-theoretical and despised conventional systems but nevertheless had consistent compositional procedures. Although his music used consistent features and a unique sound, Ruggles never explicitly defined his compositional aesthetic.

¹² It is well known that Schenker despised Debussy and his music. Speaking generally about French music and specifically about composers in the same compositional milieu as Debussy, in *Der Tonwille* Schenker (2004) commented: “The composers of so-called impressionistic pieces like to speak today of a certain ‘line.’ But, where, as in these pieces, the effect amounts only to a tonal noise...The vogue for such tonal noises and lines comes from France—that alone says it all. The French nationality, which never had much to offer in music...this French nationality allows itself to make such nonsense the fashion and even to declare it a national art” (1:23). Furthermore, in *Masterwork in Music*, Schenker (1994) rejected Debussy by saying he “could never be called a talent, indeed would not rate as a composer at all” (3:71). Additional criticisms of Debussy can be found in *Tonwille* (Schenker 2004, 1:162, 172) and *Masterwork in Music* (Schenker 1994, 2:130).

¹³ Mark McFarland (1997, 2) attributes the trend in applying Schenkerian theory to Debussy’s music to an effort among analysts to discuss works as unified wholes, rather than as the sum of smaller elements.

conventions of functional tonality are absent or extended beyond the functional system. Voice leading in Debussy's music frequently features parallel chords and free dissonances, and his approach to harmony is replete with extended and highly chromatic chords and non-functional progressions. Furthermore, modes and non-diatonic scales contribute to both linear and vertical dimensions. Incomplete structures and interpolations often complicate principles of closure and continuity, resulting in inconsistent functionality between structural levels. Debussy's music departs in many ways from procedures common in tonal composition but is tonal in a general sense; as in much tonal music, stepwise voice-leading remains an important aspect of Debussy's compositional style. Schenkerian analysis focuses heavily on stepwise voice-leading and is thus effective in elucidating many aspects of Debussy's compositional style, but it must be adapted to account for that which extends or contradicts the laws of functional tonality (Brown 2005, 172).

The anomalies of Debussy's compositions almost always require significant modifications to Schenkerian methodology. Traditional structural lines are often absent or replaced by alternate structures; for example, a conventional *Ursatz* might be replaced with a large neighbor motion (Salzer 1982, 252–55)¹⁴ or a referential harmony other than the tonic triad (Laufer 2003, 90).¹⁵ Additionally, structural tonic to dominant closure is frequently absent (undermining the importance of the *Bassbrechung*), linear progressions frequently only have local significance, structural levels are sparse (Parks 1989, 4), and methods of prolongation—such as whole tone and modal scales—uncommon in music from the traditional Schenkerian canon are prominent (Brown 2004, 158, 167). While some analysts are content to adapt Schenkerian theory as necessary to fit their interpretation of the music,¹⁶ others maintain that the

¹⁴ Figure 478.

¹⁵ In his analysis of *Canope*, Edward Laufer suggests that the referential sonority is a tonic seventh chord.

¹⁶ E.g. Väisälä 2004; Somer 1995, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2006; Katz 1945; Parks 1989.

method is well equipped to deal with many of the anomalies of Debussy's music without being "diluted into an indistinct blur" (Laufer 1981, 161).¹⁷ Views regarding the extent to which Schenkerian theory can be applied to Debussy's music vary among analysts but all agree that the method cannot be applied uncritically.

Schenkerian analysis is especially appropriate for Debussy's earlier works. Richard Parks (1989), in *The Music of Claude Debussy*, writes at length on the modifications that must be made when applying Schenkerian theory to Debussy's mature works but notes that the composer's earliest compositions conform in many ways to conventional Schenkerian models (20).

Debussy's mature style embraces a more diverse compositional aesthetic, as well as a more staunch avoidance of the conventions of the tonal common practice system, and requires more exceptions to the theory. Although some adjustments to conventional Schenkerian theory are still needed to account for the anomalies in Debussy's early songs, there are generally fewer exceptions than in mature works. This makes the method more consistently applicable to a large group of early songs rather than on a case-by-case basis as in mature works.¹⁸

Text-setting is especially important in Debussy's songs. The French language is particularly problematic when it comes to the interplay between rhythm and words and Debussy had clear opinions and preferences when it came to the type of texts he set to music (Noske 1970, 41, 66). Text (and the subsequent inspiration derived from the text) was often the most essential driving force that guided Debussy's compositional choices. In fact, issues of form and harmony, as well as other compositional parameters, were employed in service of creating the

¹⁷ For instance, Matthew Brown (1993, 2003, 2004) advocates a more rigid application of the Schenkerian system to Debussy's music. Oswald Jonas also favors a more orthodox approach (Schenker 1973).

¹⁸ Matthew Brown (2005, 171–73) suggests that: "since we cannot be sure when Schenkerian theory ceases to be applicable, we must consider each piece, case by case." This statement comes from a broader discussion of what Brown calls two "early" songs; however, both songs are from the late 1880s and feature a different compositional aesthetic and purpose than works composed before 1885.

proper sound to fit the text. Some of the most convincing analyses of Debussy's songs stem from a close reading of the poetry and continually reference the text when discussing the music itself. As Carl Schachter (1983) deftly demonstrates in a "Motive and Text in Four Schubert Songs," Schenkerian analysis can be a useful tool for revealing important relationships between the music and text. Among other observations, Schachter notes that structural connections between words and music are common in music from art-song repertory (61).¹⁹

Despite a formidable list of necessary exceptions, Schenkerian theory can be useful for examining Debussy's music. Among the many reasons the method is suitable for examining Debussy's music is that it equips the analyst with a comprehensive tool set – terminology, procedures, paradigms, etc. – that promotes clear communication by engaging with a popular means of scholarly discourse. Furthermore, the tenets of the theory are rooted in observable musical phenomena; to address Debussy's œuvre, one only needs to shift analytical focus to musical figures that are relevant to his music rather than relying on preconceived paradigms native to Schenker's canon of German composers. The methodology also offers a concise and musically logical system for visual representation.

One of the most significant and helpful aspects of Schenkerian theory when it comes to Debussy's music is that the system has both prominent vertical and horizontal dimensions. When the harmonic structure of Debussy's music begins to break down (that is, when it becomes difficult to interpret using Roman numerals or functional symbols), analysts can still rely on the horizontal dimension of the theory. One cannot simply omit one dimension or the other, but it

¹⁹ Schachter's comments are directed toward Germanic art song but I believe the statement holds equally true for the French *mélodie*.

can be helpful to place more emphasis on the horizontal features when the vertical constructs become unreliable.²⁰

Additionally, Schenkerian theory provides a great opportunity to discuss Debussy's music holistically and make connections that are clearest on levels below the foreground. It is not uncommon for analysts to discuss Debussy's music in part – often by identifying an operative scale or pitch collection – without making any larger connections. Schenkerian theory allows the analyst to incorporate different scalar systems – such as exotic and modal scales – and other unique features of Debussy's compositional style into a meaningful musical context that establishes both short and long-range connections. Many of these connections might go unnoticed with a different analytical method. Ultimately, one of the greatest strengths of Schenkerian theory in Debussy's music is that it offers a way to discuss his music as a unified whole rather than as a disparate summation of unrelated parts (McFarland 1997, 2). This aspect of the methodology, as well as many others, is discussed in greater depth in the following survey of Schenkerian analysts and approaches.

Survey of Schenkerian Approaches

Edward Laufer

Edward Laufer (1981) was keenly aware when writing his review of Schenker's *Free Composition* that Schenkerian theory would need to be modified in order to be appropriate for twentieth-century music. He recommended caution. Inherent characteristics of twentieth-century music—such as the frequent absence of a fundamental structure, alternate ways of designating principle tones, and consonance/dissonance relationships—can, arguably, weaken the effectiveness of Schenkerian theory. Laufer suggests that Schenkerian analysis (as codified by

²⁰ For more information on harmony as it was taught at the Paris Conservatory see Masci 2013; 2015.

Schenker himself) is complete and requires no adaptations; making too many alterations can cause the method to be “diluted into an indistinct blur.” He further contends that “if there is no technically consistent, non-speculative basis, then anything goes, and likewise nothing.”

Following his own cautionary advice, Laufer accounts for the possibility of a Schenkerian-based analytical approach suitable for twentieth-century music; he asserts that it will not be Schenker’s method, but will indebted to it (161). Many analysts, including Laufer himself, have helped foster the development of a neo-Schenkerian approach that deviates from Schenker’s original method but certainly owes much to it.

Laufer reiterates many of the claims from his review of *Free Composition* in his article “An Approach to Linear Analysis of Some Early Twentieth-Century Compositions” (2003) but also goes into depth regarding how a quasi-Schenkerian approach can reveal fruitful observations in music that falls outside of the Schenkerian canon. His unifying principle in the many pieces (by different composers) that he surveys is his concept of a “prime sonority.” A prime sonority replaces the triad as the main referential sonority and governs the work. Unlike the ubiquitous triad in tonal works, a prime sonority is more limited in scope; each individual piece can have a different prime sonority (90). Additionally, Laufer offers the following criteria for defining prime sonority: it will consist of three or more notes (but not too many) emphasized in characteristic ways, it will occur at the end of the piece, it will contribute to the motivic coherence of the music, it will be subjected to some form of composing out, and it must be identifiable via musical intuition (133–34).

Laufer expands on his concept of a prime sonority using several musical examples; most relevant for my own study is his analysis of Debussy’s *Canope*. The prime sonority in *Canope* is essentially a D minor seventh chord; however, Laufer characterizes the chordal seventh as an

integrated neighboring tone to the root of the chord. Defining the prime sonority in this way allows Laufer to connect it to the motivic structure of the piece, which contains many foreground neighbor motions (90–96). Other triads (that is, not D minor) with chordal sevenths provide harmonic connections with the prime sonority; they are, of course, not actually seventh chords in a functional sense, rather they are triads modified to reflect the prime sonority (90). In addition to the foreground melodic and harmonic features, Laufer demonstrates how the prime sonority is associated with middleground features of the piece as well as how the upper line is embellished with complementary sonorities (98). Laufer concludes by suggesting that, although one could suggest a descent in the structural top line, to do so would be wrong. Rather, the upper line is comprised of a large neighbor motion – A-G-A – that reflects the prime sonority and provides a foundation for foreground motivic activity (97).

Felix Salzer

One of the earliest publications to systematically embrace a modified Schenkerian analytical approach is Felix Salzer's (1982) *Structural Hearings: Tonal Coherence in Music*, which includes graphic analyses of Debussy's *Bruyères* and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. One important point that Salzer makes is that musical coherence is not based entirely on harmonic frameworks; a work can be coherent via harmonic structures, contrapuntal structures, or a combination of both (222).²¹ Debussy's *Bruyères* is, for Salzer, an example of a piece guided by a large contrapuntal structure (Example 2.1). The structural framework at the heart of the composition is a large-scale neighbor motion. The neighbor figure is not limited to a single voice; rather, the motion is comprised of two major triads moving in parallel motion. Each

²¹ In his introduction to Schenker's *Harmony*, Oswald Jonas criticizes Salzer's *Structural Hearing*. Jonas claims that Salzer's work is based on a misinterpretation of Schenker's theories and is "doomed to fail" (Schenker 1973, viii).

member of the neighbor figure occupies its own section of the musical form and Salzer further notes that the structural motion is replicated on levels closer to the musical surface, creating “fascinating melodic parallelisms” (222–23).

Example 2.1: Debussy, *Bruyères*, Contrapuntal Background (adapted from Salzer Ex. 478)²²

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's *Bruyères*, Example 2.1. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score is divided into three measures. The first measure is labeled 'A' and contains a whole note chord in the bass staff and a half note chord in the treble staff. The second measure is labeled 'B' and contains a whole note chord in the bass staff and a half note chord in the treble staff. The third measure is labeled 'A'' and contains a whole note chord in the bass staff and a half note chord in the treble staff. Above the first two measures, there is a large bracket labeled 'N' that spans across both measures. Below the first two measures, there is another large bracket that spans across both measures. The score ends with a double bar line.

Adele Katz

Adele Katz (1945) includes a section on Debussy in her book *Challenge to Musical Tradition: A New Concept of Tonality*. Katz uses a Schenkerian approach to examine how Debussy extended or adapted certain techniques within the tonal system. Specifically, she address techniques – chord arpeggiation, neighboring notes, register transfer, passing chords, and harmonic prolongation – related to structure and prolongation (250).²³ Neighbor tones are of special significance: Katz gives the technique in its own section, focusing on the prelude *La fille aux cheveux de lin* as her primary example, but also cites neighbor motions as subsidiary elements of other techniques (Example 2.2).

²² Salzer 1982, 254.

²³ Her analytical examples are primarily from *Pelléas et Mélisande* and the *Préludes* for piano.

Example 2.2: Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Katz Ex. 77, Annotated²⁴

A

B

In the above example, Katz points out that the main feature of the passage is an arpeggiation of an E major chord in which each tone supports a vertical seventh chord. The second chord of the passage appears to be a C# minor chord in third inversion (as shown in A); however, Katz contends that it is actually an E major chord in second inversion with a neighboring C# in the upper voice (as shown in B). Harmonically the chord is based on C# but in the larger context of the passage Katz insists that the C# is a neighbor tone to B (251).²⁵ Katz suggests that, for the most part, the techniques she discusses align with tonal principles of structure and prolongation;

²⁴ Katz 1945, 250.

²⁵ Katz acknowledges that this passage is an instance in which a neighboring tone and its resolution are simultaneously present. Also, she regards the F# in the final chord as a suspension that is left unresolved in the final E major chord.

however, she concedes that at times Debussy extends the techniques beyond their original purpose so that they obscure rather than clarify structural meaning (266–267).

In an examination of how some analysts have approached Debussy's music, Katz makes an important statement: "To know the special scale in which a work is composed may be an aid to our aural impressions, but it neither clarifies the technique nor demonstrates what is happening in the music" (267);²⁶ simply identifying a scale being used in the music provides very little analytical value. As an example, Katz briefly discusses an analysis of Debussy's *Pour le Piano* by René Lenormand in which there is a prominent whole tone scale (Example 2.3).²⁷

Lenormand's analysis only includes m. 43 through the downbeat of m. 46; he identifies the presence of the whole tone chords in these measures but doesn't make any significant analytical observations.²⁸ Katz offers her own analysis (Example 2.3) that goes one chord beyond that of Lenormand and demonstrates that the function of the whole-tone chords is to prolong the tonic within a larger tonic-to-dominant progression. Katz notes that using whole-tone chords as a means of prolongation is unconventional but does not obscure the structural motion (274).²⁹

Debussy's uniqueness is partially due to the fact that he used chords not found in the music of his (Germanic) predecessors but also in his ability to use such chords within a tonal environment (278).

²⁶ Mark McFarland (1997, 1) makes a similar point concerning Debussy's use of modes, pentatonic and whole-tone scales, and added chordal elements: "While these are obviously integral elements to Debussy's harmonic language, their identification does not constitute an analysis of his music, only a step towards that end."

²⁷ Lenormand's (1940, 102) example comes from his study on general harmonic practices in France up until approximately 1914, with a particular focus on Debussy. Debussy (1987, 259–260) was well aware of Lenormand's book and, although he claimed that the work was an accurate representation of harmony at that time, he criticized the author for referencing passages outside of their musical context.

²⁸ McFarland (1997, 6–7) argues that many (prominent) analysts too eagerly stop analyzing after identifying a particular scale or set in the music (whole tone, octatonic, chromatic, etc.) and often overlook clear tonal implications.

²⁹ The idea of using whole-tone material as a means of prolongation is also addressed by Matthew Brown (2004) in his analysis of *L'Isle joyeuse* (discussed below, beginning on pg. 19).

Example 2.3: Debussy, *Pour le Piano* – Whole-tone Prolongation (adapted from Katz Ex. 89)³⁰

The image displays two musical notations for Example 2.3. The upper notation is a piano score in 3/4 time, featuring two staves (treble and bass clef) with chords and melodic lines. The lower notation is a Schenkerian analysis of the same passage, showing a single staff with a melodic line and a bass line, with a large bracket underneath indicating the whole-tone prolongation. The analysis is labeled with Roman numerals: I, B^{b+}, A^{b+}, II⁶, and V⁷.

Furthermore, Debussy often avoids the kind of structural coherence inherent in tonal works; an example would be the prelude *Voiles*, in which Debussy replaces the tonal system with an alternation between pentatonic and whole-tone systems (287). Katz notes that, in cases where Debussy moves beyond the conventions of tonality, Schenkerian theory is less than completely satisfactory; however, the method is still helpful because it shows that the problems arising from music that pushes or departs from the tonal system are not simply related to scales and chord structure, but with fundamental principles of coherence (292). Katz presents a well-developed account of how Schenkerian analysis can accommodate the unique qualities of Debussy's compositional style and how the method can be fruitfully applied to music that does not reside entirely within the tonal system.

³⁰ Katz 1945, 273.

The approaches taken by the previously discussed analysts all have an interesting common element: the prominence of contrapuntal neighbor motions in Debussy's music. Salzer identifies a neighbor motion as the most essential background structure in *Bruyères* and both Laufer and Katz regard neighbor motions to be of structural significance. Neighbor figures are, of course, prominent in music within the traditional Schenkerian canon, and in Schenker's own analyses; however, in Debussy's music they assume a deeper significance. This is entirely consistent with Debussy's compositional style; he frequently avoids references to harmonic systems but is less critical of contrapuntal systems. Thus, the horizontal rather than the vertical emphasis of Schenkerian methodology tends to be more revealing and consistent in Debussy's music.

The precedent for applying Schenkerian analysis to Debussy's music was set by the above-mentioned analysts but has been vigorously continued by a later generation of analysts. Such theorists approach Debussy's music from a Schenkerian perspective but do so with varying levels of orthodoxy; that is, some try to remain as close to Schenker's original method as possible while others more willingly adapt the method as needed. The following is a survey of Schenkerian approaches taken by modern-day Debussyian scholars.

Matthew Brown

Matthew Brown is one of the foremost analysts applying Schenkerian theory to Debussy's music. Throughout his many articles and books Brown suggests that scholars tend to underestimate how much tonal material is actually present in Debussy's music. Brown contends that Schenkerian theory is well equipped to accommodate the anomalies of Debussy's compositional style but is not universally applicable to Debussy's music; rather, the method is appropriate on a piece-by-piece basis.

Brown (1993, 129–30) begins “Tonality and Form in Debussy’s *Prélude à L’Après-midi d’un faune*” with an almost obligatory statement regarding the troubles and dangers of applying Schenkerian analysis to Debussy’s music. Brown criticizes several analysts (such as Richard Parks, Adele Katz, and Felix Salzer) for too hastily making changes to the Schenkerian methodology. The bulk of the article is dedicated to elucidating formal issues in the *Prélude* via four specific techniques: incomplete progressions, parenthetical episodes, motivic compression, and tonal modeling. Additionally, Brown briefly discusses other works by Debussy that feature these techniques.³¹ Brown concludes by suggesting that the techniques used in the prelude have clear precedents in nineteenth-century tonal practices and that Debussy’s genius lies in his ability to exploit previously established techniques in bold and unique ways (143).

Brown (2004) takes an interesting approach to examining Debussy’s music in “Composing with Prototypes: Charting Debussy’s *L’Isle joyeuse*.” He begins the article with an abstract *Ursatz*, which he gradually composes out (using several common prototypes) until it resembles a musical foreground. Throughout his reconstruction Brown routinely uses modal and whole tone segments to prolong or elaborate structural tones. After elaborating the prototypes and reaching the foreground level, Brown reveals that his procedures are precisely those found in Debussy’s *L’Isle joyeuse*. He then proceeds to work from the musical surface back towards the background to show how different sections of the music fit into his previously discussed prototypes; his final reading of the piece is a 3-line with a prolonged tonic triad (Example 2.4). Among the most interesting elements of the article is Brown’s discussion of how modal and

³¹ Brown focuses on works in Debussy’s mature style. Most of his examples come from *Iberia*, the *Images*, *Nocturnes*, and *La mer*.

whole tone inflections can be explained as mixtures and tonicizations within traditional prolongations (174).³²

Example 2.4: Debussy, *L'Isle Joyeuse*, Deep Middleground (adapted from Brown Ex. 11)³³

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's *L'Isle Joyeuse*. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is annotated with Schenkerian-style chord functions below the bass staff. The functions are: I, V/V, V, I, ii⁶, V, A⁶, I. A line connects the A⁶ chord in the analysis to the corresponding chord in the piano part.

Brown concludes by suggesting that tonal composition is a process of adapting thematic shapes to an underlying prototype and that such prototypes make it possible to account for interconnections between different pieces, both by the same composer and by different composers (184).

Brown has two books that are relevant to my study. The first is *Debussy's Iberia* (2003). Brown combines analysis and sketch/manuscript studies and also engages with John Sloboda's work in cognition. In addition to cognition studies, Brown addresses music criticism and the nature of musical analysis; he frequently references the work of Joseph Kerman, Carl Schachter, and Leo Treitler, as well as others. The book is divided into two main parts: Part I, which describes how tonal composition might be understood as a form of problem solving; and Part II, which deals with the genesis of the three movements of *Iberia* in detail. Throughout the text Brown delineates an issue that is prominent in much of his work: that Schenkerian theory can explain how people understand and compose tonal music. Brown closes with what he sees as the

³² He engages with Schenker's own opinions regarding modal and whole tone material (as can be found in *Counterpoint*), which are that they arise from transformation within the tonal system.

³³ Brown 2004, 173.

most profound conclusion of the book: that music historians, music theorists, and cognitive scientists can (and should) work together to understand the cognitive elements of musical composition (162).

Explaining Tonality addresses in detail the extent to which Schenkerian analysis can explain tonal music (Brown 2005). Many of the issues found in Brown's other works, such as Schenker's views on modes and exotic inflections and the limitations of Schenkerian theory in twentieth-century music, are given fuller treatment in this text. Brown opens chapter five ("Pleasure is the Law" – the only part of the book that specifically addresses Debussy's music) by stating that applying methodologies to situations or phenomena for which they were not intended can open new avenues for research. For Schenkerians this is accomplished by applying Schenkerian analysis to music outside of Schenker's canon of composers or by using orthodox Schenkerian explanations of harmony and voice leading to illustrate other aspects of a composition (171). Brown tackles both issues via analyses of two of Debussy's songs and makes some illuminating observations regarding consonances versus dissonances and harmonic versus non-harmonic tones. Brown's analyses (as well as his thoughts regarding the limitations of Schenkerian theory) are excellent examples of how the Schenkerian methodology can be applied to Debussy's music.

Avo Somer

Avo Somer is a prolific writer on Debussy and has published many articles on different parts of the composer's oeuvre. In "Chromatic Third-Relations and Tonal Structure in the Songs of Debussy" Somer (1995) examines Debussy's ubiquitous use of chromatic third-related harmonies (especially in the late songs) and delineates their harmonic, functional, and structural implications. Debussy frequently obscures the dominant by making it minor, severely delaying

its resolution, or replacing it with a substitute harmony. Somer contends that when Debussy downgrades the dominant, chromatic thirds can be conveyors of harmonic function (217).³⁴ Furthermore, chromatic third-relations can occur as overlapping or nested structures on different structural levels, thus relating to the Schenkerian concepts of motivic unity and replication (228–29).³⁵ Additionally, Somer suggests that chromatic third relationships can be intimately linked to the form of the music and can help create coherent musical structures without the use of dominants (230, 233). Somer fleshes out the implications of his thesis in much greater detail than I can succinctly summarize and clearly illustrates that chromatic third relationships are an essential and widely varied feature of Debussy’s harmonic language.³⁶

Somer (1998) further addresses chromatic third relations in “Musical Imagery, Digression, and Coherence in the *Étude Pour Les Agréments* of Debussy” but also engages with nineteenth-century concepts of organicism. He examines how expressive gestures and the concept of metaphor can help reveal the inner workings of the piece (101–2). Debussy was notoriously ambivalent towards organicism but Somer contends that a cellular analysis is possible for the *Étude Pour Les Agréments* (93).³⁷ In his discussion of motives and expressive gestures, Somer notes that motives in the piece are similar enough to be connected but have entirely different expressive profiles (100). Somer concludes by suggesting that Debussy developed the piece in layers and that all layers are equally significant (108).

³⁴ When the dominant is omitted entirely, subdominants and contrapuntal neighbor chords can provide harmonic motion.

³⁵ Somer shows how, in “La chevelure,” chromatic third-relations are simultaneously reflected in the large-scale tonal plan and the musical foreground.

³⁶ In relation to text-music relationships, Somer suggests that there is not a clear or consistent cause-effect relationship between text and harmonic vocabulary in Debussy music. Consequently, chromatic third-relations are not connected to any particular type of poetic imagery (240).

³⁷ Somer argues that an organicist, cellular analysis is possible for the piece because much of the initial musical imagery is generated from a collection of melodic elements present at the beginning of the work. This method of analysis aligns with Schoenberg’s idea of *Grundgestalt*. Debussy is on the record as being both sympathetic to and critical of an organicist approach to musical composition.

In “*Fantastique, Ironique: An Interpretation of the Sérénade of Debussy’s Cello Sonata*,” Somer (2003) examines the phrase structure and tonal design of the cello sonata and further associates the *Sérénade* with the *commedia dell’arte* and cubist paintings. Somer makes a unique contribution to Debussyian scholarship in this article with his concept of a divergent cadence. He defines a divergent cadence as a “syntactical caesura at a tonally peripheral sonority” (149). Debussy uses traditional closing formulas such as authentic, half, and especially plagal cadences but he equally often pauses on a harmony other than tonic or dominant. Both scenarios are aurally satisfying but the latter is more difficult to explain; a term such as divergent cadence is extremely useful when discussing music from all periods of Debussy’s œuvre.

Somer (2005) further expounds on divergent cadences in “Musical Syntax in the Sonatas of Debussy: Phrase Structure and Formal Function.” Somer illustrates that, in addition to half and plagal half cadences, phrases in Debussy’s sonatas frequently end with divergent cadences on a secondary diatonic or chromatic scale degree, often on dissonant sonorities (74). Example 2.5 shows the first eight measures of the Prologue of Debussy’s sonata for cello and a reduction. Somer contends that the form of the excerpt is a modified sentence. The continuation of the basic idea overlaps with the repetition of the basic idea in m. 4; thus, the more conventional eight-measure sentence is compressed to seven measures. The truly novel aspect of this passage is Debussy’s final cadence. Debussy ends the passage on a chord that is dissonant with the surrounding harmonies and the overall key of the work; this is the essence of Somer’s concept of a divergent cadence.

In addition to several examples of divergent cadences, Somer also relates Debussy’s music to Classical models of syntax and engages with William Caplin’s ideas on form, especially with sentence structure.

Example 2.5: Debussy, Cello Sonata, Prologue, Divergent Cadence³⁸

Presentation

Violoncello

Piano

Continuation

Vc.

Pno.

Vc.

Pno.

Presentation → Continuation →

mm. 1

4

8

i

Div. C.

³⁸ Adapted from Somer Ex. 4 (76).

Caplin's ideas on loose organization of classical themes and hybrid forms are especially relevant to Debussy's music (73). Debussy's modal and chromatic language distances his thematic material from Classical syntactical models and his harmonic vocabulary adds a new dimension that effects a transformation of Classical models (90). In addition to illustrating how Debussy's music both resembles and goes beyond Classical conceptions of form, the article briefly touches on concepts such as duplication, Schoenbergian liquidation, and Debussy's relation to Symbolist poets.³⁹

Richard Parks

Richard Parks (1989) looks at a large amount of Debussy's compositional output – including several songs – in his book *The Music of Claude Debussy*. Tonality, and the extent to which Debussy's music can be considered tonal, is an issue Parks addresses early in the book. He suggests that tonality does not determine the relationship between all pitches in Debussy's compositions, but there are features that occur regularly in his music that can be considered tonal.⁴⁰ Parks's basic definition of tonality is: "pitch materials, processes, and contexts that project into prominence one or more pitch-class sets to a significantly greater extent than (or at the expense of) other pitch-class sets" (3). However, he allows for alternate views that perhaps better suit Debussy's music. For instance, Parks contends that if tonality is considered to be the process by which harmony and voice leading organize and control pitch materials within a larger system of structural levels, then some (certainly not all) of Debussy's music is tonal (43). If, however, tonality refers to a phenomenon in which some pitches behave as referents for others

³⁹ Duplication refers to the process by which an idea is stated and then immediately repeated, similar to the basic idea in a sentence structure. Debussy has a reputation for duplicating small phrases or short motives. Somer attributes the discovery of Debussy's duplication technique to André Schaeffner, Nicholas Ruwet, and Jean Barraque (72). Herbert Eimert (1961) also addresses the technique in his article on Debussy's *Jeux*.

⁴⁰ He also notes that much of Debussy's music manifest tonality in nontraditional ways (3).

within a hierarchical system with distinctions based on contextual factors, then all of Debussy's music is tonal, but not always in the same way (44). What is most relevant about Parks's discussion of tonality is the fact that Debussy's music is broadly and diversely tonal, but not in the same way as music by classical composers (3).

Parks uses Schenkerian theory to examine tonal relations in Debussy's music.⁴¹ He suggests – reflecting Oswald Jonas's warning in his introduction to Schenker's *Harmony* (Schenker 1973, viii) – that one should avoid altering the conventional Schenkerian model to fit music for which the method was not originally intended (Parks 1989, 3).⁴² Parks does, however, comment that pitches that are tonally prominent “sometimes form unconventional constructs as an alternative to the scales and triads traditionally associated with key and tonality in earlier repertoires” (3). Furthermore, Parks supplies a list of common Schenkerian characteristics that have little prominence in Debussy's music. Most conspicuous are: the *Urlinie* and *Bassbrechung*, which are frequently absent; linear progressions and structural levels, which are generally few in number; and an elevated prominence of neighbor-note motions, which often coincides with a strong focus on the subdominant harmony (4, 43).⁴³

Although Parks avoids making an explicit case for substitute background structures in Debussy's music, he does say that certain figures – such as arpeggios and neighbor-note motions – can control events over long spans of music (4). Concerning Debussy's late song “Noël des

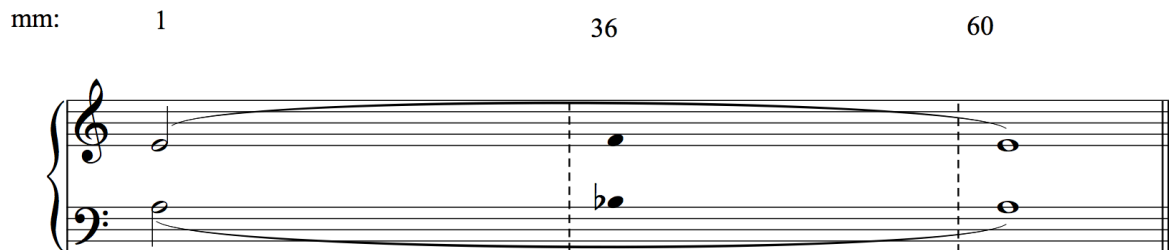
⁴¹ Parks uses both Schenkerian theory and post-tonal set theory in his book but does not attempt to combine the methods.

⁴² Oswald Jonas argues that Schenker's theory is rooted in principles of tonality as he found them in the works of the great masters (Schenker 1973, viii). If the definition of tonality is changed from how Schenker viewed it – for instance, to align with how Parks views Debussy's music – then perhaps changes in methodology are also merited.

⁴³ Parks's comment regarding how tonally prominent pitches can form unconventional constructs helps explain the absence of certain Schenkerian features. For example, prominent pitches may form a large-scale neighbor motion that serves as the most fundamental structure of the piece; thus, more traditional Schenkerian paradigms, such as an *Urlinie* or *Bassbrechung*, are downgraded to lower-level features or perhaps absent altogether.

enfants qui n’ont plus de maisons” Parks argues that the most remote structural feature is a neighbor-note motion in parallel perfect fifths (Example 2.6).

Example 2.6: Debussy, “Noël des enfants qui n’ont plus de maisons,” Neighbor-note motion.⁴⁴



Parks notes that Debussy’s 1893 String Quartet and *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (Préludes I) also have strong emphases on neighbor motions. The works also share other significant exceptions to Schenkerian methodology such as the absence of a structural bass arpeggiation and *Urlinie*, and a scarcity of linear progressions (16). Although Parks does not argue that “Noël des enfants qui n’ont plus de maisons” has a large-scale neighbor motion as its background structure, it is clear that he sees the motion as a deeply significant structural feature.

For the purposes of my study, Parks’s work is significant for how he applies Schenkerian theory to Debussy’s music and the exceptions he makes. He does not try to force Debussy’s music into the conventional Schenkerian mold; rather, he acknowledges that Debussy’s music is tonal in different ways than the works for which Schenker developed his theory and therefore is not bound by the same conventions. Parks claims that Debussy’s earliest works are especially receptive to Schenkerian analysis (20), but music from all areas of his œuvre is “tonal” to a degree. Thus, although some common features occur infrequently or are absent altogether, Schenkerian theory can be an effective way for examining Debussy music.

⁴⁴ Adapted from Parks Ex. 1.6 (17).

Olli Väisälä

Olli Väisälä has written extensively on Schenkerian approaches to post-tonal music, including much on Debussy. In his article “On the Coordination of Tonal Functions, Pitch Sets, Meter, and Form in Debussy’s *L’Isle Joyeuse*,” Väisälä (1996, 44) elucidates features of the piece that demonstrate its “inventive richness” and “unfailing compositional logic.” He argues that three primary scale collections govern the entire piece: the acoustic set, the whole tone set, and the diatonic set. Each set has a specific purpose in relation to the *Ursatz* of the work and the piece proceeds by shifting between sets. The whole tone set (which has no privileged harmonies) is suitable only for introducing the primary melodic tone, the acoustic set is appropriate only for establishing the point of harmonic departure, and the diatonic set is apt for creating harmonic motion (42). Väisälä reads the piece as a 3-line with an interruption (Example 2.7-A); however, he acknowledges that the interruption is undermined by metrical variations and the absence of a root position dominant to close the structure. The exceptions lead Väisälä to suggest the possibility of an alternate reading: a 3-line with a prolongation of scale degree 2 and no interruption (Example 2.7-B) (44). Väisälä’s reading is interesting when compared with Matthew Brown’s reading of the same piece. Väisälä prefers an interrupted structure (2.7-A) but Brown (2004, 173) reads the piece as prolonging the initial tonic (Example 2.8). These readings by Väisälä and Brown demonstrate the wealth of interpretive possibilities that Schenkerian theory brings to Debussy’s music.

Väisälä (2004a) references several works by Debussy in the introductory essay of his doctoral dissertation, but the larger purpose of the work is to examine prolongation in early post-tonal repertoire. Thus, references to Debussy’s music are mixed in with examples from many

other composers. The dissertation is difficult to summarize in relation to Debussy but Väisälä focuses directly on Debussy in an article appended to the end of the document.

Example 2.7: Debussy, *L'Isle Joyeuse*, Background Structure (adapted from Väisälä Ex. 1)⁴⁵

A

B

Example 2.8: Debussy, *L'Isle Joyeuse*, Deep Middleground⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Väisälä 1996, 37.

⁴⁶ Example 2.8 is reproduced from Example 2.4 for the convenience of comparing interpretations. It is worth noting that Väisälä and Brown read structural tones in different places within the piece; Väisälä closes the structure much earlier than Brown.

In “New Theories and Fantasies on the Music of Debussy,” Väisälä (2004b) examines *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest* (among other examples) from the first book of *Préludes* for piano. His approach aligns with the work of Felix Salzer and Edward Laufer in that he takes a sonority other than the triad – in this case a major ninth chord – as a referential harmony that is prolonged throughout the prelude.⁴⁷ Additionally, he notes that neighboring harmonies, though subordinate to the referential harmony, govern large passages of music and facilitate small-scale prolongations by becoming local referential sonorities. Throughout the article Väisälä engages with Joseph Straus’s (1987, 2-5) four conditions of prolongation in post-tonal music and demonstrates how Debussy’s prelude satisfies each condition. To conclude his analytical section, Väisälä (2004b) briefly discusses other works – *La fille aux cheveux de lin* and *La cathédrale engloutie* – that have similar features to *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest*. Väisälä ends the article with a few significant statements about analyzing Debussy’s music: first, there is a point where the “anomalies” of his style become normative and dissonances can rightly be viewed as consonances; second, neither Schenkerian theory or pitch-class set theory (he could have easily added functional Roman numeral analysis) is independently capable of explaining organizational principles in Debussy’s music; and lastly, analyzing Debussy’s music requires both conventional and non-conventional viewpoints (24).

Jeremy Day-O’Connell

Jeremy Day-O’Connell is especially interested in the pentatonic tradition – both in the nineteenth century in general, and in Debussy’s music specifically. In “Debussy, Pentatonicism, and the Tonal Tradition,” Day-O’Connell (2009) uses Schenkerian theory to examine several

⁴⁷ The Maj9 referential harmony is created by adding the subdominant scale degree (B) to a tonic add6 chord (F#A#C#D#). Väisälä notes that the Maj9 never fully materializes on the foreground and is thus different from a referential harmony in a tonal composition where the triad occurs as both a background feature and a prominent foreground harmony (13).

works by Debussy (and others); he concludes the article by examining the prelude *La fille aux cheveux de lin* in detail and applying many of the concepts presented throughout the article. Day-O’Connell addresses the pentatonic tradition and refutes the popular belief that the 1889 Paris Exhibition was the birth of Debussy’s interest in pentatonic music; rather, pentatonicism can be found in Debussy’s music well before 1889 (228).⁴⁸ Furthermore, Day-O’Connell suggests that there are important relationships between the pentatonic and diatonic systems; the pentatonic system can be viewed as existing within an extended conception of the diatonic system in the late nineteenth century (236).

Day-O’Connell links diatonic and pentatonic traditions via a specific musical gesture that exists as a part of both: the plagal leading tone (236) (Example 2.9). The gesture gets its name from the context and behavior of scale degree 6. It is harmonized as a part of a plagal cadence but, rather than descending to scale degree 5 (as might be expected in a diatonic system), it resolves up to tonic – thus functioning as a “leading tone.”

Example 2.9: Debussy, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, Measures 1-4 – Plagal leading tone.

⁴⁸ Day-O’Connell also examines the pentatonic tradition in other composers and shows that pentatonicism is prominent in the music of other composers throughout the nineteenth century. In fact, one of his primary goals in the beginning of the article (and one that resonates with my efforts in this work) is to show that Debussy’s interest in pentatonicism emerged from a strong pentatonic tradition that evolved over the nineteenth century and that his pentatonic works are linked and even indebted to that tradition (228–33).

Plagal cadences prior to around 1830 typically resolved with an upper-voice motion of 6-5, 4-3, or 1-1; beginning as early as Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, however, scale degree 6 can be found resolving by third up to tonic (235). Day-O'Connell argues that the scale degree 6-8 motion is an essential and highly characteristic melodic element of the pentatonic scale; all other melodic aspects of a pentatonic scale can be found in a major scale. This leads him to conclude that the plagal leading tone is "pentatonic-ish" and is thus a marginal extension of a diatonic technique that strongly suggests an important pentatonic technique (235).⁴⁹

Among the many examples Day-O'Connell cites as evidence for the plagal leading tone is Debussy's *Prélude l'après-midi d'un faune* (Example 2.10). Day-O'Connell asserts that the final cadence of the *Prélude* has a clear plagal leading tone that is a part of an arpeggiation beginning on the supertonic – scale degrees 2, 4, 6, 1 (237).⁵⁰ He acknowledges that the cadence has both authentic and plagal elements; scale degrees 5-1 in the bass suggest an authentic cadence and the scale degrees 6-8 motion in the violins and solo cello suggest a plagal function. As a ninth chord, the structural dominant includes both scale degrees 6 and 7. Although scale degree 7 is usually stronger (in terms of resolution) than scale degree 6, Day-O'Connell argues that scale degree 6 is more heavily emphasized via Debussy's orchestration; scale degree 7 is only played in a single horn (not shown in Ex. 2.10) while scale degree 6 is doubled in two octaves in the strings (240).

Orthodox Schenkerian theory heavily emphasizes the tonic-dominant polarity; plagal progressions are always considered subordinate to those involving dominant and tonic

⁴⁹ Day-O'Connell views the plagal leading tone as an important connection between the diatonic and pentatonic systems (as well as one of Debussy's favorite cadential figures) and suggests that there is not such a great divide between pentatonic and diatonic traditions. He further contends that analysts should stop isolating the two systems (236–37).

⁵⁰ He also identifies this gesture in the final cadences of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*.

harmonies. Thus, the plagal leading tone often gets overlooked in favor of more conventional cadential figures.

Example 2.10: Debussy, *Prélude l'après-midi d'un faune*, Final Cadence, mm. 105-106 - Strings.

The image shows a musical score for strings in Debussy's *Prélude l'après-midi d'un faune*, specifically the final cadence in measures 105 and 106. The score is written for a string ensemble consisting of two violins (Deux Vln.), two violins (Vln. I and Vln. II), two violas (Vla.), a solo violin (Solo Vc.), a violin (Vc.), and a cello (Cb.). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 12/8. The score shows a plagal leading tone C#-E in measure 106, which is highlighted with a box and labeled with '6' and '8' above it. The score also includes fingerings (e.g., '2') and a measure number 'm. 105'.

Example 2.11 is how Matthew Brown (1993, 141) interprets the final cadence of *Prélude l'après-midi d'un faune*. Brown regards the plagal leading tone C#-E as an inner-voice motion within the structural dominant. He does not consider the structural dominant to be a ninth chord and thus quickly downgrades the C# to a passing tone. Even analysts who foster a less traditional application of the Schenkerian method tend to overlook the significance of plagal leading tones

at cadences; Felix Salzer (1962, 209) downgrades the plagal leading tone figures in the *Prélude* to the point of reducing them entirely. Day-O’Connell (2009, 248) accepts that these views are reasonable interpretations but maintains his position that the plagal leading tone can penetrate into deeper structural levels than the foreground and is more significant than a simple surface-level phenomenon.

Example 2.11: Debussy, *Prélude l’après-midi d’un faune*, Measures 104–6.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for measures 104-106 of Debussy's *Prélude l'après-midi d'un faune*. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 104-106) features a complex harmonic structure with chromaticism and a plagal leading tone. The second system (measures 104-106) shows a similar structure but with a different harmonic progression. Above the first system, a horizontal line with numbers 4, 3, 2, 1 indicates a sequence of intervals. Below the first system, Roman numerals II, V₄⁶, $\frac{5}{3}$, and I are placed under the measures. The second system also has Roman numerals II, V₄⁶, $\frac{5}{3}$, and I below it. The time signature 12/8 is visible in the first system.

Mark McFarland

Mark McFarland has used Schenkerian analysis to examine many of Debussy's compositions, most notably those in the composer's mature style. In his dissertation on chromatic harmony in Debussy's late works McFarland (1997, 2) suggests that the trend of applying Schenkerian analysis to Debussy's music was born from scholars' attempts to discuss Debussy's works in a holistic way, rather than the sum of unrelated elements. McFarland mentions the work of Felix Salzer and Richard Parks as well as the efforts of less Schenkerian-oriented analysts such as Allen Forte and Roy Howat.⁵¹ He includes the obligatory disclaimer that, although Debussy's music is tonal to a certain extent, Schenkerian theory cannot be applied to Debussy's compositions without some significant adaptations (2–3).

McFarland's primary focus is on Debussy's mature works; he does briefly address some early works – including some that fit within my own study – but only within the context of providing a starting point for interpreting some of Debussy's mature compositional techniques. He is interested mostly in Debussy's use of chromatic, whole tone, and octatonic sets; the early works he examines all feature (to some extent) one or more of these sets. McFarland concludes that chromatic, whole tone and octatonic sets are present in many early works but are mostly influential; that is, they operate within a musical setting that is primarily diatonic. He suggests that they (especially the chromatic and octatonic sets) gain greater prominence in later works where they can be said to control rather than merely influence passages (41–42). McFarland acknowledges early in his dissertation that Schenkerian analysis is best suited for revealing foreground features that do not contribute to an underlying background structure in Debussy's

⁵¹ McFarland focuses on Forte's work in the post tonal domain, not his work with Schenkerian theory.

music (2). Accordingly, his musical examples frequently show low-level prolongations and other foreground details but rarely venture into the deep middleground or background of the music.

Conclusion

There are many other articles, books, and studies that apply Schenkerian theory to Debussy's œuvre. I have surely not covered every instance in which Schenkerian theory is employed to help elucidate Debussy's music; but that was never my intention. Rather, my goal was to demonstrate that many have used the theory, with varying levels of rigor, to make insightful observations that contribute to the greater understanding of Debussy's music. Much of what Schenkerian analysis reveals in Debussy's music could potentially go unnoticed using other analytical methods; certainly many important connections between concrete musical events and more abstract compositional devices – for instance, between text anomalies and middleground structural events – would be missed.

The extent to which Schenkerian theory is appropriate for Debussy's music varies from one analyst to another. Some advocate a more orthodox approach while others more willingly venture off the beaten path of Schenkerian paradigms. Regardless of the degree of orthodoxy, almost all Schenkerian analysts agree that the method cannot be applied uncritically and that it requires some modifications; the list of necessary modifications among analysts is relatively consistent. Despite the need for modifications (which are frequently criticized by Schenkerian purists), the method has proven to be a viable tool for making important and thoughtful observations about Debussy's music when in the hands of capable and creative analysts.

CHAPTER 3

BIOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

Writers have addressed Debussy's biography from many different angles. Virtually every aspect of Debussy's life and career – his family, education, compositions, attitude and demeanor, love interests, etc. – has been discussed in great detail by more than one author. Thus, my intention in this chapter is not to expose any new information or to give a full account of Debussy's life; rather, I focus on some of the more important aspects of his life that help shed light on his music and compositional practice and that are relevant to my study of the early song repertoire. Much of Debussy's biography is fascinating but my discussion centers on the years leading up to 1885 when Debussy departed Paris to assume his residency at the Villa Medici after winning the Grand Prix de Rome.⁵² Among the most important topics related to Debussy's biography are: Debussy's experiences at the conservatoire de Paris; his musical endeavors outside the conservatoire; and perhaps most importantly, the people he associated with – especially the Vasnier family.

The Conservatoire de Paris

Debussy entered the Paris Conservatoire in October 1872.⁵³ Debussy showed promise because of his prodigious skills as a pianist, and his parents had great hopes for the fame and financial stability that such a career would provide.⁵⁴ Admittance to the conservatoire was based on a competitive examination. In the year Debussy was accepted, thirty-eight students competed

⁵² Debussy won the grand prize in 1884 but did not assume his residency until January 1885.

⁵³ Lockspeiser (1978, 1:25) confirms this date, but Vallas (1973, 4) lists October 1873 as the date in which Debussy entered the conservatoire.

⁵⁴ Debussy's mother wanted her son to join the navy because it was a well-paid profession. For this reason, Debussy was not sent to school when he came of age in the late 1860s; his mother considered schooling unnecessary for a career in the navy (Dietschy 1962, 25).

for admission to the piano classes and only eight were successful; Debussy was the youngest of the group. Being admitted to the conservatoire at the age of ten only stoked the fire of his parents' ambitions; Debussy would eventually fulfill his mother's hopes, but not necessarily in the way she had planned.

Debussy had a mixture of successes and setbacks during his tenure as a student. He showed great promise in his first few years of study but was unable to continue the trend through the late 1870s. He was quite successful in his solfege classes – he earned all the prizes in this area, including the first medal (Dietschy 1990, 24). The young musician also earned second honorable mention in the piano competition of 1874 and first honorable mention in the piano competition of 1875 (Vallas 1973, 7). After coming up short in 1876, Debussy again won recognition in piano in 1877 by taking second place in a field of fifty-eight. This accolade would be Debussy's highest in piano at the conservatoire and was followed by a series of disappointing results in piano competitions in the following years (Dietschy 1990, 24). Furthermore, despite being fairly adept in his harmony classes, Debussy never managed to win recognition in the discipline.

For a young musician previously described as a prodigy or virtuoso, his lack of recognition in piano and harmony was likely crushing. Dietschy notes that Debussy's setback in piano was irrevocable but his setback in harmony concealed his true gift; Dietschy argues that the true essence of virtuosity (in this case relating to piano performance) is technique and method, but that harmony evokes inspiration and content (25). Technique and method did not necessarily align with Debussy's personality, but there was certainly a latent inspiration in the young musician at this time that, upon fruition, grew to rival that of even the most sophisticated musical minds. By the late 1870s Debussy was beginning to cultivate his independence (which

was often at odds with conservatoire teachers) and, relieved of his expectation to become a performer, the stage was set for him to pursue his compositional interests.

There are numerous reminiscences from conservatoire professors regarding Debussy's aptitude as a musician. Even from a young age Debussy had a penchant for unique sounds. Albert Lavignac commented that Debussy had well-developed musical sensibilities and favored unusual chords and subtle harmonies, intricate rhythms, and eclectic harmonic progressions (Vallas 1973, 4). Lavignac also noted that Debussy trusted too much in his abilities and didn't work hard enough (Dietschy 1990, 23). Regarding his prowess as a pianist, Antoine Marmontel expressed disappointment by commenting that the young Debussy was reckless, inaccurate, and did not live up to expectations (24). Similarly, César Franck had few positive comments for Debussy, judging some of his early compositions as trifling (26). Émile Durand, on the other hand, judged Debussy to be quite gifted in harmony (25). Despite the mixed reviews and progress reports, Debussy earned the admiration of teachers and colleagues alike and even profited from his relationships, receiving recommendations that led to jobs as a pianist that provided financial stability and helped shape his early compositional career.

The pinnacle of Debussy's time at the conservatoire was his participation (and eventual victory) in the Prix de Rome competitions of 1882, 1883, and 1884. The Prix de Rome was a competition in five disciplines (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and engraving) sponsored by the Académie des Beaux Arts (a section of the Institut de France). Winning the Prix provided victors with tremendous opportunities: a yearly stipend of 3,510 francs,⁵⁵ a three-year residency at the Villa Medici in Rome, and fame and notoriety that launched the career of many young artists (32, 46). The competition for musical composition was comprised of two

⁵⁵ 1,200 francs were deducted for room and board and an additional 300 was placed in a reserve fund, which was given to the student at the end of their residency. The remaining balance (2,010) was paid in monthly installments of 167.50 (Dietschy 1990, 40). For additional context, see Bloom 1995.

stages. In the preliminary stage students wrote two separate exercises: a fugue and a chorus. If selected to continue, participants entered the final round of the competition and had to write a cantata on a pre-selected poem. The final round of the composition lasted for several weeks; students were secluded in a studio to complete their cantata. Composers then performed their compositions for the music representatives of the Académie (often with vocal soloists and piano reductions) who would then recommend to the larger committee which compositions should receive the first, second, and third prizes (35). The composers would perform their work again before the whole Académie shortly thereafter and a formal vote would be taken to officially award the prizes.

Debussy made his first attempt for the Prix in 1882. He wrote the customary fugue and chorus – the former on a theme by Gounod, the latter for female voices with orchestral accompaniment – but did not make it past the preliminary round (Vallas 1973, 22). In the following year (1883) he was much more successful. He was ranked fourth out of five after the preliminary round, but nonetheless moved on to the final competition. After the performances of the cantatas (based on Émile Moreau’s poem “Le Gladiateur”), Debussy placed second behind Paul Vidal, missing the top prize, but gaining notable acclaim (23). Similar to the 1883 competition, the 1884 preliminary round left Debussy in fourth place out of five. In the final competition, however, Debussy received a dominating twenty-two votes out of twenty-eight to secure the top prize (26).

After three years of trying and much encouragement by those closest to him, Debussy won the grand prize and thus secured his place at the Villa Medici for the next two years. Despite the privileges due to him as a part of his prize, Debussy was reluctant to leave Paris; he did not

want to leave his friends and the life to which he was accustomed (17).⁵⁶ Despite his reservations, Debussy set out for Rome at the end of January 1885 (32). He would ultimately have a miserable time in Rome and make trips back to Paris as often as he could manage. Furthermore, the compositions he produced while in Rome (*envois de Rome*) failed to impress the Académie back in France.⁵⁷ He returned for good in March of 1887 after completing two of the three years he was given as a part of his scholarship, the minimum residency mandated by the conditions of his prize (Dietschy 1990, 46).⁵⁸

A Duality of Style

Debussy quickly tired of the rules of the conservatoire and began to cultivate a more rebellious style, both in terms of his personality and attitude and in terms of his musical tastes and compositional approach. As early as 1876 Debussy was already irritated with the way solfege was taught at the conservatoire; he is known to have criticized Lavignac's pedagogy and was especially unhappy with the lack of rhythmic complexity in Lavignac's examples (23). Additionally, in years to come Debussy would openly defend his use of parallel fifths and octaves, unresolved chordal extensions (sevenths, ninths, elevenths, thirteenth), and complex clusters of tones (Briscoe 1979, 12).

By 1880 Debussy had developed an even more stubborn reputation among professors, colleagues, and even administrators at the conservatoire; he had become rather impatient and disruptive (Dietschy 1990, 36). Dietschy describes the eighteen-year-old Debussy as openly

⁵⁶ Many Prix winners were reluctant to leave Paris for Rome due to the fact that Rome was less musically fashionable than Paris. For more information, see Dratwicki 2005.

⁵⁷ *Envois* are works that the Académie des Beaux-Arts requires laureates to submit as a part of their scholarship. Debussy submitted three in total – the first two were composed in Rome, the last was composed after he returned to Paris. The first two (*Zuleima* and *Printemps*) were judged harshly by the Académie; the third (*La Damoiselle élue*) had a better reception (Vallas 1973, 40–43)

⁵⁸ Typical residencies at the Villa Medici were three years, but two years was the minimum.

rebellious and spirited, possessing a “youthful and ironically contemptuous violence” that encouraged hostility from many people who knew him. Dietschy also comments that “the Debussy of the years 1880 to 1884 really must have been most annoying and exasperating.” Maurice Emmanuel (a colleague of Debussy) argued that Debussy’s behavior was just for show, but Dietschy justifies the young composer’s behavior as resulting from his frustrations in piano and harmony classes at the conservatoire and from his failed attempt at the Prix de Rome in 1882 (37).

The rebellious Debussy continued to develop in the years leading up to 1880. After graduating from Lavignac’s classes in theory and solfege, Debussy joined the harmony class of Émile Durand, which produced no small amount of tension. Debussy continued to cultivate his independence and was never able to satisfy the conservative Durand (Lockspeiser 1978, 1:32). Similarly, the young composer butted heads with César Franck; in one often quoted instance Franck urged Debussy to modulate, to which Debussy replied “Mais pourquoi voulez-vous que je module, puisque je me trouve très bien dans ce ton-la” [But why do you want me to modulate, when I am very well situated in this key] (33). This is also the time, when asked at registration for conservatoire classes what rule he followed, Debussy so famously replied “Mon plaisir” [My pleasure] (70). Briscoe (1979, 14) notes that Debussy was forming a hedonistic aesthetic in these years. The previously mentioned quotes by Debussy are often cited in writings on Debussy and his music and can present an over-simplified and mainly negative view of the teenage composer. Debussy clearly saw value in attending the conservatoire – otherwise why would he have continued? – but was tenaciously seeking to define his unique compositional aesthetic.

Lockspeiser (1978) identifies two distinct but contrasting styles Debussy was cultivating

during his time at the conservatoire; one was more rebellious, the other more conservative.⁵⁹ Compositions written as a part of his conservatoire studies are generally more traditional – representing the style and influence of his teachers and their perceived notions of proper musical study – and thus represent the conservative Debussy. The compositions Debussy composed outside of the conservatoire environment (such as many of his early *mélodies*) – which fall outside of the direct scrutiny of conservatoire professors – represent his rebellious compositions. Maurice Emmanuel, a fellow student at the conservatoire, notes Debussy’s split compositional personality; the law-abiding academic versus the unique and independent character that would continue to emerge as Debussy matured. Emmanuel suggested that both sides of Debussy were present simultaneously, but were not equal parts of his musical personality; Emmanuel argues that Debussy’s academic side – and the success he found at school – was a veneer under which he hid his true style and ambition (1:58).

Debussy struggled to reconcile the conflicting attitudes he had toward composition. In the early 1880s the still young composer joined the composition classes of Ernest Guiraud. Guiraud’s initial assessment was that Debussy had promise as a composer. By 1883 Guiraud had more dire opinions, blatantly saying of Debussy, “he writes music badly.”⁶⁰ Guiraud’s assessment was, considering the accepted compositional aesthetic of the time, correct; Debussy, in searching to develop his own style, was writing music that certainly broke with convention (Dietschy 1990, 30).

⁵⁹ Following Lockspeiser, Briscoe (1979) distinguishes between rebellious and academic styles when addressing the characteristics of Debussy’s formative compositional style.

⁶⁰ Eric Jensen (2014, 24) suggests that this phrase could be an error in translation. Guiraud used the word “écrire,” which in this context we take to mean “compose.” The literal meaning, “to write” could have been referring to Debussy’s penmanship in writing out his scores. (His manuscripts are notably messy; Debussy was careless and inconsistent in the use of accidentals and performance indications.) Jensen notes, however, that it is more likely that Guiraud believed Debussy to be ignorant of academic methodology, thus writing music that did not fit the mold of standard compositional rules and procedures.

Despite his negative assessment of the young composer, Guiraud was much more open-minded than many of the conservatoire professors and he and Debussy eventually developed a close friendship. Guiraud became interested in the sounds Debussy was writing and provided words of encouragement as well as advice for his career as a composer. After reading through a piece based on Banville's "Diane au Bois," Guiraud commented that it was an intriguing work, but suggested that Debussy not write such audacious and ambitious sounds or he would never win the Prix de Rome (Vallas 1973, 21). Debussy seemed to take Guiraud's opinions to heart and eventually found success, winning the Prix in 1884. Thus, Guiraud became a powerful mentor for Debussy and helped guide him simultaneously toward finding academic success and cultivating his own unique compositional aesthetic.

The years in Debussy's life and compositional output that are of primary concern for my work (1880–1885) were a time when he was simultaneously cultivating both academic and adventurous compositional styles. Most of Debussy's compositions written outside of the conservatoire during this period were songs, and they represent his more defiant compositional style. This is perhaps the first and most obvious clue that the early *mélodies* can be said to represent an independent repertoire. I address the issue of an independent repertoire in later chapters; for now, let it suffice that all the early songs showcase Debussy's endeavor to explore and define his compositional individuality. In doing so, the young composer moved beyond the conventions of song writing endorsed by the conservatoire and ultimately pushed the French art song into new territory.

The Vasniers

"On trouve une femme à tous les carrefours de la vie de Debussy" [We find a woman at every crossroad in Debussy's life.] So writes Marcel Dietschy in *La Passion de Claude Debussy*

(1962, 8). Dietschy organizes much of the early part of his book around the women who influenced Debussy's life in different stages. Key figures include Debussy's mother, Victorine; his aunt (and godmother) Clémentine; Mme. Mauté, an early piano teacher; and Nadezhda von Meck, a benefactress who employed Debussy as a pianist and gave him one of his earliest opportunities to travel outside of France (1–30). Of the many women that played a role in Debussy's early life and development few had as profound an impact as Marie Vasnier. It is to Mme. Vasnier, and the Vasnier family in general, that I now turn my discussion.

In the fall of 1880 Debussy took a job as an accompanist in the voice studio of Madame Moreau-Sainti.⁶¹ It was here that Debussy met Marie Vasnier, a thirty-two year old woman with a remarkably light and agile voice, for the first time. Debussy was immediately enamored by Marie. She became his primary inspiration and the dedicatee to many of his songs; out of the approximately forty songs Debussy composed between 1880 and 1885, twenty-seven are dedicated to her (Yates 2002, 108). Marie's influence can, of course, be seen in Debussy's dedications, which were excessively flattering. Lesure (1994, 51) suggests that Debussy's dedications were such that it would have been inappropriate to leave the manuscripts in public view. Marie's influence can also be seen in the music itself. Briscoe (1979, 30) notes that the songs Debussy wrote for Vasnier "show the rebellious side of his early style" and are a departure from the established musical canon. The vocal lines in Debussy's Vasnier songs necessitate a light and agile voice, often explore a high tessitura, are frequently sung on a neutral syllable, and tend to be very virtuosic. Vasnier was known for having the necessary vocal technique for such melodies;⁶² collectively these conditions are the criteria for what I call the "Vasnier vocalise,"

⁶¹ Debussy got the job courtesy of his colleague Paul Vidal (Dietschy 1990, 30).

⁶² Shortly before Debussy left for Rome, Vidal commented "His succubus is battenning on to all his little weaknesses. She's pretty and much pursued by admirers, which pleases her jealous vanity; it appears she's a talented singer (I haven't heard her) and sings his songs extremely well; everything he writes is for her and owes its existence to her.

which is given fuller discussion in subsequent chapters.

It is clear that Marie was an important influence on Debussy's music, but there is some conjecture among scholars whether Debussy's feelings toward her were reciprocated and whether or not they had a physical relationship. Dietschy (1962, 39) suggests that Debussy and Vasnier were lovers; Lockspeiser (1978, 1:71) suggests a deep bond between the two; and Yates (2002, 108) writes "most commentators now seem to agree that the young composer's affections were reciprocated by Madame Vasnier." Briscoe (1979, 30), on the other hand, argues that the evidence for a physical relationship is not strong enough to draw a firm conclusion and, until new evidence surfaces, "one cannot state as a fact that Debussy was romantically attracted to her or that she reciprocated his feelings." It is interesting to note that the same evidence is used to support both sides of the argument. Briscoe argues that the evidence is "circumlocutious and therefore insufficient" (29); Yates (2002, 208) notes that "evidence for a physical relationship is sketchy, but discretion would have had to be paramount," and maintains his affirmation that Debussy's relationship with Vasnier was a romantic one. Lockspeiser (1978, 1:71) takes a less committal tone by commenting on the lack of solid evidence but notes that "there may be some significance in the fact that the correspondence with Madame Vasnier has been either lost or destroyed."

The Vasnier family – Eugène, Marie, and daughter Marguerite – was a surrogate family for Debussy and provided him with resources and support that he was otherwise unable to obtain (Vallas 1973, 17). The young musician visited the Vasniers on a daily basis at their home in Paris (they reserved a room for him to work) and regularly at their summer villa at Ville-d'Avray (Dietschy 1990, 32). Debussy worked in the Vasnier home, gave piano lessons to their daughter,

How can one expect him in the circumstances to exile himself for two years in Rome...?" (Nichols 1998, 22). Vidal's words suggest two important issues. The first is that Marie Vasnier had a reputation for being a talented singer; the second is that she exerted a powerful influence on Debussy (and apparently others as well).

and indulged in the charm and generosity of his hosts; he was a consistent and welcome fixture of the Vasnier residence for many years prior to his journey to Rome in 1885. Debussy was so attached to the Vasniers that he was tempted to abandon his residency, and the Prix, to remain in Paris (Vallas 1973, 17).⁶³

Marie's husband, Eugène, was a tremendous influence and mentor to Debussy. Eugène Vasnier was eleven years older than Marie (Yates 2002, 106). The couple had two children but different life styles; Marie was young and outgoing and Eugène was by most accounts a stuffy businessman (Dietschy 1990, 31).⁶⁴ Eugène Vasnier had no professional experience with the arts but was intensely interested in poetry and literature; he introduced Debussy to the work of Mallarmé and Verlaine, and many of the conversations between Debussy and M. Vasnier centered on poetry, literature, painting and other art forms (Briscoe 1979, 30).⁶⁵ It is well known that Debussy was intensely interested and influenced by other contemporary artists and art forms; it is likely that his introduction to many of the poets and authors that would become so influential to his music came from Eugène Vasnier.

Monsieur Vasnier provided Debussy with an almost paternal mentorship. In the early 1880s Debussy clearly had mixed feelings about the Prix de Rome competition. Given his opinions and behavior at the conservatoire and his newly emerging compositional aesthetic, it is little surprise that Debussy considered the institution's top academic prize to be a little antiquated. On another level, however, Debussy recognized the value in the prize and what

⁶³ The Vasniers were surely only one of many reasons that Debussy did not want to leave Paris. He was Parisian to the core and likely would not have been happy anywhere else.

⁶⁴ Marcel Dietschy describes M. Vasnier as a ponderous, anti-social, French antiquarian. He also refers to him as cold, secret, an obsessive worker, and a teetotaler, and notes that he was very much like Debussy.

⁶⁵ Vallas (1973, 16) claims that M. Vasnier was an architect, thus having a professional connection to the arts. Dietschy (1990, 31), however, notes that Eugène was a registrar of buildings and not an architect and thus had no professional artistic interests.

winning it could do for his career. Eugène Vasnier encouraged the young composer to put aside his reservations about the prize and enter the competition in 1883 (31).⁶⁶ After winning the competition and relocating to Rome to “serve his sentence,” Debussy continued to write to M. Vasnier, and the whole Vasnier family. His letters provide much of what we know concerning his attitude and opinions about the Villa Medici (33).⁶⁷ Furthermore, the sheer number of letters sent to the Vasniers, and Debussy’s very candid tone, confirm that he had a close relationship with the family; he wrote to them often, almost cathartically, and expressed his feelings and emotions without reservation.

Although Debussy was very close to the Vasniers in the years leading up to his residency at the Villa Medici, when he returned from Rome his relationship with the family deteriorated quickly. After returning to Paris Debussy sought to rekindle his former relationship with the family but, as Marguerite notes, Debussy and the Vasnier family had both changed and their former relationship could not continue. For a while Debussy continued to play his compositions for the Vasniers, solicit advice from M. Vasnier, and receive a small amount of financial support from the family. But he slowly gained more independence as a professional and cultivated other social circles, eventually severing his ties to the Vasniers completely (35).

Debussy’s relationship with Marie Vasnier is shrouded with mystery. It is difficult to definitively say that the two had a physical relationship, but the influence of the Vasnier family is quite clear. Marie was a driving musical influence for the young composer; the texts he chose reflect his infatuation with her and the music dedicated to her clearly plays to her strengths as a

⁶⁶ There is some discrepancy in Briscoe’s dating. He claims that Debussy first entered the Prix in 1883, but Debussy actually competed in the competition in 1882, although he did not make it past the preliminary round. Nevertheless, it is likely that M. Vasnier would have encouraged Debussy to enter the 1882 competition as well.

⁶⁷ Briscoe notes that, much like Berlioz, Debussy considered his time in Rome as more like a prison sentence than a valuable opportunity.

singer. If Marie encouraged the unique and rebellious side of Debussy, then Eugène Vasnier encouraged the academic side. Monsieur Vasnier fostered Debussy's interest in contemporary art forms outside of music and encouraged the young composer to strive for success at the conservatoire (i.e. the Prix de Rome). And perhaps most importantly, both Vasniers offered Debussy a place in their home where he could cultivate the lifestyle to which he was well-suited, but not born into; as a guest of the Vasniers Debussy indulged in a way of life that was unattainable in his own family.

In 1885 Debussy embarked on his sojourn to Rome. In addition to being the beginning of his Roman residency, 1885 is a more broadly important year in Debussy's life that marks the beginning of several changes. Prior to 1885, Debussy was largely an amateur – a student, hopelessly in love with a woman above his station, and seeking to define his own style while also reconciling it with the expectations placed upon him by the conservatoire. Beginning in 1885, Debussy found the need to redefine his role in the Parisian musical scene and cultivate new social circles. The two years he spent at the Villa Medici are a something of a compositional dry spell; he wrote very little and what he did write was not well received. Perhaps one of the most significant effects of his Roman residency was the severing of his connection with the Vasniers. When he returned to Paris Debussy had a completely different mindset than he did before leaving. He was no longer a student, but rather a professional member of musical society looking to capitalize on the notoriety that accompanies the Prix and make a living as a composer.⁶⁸

By 1887 Debussy had effectively moved on to a different stage in his life and began to pursue in earnest the compositional aesthetic that he had been cultivating for many years but was

⁶⁸ Jensen (2014, 37–38) notes that Debussy struggled to reap the full benefits of winning the Prix because to do so would have meant continuing to write music that fit the conservatoire conception of proper musical composition – an aesthetic he tentatively accepted in order to win the competition and satisfy conservatoire professors, but never embraced as his own.

unable to fully embrace while at the conservatoire. Debussy continued to write songs, as well as more ambitious large-scale works, but they were different from the songs of earlier years. He was no longer writing *mélodies* merely as an exercise in expression and experimentation, he was also writing them to be published and to support himself.⁶⁹ Debussy continued to mature as a composer, but had irrevocably moved past the aesthetic of years past. Thus, the early songs (those composed prior to 1885) exist as a definable repertoire within Debussy's larger œuvre and embody a unique aesthetic that is intimately linked to the time in Debussy's life in which they were created.

⁶⁹ Debussy was writing music to be published, but that doesn't mean he was catering to the masses (i.e. reverting back to a style endorsed by the conservatoire). He continued to develop his unique and forward-thinking compositional aesthetic.

CHAPTER 4

FRENCH ART SONG IN THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Mélodie is a term that now refers generally to French art song in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, the title of the genre does little to convey the artistry imbedded within. French song – particularly of the mid to late-nineteenth century – is a subtle art, what Katherine Bergeron (2010, viii) calls an art of extreme nuance and discretion based on the principles of delicacy and restraint. Bergeron, in fact, describes the origin of the *mélodie* as “not so much the birth of a genre as the birth of an ethos, a new expressive value” (6). Her argument is not without its charm. The history of the *mélodie*, both as a genre (or an ethos) and as a term referring to French art song, is more than a little convoluted and owes much to earlier genres – namely the *romance* and the German *Lied*. The development of the *mélodie* is also intertwined with developments in French society in the middle to late nineteenth century. Chief among the societal factors are the reemergence of salon culture following the French Revolution and the efforts of the French Academy to standardize the French language in the 1880s.

The *mélodie* evolved throughout the 1800s to become the preeminent French vocal genre in the years approaching the *fin de siècle*. In his book-length study of French art song (one could just as accurately call it a study on *mélodie*), Frits Noske (1970, 1) identifies three factors that he believes contributed most heavily to the development of the *mélodie*: the decline in the artistic level of the *romance*, the introduction (and subsequent popularity) of Schubert’s *Lieder*, and the impact of Romantic poetry.⁷⁰ Independently, each of these factors would likely have assimilated into the ebb and flow of the artistic and musical zeitgeist; together, however, they effected the

⁷⁰ Poets such as Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier, and Émile Deschamps are among the most prominent.

development of a new genre of French art song.⁷¹

By the end of the century many French composers were writing *mélodies*. Among the community of art-song composers, Gabriel Fauré, Henri Duparc, and Claude Debussy are today largely heralded as the most important and influential; collectively they broadened the gap between the *mélodie* and its predecessors and brought the genre to maturity. Fauré, Duparc, and several others helped establish a new standard in the late nineteenth century but Debussy, though he shares many aspects of his compositional style and approach with his predecessors, ultimately guided the *mélodie* in new directions. The following is a brief discussion of how the *mélodie* came to be and an examination of selected *mélodies* by Gabriel Fauré and Henri Duparc. The information in this chapter serves as a baseline for comparison with Debussy's early songs in subsequent chapters.

The *Mélodie*

The *mélodie* is closely related to – and indeed developed from – the *romance*. The *romance* and the *mélodie* share many features and the characteristic margins between the two are often blurred, especially in the early stages of the *mélodie*. Many early *mélodies* are indistinguishable from late *romances*.⁷² In the 1830s the *mélodie* began to gain independence and by the end of the century it had become fully liberated from its predecessors. Despite the ever-increasing autonomy of the *mélodie* throughout the nineteenth century, the term “romance” continued to persist in art-song parlance. Terminology is not always precise in differentiating between the *mélodie* and the earlier *romance*, but musically the two song types are noticeably

⁷¹ Bergeron (2010, 4–12) addresses the origins and ethics of the term *mélodie* and offers a critical take on Noske's history in *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Epoque*.

⁷² The *romance* originated as a literary form in the early eighteenth century and was defined as a musical form as early as the 1760s by Rousseau (1767) and others. By 1784 the *romance* had matured into a genre of notable artistic value. The *romance* continued to be popular well into the nineteenth century, but eventually yielded to the *mélodie* in the 1830s as the premier artistic vocal genre (Noske 1970, 1–39).

different; the *mélodie* is more musically robust and is generally more complex than its predecessor.

The *romance* has strong literary ties and, unsurprisingly, closely aligns with popular trends in poetry in the late eighteenth century. The French Revolution effected a change in the subject matter of contemporary poetry by supplying a trove of topics and events to be used as subject matter, which in turn became the text for many songs. There was also an emerging trend towards lyrical rather than pastoral poetry (Noske 1970, 3–4). Furthermore, a surge in Parisian salon culture following the revolution provided a venue appropriate for the *romance*. Thus, the art song became increasingly *en vogue*.⁷³ Approaching the middle of the nineteenth century, hundreds of *romances* were being written each year and it was not uncommon for composers to perform their works at the *fêtes de salon* of the bourgeoisie (Tunely, Noske).

Musically, the *romance* is characterized by its simplicity. Compositional parameters such as harmony, form, and accompaniment were subordinated to melody. In his dictionary of music, Rousseau (1768, 420) recommended that a romance be simple, avoiding ornamentation and excess filigree, and reflect the character of the text: “Since the Romance should be written in a simple, touching, and somewhat older style, the Air should respond to the character of the words; no ornaments, nothing mannered, but a sweet, natural, and rustic melody that produces an effect by itself regardless of how its sung.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the *romance* had a certain complexity unseen in earlier song forms. One notable feature that set the *romance* apart from earlier vocal works is that it often had a written-out piano part rather than a basso continuo part to be played

⁷³ For more information, see Cheng 2011.

⁷⁴ “Comme la Romance doit être écrite d’un style simple, touchant, & d’un gout un peu antique, l’Air doit répondre au caractère des paroles; point d’ornements, rien de maniéré, une mélodie douce, naturelle, champêtre, & qui produise son effet par elle-même, indépendamment de la manière de la Chanter.” Rousseau, like many others who helped codify the romance, seems primarily interested in melody.

on a harpsichord (Noske 1970, 3). The piano accompaniment at this time was, however, fairly simple and clearly supportive of the melody.⁷⁵ By the turn of the nineteenth century music had become as important as the text, which greatly contributed to the artistic value of the *romance* (5).

The *romance* expanded significantly in the early 1800s; new names – such as *barcarolle*, *tyrolienne*, *chansonnette*, *tarantella*, and others – were brought under the broader categorization of *romance* and many of the songs were variously categorized as heroic, passionate, dramatic, etc. (6). The *romance* continued to become more sophisticated in the early nineteenth century due to the efforts of many composers. Berlioz wrote songs with highly developed phrase structure and Louis Neidermeyer set precedence for more adventurous harmonies while still adhering to more conventional approaches to melody. Neidermeyer (along with Hippolyte Monpou) was one of the first to display Romantic qualities in his songs and helped give new life to the *romance*. He is known for having an unusually good understanding of contemporary poetry; his songs are set apart from those of other composers by his choices of text, by the structure of the songs, by a closer relationship between text and music, and by the greater prominence of the accompaniment (12).⁷⁶

By the middle of the nineteenth century German *Lieder* had become quite popular in France. German song elevated mediocre or unremarkable poetry and was affective in a different way than the *romance*;⁷⁷ furthermore, German *Lieder* differed greatly in tone from the charming

⁷⁵ Piano accompaniments became increasingly sophisticated throughout the nineteenth century, eventually becoming equal to the vocal melody in expressive content, structural significance, and general importance.

⁷⁶ Saint-Saëns credits Neidermeyer with creating a new type of song. Noske notes, however, that Neidermeyer did not create the *mélodie*; his songs are more adventurous than those of his contemporaries but are still basically *romances*.

⁷⁷ The French *romance* focuses on the expressive power of the melody. The German *Lied*, however, focuses on a relationship between voice, music, and text in which musical gestures have semantic potential.

but unimpressible *romance* (Bergeron 2010, 6). Songs by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann were popular, but the most prominent among the German art-song composers was Schubert. After 1840 Schubert's songs were almost ubiquitous in Paris and many publishers offered collections, often in translation, to the musical public (Noske 1970, 26–27). Publishers even set many of Schubert's melodies to texts by popular French poets (Bergeron 2010, 6). Schubert's songs contributed greatly to the decline of the *romance* and subsequent emergence of the *mélodie*.

Although some lamented the deterioration of the *romance*, Schubert's songs were generally a positive influence on French art song. Four areas that defined the post-Schubertian *mélodie* are: form, vocal line, accompaniment, and text. The structure of songs expanded to be much freer (no longer was strophic form compulsory) and vocal parts largely abandoned square phrases in favor of a recitative style (Noske 1970, 35–36). Accompaniments became more central to the dramatic evolution of the song and often contributed to the overall impression and interpretation of the poetry.⁷⁸ Texts frequently tied together other strands of composition and composers were increasingly compelled towards the works of Romantic poets, which required a different approach to composition. Freer poetic structures encouraged a similarly free approach to melodic writing and the multiple layers of meaning of the poetry created a need for piano accompaniments that could convey that which is only tacitly suggested by the poetry (37–38). The *Lied* would continue to be a major influence well into the twentieth century; composers toward the end of the nineteenth century often still thought of their songs as variations on the *Lied* but with a decidedly French character, accent, and subtle nuance that were quite different

⁷⁸ Schubert's piano accompaniments received especially high praise in Paris. His accompaniments were harmonically robust, cleverly intertwined with the vocal part, and replete with motivic rhythms. But most importantly, Schubert's piano accompaniments participated in the drama of the songs and helped convey the spirit and the mood of the poetry (Noske 1970, 33). This particular aspect of composition – linking both voice and piano as a combined interpretive process – was especially influential for Debussy.

from German art-song (Bergeron 2000, 8).⁷⁹

A concurrent but contrasting trend to the new developments encouraged by Schubert's *Lieder* was the commercialization of the *romance*. Approaching the middle of the century the *romance* began to noticeably decline in artistic merit (Noske 1970, 8). It had become a commodity and thus linked to the tastes of the public, which did not always tend towards the artistic side. Despite being artistically on the rise leading into the nineteenth century, the business of composing and selling songs contributed to a decline in artistic quality of the *romance* as early as the 1830s. The importation of Schubert's songs infused the *romance* with a new vitality but the salon culture of the Parisian bourgeoisie created a high demand for art songs that encouraged the commercialization, and ultimately the deterioration, of the genre. These simultaneous but mutually exclusive paths made it almost impossible for composers to assimilate new creative developments and meet public demands. This paved the way for the *mélodie* in the middle to late nineteenth century as a new artistic genre of art song.

The origins of the term *mélodie* are complex and more than a little convoluted. In the early nineteenth century, many songs based on Irish airs carried the title *mélodie*. These songs often had regional or folk elements but were basically *romances* (25). By the middle of the nineteenth century, it is appropriate to speak of the *mélodie*, although the new genre still had much in common with the *romance*.⁸⁰ The term *mélodie* took a while to standardize but was

⁷⁹ Charles Kœchlin (1925a, 1) suggested that French song was different from German song and that musicians should avoid using the German term. Kœchlin's (1925a, 1) argument in his essay was as follows: "Ce n'est pas sans raison que nous évitons ici le terme de lied. Plusieurs, il est vrai, ont préféré l'emploi de ce mot, maint critique musical notamment; et le traité de composition de M. d'Indy parle souvent de la "forme-lied." Néanmoins, la *mélodie* française pour piano et chant reste bien différente du lied allemande." Most twentieth-century writers subsequently followed his suggestion (Bergeron 2010, 8).

⁸⁰ Some argue, with merit, that the *romance* never entirely disappeared and remained a prominent genre throughout the nineteenth century (Beltrando 1987, 139–48).

being used to refer to a type of art song by the 1850s.⁸¹ Some sources credit Schubert⁸² as the inventor of the *mélodie* while others insist Berlioz – in the 1830s – was the first to call his songs *mélodies* (23). Berlioz’s *Neuf mélodies imitées de l’anglais* from 1830 is often thought to be the collection that introduced the term “*mélodie*” as a moniker for French art song (Bergeron 2010, 4). Berlioz’s collection was a French response to Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies*, which suggests that Berlioz’s title is an English transliteration rather than a term native to the French language. Bergeron notes that Berlioz and Moore alike employed the term in the service of composing a more authentic modern song (4–5).⁸³

Perhaps searching out when the term *mélodie* was coined and its subsequent development is not such an important endeavor. Bergeron suggests that early accounts of the use of the term are less important in defining a new genre of art song and more important in showing the birth of an ethos. She further points out, following Noske, that the term *mélodie* was included in few to no French lexicons prior to the twentieth century, suggesting that it was less a genre than a “captivating quality of voice.” This is supported by consulting the dictionary of the French Academy published in 1835, which did not acknowledge the *mélodie* as a type of song but did acknowledge the term in reference to poetry or prose (6). The dictionary reference to “*mélodie*” as a collection of words and phrases designed to please the ear supports Bergeron’s hypothesis that the origin of the term *mélodie* referred more to a quality of voice rather than the emergence

⁸¹ Charles Soulier’s *Nouveau dictionnaire de musique* (1855) and Georges Kastner’s *Parémiologie musicale de lan langue française* (1866) both include explanations of the term but many other dictionaries and encyclopedias from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries do not mention it (Noske 1970, 22–13).

⁸² Ernest Legouvé (1885) stated that “Schubert killed the romance and created the melody.”

⁸³ Bergeron (2010) states, “the Irish air was also, for Moore, a guarantor of authenticity, the breath of life that would make his verse ring true. Berlioz hoped to breathe the same, and so he used these English poems (now in French translation) in much the same way that Moore had traded on the Irish...”. Bergeron further notes the irony in Berlioz’s attempt to create an authentic French song based on a foreign influence (5).

of a new genre of art song.⁸⁴ It is possible that the convoluted origins of the *mélodie* as a genre are so ill-defined because it was not initially designed as a genre, but as a reflection of a new aesthetic in vocal music (7).

Many composers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries composed *mélodies*. In addition to Schubert and Berlioz, other notable composers include Gounod – sometimes referred to as the first composer of genius for the *mélodie* (Johnson 2000, xx), Franck,⁸⁵ Vincent d’Indy, Chausson, Saint-Saëns, and Chabrier. Lalo, Liszt, and Wagner also wrote *mélodies*, although they excelled in other genres (xix–xxi).⁸⁶ Massenet – who “delivered the *mélodie* from the yoke of the square phrase” – followed on the heels of Gounod; he wrote many songs following the trends in phrase structure and accompaniment inspired by Schubert’s songs (Noske 1970, 211). Bizet and Délibes further enriched the *mélodie* by incorporating elements of exoticism into their songs⁸⁷ (Tunely, Noske). Gabriel Fauré, Henri Duparc, and especially Claude Debussy brought the *mélodie* to its highest degree of sophistication. In the later part of the nineteenth century, the *mélodie* had grown to be much more harmonically robust, melodically intricate but also highly nuanced, and texturally independent. Piano accompaniments, especially in the case of Debussy (as well as Duparc and, to a lesser degree, Fauré), had become a much more significant contributor to the aesthetic of the *mélodie*, often playing an important part in the drama of the poem or in creating an atmosphere for the

⁸⁴ Bergeron also suggests that this meaning of the term was apparent to the performers of the time.

⁸⁵ Franck’s teaching had as profound effect on the French art song as his compositions. Franck incorporated the styles of Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner into his teaching, which became an apparent strain in French music (Johnson 2000, xxi). Notable students that made a mark on the *mélodie* tradition are Ernst Chausson and Henri Duparc.

⁸⁶ Gaetano Donizetti, Jacques Offenbach, and Gioachino Rossini also wrote songs in French, but they do not fit into the tradition of the *mélodie* (Johnson 2000, xx).

⁸⁷ Much has been written on exoticism in nineteenth century Paris. See Kerry Murphy’s (2009) “*Carmen*: Couleur Locale or the Real Thing?” and Ralph Locke’s (2009) “Spanish local color in Bizet’s *Carmen*: Unexplored borrowings and transformations” for two especially intriguing articles on Bizet and exoticism.

characters and actions. In characteristic fashion, many of Debussy's songs from the late 1880s onwards are unencumbered by many traditional tenets of tonality and frequently defy theoretical or analytical interpretation; highly extended non-functional harmonies abound and melody and accompaniment become interpretive elements in service of Debussy's often profound understanding of the poetry. For these reasons and others Debussy is considered less a successor of earlier composers (as Fauré is considered to be), but rather a "rank outsider, a revolutionary" with less tenable connections to his predecessors (Johnson 2000, 92).

The *mélodie* maintained its popularity in the twentieth century and was still heavily cultivated. Maurice Ravel and Jacques Ibert wrote notable *mélodies*, as did Lili Boulanger and Erik Satie. Francis Poulenc and fellow members of *Les Six* Georges Auric and Darius Mihaud incorporated elements of humor and satire into their *mélodies*; they also experimented with diverse styles including jazz, folk, and popular music. Olivier Messiaen wrote highly complex and technically demanding songs that are lyrical and beautiful, but are not necessarily in the same tradition as those from earlier composers of the *mélodie*. In his effort to create his own musical language, Messiaen moved away from the refined aesthetic that had characterized the *mélodie* for over a century. Composers (of many different nationalities) continued to write songs with French texts, but the works were of a new milieu influenced largely by Schoenberg and the atonal tradition, the serial techniques of Webern, the Darmstadt School headed by Stockhausen, and of course the work of Pierre Boulez in France (xxvii).⁸⁸

After gaining an individual identity in the 1830s the *mélodie* continued to grow in complexity and sophistication. The genre evolved to reflect changing trends in music and the arts and was exported to other countries (notably to Germany as a reciprocal process to the

⁸⁸ In *A French Song Companion*, Johnson (2000) gives a much fuller account of the composers who played a role in the development of French song. Johnson begins with Berlioz and continues well into the twentieth century (xix–xxix).

importation of Schubert's songs that were so influential in the development of the *mélodie*). Almost every major French composer from the mid-nineteenth century onwards found a creative outlet in the *mélodie*, imbuing the genre with the spirit of the time and establishing it as a highly flexible, enduring, and influential addition to French vocal repertoire.

The Non-Debussyian *Mélodie*

Among the many composers writing *mélodies* toward the end of the nineteenth century, Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) was surely one of the most prominent and one of the most prolific. Fauré composed his first song in the 1860s and his last in the 1920s (Johnson 2000, xxi). Fauré played an important role in the development of the *mélodie* and is counted among the most successful composers of the genre. His larger works (operas, symphonies, chorals works, etc.) pale in comparison to smaller works in which the piano plays a significant role; such works include piano solos, trios, quartets, sonatas for violin and cello, and most notable over sixty *mélodies* (161–62).⁸⁹ Fauré's songs are in many ways characteristic of the *mélodie* as a genre in the late nineteenth century.

Henri Duparc's (1848–1933) contribution to the *mélodie* was brief and highly concentrated. Duparc composed a total of seventeen songs, all of which were written by the end of 1884 (Noske 1970, 272). By 1885 Duparc was suffering from a mental illness that made a career as a composer impractical, if not impossible. The young composer – only thirty-seven at the time – gave up composition; he lived another forty-eight years, but didn't compose another piece of music (Johnson 2000, 135). Duparc had diverse interests in poetry, art, and literature and is renowned for distilling German influences, notably Wagner, into a personal style that

⁸⁹ Johnson notes “the whole of Fauré's career may well seem a failure to those who do not value chamber music and the *mélodie*.” He further comments that, although Fauré has a rather large catalogue of works, “the heart of the music is in those pieces where the humble piano plays some part...” (161).

drew upon the music of other nations; he was, however, undoubtedly and unreservedly French (136). Duparc's songs are highly expressive, but his primary contribution to the genre was in his piano accompaniments, which are often harmonically robust and rhythmically complicated (Tunely, Noske).

Many composers contributed to the development of the *mélodie* over more than a century, but the most profound developments belong to the late nineteenth century via the works of Fauré, Duparc, and their contemporaries. The following is a brief and necessarily incomplete survey of compositional features of the late-nineteenth-century *mélodie* that I have deemed most important for situating Debussy's contributions to the genre within a proper chronological narrative. To that effect, I have chosen to focus on songs that were composed prior to Debussy's departure to Rome in 1885. These songs define the genre during the time Debussy was composing his early song repertoire (1880–1885) and would surely have been influential for the young composer. It is somewhat reductive to make generalizations about the *mélodie* (or any other genre) based on a broad sweep of characteristics distilled from the works of major composers; doing so necessarily eliminates the idiosyncrasies of individual composers. However, to establish a norm for the sake of comparison, such generalizations are necessary.

Text

Among the many compositional parameters that could be addressed, text setting is an especially fruitful starting point for examining any song. Setting a text to music is an act of interpretation. Sometimes composers use the whole, unaltered, poetic text; however, much more frequently they modify the original poem in some way. Such ways include: 1. changing the title to better fit the composer's artistic interpretation, to distinguish between works that carry the same title, or to give a title to an originally untitled poem; 2. omitting, adding, altering, or re-

ordering stanzas to support artistic inspiration or to manage a longer poem; and, 3. in extreme cases re-writing or conflating verses of different poems. An especially common procedure is to repeat verses as a refrain (Johnson 2000, xvi–xvii). Whatever the case, the text is often the driving force behind other compositional decisions; indeed, many if not all compositional decisions are made in service of the text.

Examples in which composers alter poetic titles, or supply alternate titles, abound throughout the literature and rarely receive more than a casual remark. Fauré is known to have petitioned poet Albert Semain for a new title for the poem “Larmes” (resulting in “Pleurs d’or”) and even supplied his own title for Verlaine’s “Sagesse” (resulting in “Prison”).⁹⁰ Lalo offered “Souvenir” for his setting of a poem from Hugo’s “Les contemplations.” The alterations in the former case (Semain’s setting of “Larmes”) were clearly to distinguish between “Larmes” and another work with the same title by a different poet; in the latter case, the original poems were part of a collection and thus needed independent titles. Bizet offered “Guitare” for Victor Hugo’s “Autre guitar” and Fauré found “Rêve d’amour” to be superior to Hugo’s “Nouvelle chanson sur un vieil air” (xvi–xvii). There doesn’t seem to be a convincing reason why Bizet or Fauré changed the titles of Hugo’s poems, other than perhaps the composers did not think that the original title captured the essence of their song.

Alterations to the content or organization of a poem are more profound and reveal more of the interpretive process. When composing his song “Chant d’automne,” which was based on Baudelaire’s poem by the same name, Fauré omitted three stanzas and restructured the original work (Example 4.1). The stanzas that Fauré omitted are in boxes in Example 4.1. The resulting song text consists of the first, third, fourth, and fifth stanzas.

⁹⁰ Hahn did something similar, calling his work “D’une prison.”

Example 4.1: Fauré, “Chant d’automne,” Original Text and Alterations⁹¹

Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténèbres; Adieu, vive claret de nos étés trop courts! J’entends déjà tomber avec des chocs funèbres Le bois retentissant sur le pave des cours.	Soon we shall plunge into the cold darkness; Farewell, vivid light of our short-lived summers! Already I hear the mournful shock Of echoing logs on the courtyard floor.
---	---

Tout l’hiver va rentrer dans mon être: colère, Haïne, frissons, horreur, labeur dur et force, Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire, Mon Coeur ne sera plus qu’un bloc rouge et glacé.	All winter will possess my being: anger, Hatred, shivering, horror, hard, forced labor, And, like the sun in his polar Hell My heart will be no more than a frozen red block.
--	--

J’écoute en frémissant chaque bûche qui tombe; L’échafaud qu’on bâtit n’a pas d’écho plus sourd. Mon esprit est pareil à la tour qui succombe Sous les coups du belier infatigable et lourd.	I listen, trembling, to each falling log; Building a scaffold has no duller sound. My spirit is like the tower which crumbles Under the tireless blows of the battering ram.
---	---

Il me semble, bercé par ce choc monotone, Qu’on cloue en grande hate un cercueil quelque part. Our qui? – C’était hier l’été; voici l’automne! Ce bruit mystérieux sonne comme un départ.	It seems to me, lulled by these monotonous shocks, That somewhere in great haste they’re nailing a coffin. For whom? – Yesterday was summer; here is autumn That mysterious noise sounds like a farewell.
--	--

J’aime de vos longs yeux la lumière verdâtre, Douce beauté, mais tout aujourd’hui m’est amer, Et rien, ni votre amour, ni le boudoir, ni l’âtre, Ne me vaut le soleil rayonnant sur la mer.	I love the greenish glow of your wide eyes, Sweet beauty, but today all is bitter to me; And nothing, neither your love, your bedroom, nor your hearth Can compare with the sunlight on the sea.
--	---

Et pourtant aimez-moi, tender coeur! soyez mère, Même pour un ingrat, même pour un méchant; Amante ou soeur, soyez la douceur éphémère D’un glorieux automne ou d’un soleil couchant.	And yet, love me, tender heart! Be a mother, The same to an ingrate, the same to the wicked; Mistress or sister, be the fleeting sweetness Of a gorgeous autumn or of a setting sun.
Courte tâche! La tombe attend; elle est avide! Ah! Laissez-moi, mon front pose sur vos genoux, Goûter, en regrettant l’été blanc et torride, De l’arrière-saison le rayon jaune et doux!	Short task! The tomb awaits; it is greedy! Ah! Let me, with my head bowed on your knees, Taste, regretting the white and scorching summer, The sweet, yellow rays of autumn!

By removing the second stanza, Fauré draws a clearer connection between the falling logs in Stanzas 1 and 3 and avoids the more sinister references to hatred, horror, and hell.⁹² The last two omitted stanzas (six and seven) elaborate the prior (fifth) stanza and move away from the central focus of the poem (autumn). Additionally the sixth and seventh stanzas reprise some of the more sinister themes from the second stanza. The result of Fauré’s restructuring of the poem is a tamer

⁹¹ Translation adapted from Johnson 2000, 173.

⁹² Johnson (2000, xvii) notes that the second stanza was “unmanageable for his [Fauré’s] purpose.”

interpretation of autumn, with a hint of directed focus on the sweet beauty with big green eyes. The original poem is perhaps more thematically robust; however, Fauré's rendition is more focused, more appropriate as a song text, and more representative of his interpretation of the poem.

There are many other poems that have received more severe abridgements when set to music. It is not uncommon for composers to truncate verses or even to selectively choose lines from throughout a larger poem to create a song text. Satie heavily reduced Lamartine's "L'isolement" for his song, retitled "Élegie," and Gounod followed a similar process for Lamartine's "Le vallon," "Le soir," and "Au rossignol." In addition to changing the title of the poem, Lalo also restructured the verses of Hugo's "Les contemplations." Chabrier heavily re-wrote Gérard's "Villanelle des petits canards" and "Les cigales" and Massenet combined sections of different poems in the last song of *Poème d'Avril* (xvii).

Sometimes composers will make small alterations – maybe a word or two – to create a more fluid vocal melody rather than as an interpretive act. Examples of such a procedure can be found throughout Fauré's body of songs. In many cases Fauré softens more aggressive sounds – dental consonants, sibilants, etc. – and removes vowels (especially è) that inhibit smooth melodies (Nectoux 1991, 352). Examples are too numerous to cite without running the risk of being banal or redundant. Fauré and most French composers of the time were attentive to the text on several levels and recommended that one should never try to set a mediocre poem to song because it only takes a couple of clumsy or out of place words to spoil the poem's musical potential.⁹³ Fauré notes that the most important elements of a poem are its atmosphere and the quality of the writing, which should allow the music to naturally adapt to the words (347).

⁹³ Nectoux (1991, 354) notes, however, that Fauré – as well as Debussy, Gounod, Schubert, and others – wrote several good songs to mediocre poems.

Despite seeking out quality writing in their texts, composers were often compelled to alter text as befitted their musical and interpretive decisions.

Accompaniment – Fauré

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important compositional parameters in the evolution of the French art song is the piano accompaniment. An independent accompaniment is one of the key factors in the rise of the *mélodie* that distinguishes it from the earlier *romance*. Because the *romance* didn't completely die out with the advent of the *mélodie*, songs from the pre-Debussyian period have a blend of simple and complex piano parts. Fauré's "Les Matelots" – published in the 1870s – is still basically a *romance*; despite the colorful atmosphere of the poem, the musical setting is rather simple (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2: Fauré, "Les Matelots," Accompaniment

Tempo animato quasi Allegro.

Sur l'eau bleue et profon - de,

Nous allons vova - geant. En - vi - rou - nant le mon - de

Example 4.2 shows the first eight measures of the song. The accompaniment is not especially complicated and, aside from mimicking a wave-like motion in a song about sailors and the sea, contributes little substance to the song outside of establishing a clear harmonic framework. The accompaniment pattern persists throughout the work, breaking only in the final bars of the song.

Fauré only set the first, third, and fifth stanzas of Gautier's original five. Example 4.3 is Gautier's full poem and translation, and Fauré's adaptations. Fauré omitted the second and fourth stanzas (in boxes) and repeated the last line of each stanza he set (shown in parenthesis in Example 4.3). Each stanza is set to the same music. Thus, the simplicity conveyed by the piano accompaniment is reflected in the song as a whole. Although the accompaniment does not participate in the drama of the piece or contribute a deeper interpretation of the poetry, it does provide a consistent reference to waves, which are referenced in each of the stanzas Fauré set and are conspicuously absent in those he did not.

Fauré followed a similar approach in devising the accompaniment for his "Barcarolle" (1873), which comes from the same decade as "Les Matelots" and has some similar features. The subject of the text – in four stanzas by Marc Monnier – is a gondola on the Venetian canals (Example 4.4). Fauré sets the four verses of poetry in two identical musical sections (A and A'). He further divides each larger section into two smaller sections (a and b); each smaller section includes one stanza of poetry comprised of four lines. It is clear that Fauré relied on the poetic form when designing his song; he split the poem evenly across the musical form and sacrificed musical variety in order to convey a transparent representation of the text. The internal phrase design of each verse is not articulated by clear cadences; rather the musical foreground is governed by an almost ubiquitous rhythmic motive (Example 4.5).

Example 4.3: Fauré, “Les Matelots,” Gautier’s Poem and Faure’s Adaptations⁹⁴

Gautier

Sur l’eau bleue et profonde
 Nous allons voyageant,
 Environnant le monde
 S’un sillage d’argent,
 Des îles de la Sonde,
 De l’Inde au ciel brûlé,
 Jusqu’au pôle gelé!

Fauré

On the water, blue and deep
 We will travel,
 Circling the world
 On a silver wake.
 From the Sunda Islands,
 From India, with its burning sky,
 To the frozen pole!
 (To the frozen pole!)

Les petites étoiles
 Montrent de leur doigt d’or
 De quell côté les voiles
 Doivent prendre l’essor;
 Sur nos ailes de toiles,
 Comme de blancs oiseaux,
 Nous effleurons les eaux.

Small stars
 Show with their golden fingers
 From which direction the sails
 Must take the rise;
 On our wings of canvases,
 Like white birds,
 We touch the waters.

Nous pensons à la terre
 Que nous fuyons toujours,
 À notre vieille mère,
 À nos jeunes amours;
 Mais la vague légère
 Avec son doux refrain
 Endort notre chagrin.

We think of the land
 Which we always flee,
 Of our old mother,
 Of our young loves.
 But the light wave
 With its sweet refrain,
 Lulls our chagrin.
 (Lulls our chagrin.)

Le laboureur déchire
 Un sol avare et dur;
 L’éperon du navire
 Ouvre nos champs d’azur,
 Et la mer sait produire,
 Sans peine ni travail,
 La perle et le corail.

The laborer breaks up
 A stingy, hard soil
 The prow of the ship
 Open our fields of blue,
 And the sea knows how to produce,
 Without trouble or work,
 Pearl and coral.

Existence sublime!
 Bercés par notre nid,
 Nous vivons sur l’abîme
 Au sein de l’infini;
 Des flots rasant la cime,
 Dans le grand désert bleu
 Nous marchons avec Dieu!

Sublime existence!
 Rocked by our nest.
 We live on the abyss,
 On the breast of the infinite,
 Waves grazing the peaks,
 In the great blue desert
 We walk with God!
 (We walk with God!)

⁹⁴ Translation by Meister (1980, 5).

Example 4.4: Fauré, “Barcarolle,” Text and Musical Form

A		A'	
St.1	St.2	St.3	St.4
a	b PAC	a	b PAC
Gondolier du Rialto, Mon château c'est la lagune, Mon jardin c'est le Lido, Mon rideau, le clair de lune.	Gondolier du Grand Canal Pour fanal j'ai la croisée Où s'allument tous les soirs, Tes Yeux noirs, mon épousée.	Ma gondole est aux heureux, Deux à deux je les promène, Et les vents légers et frais Song discrets sur mon domaine.	J'ai passé dans les amours Plus de jours et de nuits folles, Que Venise n'a d'ilots Que ses flots n'ont de gondoles.

Example 4.5: Fauré, “Barcarolle,” Rhythmic Motive

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Fauré's "Barcarolle." The tempo is marked "Andante con moto." The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 6/8. The first system shows the vocal line starting with the lyrics "Gon - do - lier du Ri - al - to" and the piano accompaniment. The second system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "Mon - cha - teau c'est - la - la - gu - ne, Mon - jar - din c'est - le Li -" and the piano accompaniment. Rhythmic motives are highlighted with boxes: a triplet in the vocal line and a sixteenth-note pattern in the piano accompaniment. Pedal points and asterisks are marked in the piano accompaniment.

In addition to the rhythmic similarities, Fauré often uses transposed and inverted forms of the original motive. The transpositions are sometimes exact (not always) and the inversions maintain

the same contour, but are not precise intervallic inversions. Regardless of whether the motives are real or tonal responses, the connection is clear and the effect is convincing.

“Barcarolle” can refer generally to any boat song, but in this case the boat is surely a gondola on the Venetian canals (Meister 1980, 29).⁹⁵ Fauré used the recurring motive to imitate the rocking motion of a gondola. This idea is the most important feature on the musical foreground and obscures many features of small-scale phrasing; the rocking motive and frequent pedal points downplay many cadences that would otherwise mark clear phrases. Rather than articulating individual phrases or marking internal divisions of each verse of poetry, Fauré chose to emphasize the theme of the poem via the gondola motive and to reserve cadential closure for larger formal sections.

“Barcarolle” was written during the time when all of Fauré’s songs were inspired by and written for Pauline Viardot. Viardot influenced Fauré’s approach to writing for the voice (he was writing for *her* voice) and his choice of poems.⁹⁶ The composer was so consistent in his melodic conceptions that a particular idea has earned the name “Viardot Motive.” This motive is characterized by a rising sixth or octave followed by a conjunct stepwise descent (Nectoux 1991, 70). Example 4.5 above illustrates this motive in “Barcarolle.” In fact, in “Barcarolle,” the “Viardot” idea, what I call the rocking motive – which seems more accurate in this particular song – is the only significant feature of the accompaniment; the remainder of the piano part is comprised of sustained chords and pedal points. Although the accompaniment in this song could arguably be thought of as an interpretive feature of the song, or as participating in Fauré’s dramatic conception of the poetry, it does not do so in a way consistent with the piano parts of a

⁹⁵ Marc Monnier’s (1827–1885) poem directly references Venice and gondolas as well as several Venetian landmarks.

⁹⁶ Nectoux (1991, 70) suggests that Fauré’s choice of poems was “fairly disastrous.”

mature *mélodie*. Whatever interest the motive generates outside of its association with Viardot is earned through its ubiquitous presence and resemblance to water or the rocking motions of a gondola.

The accompaniments of “Les Matelots” and “Barcarolle” are fairly simple and more closely align with the tradition of the *romance*. Other songs from the same period (1870s), however, have accompaniments that participate in the dialogue of the song and work in tandem with the vocal line as interpretive elements. “Lydia” was composed in the same year as “Les Matelots” (1870), but has a much more sophisticated piano part (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6: Fauré, “Lydia,” More Sophisticated Piano Part

The image displays a musical score for Fauré's "Lydia". It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked "Andante." and the dynamics are "p". The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Ly - di - a sur tes". The piano accompaniment includes a "Ped." (pedal) marking and a "sempre dolce." instruction. A star symbol (*) is placed below the piano part. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "roses jon - es Et sur ton col frais et si blanc, Roule é" and shows further piano accompaniment with dynamic markings.

One important feature of Schubertian accompaniments – which heavily influence nineteenth century French art song and paved the way for the *mélodie* – is that the accompaniment had a close relationship to the vocal part (Noske 1970, 33). This is plainly evident in “Lydia.” After a short piano introduction, the voice enters and is doubled by the piano. The upper part of the piano right hand doubles the voice throughout the song. The difference between this accompaniment and earlier accompaniments is immediately clear: rather than simply providing harmonic support (as in earlier songs), the piano mirrors the voice (and all its chromatic inflections), thus participating in Fauré’s interpretive process by supporting the dramatic inflections of the voice. Additionally, by doubling the voice throughout, the piano provides a sense of melodic continuity (Nectoux 1991, 66).

The accompaniment serves an additional, perhaps more important, interpretive role by helping navigate the structure of the poem in a musical way. The first stanza has a run-on between the second and third lines (Example 4.7).⁹⁷ Fauré navigates this enjambment by continuing the melody in the piano, but giving the voice a short rest. The effect is subtle, but allows Fauré to mirror the small-scale structure of the poetry in the music. Such an effect would not be possible with a *romance*-style piano accompaniment; an accompaniment that complements and interacts with the voice, however, is an ideal solution for representing the more delicate aspects of the poem. Fauré repeats the music from the first two stanzas in Stanzas 3 and 4. In the second large formal section of the song (A’) – and the third stanza of poetry – the same melodic issue comes back. This time, however, the poetry does not demand a break in the vocal line (Example 4.8) The poetry in this instance does not require Fauré to do any fancy compositional work; he can simply continue the melody line in both the voice and the piano.

⁹⁷ Run-on, or enjambment, is defined as incomplete syntax at the end of a line; the meaning runs over from one line to the next without terminal punctuation.

Example 4.7: Fauré, “Lydia,” Stanza 1 and Music⁹⁸

Lydia sur tes roses joues
Et sur ton col frais et si blanc,
Roule étincelant¹
L’or fluide que tu dénoues;

Lydia on your rosy cheeks
And on your neck so cool and white,
Rolls sparkling
The fluid gold that you give forth;

Example 4.8: Fauré, “Lydia,” Stanza 3 and Music⁹⁹

Un lys cahé répand sans cesse
Une Odeur divine en ton sein;
Les délices comme un essaim
Sortent de toi, jeune déesse.

A hidden lily ceaselessly exudes
A divine scent in your bosom;
Delights like a swarm
Emanate from you, young goddess.

⁹⁸ Translation from Meister 1980, 13.

⁹⁹ Translation from Meister 1980, 13–14

The image shows a musical score for the song "Lydia" by Gabriel Fauré. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Les dé. li - ces comme un essaim Sor. tent de toi, jeu. ne dé - es - se." The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment, written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). A blue rectangular box highlights the first measure of the vocal line and the corresponding piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent bass line with moving eighth and sixteenth notes.

An additional characteristic of the accompaniment to “Lydia” that can be seen above (Examples 4.7 and 4.8) is a bass line that is melodically (as well as harmonically) significant (Nectoux 1991, 66). The bass line functions as an independent line and often moves in contrary motion to the melody. The result of the active bass line, the close relationship between voice and piano, and Fauré’s clever use of the piano to musically represent the structure of the poem, is that both voice and piano contribute to the combined musical and poetic dialogue.

Fauré’s “Nell,” composed in the late 1870s and published in 1880, shares many characteristics with “Lydia;” both are based on poems by Leconte de Lisle and have accompaniments that interact with the vocal line and participate in poetic dialogue.¹⁰⁰ The piano part is comprised of almost continuous arpeggiated sixteenths (Example 4.9). The repeating arpeggios are, on the surface, not a novel characteristic. Closer inspection, however, reveals an intimate connection between the piano line and the voice. In addition to providing a harmonic basis and rhythmic flow, the piano occasionally doubles the melody (Example 4.10). The melodic doubling in “Nell” is much less pervasive than in “Lydia” and not as visually obvious,

¹⁰⁰ Meister (1980, 35) claims that “The piano part is strictly accompaniment except for two brief moments...Hidden within the sixteenth-note figure, however, one finds subtle little melodies throughout the piano part.” I think the “brief moments” (which I address below via my own view of the piece) are more significant than Meister seems to imply; the “subtle little melodies” create connections between the voice and piano that make the latter something more than strictly accompaniment.

but serves a similar purpose. By weaving the accompaniment with the voice, allowing it to alternate between supportive and primary roles, Fauré creates a connection between both parts and elevates the importance of the piano.

Example 4.9: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment

The musical score for Example 4.9 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line and the first two staves of the piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest followed by the lyrics "Ta ro - se de pour - pre à ton". The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "clair so - leil, Ô Juin, é - tin - cel - le en - i -". The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. The instruction *sempre legato* is written above the piano accompaniment.

Example 4.10: Fauré, “Nell,” Piano Doubling Voice

The musical score for Example 4.10 shows the vocal line and the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand. Dashed lines indicate the piano doubling the vocal line.

In addition to supporting the vocal line and occasionally doubling the melody, the piano also interacts with the voice as a countermelody. Similar to the interaction between accompaniment and melody, Fauré blends countermelody patterns into the larger fabric of the accompaniment so that important figures seem to grow out of the ubiquitous wave-like sixteenths. In Example 4.11, the countermelody motive is in the box. The rising scalar passage in eighths flows from the accompaniment in the previous measure. The eighth-note motion stands out from the surrounding rhythmic activity and the rising line provides contrary motion to the end of the phrase in the voice.

Example 4.11: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Countermelody

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's "Nell". The top staff is the vocal line, marked *dolce*, with the lyrics "Que ta perle est douce au ciel en - fan - mé,". The piano accompaniment is shown in two staves below. A blue box highlights a countermelody motive in the right hand of the piano, which is a rising scalar passage in eighths. The piano accompaniment features a continuous wave-like pattern of sixteenth notes in both hands.

Example 4.12, which includes the original music and a reduction, shows how the rising countermelody soars gracefully into a higher register, thus setting it further apart from the accompaniment, to echo the voice melody in the previous measure. As the voice finishes its phrase, the piano repeats the melody from the previous measure (at a different pitch level), providing a brief but meaningful connection between the voice and the piano.

A similar countermelody line occurs earlier in the piece in a less obvious guise. In Example 4.13 the rising line is elaborated with downward stems and beams.

Example 4.12: Fauré, “Nell,” Echo Counter melody

19 *dolce*
 Que ta perle est dou - ce au ciel en - flam - mé,

The score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The second system shows the vocal line again, with an arrow pointing to a specific melodic phrase in the piano part that mirrors the vocal line.

Example 4.13: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Counter melody¹⁰¹

Ta rose de pourpre à ton clair soleil,
 Ô Juin, étincelle enivrée,
 Penche aussi vers moi ta coupe dorée:
 Mon coeur à ta rose est pareil.

Your purple rose in your bright sunlight,
 O June, sparkles drunkenly,
 Tilt towards me, too, your golden cup:
 My heart is like your rose.

(eni) -vré - - e Penche aus - si vers moi ta cou -

The score shows a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. A dashed line in the piano part indicates a counter-melody that follows the vocal line.

¹⁰¹ Poem translation from Meister 1980, 36.

The countermelody moves with each beat, rather than in eighths as before, and provides melodic interest below the Db5 retained in the voice. Additionally, this counter melody serves to bridge the gap between the second and third lines of the first stanza of poetry, thus providing a subtle but coherent musical connection between the first and second couplets of the poem.¹⁰² Fauré also uses the piano to make a similar connection between the first two stanzas of poetry (Example 4.14).

Example 4.14: Fauré, “Nell,” Accompaniment Connection between Stanzas 1 and 2

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's "Nell". It consists of three staves: a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line has lyrics "- reil." and "Sous le mol a - bri de la". A box labeled "St. 2" is placed above the vocal line at the beginning of the second stanza. The piano accompaniment features a consistent sixteenth-note pattern in the right hand and a more varied pattern in the left hand. The piano part includes markings for "pp" and "espress.".

In the measure immediately preceding the second stanza of poetry, Fauré breaks the consistent sixteenth note pattern for the first (but not the last) time and cascades a short melody from the right to the left hand of the piano, signaling the beginning of a new stanza of poetry in an effective and musical way.

The form of the song is AA'BA'' and each section of the form receives one stanza of poetry. The first two sections are in Gb major, Section B modulates through C minor, and Section A'' returns to Gb major (Nectoux 1991, 74). When Fauré breaks the persistent sixteenth-note pattern just before St. 2, he not only marks the beginning of a new stanza of poetry, but also the beginning of a new formal section. This instance of using the piano to make an important

¹⁰² After creating a musical connection between the first and second couplets of the poem, Fauré prolongs the G4 until beat four of the following measure. In fact, Fauré prolongs the figures in both the right and left hand of the piano, as well as the figure in the voice, one complete measure.

connection is more abrupt than the earlier example (Example 4.13 – between the first and second couplets of the first stanza), but the larger break is merited by poetic structure; moving between stanzas is a structural motion whereas between couplets is a more local level formal move.

The last point I would like to mention about the piano part in “Nell” is in regards to the bass line created by the left hand of the piano. As in “Lydia,” the bass line is quite melodic (Example 4.15).

Example 4.15: Fauré, “Nell,” Melodic Bass Line

The musical score for Fauré's "Nell" consists of three systems. Each system includes a vocal line in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The piano part features a continuous eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a similar eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand. The vocal line is in a soprano or alto range. The lyrics are: "Ta ro - se de pour - pre à ton clair so - leil, Ô Juin, é - tin - cel - le en - i - vré - - - e, Penche aus - si vers moi ta cou -". The piano part is marked *pp* and *sempre legato*. The score includes measure numbers 3, 5, and 6.

Example 4.15 is the first six measures of the song. Considering the first sixteenth note of each beat, a melodic line in the bass begins on Gb in m. 2 and descends by step a minor seventh to Ab in m. 3. Then, after leaping up a fifth to Eb in m. 4, the line again descends to Bb in m. 5, again by step. Fauré then reprises this cascading line from Gb in m. 10 with the arrival of the second stanza of poetry and Section A' of the song (refer back to Example 4.14). Additionally, it is interesting to note that in m. 6 (and other places throughout the song), Fauré writes an additional line that moves in counterpoint with the descending bass melody; the complimentary line in m. 6 moves in parallel sixths with the bass. At some points in the song, Fauré is more direct with his bass lines (Example 4.16).

Example 4.16: Fauré, “Nell,” More Obvious Bass Line

The musical score for Example 4.16 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 13 and 14, and the second system covers measures 15 and 16. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "- té; Plus d'un ra - mier chante au bois" in the first system, and "é - car - té, Ô mon cœur, sa plainte a - mou -" in the second system. Dynamic markings include *cresc.* in measures 13 and 14, *f* in measure 15, and *mf* in measure 16.

In measures 14–16 Fauré abandons the sixteenth note pattern in the left hand of the piano for the second and final time¹⁰³ to heavily emphasize a rising melody in the bass. The overall upward

¹⁰³ The first was in m. 9 – see Example 4.14. The final measure also does not have a constant sixteenth rhythm (Fauré rolls chords in the left hand); however, this is surely in the service of bringing the song to a close.

motion of the bass melody is contrary to the predominant downward motion in the voice. The bass melody in mm. 14–16 falls just two measures before the beginning of the third stanza of poetry (Section B in the song); roughly half way through the song. The break in the rhythmic activity of the accompaniment pattern and the rising bass melody thus signal an important point in the form of the music. Fauré indicates the beginning of something new – Section B and a modulation to C minor – without sacrificing the flow of the music or losing the sense of musical continuity and coherence.

Accompaniment – Duparc

Henri Duparc had a short-lived compositional career – he abandoned composition in 1885 due to the effects of a neurasthenic condition – but nonetheless produced some remarkable *mélodies* between the late 1860s and mid-1880s. Duparc wrote only seventeen songs prior to stepping away from composition (Noske 1970, 272). Because his song repertoire is so small, and because he produced it over a relatively short period of his life, the characteristics of his style are more concentrated than those of Fauré. Fauré wrote many songs over a much longer period of time; thus, his style (or styles) developed gradually and changes are much less abrupt than we see with Duparc.¹⁰⁴ Generally speaking, Duparc had more developed melodic lines (due in large part to his penchant for converting his text to prose, thus abandoning the square structure of his predecessors), very individual accompaniments, and unexpected (versus Fauré’s more fluid) harmonies. From the standpoint of melodic style and interpretation, Duparc was more influential to the later generation – most notably Debussy – than Fauré.

“L’Invitation au Voyage” was published in 1870 and clearly reaches beyond the *romance*

¹⁰⁴ Frits Noske (1970, 272–94), in his tome on French song, frequently couches his discussion of Duparc in terms of a comparison with Fauré.

and into the world of the *mélodie* (Nectoux 1991, 66).¹⁰⁵ Example 4.17 is the text and translation of the poem (by Charles Baudelaire).

Example 4.17: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Text and Translation¹⁰⁶

Mon enfant, ma soeur, Songe à la douceur D’aller là-bas vivre ensemble, Aimer à loisir, Aimer et mourir Au pays qui te ressemble! Les soleils mouillés De ces ceils brouillés Pour mon spirit ont les charmes Si mystérieux De tes traîtres yeux, Brillant à travers leurs larmes	My child, my sister, Think of the sweetness To go down there to live there together To love in leisure To love and die In the land that resembles you! The damp suns Of these clouded skies For my spirit have the charms So mysterious Of your treacherous eyes, Shining through their tears.	} A
Là, tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté, Lux, calme et volupté.	There, all is order and beauty, Luxury, calm, and sensuality.	
Vois sur ces canaux Dormir ces vaisseaux Don’t l’humeur est vagabonde; C’est pour assouvir Ton moindre désir Qu’ils viennent le bout du monde. Les soleils couchants Revêtent les champs, Les canaux, la ville entiere, D’hyacinthe et d’or; Le monde s’endort Dans une chaud lumière!	See on these canals The sleeping boats Whose nature is to wander; It is to satisfy Your slightest desire That they come from the ends of the world. The setting suns Once again clothe the fields, The canals, the whole town, In hyacinth and gold; The world sleeps In a warm light!	} A’ } B
Là, tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté, Lux, calme et volupté.	There, all is order and beauty, Luxury, calm, and sensuality.	

The song is in bar form (AA’B); the first stanza of poetry comprises the first A section and the second stanza is split between Sections A’ and B. Musically, Section B is clearly marked by a change in texture and accompaniment pattern. A refrain occurs at then end of the first A section and then again as a postlude at the end of Section B.

¹⁰⁵ Nectoux also suggests that this song was influential for Fauré, introducing him to the poetry of Baudelaire and showing that the *mélodie* could be conceived on grand scale.

¹⁰⁶ Translation from Meister 1980, 250–51.

Duparc intimately associates the accompaniment of the song with the poetry and melodic line in two particular places. Shortly into Section A, Duparc introduces a lovely vocal melody in C minor (the home key) over the text “Aimer à loisir, Aimer et mourir” [To love in leisure, To love and die] and an active accompaniment that is frequently present throughout the song (Example 4.18).

Example 4.18: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Melody in Voice

The image shows a musical score for the song "L'Invitation au Voyage" by Frédéric Chopin. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows a vocal melody in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The lyrics are: "ble, Aimer à loisir, Aimer et mourir". The second system continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment, with lyrics: "Au pays qui te res-". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active pattern in the left hand. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4.

Towards the end of the song, over the text “C’est pour assouvir, Ton moindre désir” [It is to satisfy, Your slightest desire], Duparc reprises the melody, but in the piano left hand. In Example 4.19, the melody in the left hand of the piano (in brackets) is especially prominent because it stands out against the much more rhythmically active accompaniment in the right hand.

Example 4.19: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Reprise of Vocal Melody in Piano

The musical score for Example 4.19 consists of two staves. The upper staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics: "C'est pour as - sou - vir Ton moin - dre dé - sir Qu'ils vien -". The lower staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part features a dense texture of sixteenth-note chords. Dynamics include *più f* at the beginning, *Cresc. molto* at the end of the phrase, and *Expressif* written below the piano staff.

By restating the melody in this way Duparc gives the piano an interpretive role and conveys the meaning from the original presentation in the voice in a less direct but equally effect manner.

Duparc brings back a portion of the same melody in the final refrain of the song (Example 4.20).

Example 4.20: Duparc, “L’Invitation au Voyage,” Second Reprise of Vocal Melody in Piano

The musical score for Example 4.20 consists of two staves. The upper staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics: "Là, tout n'est qu'ordre". The lower staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part features a dense texture of sixteenth-note chords. Dynamics include *pp* at the beginning and *Cantabile* written above the piano staff. A bracketed section in the piano part shows a melodic fragment in treble clef with a dynamic of *mf*.

The third presentation only includes the first half of the melody, but the fragment is clearly recognizable. By first establishing the melody in the voice and then transferring the same melody (or a portion of the melody) into the piano, Duparc creates a connection between voice and piano parts. Additionally, by placing the melody in three different sections of the song Duparc provides a connection between both stanzas and the refrain as well as between all three formal sections of the song. Duparc’s reuse and distribution of this simple melody places greater prominence on the

piano an interpretive element; it participates in the dialogue of the poetry and creates a valuable music connection in the song, rather than being simply an accompaniment to the voice (as would have been the case in the earlier *romance*).

Duparc wrote “Phidylé” in 1882, relatively late in his compositional career. The original poem by Leconte de Lisle is in ten stanzas; Duparc set the first three and the last. Additionally, he used a portion of the second stanza as a refrain (Example 4.21).

Example 4.21: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Duparc’s Text and Translation¹⁰⁷

L’herbe est molle au sommeil sous les frais peupliers, Aux pentes des sources moussues Qui, dans les prés en fleur germant par mille issues, Se perdent sous les noirs halliers.	The grass is soft for sleep beneath the cool poplars, On the banks of the mossy springs That flow in flowering meadows from a thousand sources, And vanish beneath dark thickets.
Repose, ô Phidylé! Midi sur les feuillages Rayonne, et t’invite au sommeil. Par le trèfle et le thym, seules, en plein soleil, Changent les abeilles volages.	Rest, O Phidylé! Noon on the leaves Is gleaming, inviting you to sleep. By the clover and thyme, alone, in the bright sunlight, The fickle bees are humming
Un chaud parfum circule au détour des sentiers; La rouge fleur des blés s’incline; Et les oiseaux, rasant de l’aile la colline, Cherchent l’ombre des églantiers.	A warm fragrance floats about the winding paths, The red flowers of the cornfield droop; And the birds, skimming the hillside with their wings, Seek the shade of the eglantine.
Repose, ô Phidylé!	Rest, O Phidylé!
Mais quant l’Astre, incliné sur sa courbe éclatante, Verra ses ardeurs s’apaiser, Que ton plus beau sourire et ton meilleur baiser Me récompensent de l’attente!	But when the sun, low on its dazzling curve, Sees its brilliance wane, Let your loveliest smile and finest kiss Reward me for my waiting.

Each stanza of poetry is reflected by a different accompaniment pattern. Additionally, the first three stanzas of poetry represent different key areas (Ab, F, and G); Duparc returns to the home key during the refrain (between the third and fourth stanzas of the song) and remains there for the rest of the song. The piano part assumes an important role during the first line of the second stanza of the poem (Example 4.22). The second stanza begins with the text “Repose, ô Phidylé”

¹⁰⁷ Translation from Johnson 2000, 147.

[Rest, o Phidylé]. Just after “Phidylé,” Duparc places two measures of rest in the voice, perhaps to emphasize the text (“rest”).

Example 4.22: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano melody

Repose, ô Phidylé! Midi sur les feuillages
Rayonne, et t’invite au sommeil.
Par le trèfle et le thym, seules, en plein soleil,
Changent les abeilles volages.

Rest, O Phidylé! Noon on the leaves
Is gleaming, inviting you to sleep.
By the clover and thyme, alone, in the bright sunlight,
The fickle bees are humming

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system (measures 13-16) shows the vocal line starting with a rest, then singing "(Repose) ô Phidy lé." The piano accompaniment begins with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 17-18) shows the vocal line singing "Mi di sur les feuil - la - ges Ray - onne et t'in -". The piano accompaniment continues with the same melodic and bass lines. The third system (measures 19-20) shows the vocal line singing "vite au som - meil". The piano accompaniment concludes with the same melodic and bass lines. Measure numbers 13, 17, and 19 are indicated in boxes.

During the two measures of silence in the voice, the piano takes up a brief lyrical melody (in brackets in Example 4.22) that begins on D5 and oscillates between C5 and E5 before quickly descending to G4. This facilitates a poetic pause – which the poetry clearly calls for – without a musical pause. By placing a melody in the right hand of the piano, Duparc simultaneously continues the momentum of the song and satisfies the demands of the poetry. Following this brief moment of prominence, the piano returns to playing a more strictly accompanying role. Then, as the voice wraps up its second line of text “Rayonne et t’invite au sommeil” [Is gleaming, inviting you to sleep] in mm. 17–20, the piano (beginning in m. 19) soars over the voice in contrary motion, eventually reprising a transposed form of melody from m. 14 in m. 20 (with a smaller alteration in the first two pitches). This soaring melody leads to a brief piano interlude, with a change in key and accompaniment pattern (not shown in Example 4.22), which ushers in the next line of text.

The same melody returns in two additional places in the song. The first is during the refrain that comes before the last stanza of poetry (Example 4.23). The refrain is comprised entirely of the text “Repose, ô Phidylé;” Duparc repeats the text taken from the first half of St. 2, line 1 three times throughout the refrain. Much like the first time the text occurred (as in Example 4.22), in the first statement of the text in the refrain Duparc uses the piano melody (transposed to begin on F) to bridge the gap between “...Phidylé” and the next line of text. Curiously, subsequent statements (the second and third) of the same text in the refrain are not followed by the piano melody.

The melody returns, in part with some alterations, twice near the end of the song (Example 4.24). The first presentation in mm. 68–69 begins on a Bb; the eighth notes on beat four of m. 68 are displaced by an octave.

Example 4.23: Duparc, "Phidylé," Piano Melody during Refrain

très doux 1^o Tempo
Re - po - - - se,
1^o Tempo
pp
cantabile
ô Phidy lé,
poco riten.
Re-po - - - se, ô Phidy -
poco riten.

Example 4.24: Duparc, "Phidylé," Piano Melody at End of Song

68 *f* *poco a poco dim.*

The figure then repeats in mm. 70–71, this time all within the same octave but at a different pitch level. Measure 73 includes an additional fragment of the melody (under the bracket); despite being incomplete, the figure – having just occurred twice – is identifiable as relating to the complete motive. Each time the melody occurs throughout the song it is associated with the text “Repose, ô Phidylé.” When the melody returns in the final measures of the song (now separated from the text), it leaves the listener with a subtle connection to the text, particularly the titular character of the poem – Phidylé. The final reference to the melody elevates (or rather confirms) the importance of the piano by charging it with finishing the dialogue of the poem. The text is finished, but Duparc lets the voice of the poet linger and eventually dissipate in the coda via the

piano. An additional feature of the melody in the instrumental coda is that it serves as a reminiscence of earlier connections made between the voice and piano.

I would like to mention one other interesting aspect of the piano part in “Phidylé” that unifies it with the voice.¹⁰⁸ Duparc creates a very straightforward, though brief, connection between the piano part and the voice in mm. 58–59 (Example 4.25)

Example 4.25: Duparc, “Phidylé,” Piano Echo of Voice Melody

The image displays a musical score for Example 4.25, titled "Duparc, 'Phidylé,' Piano Echo of Voice Melody". It consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, with lyrics "né sur sa courbe é cla". The second staff is the piano accompaniment for measure 58, featuring a very active piano part with a dense texture of chords and moving lines. The third staff is a vocal line with lyrics "- tan - - - - te, Ver - -". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment for measure 59, starting with a piano dynamic of *meno f* and a *cresc.* marking. A large black arrow points from the vocal line in measure 58 down to the piano part in measure 59, highlighting the piano's echo of the vocal melody. The piano part in measure 59 begins with a direct repeat on the fourth beat of the measure and then continues to ascend.

The text for the passage is the first two lines of the fourth stanza: “Mais quand l’Astre, incliné sur sa courbe éclatante, Verra ses ardeurs s’apaiser” [But when the sun, low on its dazzling curve, Sees its brilliance wane]. In m. 58 the voice has a rising melody over the very active piano. The melody descends on beat four and then stretches out to finish the word “éclatante” in m. 59. While the voice is holding out its Eb5 in m. 59, the piano echoes the vocal melody from m. 58. The piano breaks from a direct repeat on the fourth beat of m. 59 to continue to ascend.

¹⁰⁸ There are other notable aspects of the piano accompaniment for “Phidylé” that I have not mentioned. I have elected not to discuss them because they are less relevant than those that I have addressed.

The voice part, with its quick descent at the end of m. 58 seems to imitate the curve (*courbe*) mentioned in the text; the piano (in m. 59), although it does not descend, mimics the voice to prolong the meaning conveyed and atmosphere created by the voice. For these two measures the voice and piano part work together to mirror the text; thus, all three elements contribute equally to the drama of the poetry and help convey the atmosphere suggested in the poem.

The piano parts of songs on the frontlines of the *mélodie* in the 1870s and 1880s were inherently much more than support for the voice. They did, of course, function as accompaniments for the vocal line; however, compared with earlier genres and the early days of the *mélodie*, they were so much more. *Romance* accompaniments tended to either set up repetitive patterns or double the voice more homophonically. *Mélodie* accompaniments drew on both precedents (often simultaneously) but also developed a motivic vocabulary in dialogue with the vocal line; composers deftly intertwined piano lines within the larger texture to create important connections between the voice, piano, and poetry. The result was a piano part that participated in the composer's conception, interpretation, and representation of the poem; the piano joined in the dialogue and unfolding of the poetic conception, emphasized important points in the music, provided solutions to problems created when conveying poetic subtleties via a different medium (music), and at times hinted at meaning that could only (or perhaps most appropriately) be indirectly suggested. This magnificent new capacity of the piano clearly set the *mélodie* apart from the *romance* and encouraged a greater degree of complexity and sophistication in French art song than had hitherto been seen. Composers responded to this new resource *avec enthousiasme*, producing a great volume of works that solidified the *mélodie* as the premier genre of French song in the late nineteenth century.

Melody

With the *mélodie*, perhaps more than in previous genres, text and melody were on equal footing; composers had to find a delicate, but equal, balance between their melodies and the poetry.¹⁰⁹ Toward the end of the nineteenth century, French composers – following the lead of contemporary poets – became increasingly interested in capturing the likeness of spoken French in their melodies.¹¹⁰ This ultimately led to a rather striking change in the character of the melody lines in late-century *mélodies*; melodic lines essentially had “less to say” as the French accent rose in prominence (Bergeron 2010, xi). Examining the character of melodic lines can be a fruitful way of tracing the evolution of the *mélodie* from the *romance* into maturity. Tracing such an evolution is not my goal; rather, I focus on the character of vocal lines as they are represented in the *mélodie* prior to the large-scale language reforms of the 1880s.¹¹¹

In the 1870s, Fauré was still writing many of his songs in strophic form, resulting in less interesting and subdued melodies in order to create balanced phrases (Noske 1970, 260). Sometimes the melody would be altered from one strophe to another to fit the different text, but it was basically the same. Melodic variety was limited. This is apparent in “Barcarolle,” where the only significant feature of the melody is a single rhythmic motive (refer back to Example 4.5). “Lydia” (Examples 4.6–8) also has limited melodic variety; the third and fourth stanzas are repetitions of the first and second stanzas. Although the melody is more compelling than in

¹⁰⁹ “With the development of the *mélodie*, the text was no longer a secondary support, with little or no effect on the music. To achieve success, a composer had to effect a marriage between the melodic line and the poetry” (Nectoux 1991, 68). In other words, text and melody could not come about in isolation. Given a text, composers had to craft melodies that not only carried the text, but more importantly complimented the text and helped convey the meaning or atmosphere it suggested.

¹¹⁰ Rameau and Lully (among others) had attempted something to this effect in earlier times; however, composers in the late nineteenth century were doing it to a greater degree.

¹¹¹ In 1882 the French government passed a series of laws that attempted to regularize the French accent, essentially banning all local regional dialects in schools in favor of a standardized, more academic, accent. Many were unhappy about such laws. For more information, see Bergeron 2010, Chapters 2–3.

“Barcarolle,” interest within the song itself is somewhat limited since the melody is repeated with only minor alterations in the second half of the song (for the sake of the text). The vocal line in “Lydia” encompasses only an octave (from F4 to F5) and is fairly conjunct; however, there are a few rather expressive moments (Example 4.26).

Example 4.26: Fauré, “Lydia,” Melodic Tritone

A

B

The melody begins with an ascent from F4 to B4 in mm. 3–4, outlining a melodic tritone. This can be easily (and convincingly) explained as a Schenkerian *Anstieg* (see Example 4.26-B) that begins on the tonic (F4) in m. 3 and ascends through the B4 in mm. 4–5 to arrive at the *Kopfton*

(C5) in m. 6. The initial B4 that serves as the upper border of the melodic tritone is an unsuccessful first attempt to reach C5 in m. 6; locally, it is as an upper neighbor. Subsequent B naturals in m. 5 provide further and more appropriate motion upward toward the *Kopfton*.¹¹²

An additional moment of expressive interest occurs in mm. 16-17 (and analogously mm. 34–35). Fauré breaks the pace of the melody by introducing triplets and some modal alterations (Example. 4.27)

Example 4.27: Fauré, “Lydia,” Triplets and Melodic Alterations

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's "Lydia". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Laisse tes baisers tes bai_sers, de_ colom - be Chanter sur ta lèvre en fleur,". The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. The score includes triplets in both parts, indicated by a '3' and a bracket. The piano part has a measure number '16' and a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) in the final measure. The word 'dolce.' is written above the vocal line.

The triplets occur over the text “Laisse tes baisers (tes baisers), de colombe” [Let your dove-like kisses]. The sudden rhythmic flourish in the melody corresponds to the dove reference. The altered tones (Eb5 and Db5) in m. 17 over the text “Chanter sur ta lèvre en fleur” [Sing on your flowering lips] help highlight an expressive moment in the poem and occur about half way

¹¹² Allen Forte (1959, 16–18) takes issue with the concept of the Schenkerian *Ansteig* in his article “Schenker’s Conception of Musical Structure,” citing it as a deficiency in the Schenkerian system arising from Schenker’s failure to define the concept with sufficient rigor. One particularly compelling aspect of his discussion is the characteristics of “space-opening motion” that define an ascent to scale degree 3 versus one to scale degree 5. Forte contends that, in the major mode, an opening ascent to ^5 necessarily includes a chromatically raised ^4. This is because ^4 serves as connective tissue to the final tone and, if left unaltered, the half step between ^4 and ^3 urges ^4 to relate downward. Thus, a raised ^4 reorients the ascent so that the half-step drive is upward toward ^5. This is, of course, not an issue in the minor mode where the distances between ^3-^4 and ^4-^5 are both major seconds and there is no obstacle to block an ascending connection between ^4 and ^5.

through the song.¹¹³ The aforementioned inflections from the minor mode have a clearer relationship to the text when they return in the second half of the song (Example 4.28)

Example 4.28: Fauré, “Lydia,” Repetition of Minor Mode Inflections

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's "Lydia". It consists of a vocal line (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom two staves). The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is marked "dolce." at the beginning. There are triplets in both parts. The piano part has a "riten." marking and a "p" (piano) dynamic marking. The lyrics are: "O Lydi-a, rends-moi — la vi - e, Que je puis-se mourir, mou-rir tou-".

When Eb4 and Db4 return in m. 35, they support the text “Que je puisse mourir...” [That I may die...]. Fauré makes the reference to death quite clear by darkening the character of the melody with references to the minor mode.

“Après un Rêve” has a more elaborate vocal line; Bergeron (2010, xi) describes the song as “lush” compared with later developments. The tessitura of the song is quite large, ranging from C4 to F5, and the contour of the melody provides some expressive challenges for the vocalist. The melody line is generally flowing and conjunct, often in triplets juxtaposed with straight eighths in the piano (Example 4.29). The general character of the melody for the song is evident in Example 4.29. It is mostly conjunct and in a modest range; the frequent triplets give the melody a flowing character that is especially effective when considered against the duple divisions of the piano. There are, however, points in the music (such as that circled in the above example) in which Fauré contrasts the predominant conjunct flow with more jagged, often abrupt, leaps. In Example 4.29, Fauré writes a series of leaps (circled in the example) – one as

¹¹³ Excluding the two bars of introduction and the four bars after the textual close, the song is thirty-five measures long; thus, m. 17 is as close to the middle of the song as is possible without splitting measures.

large as a minor sixth – consecutively in a rather brisk rhythm. This sudden moment of melodic contrast initiates the second line of the first stanza of text; one could also surmise that the sudden but short-lived moment helps emphasize the text “Je rêvais...” [I dream].¹¹⁴

Example 4.29: Fauré, “Après un Rêve,” Character of Melody

Fauré writes an even more pronounced betrayal of the dreamy flow of the melody at the climax of the song in mm. 30–31 (Example 4.30). The climax of the song is initiated by the beginning of the third stanza of text: “Hélas! Hélas! Triste réveil des songes” [Alas! Alas! Sad awakening from dreams]. There is neither a clear musical break leading into the third stanza nor is there a poetic break; the final line of the second stanza is not punctuated with a full stop.

¹¹⁴ The same melodic figure occurs with the beginning of Stanza 2, Line 2 (A' in the form of the song) over the text “Pour m'enfuir...” [to run away...], which also suggests tenable textual connection.

Example 4.30: Fauré, “Après un Rêve,” Climax

The image shows a musical score for the climax of Fauré's "Après un Rêve". It consists of two systems of staves. The top system is for the voice, with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is jagged, starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5 (the highest note). The lyrics under the voice line are: "vu - es, Hé - las! Hé - las, triste réveil des / - dt - re, Se - lo - ri - tro - to quell' amor gin". The bottom system is for the piano accompaniment, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature of two flats. It features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more sustained bass line in the left hand. A measure number "30" is written at the beginning of the piano part.

Instead the performers push straight through. Fauré signals the climax by writing the highest pitch (F5) in the voice of the song, which is only sung at this point, and the lowest note (C4), which after this passage is only is sung once more as the last note of the song. Additionally, the melody line at this point in the music is jagged and quite striking compared to the flowing atmosphere established prior to this point. Although the passage is brief, Fauré makes expert use of an interruption in the fluidity of the melody to express the intensity suggested by the poem at “Hélas!”¹¹⁵

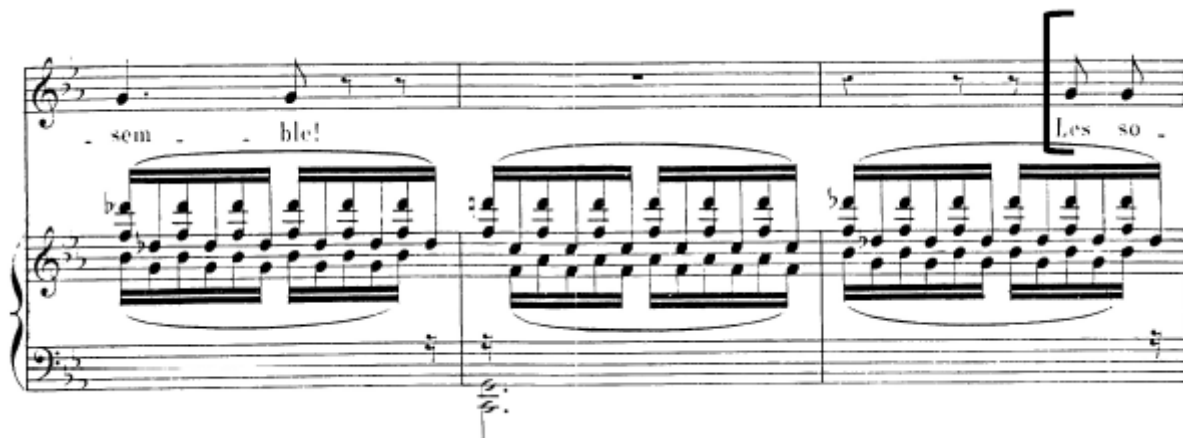
Many of Henri Duparc’s stylistic traits are similar to those of Fauré. Duparc, however, was much more adventurous in his melodic style. (In this way he and Debussy were much alike.) Concerning Duparc’s style in relation to Fauré, Noske (1970) writes “This similarity [that between Duparc’s “Sérénade” and Fauré’s *mélodies*] does not deny Duparc’s personal spirit...” (273). Fauré’s phrase structure tends to follow that of the verse whereas Duparc often converted his poems into prose, thus creating fewer “square” phrases and demanding special attention to prosody (281). Additionally, Duparc’s melodies are generally more ample than those of Fauré.

¹¹⁵ It is also worth noting that the melody is all the more pronounced because the supporting piano part is fairly unremarkable. The eighth-note motions above a more sustained bass are ubiquitous throughout the song.

Fauré’s melodic lines are generally restrained, balanced, and inoffensive but Duparc’s melodies are intense, expressive, and replete with augmented intervals (Tunely, Noske). Duparc and Fauré both favored augmented intervals, notably the tritone, but took different paths in applying them in their songs; Fauré tends to be more formulaic – as in his frequent use of a rising melodic figure spanning the distance of a tritone (often cited as the “Fauré” tritone) – while the augmented figures in Duparc’s songs stem naturally from his emotional interpretation of the poetry (Noske 1970, 282). Despite having a relatively limited output of songs (only seventeen), Duparc made a considerable contribution to the genre via his melodic vocal writing.¹¹⁶

Two examples that illustrate the expression embedded in Duparc’s melodic style – especially when juxtaposed with that of Fauré – come from his “L’invitation au voyage” (1870). In the first stanza of poetry, over the text “Les soleils mouillés, De ces ciels brouillés [The damp suns, of these hazy skies], Duparc writes an ascending melody that is far from formulaic (Example 4.31)

Example 4.31: Duparc, “L’invitation au voyage,” Characteristic Melody



¹¹⁶ David Tunely and Frits Noske, in their entry on Duparc for Grove Music Online, claim that Duparc composed only thirteen songs. In his earlier, and much more comprehensive, book on French song, Noske suggests seventeen. This is perhaps because Duparc destroyed much of his music, including some *mélodies*. Duparc was not always completely successful in destroying every copy of a given work – portions of his *Cinq mélodies*, for instance – and the rarity of some songs has lead scholars to largely consider them to be lost (Noske 1970, 272).

The melody, which is stated and then immediately repeated, spans a major sixth but includes a very prominent tritone from Ab-D. One of the most striking and expressive aspects of this melody is that the D does not resolve up by half step to Eb; instead, Duparc pushes upward to an E natural. Such a blatantly emphasized augmented fourth creates some expectations for listeners, namely that this rather strident interval will eventually get a half step resolution (to Eb). But, as if mirroring the veiled and undefined atmosphere conveyed by damp suns and hazy skies, such a resolution never occurs.

The sun is mentioned once again in the second stanza.¹¹⁷ Similar to the first instance, Duparc associates this reference with a linear tritone (Example 4.32). The melody in question

¹¹⁷ The second stanza in Duparc's song is the third stanza of the original poem; he only set the first and third stanzas of the original.

occurs just after a shift from compound duple meter to compound triple meter and tonally from C minor to A minor. The most expressive part of the melody, the tritone between G and C#, occurs over the text “Les soleil.” Unlike the earlier example in which Duparc frustrates expectations by not resolving the tritone, this passage clearly resolves by half step over the text “couchants.” This passage conveys a more direct and definable moment in the poem – the setting suns – and thus has a more direct and convincing resolution.

Example 4.32: Duparc, “L’invitation au voyage,” Second Melodic Tritone

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "de." and "Un peu plus vite" above it. A melodic tritone is highlighted with a bracket and the dynamic marking *mf*. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The bottom system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "leils" and "couchants" above it, and the piano accompaniment continues with similar patterns. The text "Re" is also visible in the vocal line.

Although the two passages represented in Examples 4.31 and 4.32 are notably different, they both contain two conspicuous similarities: clear melodic tritones in the voice and textual references to the sun. It is clear that Duparc is employing a striking and expressive melodic figure in association with a specific reference in the poem.

Duparc’s “Le Manoir de Rosamonde,” is based on the poem by Robert de Bonnières by the same title. This poem is darker than many of the poems I have addressed thus far (Example 4.33). The last stanza brings together the events described in the poem and reveals the fate of the

character in the poem. It also includes a particularly expressive melodic passage over the text “Et qu’ainsi je m’en fus mourir” [And thus I went off to my death].

Example 4.33: Duparc, “Le Manoir de Rosamonde,” Text and Translation¹¹⁸

De sa dent soudaine et vorace, Comme un chien l’amour m’a mordu... En suivant mon sang répandu, Va, Tu pourras suivre ma trace...	With its sudden and voracious teeth, Like a dog love has bitten me. If you follow my blood that was shed, You could easily find my trail.
Prends un cheval de bonne race, Pars, et suis mon chemin ardu, Fondrière ou sentier perdu, Si la course ne te harasse!	Take a horse of good breed, Go and follow my arduous road, Through pitfalls and lost trails, If the chase will not make you weary!
En passant par où j’ai passé, Tu verras que seul et blessé J’ai Parcouru ce triste monde.	Passing where I have passed, You will see that alone and wounded I have travelled over this sorrowful world.
Et qu’ainsi je m’en fus mourir Bien loin, bien lin, sans découvrir Le bleu manoir de Rosamonde.	And thus I went off to my death, Far, far away, without discovering The blue manor of Rosamonde.

In Example 4.34, in addition to reaching up to the highest note of the song (Ab5), Duparc combines two descending leaps of a third with a lovely ascending leap of a major sixth. The leap of a sixth brings new energy to the line by contrasting with the melodic motion established by the preceding descending Bb minor triad.

Example 4.34: Duparc, “Le Manoir de Rosamonde,” Expressive use of Larger Intervals

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line in G minor, with lyrics: "de, Et qu'ainsi je m'en fus mourir — Bien". A bracket highlights a melodic phrase starting on G4, descending to E4, then ascending to Ab5 (a major sixth), and finally descending to G5. The piano accompaniment is in the bottom two staves, featuring a rhythmic pattern of chords and dynamics like *cresc.* and *f*.

Duparc does not immediately reverse direction after the major sixth, but rather contrasts the large interval with a small one in the same direction (G5 to Ab5); the Ab5 then resolves by half step over the text “mourir” [death]. No single element of the melody is particularly novel, but the end

¹¹⁸ Translation adapted from Meister 1980, 258–59.

result is an especially expressive line that conveys the gravity of the text and serves as an effective climax.

In “Élégie” Duparc uses a prose version of Thomas Moore’s original poem on the death of Robert Emmet (Meister 1980, 266). Example 4.35 is the text and a translation.

Example 4.35: Duparc, “Élégie,” Text and Translation

Oh! Ne murmurez pas son nom!	Oh, do not whisper his name!
Qu’il dorme dans l’ombre,	Let him sleep in the shade,
Où froide et sans honneur repose sa dépouille.	Where cold and without glory lie his remains.
Muettes, tristes, glacées, tombent nos larmes,	Silent, sad and cold fall our tears,
Comme la rosée de la nuit,	Like the dew of the night,
Qui sur sa tête humecte la gazon;	Which over his head moistens the grass;
Mais la rosée de la nuit, bien quelle pleure,	But the dew of the night, though it weeps,
Qu’elle pleure en silence,	Though it weeps in silence,
Fera briller la verdure sur sa couche	Will make the verdure on his resting place shine,
Et nos larmes, en secret répandues,	And our tears, shed in secret,
Conserveront sa mémoire fraîche et vert	Will keep his memory fresh and green
Dans nos coeurs.	In our hearts.

The text is a touching ode and is ripe in potential for musical expression. Duparc sets the text to a very subdued melody, consistent with the elegiac nature of the poem, and conveys the somberness of the text through the use of minor intervals in the voice. In Example 4.36, Duparc uses two conspicuous minor thirds (boxed in the example) and several minor seconds (circled) that oscillate between scale degrees five and six (a characteristically expressive feature of the minor mode – in this case F minor).

Example 4.36: Duparc, “Élégie,” Focus on Minor Intervals in Opening Phrase



The image shows a musical score for a song in G minor, consisting of three systems of vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are:

mu rez pas son nom! qu'il dor me dans
 l'om bre, où froide et sans hon neur re
 po se sa dé pouil le. Mu

The piano accompaniment features a steady, descending bass line and a treble part with chords. The score includes dynamic markings such as *dimin.* and *poco più f*.

Furthermore, the piano part also includes some very conspicuous minor seconds: Ab-G, Gb-F, etc. Duparc uses half-step motions regularly throughout the remainder of the song and the melody is basically similar in character to the passage cited in Example 4.36: stepwise with a

narrow tessitura. Duparc does, however, contrast the stepwise somber melody for a brief moment with a melodic tritone in m. 34 (Example 4.37).

Example 4.37: Duparc, “Élégie,” Melodic Tritone

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower two staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor). The vocal line has lyrics: "pleure en silence, fera briller". A box highlights a melodic tritone in measure 34, which occurs between the notes F5 and B4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

The linear tritone falls between the lines “Pleure en silence” [Weeps in silence] and “Fera briller” [make shine], and although the interval is short-lived, it stands out against the overall character of the melody. This instance of a melodic tritone is a little more conventional than previously discussed examples because Duparc immediately (and expectedly) resolves the tritone by half step in the opposite direction. Furthermore, this tritone is not contained within a single phrase; rather, the F5 is the end of one phrase and the B4 is the beginning of a new phrase. So, this example of a melodic tritone is more a transition between phrases; however, because the two pitches are so close to each other in time, it is hard to discount the aural effect created, which fits with the often harsh mood of sadness and loss conveyed equally well by Moore’s poem and Duparc’s song.

Conclusion

The preceding summary of compositional parameters is by no means comprehensive. To provide a complete summary of the evolution and mature embodiment of the *mélodie* would be a different project, one that would require much more detail and would not be ancillary to my

central focus. Furthermore, there is already more than one detailed study on the genre. My goal in this chapter was to provide a suitable, if broad, representation of the genre and convey that there are some clear compositional approaches that manifested in middle to late nineteenth century that elevated French song beyond the conventions of the simple *romance* and produced an intricate new style of art song. Several small changes produced profound results and gave France a new genre and style of singing comparable to the German *Lied* in quality and artistic merit. Indeed, it was with the arrival and popularity of Schubert's songs to Paris, along with the rise of salon culture in the bourgeoisie and reforms in French dialect, that the *mélodie* truly matured.

Most notable among the compositional features that defined the *mélodie* are a more elaborate and interactive piano part, a consistency in poetic content and text setting, and a highly expressive and frequently disjunct melodic profile. Of course, composers addressed each parameter in their own individual ways. The piano part was perhaps the most important innovation of the mature *mélodie*. No longer did the piano strictly play an accompanimental role; rather, it was an independent, if frequently supportive, part that participated in the drama of the song. The piano worked alongside the melody to express the poetry, often in subtle ways that are not possible with the voice alone (for instance as in Examples 4.7 and 4.12, as well as others). Issues related to text and prosody – namely the freedom composers exercised when choosing and setting a text – are unified by their inconsistencies. Composers did not feel obliged to adopt texts as infallible objects; they freely altered and adapted them when designing their songs. This of course leads to an additional, if difficult to concisely define, consistency in *mélodie* composition: the art of interpreting poetic expression and subsequently translating that interpretation into music. In the *mélodie* in particular, as opposed to early song genres, the melodic parameter of

composition contributed greatly as an interpretive element and began to be treated on equal footing with text, rather than being used simply for word painting.

Perhaps most notable among my omissions is the harmonic aspect of the nineteenth-century *mélodie*. There are certainly some interesting harmonies and harmonic events, such as frequent use of augmented harmonies, remote and often opposing key areas, and frequent use of diatonic modes. The interesting aspects of harmony found throughout the repertoire of *mélodies* are more representative of French music of the time in general, rather than a defining element of the *mélodie*. Thus, although interesting and certainly an important part of the compositional process, harmony has less bearing in characterizing the *mélodie* than other compositional areas. I occasionally reference harmonic events, especially in regards to Debussy's songs, but I do so in an effort to explain more prominent aspects of individual songs. Having established some basic parameters for the *mélodie*, subsequent chapters examine the same parameters in Debussy's songs to show how he participated in the culture of the genre, to demonstrate the novel ways in which he addressed similar issues as Fauré and Duparc (and others), and to reveal how he carved his own path and pushed the genre forward in the 1880s.

CHAPTER 5

DEBUSSY WITHIN THE MILIEU OF THE FRENCH MÉLODIE

“J’aimerais toujours mieux une chose où, en quelque sorte, l’action sera sacrifiée à l’expression longuement poursuivie des sentiments de l’âme” [I would always prefer a subject where, in some way, the action would be sacrificed to the expression of the feelings of the soul examined at length¹¹⁹] (Dietschy 1962, 53). Debussy expressed this sentiment to Vasnier shortly after arriving in Rome in June 1885. The following year he expressed his desire to write music that was “supple enough...so that it could adapt itself to the lyric motions of the soul, to the whims of reverie” (Dietschy 1990, 44). Debussy made these comments after he had written the body of songs that constitute his early song repertoire; however, this aesthetic factored prominently in the conception of the early songs and is part of what makes Debussy’s songs such an important contribution to the *mélodie* in the late nineteenth century. Although Debussy expressed his sentiments verbally in 1885, he had already been cultivating and implementing them compositionally throughout the early 1880s.

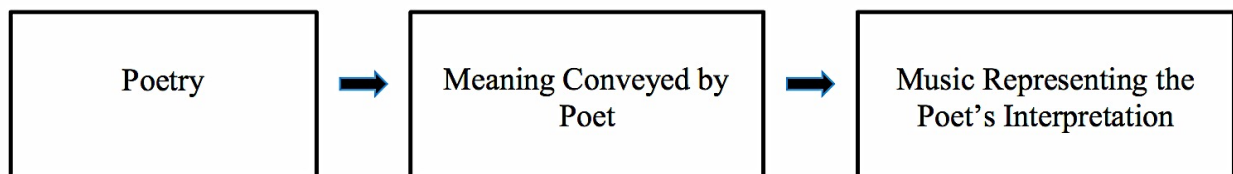
In addition to the subtle musical sensibilities, the early songs project into prominence Debussy’s highly developed, often profound, poetic sensibilities. Eric Jensen (2014, 134) notes that Debussy’s interpretation of the poetry was “a passionate combination of intellect and imagination” that was reflected in his music, and that many of Debussy’s songs are valuable both as a piece of music and an interpretation of the poetry. Debussy’s poetic inspiration is one thing that sets him so far apart from his contemporaries. No doubt, setting poetry to music is in itself an act of interpretation; but Debussy’s approach was entirely his own, one that not only

¹¹⁹ Translation by William Ashbrook and Margaret Cobb (Dietschy 1990, 44).

distinguished him from his contemporaries, but also fostered the development and sophistication of the *mélodie*.

Examining and reconstructing the interpretive process that composers of the *mélodie* followed when writing their songs can effectively demonstrate how Debussy began to push French art song in new directions. And as is the case with any music with words, one should start with the text. French composers before Debussy generally had a three-part interpretive process (Example 5.1).

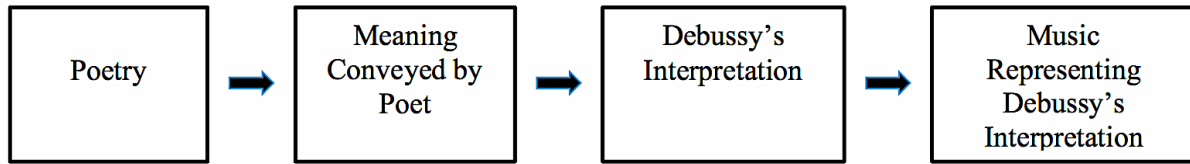
Example 5.1: Three-Part Interpretive Process



The first step for composers was to pick a text, not uncommonly a poem by Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, or a number of others. The composer would then spend some time with the poem – learn it, contemplate it, etc. – and develop the meaning that they thought the poets wished to convey. Although composers could potentially develop different viewpoints on the poetry, ultimately they sought to uncover and understand the poet’s intention. They would then use compositional devices of the time to write music that represented what they believed to be the poet’s intent.

Debussy’s approach was similar to that of his contemporaries, but he added an extra interpretive layer (Example 5.2). Debussy read the poetry, mulled it over, and considered the poet’s intention. He then – or more likely concurrently – developed his own interpretation, which may or may not have been the same as the poet’s intention; in any case, Debussy’s interpretation is more important musically than the poet’s interpretation. He would then set his own interpretation to music.

Example 5.2: Debussy's (Four-Part) Interpretive Process



In the early days he was using the same compositional devices as others, perhaps slightly expanded; as his style matured he began to use less common techniques.¹²⁰ It can be difficult to discern Debussy's interpretation of the poem but clues can be found in his biography – living situations, friends, colleagues, patrons, lovers, etc. – and in his treatment of text. The way he manipulates text and the musical features he uses to highlight certain parts of the text are usually quite telling; anything unusual usually reveals some aspect of Debussy's interpretation. Musical features that seem odd at first blush tend to become less odd when viewed within Debussy's take on the poetry. This way of looking at Debussy's songs roots him in the *melodie* tradition – via similar compositional devices to those of his contemporaries – but also shows how he pushed the genre towards greater sophistication.

This chapter is dedicated to situating Debussy within the milieu of the French *mélodie*, showing both how he participated in the culture as it was defined by his predecessors and how he was beginning to move beyond standard conventions. I address a selection of Debussy's songs focusing on the same parameters that I examined in Chapter 4: text, piano accompaniment, and vocal melody. Many of these features also factor prominently in the next chapter, which is dedicated to an exposition of the characteristic features of Debussy's early songs that qualify

¹²⁰ These compositional techniques include non-functional harmony, chord planing, the use of exotic scales and diatonic modes, etc. Such techniques tend to be the focus of most authors since they are essential defining elements of Debussy's mature compositional style.

them as a unified and identifiable repertoire within his larger œuvre and to a deeper examination of how Debussy advanced the genre of the *mélodie*.

Text

Altering the original text of a poem was a highly popular procedure among composers of the *mélodie* in the late-nineteenth century.¹²¹ Despite the fact that such alterations were fairly common, Debussy has received criticism for doing so. In his article comparing Debussy's two settings of Verlaine's "Clair de lune" (both are *mélodies* – the first from 1882 and the second from 1892), Roger Nichols (1967) faults Debussy for his treatment of the text. Nichols claims that Debussy was insensitive to the poetry in the 1882 setting because he altered the original poem by repeating two lines of text. Nichols attributes the repetition to a lack of compositional ability and suggests that, by repeating the text, Debussy was trying to establish a mood that he was otherwise unable to convey in his music (230). The later version of the song ranks higher in Nichols's opinion because he feels that Debussy has a "more responsible and sensitive attitude to the poetry" (231).

Paul Yates (2002) addresses Nichols's article in his study of the *Recueil Vasnier* and defends Debussy's compositional decisions. Yates notes that at the time Nichols was writing there were certain assumptions about how the text of a song should be treated. One assumption was that textual fidelity meant making as few changes as possible; another was that textual fidelity was an end in itself (202). This, however, doesn't seem to be the case since most of Debussy's contemporaries altered the original poems. If, as Nichols contended, textual fidelity is an important aspect of a song, and if fidelity means changing the original text as little as possible, then songs that are true to the text form a fairly small group. Nichols's view is quite

¹²¹ See Chapter 4, pgs. 61–65 for a description of popular textual alterations.

limiting and in many cases overlooks the interpretive aspect of setting the poems to music.

Therefore I would suggest that textual alterations are more an act of fidelity than strict adherence to the text. Composers were better able to convey the subtleties of the poem with a malleable text;¹²² it is my belief that the interpretive act is more important than a blind adherence to text, especially as poetry trended toward symbolism. Yates's defense aligns with my own thoughts and opens the door for more fruitful approaches to analyzing Debussy's early songs.

Debussy frequently altered the text of the original poetry when setting it to music, but – much in the tradition established by his contemporaries – the process by which he altered it varies from song to song. Sometimes he changed or omitted words (or whole stanzas) and he frequently repeated words, lines, and stanzas. In the following discussion I show several examples of instances where Debussy alters the text of a poem; however, I delay discussing the deeper significance of many musical features until the next chapter.

In “Fete Galante” (1882) we see a very basic form of textual alteration. Debussy changed some words in four separate lines of Théodore Banville's original. Example 5.3 shows Banville's original and Debussy's adaptations; the altered text is italicized. Line 2, Debussy changed the text to say “this evening” rather than “today; in Line 3, he removed the word “enchanted,” thus creating a smoother line; in Line 4, Debussy changed the scene from “in the moonlight” to “in the park;” and in Line 7, he altered the poem to “a million charming places.” As noted in Chapter 4, it was not uncommon for composers to change a word or two when setting a poem to music. Debussy's procedure here is perhaps more extreme, but nonetheless aligns him with his predecessors. “Fête Galante” serves as a clear example of how Debussy, like his contemporaries, felt free to adapt a poem when setting it to music.

¹²² This applies equally to composers wishing to convey the meaning of the poet and to those wishing to express their own interpretation.

Example 5.3: “Fête Galante,” Banville’s Original and Debussy’s Alterations¹²³

Banville

Voilà Sylvandre et Lycas et Myrtil
C'est aujourd'hui fête chez Cydalise.
Enchantant l'air de son parfum subtil;
Au clair de lune où tout s'idéalise
Avec la rose Aminthe rivalise.
Philis, Eglé, qui suivent leurs amants,
Cherchent l'ombrage *et les abris* charmants;
Dans le soleil qui s'irrite et qui joue,
Luttant d'orgueil avec les diamants,
Sur le chemin, le Paon blanc fait la roue.

There are Silvandred and Lycas and Myrtil
Today is a party at Cydalise's.
Enchanting the air with its subtle fragrance;
In the moonlight where everything is ideal
Aminthe rivals the rose.
Philis, Eglé, who follow their lovers,
Search among the shadows and charming shelter
In the bright sun that excites and plays about
Vying proudly with diamonds
Across their path the white peacock vaunts his plumage

Debussy

Voilà Sylvandre et Lycas et Myrtil
Car c'est ce soir fête chez Cydalise.
Partout dans l'air court un parfum subtil;
Dans le grand parc où tout s'idéalise
Avec la rose Aminthe rivalise.
Philis, Eglé, qui suivent leurs amants,
Cherchent l'ombrage *en mille endroit* charmants;
Dans le soleil qui s'irrite et qui joue,
Luttant d'orgueil avec les diamants,
Sur le chemin, le Paon blanc fait la roue.

There are Silvandred and Lycas and Myrtil
For this evening is a party at Cydalise's.
All about a subtle perfume fills the air;
In the great park where everything is ideal
Aminthe rivals the rose.
Philis, Eglé, who follow their lovers,
Search among the shadows in a thousand charming places
In the bright sun that excites and plays about
Vying proudly with diamonds
Across their path the white peacock vaunts his plumage

Stéphane Mallarmé wrote “Apparition” in the early 1860s; however, the poem wasn't published until years later, in the early 1880s, as a part of the collection *Premiers poèmes*. The atmosphere of the poem is notably dark; Meister (1980, 285) notes that the poem is one of Mallarmé's most important works and reflects the “demon of analogy” that many symbolist poets worked into their poems.¹²⁴ Indeed the overall atmosphere of the poem is a familiar one (Example 5.4). The poem is comprised of rhyming couplets – each with twelve syllables¹²⁵ – and is replete with expressive metaphors.

¹²³ This translation is mostly by James Briscoe. In instances – lines 2, 3, 4, 7 – where Debussy's text differs from Banville's, the translation is my own.

¹²⁴ “Demon of Analogy” is a prose poem written by Mallarmé in 1865. In it Mallarmé depicts a man wandering in the street saying “the penultimate is dead.” What Meister is alluding to in the connection she makes between the “Demon of Analogy” and “Apparition” is that the two works have a similar aesthetic and seem to conjure a similar atmosphere. Verlaine's poems “Clair de lune” and “En Sourdine” from 1869 have similar atmospheres and motives. For more information on the rich connections between symbolist poetry and French composers, see Varvir Coe 2016.

¹²⁵ In French poetry, the term for twelve-syllable iambic lines is “alexandrine.”

Example 5.4: “Apparition” – Text and Translation¹²⁶

La lune s’attristait. Des séraphins en pleurs
 Rêvant, l’archet aux doigts, dans le calme des fleurs
 Vaporeuses, tiraient de mourantes violes
 De blancs sanglots glissant sur l’azur des corolles.
 —C’était le jour béni de ton premier baiser.
 Ma songerie aimant à me martyriser
 S’enivrait savamment du parfum de tristesse
 Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse
 La cueillaison d’un Rêve au cœur qui l’a cueilli.
 J’errais donc, l’œil rivé sur le pavé vieilli,
 Quand avec du soleil aux cheveux, dans la rue
 Et dans le soir, tu m’es en riant apparue
 Et j’ai cru voir la fée au chapeau de clarté
 Qui jadis sur mes beaux sommeils d’enfant gâté
 Passait, laissant toujours de ses mains mal fermées
 Neiger de blancs bouquets d’étoiles parfumées.

The moon grew sad. Weeping seraphim
 Dreaming, bows in hand, in the calm of flowers
 Hazy, drew from dying violets
 White sobs that glided over the corollas’ blue.
 —It was the blessed day of your first kiss.
 My dreaming, glad to torment me,
 Intoxicated on the scent of sadness
 Even without regret and without vexation
 The gathering of a dream to the heart that gathered it.
 And so I wandered, my eyes fixed on the old paving stones,
 When with sunlight in your hair, in the street
 And in the evening, you appeared laughing before me
 And I thought I glimpsed the fairy with her halo of light
 Who once in my lovely dreams as a spoiled child
 Passed, letting fall from her half-closed hands
 Snow-white bouquets of fragrant stars.

“The moon grew sad,” “weeping seraphim,” “white sobs,” “scent of sadness” – the text appeals to the senses and sets up a surreal and somber atmosphere, expressively melancholic with a tender reflection. Debussy’s song by the same name (from 1884) is among the few early songs that have remained popular. Regarded by some as the most important of Debussy’s early songs (286), the work is as expressive as the original poem. Debussy remains true to the text except for the very end (Example 5.5).

Example 5.5: Debussy, “Apparition,” Repeated Text¹²⁷

The musical score for Example 5.5 shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and 3/4 time, with lyrics: "mé - es Nei - ger de blancs bou - quets d'é -". The piano accompaniment features a repeating eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*, *sim.*, *pp*, and *sf [p]*.

¹²⁶ Translation adapted from Debussy 1993, 1:17–18.

¹²⁷ See Appendix for the full song.

53
 toi les par - fu - mé - es, d'é - toi - - les par - fu -

56
 mé - es.

The last line of text, “Neiger de blancs bouquets d’étoiles parfumées” [Snow-white bouquets of fragrant stars] in mm. 50–54 is set to a rather subdued melody line. In order to bring the song to a more convincing, almost pensive, conclusion, Debussy repeats the last half of the line in mm. 54–57 (boxed in Example 5.5). Additionally, he sets the repeated text to a much more elaborate melody in the voice. Although the repeated text doesn’t have any formal or profoundly interpretive function, it is effective from an aesthetic point of view. Debussy reflects briefly on one of the more expressive metaphors from the poem and gives a final flourish in the voice to bring the song to a close. This sort of surface-level repetition of text – that is, one without any deeper structural or interpretive significance – very much aligns Debussy with the procedures of his predecessors.

Paul Verlaine’s “Pantomime” features characters from the *Commedia dell’arte* in an atmosphere that is poised on the edge of action. Example 5.6 is the text as it appears in

Debussy's song. The italicized lines are repetitions added by Debussy; they did not occur in Verlaine's original poem.

Example 5.6: "Pantomime," Text and Translation¹²⁸

Pierrot, qui n'a rien d'un Clitandre, Vide un flacon sans plus attendre, Et, pratique, entame un pâté. <i>Pierrot, qui n'a rien d'un Clitandre, Vide un flacon sans plus attendre.</i>	Pierrot, who is nothing like Clitandre, Empties a flask without further ado, And, being practical, cuts into a pastry. <i>Pierrot, who is nothing like Clitandre, Empties a flask without further ado.</i>
Cassandre, au fond de l'avenue, Verse une larme méconnue Sur son neveu déshérité.	Cassandre, at the end of the path, Sheds a unnoticed tear Over his disinherited nephew.
Ce faquin d'Arlequin combine L'enlèvement de Colombine Et pirouette quatre fois, <i>Et pirouette quatre fois.</i>	That rascal Harlequin schemes The kidnap of Columbine And whirls about four times, <i>And whirls about four times.</i>
Colombine rêve, surprise De sentir un coeur dans la brise Et d'entendre en son coeur des voix, <i>Et d'entendre en son coeur des voix.</i>	Columbine dreams, surprised To feel a heart in the breeze And hear voices in her heart, <i>And hear voices in her heart.</i>

Each stanza features a different character and a different mood. Pierrot casually eats and drinks, Cassandre laments the fate of his nephew, Harlequin plots to kidnap Columbine and jokingly twirls about, and Columbine dreams and seems forlorn. Debussy repeats some text in each stanza except for the second one. The most extensive change is in the first stanza. Debussy repeats the first two lines, extending the stanza and underscoring the casual behavior of Pierrot, and emphasizing the fact that Pierrot and Clitandre are nothing alike. Although there is a deeper significance to the textual repetitions (to be discussed in Chapter 6), the immediate effect is one of color and atmosphere. The repetitions in the third and fourth stanzas merely echo the last lines of each stanza, extending the poetry and allowing the final line to resonate more fully with the listener.

¹²⁸ Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:13–14). Translation of St. 1, Line 3 is my own.

“En Sourdine” (poem by Paul Verlaine) also includes a brief instance of textual repetition, the effect of which is very similar to Debussy’s textual alterations in “Pantomime.” Debussy seemed to have been fairly satisfied with Verlaine’s original; his only alteration was to repeat the last couplet of text (italicized in Example 5.7). The atmosphere of the poem is dark (literally and figuratively) and intimate, with a growing anticipation. The reader is drawn in over the first three stanzas, awaiting the denouement.

Example 5.7: Verlaine, “En Sourdine,” Text and Translation¹²⁹

Calmes dans le demi-jour Que les branches hautes font, Pénétrons bien notre amour De ce silence profond.	Calm in the half-light That the high branches make, Let us permeate our love With this deep silence.
Mêlons nos âmes, nos cœurs Et nos sens extasiés, Parmi les vagues languoureux Des pins et des arbousiers.	Let us blend our souls, our hearts And our enraptured senses Among the languorous waves Of the pines and strawberry trees.
Ferme tes yeux à demi, Croise tes bras sur ton sein, Et de ton cœur endormi Chasse à jamais tout dessein.	Half-close your eyes, Fold your arms on your breast, And from your sleeping heart Banish all care.
Laissons-nous persuader Au souffle berceur et doux Qui vient, à tes pieds, rider Les ondes des gazons roux.	Let us be drawn By the gentle and lulling breeze That comes to ruffle at your feet The waves of russet grass.
Et quand, solennel, le soir Des chênes noirs tombera Voix de notre désespoir, Le rossignol chantera, <i>Voix de notre désespoir, Le rossignol chantera.</i>	And when, solemnly, evening Falls from the black oaks, That voice of our despair, The nightingale shall sing, <i>That voice of our despair, The nightingale shall sing.</i>

Then, in the final stanza, Verlaine covertly reveals the fate of the characters; the desperate cry of the nightingale sings out their frustrated despair. To underscore the final outcome, Debussy repeats the last couplet. This could, of course, be for a number of reasons, but the immediate

¹²⁹ Translation adapted from Debussy 1993, 1:13–14.

effect is to allow the perhaps somewhat unexpected climax of the poem ring out, to let the despair resonate with the listener a little longer.

Musically, Debussy links the first statement of “Voix de...chantera” with the repetition (Example 5.8). The first statement of the text in mm. 42–45 moves through a series of predominant harmonies to rest on half-diminished seventh chord, creating a half cadence in m. 45. In mm. 46–49 Debussy preserves the contour of the first phrase but alters the melody so that it cadences on the tonic, thus providing a more satisfying and conclusive ending. Unsurprisingly, many of the harmonies have extensions. The surface-level purpose of the passage is clear and effective.

Example 5.8: Debussy, “En Sourdine,” Musical Connection Between Repeated Text¹³⁰

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Debussy's "En Sourdine". Each system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system (mm. 42-45) shows the text "Voix de notre désespoir, Le rossignol chantera." The vocal melody is marked with a slur over the first phrase and a fermata over the second. The piano accompaniment features chords labeled IV, ii, and vii°7. The second system (mm. 46-49) shows the same text repeated. The vocal melody is marked with a slur and a fermata. The piano accompaniment features chords labeled V^{b9}/V, V^{b9}, and I⁹_{b7}. The second system includes dynamic markings *pp* and a performance instruction *[morendo e ritenuto]*.

¹³⁰ See Appendix for full song.

Debussy repeats the text to extend the textual climax and allow the effects of the poetry to resonate with the listener. Furthermore, he links the phrases containing the text together by crafting them into a parallel continuous period that propels the music from the beginning of the first statement through the ending of the repeat. This not only extends the poetic climax, it allows Debussy ample time to bring the song to a conclusion without being overly curt. Debussy's alterations yield an effective conclusion that aligns with the procedures enacted by contemporary composers of nineteenth-century French art song.

Debussy's "Nuit d'étoiles" is based on Théodore Banville's original poem by the same name. Banville's poem is in four stanzas (Example 5.9).

Example 5.9: Banville, "Nuit d'étoiles," Text and Translation¹³¹

Nuit d'étoiles, sous tes voiles, Sous ta brise et tes parfums, Triste lyre qui soupire, Je rêve aux amours défunts.	Starry night, beneath your veils, Beneath your breeze and your perfumes, I am a sad lyre that is sighing, I dream of past loves.
La sereine mélancolie Vient éclore au fond de mon cœur, Et j'entends l'âme de ma mie Tressaillir dans le bois rêveur.	Quiet melancholy comes and breaks forth The depths of my heart, And I hear the soul of my love Tremble in the dreaming wood.
Dans les ombres de la feuillée Quand tout bas je soupier seul, Tu reviens, pauvre âme éveillée, Toute blanche dans ton linceuil.	In the leafy shadows When I sigh alone You return, poor awakened soul, All white in your shroud.
Je revois à notre fontaine Tes regards bleus comme les cieux; Cette rose, c'est ton haleine, Et ces étoiles sont tes yeux.	I again see in our fountain Your gaze, blue as the sky; This rose, it is your breath, And these stars are your eyes.

The poem is very melancholic. The title (starry night) suggests a setting or atmosphere in which the narrator reflects and longs for lost loves. The first and second stanzas are linked together and follow a single train of thought; the third and fourth stanzas are similarly linked. After

¹³¹ Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:7).

establishing the character and mood for the poem in the first stanza, Banville guides the reader through deeper reflection in the second stanza, culminating with a specific focus on a particular lost love. In the third stanza the speaker conjures a clearer conception of his past love, which returns to him as a ghostly figure. The fourth stanza elaborates on the narrator's lost love; he reflects fondly on his beloved's starry eyes and perfumed breath. The fourth stanza also links back to the first, reflecting the atmosphere (and title) of the poem.

Debussy makes several different textual alterations to Banville's original poem. First, he omits the third stanza entirely. This makes the conception of the lost love more abstract and less grim. By omitting the third stanza, Debussy removes the part of the poem that alludes to an actual reappearance of the lost love as a ghostly apparition. Without the third stanza we cannot be sure if the narrator is talking about a lover who has died or one that has spurned him or otherwise moved on with her romantic life.¹³² Instead of a direct physical reference to the lost love, we are left with a beautiful depiction of her features in the fourth stanza. The second way Debussy alters the original text is by using the first stanza as a refrain after the second and fourth stanzas. The resulting form of the song is a tidy rondo: ABACA. As previously mentioned, the first stanza is important for establishing the atmosphere of the poem. Returning to the opening stanza allows Debussy to continue to promote the atmosphere of the poem throughout the song; it also makes for an effective and melancholic ending. The third and final way Debussy deviates from Banville's original is by repeating the last line of the first stanza: "Je rêveaux amors défunts" [I dream of past loves]. He does this all three times the first stanza appears. This line represents the main action of the poem. The subject dreams of past loves in the first stanza; subsequently the following stanzas focus on the details of the narrator's reflection. This wistful

¹³² The allusion to the "soul of my love" in St. 2 could be suggestive of death, but it could also suggest that the narrator felt a very deep connection with his lost love.

alteration lets the last line of the stanza softly echo in the listener's mind each time it occurs and makes for a compelling and expressive end to the *mélodie*.

“Regret” (1884) was perhaps the last song the young Debussy gave to his muse (Marie Vasnier) before embarking for Rome to fulfill his obligations after winning the Prix. It is the last song in the *Recueil Vasnier* and was presented to Mme. Vasnier just before the composer left for Rome (Cobb 1982, 79). The tone of the song is quite somber and reflects the title of the poem (cognate in French and English). The original poem is by Paul Bourget (Example 5.10).

Example 5.10: Bourget, “Regret,” Text and Translation¹³³

Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé,
Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe,
Et mon regret fidèle aime et prolonge
Les heures où j'étais aimé.

Les astres brilleront dans la nuit noire;
Le soleil brillera dans le jour clair;
Quelque chose de toi flotte dans l'air,
Qui me pénètre la mémoire.

Quelque chose de toi qui fut à moi:
Car j'ai possédé ta douce pensée,
Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée,
Est encor tout entière à toi.

Under the summer sky, warm and calm,
I remember you as in a dream,
And my constant regret relishes and draws out,
The hours when I was loved.

The stars will shine in the black night;
The sun will shine in the clear day;
Something of you is suspended in the air,
That penetrates my memory.

Something of you that was mine:
For I possessed all of your thoughts,
And my soul, betrayed and forsaken,
Is still completely yours.

In the poem the narrator reflects fondly on a lost love; the narrator's memories seem foggy (“as in a dream”), but the feelings and emotions are still sharp in his mind. He reflects regretfully on the time he was loved and is distraught over losing his love. Debussy's interest in the poem given his situation with Vasnier is clear. Debussy made few changes to the poetry, but those he did make are effective.

The most conspicuous change Debussy made to the text is repeating the first couplet of text at the end of the song. By adding this refrain to the end of the song, Debussy softens the ending to the poem; “Under the summer sky, warm and calm, I remember you as in a dream” has

¹³³ Translation adapted from Cobb 1982, 91.

less dramatic weight than “And my soul, betrayed and forsaken, Is still completely yours.” A more significant purpose of the repeated text is to complete the form of the song. The form of the *mélodie* is rounded binary – A|BA’. Section A includes the first and second stanzas of poetry (the second stanza is mainly transitional), Section B is comprised of the third stanza. By repeating the beginning of the song following the third stanza Debussy rounds out the form. From an analytical standpoint, repeating the text at the end of the song also closes the structural framework of the song (Example 5.11).

Example 5.11: Bourget, “Regret,” Form and Deep Middleground Structure

MM:	1	4	11	15	18	19	23	25	29	30	31	33	34	35	37	40	41	44	46	47	49	50
Stanza:	1		2										3			Repeat						
	$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{\#4}$		$\hat{4}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$		$\hat{3}$	

The deepest structural motion is an upper neighbor motion in tenths in the outer voices. The *Urlinie* begins on scale degree 3, moves briefly through an altered (raised) scale degree 4,¹³⁴ to the primary neighbor of the line – the unaltered (diatonic) scale degree 4 in m. 35 – and then returns to scale degree 3 with the repeated passage in m. 40. The bass behaves similarly, moving from scale degree 1 in m. 1 to scale degree 2 in m. 31 (which supports both scale degrees #4 and 4), and then back to scale degree 1 in m. 40. Without the repeated music, the structural framework of the *mélodie* would be unfinished. Although Section A’ and the repeated text

¹³⁴ I examine the altered member of the *Urlinie* in more depth in Chapter 6 as it relates to characteristic and defining features of Debussy’s repertoire of early songs.

occupy only a small portion of the song, they serve an important purpose. By imbuing this section with such significance, Debussy further emphasizes the opening couplet and creates a lighter, more wistful atmosphere than Bourget's original.

The second, less obvious, textual alteration is an immediate repetition of the text "où j'étais aimé" [when I was loved] from the fourth line of St. 1 (mm. 17-18). In a song in which Debussy laments leaving both his love and the only city to which he was suited (Paris), the cause and effect of this immediate repetition of text seems clear: Debussy is reflecting, longing, yearning even, to stay in Paris with Marie. The extent to which Marie reciprocated the budding composer's affection is unclear; however, we can reasonably say that Debussy likely indulged himself in thinking that she had strong, even amorous, feelings for him. Thus, that he would long for the time he felt loved seems an appropriate reason to add a little extra emphasis to this text.

The poem "Clair de lune" was written by Paul Verlaine and is based on a juxtaposition of two simultaneous but contrasting feelings: an outward, admitted happiness; and an inward, unacknowledged sadness. This contrast can be seen in each of the three stanzas (Example 5.12).

Example 5.12: Verlaine, "Clair de lune," Text and Translation¹³⁵

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi tristes
Sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

Your soul is a choice landscape
Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go about
Playing the lute and dancing and are almost
Sad beneath their whimsical disguises.

While singing in the minor mode of
Love triumphant and of the good life,
They seem not to believe in their own happiness
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,

In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,
That makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob in ecstasy,
Those tall, slender fountains among the statues.

¹³⁵ Translation is mostly by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:15). The translation of St. 2, line 1 is my own.

The first stanza focuses on the masqueraders and bergamaskers who happily dance and play the lute; but on the inside, behind their whimsical masks, they are sad. On the surface they are happy but below the surface lays an unacknowledged sadness. The first two lines of Stanza 2 set up a somber and conflicting scene that more directly addresses the juxtaposition from the first stanza. The characters are singing about love and the good life – both presumably happy themes – but they are singing in the minor mode. The themes of their song are at odds with their delivery. The third line of the second stanza elaborates on the first two lines. They don't believe in their own happiness; despite claiming to be happy on the outside, their inner unacknowledged emotions suggest a latent sadness.

The primary focus of the poem comes at the end of the second stanza and beginning of the third. The last line of St. 2 first introduces the primary theme of the poem (moonlight) and absorbs the ambivalent feelings conveyed in the poem thus far: like smoke escaping from a chimney, the song of the characters – both outwardly happy and inwardly sad – blends and is lost in the moonlight. We discover in the first line of the third stanza that moonlight is perfectly representative, perhaps even the progenitor, of the character's conflicting feelings. It is both sad and beautiful and creates a perfect atmosphere for dreaming birds and sobbing fountains. Although Verlaine opens the poem by focusing on the masqueraders and bergamaskers, towards the end of the poem we realize that the actions of the characters are merely a preamble to the main subject: moonlight. Furthermore, we realize that the ambivalent feelings of the characters exposed in the beginning of the poem are a result of the somber influence of the pervading moonlight that encourages distant, almost lonely, happiness.

In "Clair de lune," Debussy alters the original poem by repeating two lines of text in two separate parts of the song. Debussy's alterations are italicized in Example 5.13. He immediately

repeats the last line of St. 2 and brings back the first line of St. 3 at the end of the song. The two repeated lines originally occur in separate stanzas but are otherwise consecutive (i.e. the last line of the second stanza flows into the first line of the third stanza).

Example 5.13: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Text, Translation, and Debussy’s Alterations

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi tristes
Sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Your soul is a choice landscape
Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go about
Playing the lute and dancing and are almost
Sad beneath their whimsical disguises.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L’amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n’ont pas l’air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

While singing in the minor mode of
Love triumphant and of the good life,
They seem not to believe in their own happiness
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d’extase les jets d’eau,
Les grands jets d’eau sveltes parmi les marbres.
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau.

In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,
That makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob in ecstasy,
Those tall, slender fountains among the statues,
In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful.

Furthermore, they are two of the most important lines in the entire poem; together they convey the mood of the poem and help establish the atmosphere in which all the characters exist and in which all the events take place. By immediately repeating the last line of Stanza 2, Debussy expands the section of the poem that directly references the primary subject of the work (*clair de lune* [moonlight]) and lingers on Verlaine’s compelling and vivid reference to song mixing with moonlight. Debussy’s reprise of the first line of St. 3 – “Au calme clair de lune triste et beau” [In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful] – at the end of the song leaves the listener (or reader) with a palpable feeling of the character of the work. Furthermore, Debussy’s repetitions support Verlaine’s original interpretation of the poem. There is a deeper significance to Debussy’s alterations, but I delay that discussion until the next chapter, which addresses how Debussy pushed the *mélodie* beyond the norms of his predecessors.

“Fantoche” was written by Paul Verlaine. It features stock characters of the *Commedia dell’arte* – Scaramouche and Pulcinella – as well as “the doctor from Bologna,” the doctor’s daughter, and a Spanish pirate.¹³⁶ The first two stanzas of poetry set the atmosphere – one is compelled to envision a dark, almost sinister, clandestine scene – while stanzas three and four present the primary action and main characters of the poem. Example 5.14 has two parts; A is Verlaine’s original poem and B is the original poem with Debussy’s alterations. Debussy repeats three lines of poetry (italicized in 5.14-B): Stanza 1, line 3 – “Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune” [Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon]; Stanza 3, line 3 – “Se glisse demi-nue, en quête” [Glides half-nude, in search]; and Stanza 4, line 1 – “De son beau pirate espagnol” [Of her handsome Spanish pirate].

Example 5.14: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Text and Translation¹³⁷

A

Scaramouche et Pulcinella
 Qu’un mauvais dessein rassembla
 Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune.

Cependant l’excellent docteur
 Bolonais cueille avec lenteur
 Des simples parmi l’herbe brune.

Lors sa fille, piquant minois,
 Sous la charmille, en tapinois,
 Se glisse demi-nue, en quête

De son beau pirate espagnol,
 Don’t un langoureux rossignol
 Clame de détresse à tue-tête.

Scaramouche and Pulcinella
 Brought together by some evil scheme
 Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon.

Meanwhile, the good doctor
 From Bologna slowly gathers
 Simples in the brown grass.

While his daughter, that saucy looker,
 Beneath the bower, slyly,
 glides half nude, in search

Of her handsome Spanish pirate,
 Whose distress a languorous nightingale
 Proclaims at the top of its voice.

¹³⁶ Briscoe suggests that the doctor from Bologna might be Pantalone, Columbine’s father (Debussy 1993, 1:17). Kimball (2006, 195) surmises that the Spanish pirate and the doctor’s daughter could be the Captain and Columbine.

¹³⁷ The term “saucy looker” comes from James Briscoe’s translation of the poem (Debussy 1993, 1:17).

B

Scaramouche et Pulcinella
Qu'un mauvais dessein rassembla
Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune.
Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune.

Cependant l'excellent docteur
Bolonais cueille avec lenteur
Des simples parmi l'herbe brune.

Lors sa fille, piquant minois,
Sous la charmille, en tapinois,
Se glisse demi-nue, en quête
Se glisse demi-nue, en quête

De son beau pirate espagnol,
De son beau pirate espagnol,
Don't un languoureux rossignol
Clame de détresse à tue-tête.

Scaramouche and Pulcinella
Brought together by some evil scheme
Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon.
Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon.

Meanwhile, the good doctor
From Bologna slowly gathers
Simples in the brown grass.

While his daughter, that saucy looker,
Beneath the bower, slyly,
glides half nude, in search
glides half nude, in search

Of her handsome Spanish pirate,
Of her handsome Spanish pirate,
Whose distress a languorous nightingale
Proclaims at the top of its voice.

In each instance Debussy states and then immediately repeats the text. These lines represent a sort of summary of the poem. The first textual repetition sets the atmosphere for the poem and the remaining two instances relate to the two main characters: the doctor's daughter, who is gliding half naked, and the Spanish pirate. I address issues related to Debussy's interpretation and the deeper significance of the textual repetitions in Stanzas 3 and 4 in Chapter 6. For now, note that, although in different stanzas, these two lines are adjacent to each other and form an important point in the poem. Debussy's repetition of the lines emphasizes their importance.¹³⁸

Accompaniment

By the time Debussy began writing his songs the culture of French art song was comfortably entrenched in the *mélodie* tradition. Much like the piano parts of Fauré, Duparc, and others, Debussy's accompaniments are highly integrated into the larger fabric of the compositions. Although they can serve as simple accompaniments (reflecting the earlier *romance*

¹³⁸ It is interesting to note that the textual alterations in "Fantoche" are strikingly similar to those in "Clair de lune," at least in regards to the position of the original lines. In both songs, Debussy focuses on the first line of the last stanza and the last line of the penultimate stanza. The design of the poems – both authored by Verlaine – seems to have drawn Debussy's attention.

tradition),¹³⁹ much more often they help set the mood of the piece, provide interest via a series of different patterns, work alongside the vocal melody to provide counter-ideas, or otherwise participate in the dramatic unfolding of the song. As with many of the idiosyncrasies of Debussy's compositional style, the unique features of Debussy's piano parts almost always tie into his interpretation of the poetry, which is frequently related to his life and the people with whom he associated. Debussy's piano parts can be more complex and have a greater interpretive significance than many of his predecessors; however, his early song repertoire also includes songs with piano accompaniments that fall comfortably in line with the practice of other composers of the time.¹⁴⁰ In this section I examine several of Debussy's accompaniments with a focus on how they fit within the larger tradition of the *mélodie*.

One of the earliest works in Debussy's catalogue is "Fleur des blés" (L.7).¹⁴¹ Debussy composed the song on a poem by André Girod. The publication date is 1880 (Debussy would have been a mere eighteen years old), but certain aspects of the song seem to suggest that it was composed even earlier. Among them are a youthful style predating the features of the songs convincingly rooted in the early 1880s, and the fact that the song's dedicatee – Madame E. Deguingand – was already well-known to Debussy by the publication date (Debussy 1993, 1:8). I believe the form and directness of the music in relation to the text are prominent among the nascent features. Example 5.15 is the text of the poem and a translation. The poem takes place in a peaceful wheat field and finds the narrator fawning over his love and likening her features to

¹³⁹ Nectoux (1991, 66) notes that in the 1870s the *mélodie* was still emerging.

¹⁴⁰ Many of Debussy's earliest songs (those likely composed in the late 1870s or early 1880s), particularly those not dedicated to Marie Vasnier or other significant dedicatees, have piano parts that are less interactive with the poem and Debussy's interpretation thereof.

¹⁴¹ François Lesure did the yeomen's work in organizing Debussy's œuvre. Catalogue numbers carry his surname, often abbreviated simply to "L."


the beauty of the field; he draws several analogies between the field and the sky and his beloved to convey her beauty.

Example 5.15: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Text and Translation¹⁴²

<p>Le long des blés que la brise Fait onduler puis défrise En un désordre coquet, J’ai trouvé de bonne prise De t’y cueillir un bouquet.</p> <p>Mets-le vite à ton corsage, – Il est fait à ton image En même temps que pour toi... Ton petit doigt, je le gage, T’a déjà soufflé pourquoi:</p> <p>Ces épis dorés, c’est l’onde De ta chevelure blonde Toute d’or et de soleil; Ce coquelicot qui fronde, C’est ta bouche au sang vermeil.</p> <p>Et ces bluets, beau mystère! Points d’azur que rien n’altère, Ces bluets ce sont tes yeux, Si bleus qu’on dirait, sur terre, Deux éclats tombés des cieux.</p>	<p>Among the wheat that the breeze Makes wave and then relax In charming disorder, I thought it right To pick you a bouquet.</p> <p>Put it quickly into your bodice, – It is made in your image, As it was made for you... Your little finger, I wager, Has already told you why:</p> <p>These golden clusters, they are the wave Of your blond hair, All gold and sunlight; This poppy that banter, It is your mouth as red as blood.</p> <p>And these cornflowers, beautiful mystery! Points of azure that nothing can change, These cornflowers are your eyes, So blue that they seem like, Two shards of sky fallen to earth.</p>
--	---

The musical form of the song is divided evenly across the poetry. Each large section of the form receives two stanzas of poetry (Example 5.16).¹⁴³

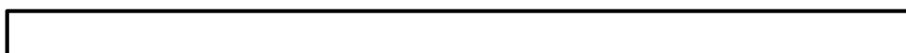
Example 5.16: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Text and Musical Form

A	
	
<p>Among the wheat that the breeze Makes wave and then relax In charming disorder, I thought it right To pick you a bouquet.</p>	<p>Put it quickly into your bodice, – It is made in your image, As it was made for you... Your little finger, I wager, Has already told you why:</p>
MM. 1	9

¹⁴² Translation adapted from Debussy 1993, 1:7–8.

¹⁴³ Form is partially defined by the piano accompaniment, which I address shortly.

A'



These golden clusters, they are the wave
Of your blond hair,
All gold and sunlight;
This poppy that banterers,
It is your mouth as red as blood.

17

And these cornflowers, beautiful mystery!
Points of azure that nothing can change,
These cornflowers are you eyes,
So blue that they seem like,
Two shards of sky fallen to earth.

25

Section A' is nearly identical to Section A. The few differences can be explained as necessary variations to support a different text and for crafting a proper ending. Perhaps the form is an attempt to place a greater focus on the text; however, I think it much more likely to be the result of the young composer's developing prowess.¹⁴⁴ Also worth noting as another potential nascent feature is the fact that Debussy made no changes to Girod's original poem. As previously noted, changing the text was a common, almost expected, procedure among most composers.

The piano part of "Fleur des blés" initially seems to be a fairly direct reference to the atmosphere of the poem, mimicking the waving motion of the wheat field (Example 5.17). The right hand is comprised almost entirely of sixteenth notes that create an aesthetic reminiscent of wheat flowing in the breeze. The repeating one-beat pattern of four sixteenth notes leaps down from a focal pitch, and then arpeggiates back up before moving to the next focal point and repeating the pattern. Each focal pitch is highlighted with longer rhythmic values and upward stems; these pitches create countermelodies that interact with the voice melody and are elaborated by the aforementioned wave motion in sixteenth notes. The left hand is less rhythmically active, but generally mirrors the upper stems in the right hand.

¹⁴⁴ Debussy as we know him in the 1880s never made use of such a deliberate and transparent form and, similarly, never had trouble representing the meaning or atmosphere conveyed by the text.

Example 5.17: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Accompaniment Pattern¹⁴⁵

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Fleur des blés," featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal staff and a piano accompaniment staff. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clef).

System 1: The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Le long des blés que la bri - se Fait on - du - ler puis dé - fri - se". The piano accompaniment starts with a *pp* dynamic. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and slurs. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with slurs.

System 2: The vocal line continues with "En un dé - sor - dre co - quet, J'ai trou - vé de bon - ne". The piano accompaniment includes a *mp* dynamic marking and a circled number "2" in the right hand.

System 3: The vocal line concludes with "pri - se De t'y cueil - lir un bou - quet." The piano accompaniment features a *dim.* dynamic marking in the right hand and a *p* dynamic marking in the left hand, along with a circled number "3" in the right hand.

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix for full song.

The persistent sixteenth-note rhythm only abates at two points in the song. The first is in mm. 13–16 (Example 5.18).

Example 5.18: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Break in Accompaniment Pattern

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Fleur des blés". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 12 with the vocal line: "toi... Ton pe - tit doigt, je le ga - ge, T'a dé - jà souf -". The piano accompaniment features a persistent sixteenth-note pattern. A bracketed section from measure 13 to 16 shows a break in this pattern. The second system starts at measure 15 with the vocal line: "flé pour-quoi: Ces é - pis do - rés, c'est". The piano accompaniment includes markings such as "En retenant", "più p", "a tempo", and "[p]". Measure 17 is marked with a box containing the number 17, indicating the start of a new section.

In mm. 13–16 (bracketed in Example 5.18) Debussy breaks the accompaniment pattern for the first time. The text “Ton petit doigt, je le gage, T’a déjà soufflé pourquoi” [Your little finger, I wager, Has already told you why] is perhaps the most questioning part of the whole poem. The subject of the poem knows “why,” but the narrator never explicitly elaborates, thus leaving the reader to interpret the meaning. Debussy approaches this text with a sudden halt in rhythmic motion that is perhaps as striking or indirect as the text. The moment is short lived, however; two measures after the sudden change Debussy increases the rhythmic activity, ultimately leading to m. 17 which signals the reprise of the beginning of the song, the beginning of Section A’, and a return to the familiar “waving wheat” pattern. Because the form is binary, the halt in the rhythmic pattern also occurs again at the end of the song, analogous to its position in Section A.

The text at this point, “Si bleus qu’on dirait, sur terre, Deux éclats tombés des cieux” [So blue that they seem like, Two shards of sky fallen to earth] is more direct and less questioning; the break in the pattern at the end of the song serves to satisfy the form rather than any textual demands. Additionally, both breaks in the accompaniment pattern happen at the end of their respective formal sections. Thus, Debussy signals the end of each section with a brief change in the constant piano rhythm that quickly and effectively dissipates the momentum of one section to prepare for the beginning of another (or in second occurrence of the passage, the end of the song).

Although the piano accompaniment seems fairly simple at first blush, a closer examination reveals a bit more subtlety. The upper stems in the right hand, frequently doubled in the left hand, often create quarter-note countermelodies to the voice part (Example 5.19). Measures 1–2 have a simple pattern comprised primarily of descending thirds while mm. 3–4 are mainly comprised of arpeggiations. Although subtle, these patterns pair well with the voice melody. When the voice is especially leapy (mm. 1–2), the counter idea in the piano tends to be more conjunct. Similarly, when the voice is more conjunct (mm. 3–4), the countermelody is more arpeggiated.

Example 5.19: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Countermelodies in Piano

En un dé-sor - dre co - quet, J'ai trou - vé de bon - ne

3

mp

6

mp *dim.*

pri - se De t'y cueil - lir un bou - quet.

dim. *p*

The interaction between the countermelody and the voice melody is not entirely consistent. Notice in the above example that, in mm. 6–7, both the voice and piano move similarly.

The counter-ideas presented in the piano serve two other specific purposes, both of which are related to the text. The text is in four stanzas, each with five lines (review Example 5.15 above) divided unevenly into 3+2. The first way Debussy uses the countermelodies is to provide continuity within and between stanzas. At the end of the third line of each stanza, Debussy writes a longer value or rest in the voice and shifts the melodic focus to the piano. In the first stanza (m. 4 – see Example 5.19) Debussy uses an ascending arpeggio to continue momentum into the second portion of the stanza. Following the first stanza, which ends in m. 8, Debussy uses a different figure to achieve the same effect. After the voice sings the downbeat, the piano bridges the gap into the next stanza with a simple melody: D-C-D-E-G. (Debussy uses the same figure in

the middle of the second stanza [m. 12] only written an octave higher.) The end of St. 2 features the break in the piano rhythm mentioned above (Example 5.18 – m. 13) and does not need an additional connective gesture. The second half the song (m. 17 and following) mirrors the above-mentioned gestures at analogous points in the form. Each half of the song thus has three connective measures (one in the middle of each stanza and one between stanzas) in which Debussy briefly shifts the primary melodic focus from the voice to the piano in service of text.

The second way Debussy uses the piano in the service of the text is to highlight and reinforce the voice melody. My previous discussion has shown how the piano in “Fleur des blés” provides counter-ideas to the voice. It can, however, also reinforce the melody (Example 5.20).

Example 5.20: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Countermelody Supporting Voice

Notice in m. 9 that the upper stems of the piano right hand join with voice on the second beat of the measure. The piano plays the vocal line an octave higher and in longer values, briefly supporting the voice and leaving the counter-ideas to the left hand. This moment is short lived. By m. 10 the parts have separated again; the piano continues the motive established in m. 9 but the voice does not.

To summarize, the piano part in this *mélodie* initially seems like a straightforward (perhaps bordering on banal) imitation of wheat in a field that defines the atmosphere of the poem. However, brief but clear changes in the piano pattern, accompanied by less obvious

countermelodic ideas imbedded in the consistent rhythmic activity of the piano (particularly the right hand), give the song a depth that roots it in the tradition of the *mélodie*. This shows that Debussy, even at a young age, was well conversant with the style of his predecessors.

Another song from early in Debussy's compositional career is "Aimons-nous et dormons," based on a poem by Théodore de Banville and published c. 1881. The song carries a curious dedication: "à mon ami Paul Vidal." The dedication, however, is only extant on the first posthumous edition of the song, which comes from the February 1933 edition of *The Etude*. The dedication is not evident on the autograph manuscript but, as Briscoe notes in his critical edition of the songs, it could have been on the now lost cover page to the song (Debussy 1993, I:9). The curious nature of the dedication lies less in its provenance than in the nature of the poem. Banville's original poem (and Debussy's song, which includes no apparent changes to the original)¹⁴⁶ is in three stanzas of seven lines each (Example 5.21).

Example 5.21: Debussy, "Aimons-nous et dormons," Text and Translation¹⁴⁷

Aimons-nous et dormons
 Sans songer au reste du monde;
 Ni le flot de la mer, ni l'ouragan des monts,
 Tant que nous nous aimons
 Ne courbera ta tête blonde,
 Car l'amour est plus fort
 Que les Dieux et la mort!

Let us love and sleep
 Without thinking of the rest of the world;
 Neither the surge of the sea, nor the mountain storm,
 As long as we love each other,
 Shall touch your blonde head,
 For love is stronger
 Than the Gods or death!

Le soleil s'éteindrait
 Pour laisser ta blancheur plus pure;
 Le vent qui jusqu'à terre incline la forêt,
 En passant n'oserait
 Jouer avec ta chevelure,
 Tant que tu cacheras
 Ta tête entre mes bras!

The sun will fade away
 To let your innocence shine more pure;
 The wind, which bends the forest to the ground,
 As it passes would not dare
 To play with your hair,
 So long as you hide
 Your head in my arms!

Et lorsque nos deux cœurs
 S'en iront aux sphères heureuses
 Où les célestes lys écloreont sous nos pleurs,
 Alors, comme deux fleurs,
 Joignons nos lèvres amoureuses,
 Et tâchons d'épuiser
 La mort dans un baiser

And when our two hearts
 Depart for happy realms
 Where celestial lilies will bloom beneath our tears,
 Then, like two flowers,
 Let us join our loving lips,
 And try to extinguish
 Death with a kiss!

¹⁴⁶ "Aimons-nous et dormons" and "Fleur des blés," both composed quite early in Debussy's compositional career, share the seldom seen approach to text in which there are no alterations to the original poem. This perhaps lends credence to the assumption made earlier that not altering a text is a feature of Debussy's earliest *mélodies*.

¹⁴⁷ Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:9).

The poem – the title of which translates to “let us love and sleep” – seems to be a love poem. The subject is of two people wholly dedicated to each other; their love is stronger than the elements of earth, the Gods, and even death itself. This is precisely the type of poem to which Debussy would have been drawn. And the poem would make perfect sense if it were dedicated to Marie Vasnier. But it is not. Debussy certainly knew Mme. Vasnier in 1881 when the song was published,¹⁴⁸ yet it is Paul Vidal – one of Debussy’s classmates at the conservatoire and later a fellow Prix de Rome laureate – to whom the song is dedicated. It is difficult to surmise why Debussy would have dedicated the song to Vidal; commentary on the issue is scarce and his relationship to Debussy seems to have been nothing more than that of a colleague and friend.¹⁴⁹

The piano accompaniment in “Aimons-nous et dormons” serves primarily to set the mood of the poem and interacts little with the dramatic evolution of the story presented by the voice. Each of the three stanzas has a unique accompaniment pattern (Example 5.22).

Example 5.22: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Accompaniment Patterns¹⁵⁰

Stanza 1

¹⁴⁸ The song was published in 1881; however, it was likely composed earlier. If it were composed in the late 1870s, Debussy would have not yet known Marie Vasnier but would have known Vidal. This, however, still does not account for why Debussy would have dedicated a love poem to his friend and colleague.

¹⁴⁹ This is, of course, evident from the dedication: “mon ami (my friend) Paul Vidal.”

¹⁵⁰ See Appendix for full song.

Stanza 2

16 *ritenuto* *[a tempo]*
Que les dieux et la mort! Le so - leil s'é - tein - dra

Stanza 3

Et lors - que nos deux cœurs S'en i -

Each of the three main patterns has a unique rhythmic and melodic identity. In the first stanza the accompaniment is comprised of steadily arpeggiated sixteenths in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. In the second stanza both hands work together trading off a short rhythmic motive; the left hand provides some continuity with sustained quarters that descend primarily by step. Stanza 3 focuses on the left hand with a right-hand counter-idea. In the above example, the left hand doubles the voice at the octave for the first measure. The pattern represented in Example 5.22 is representative of St. 3, but the piano accompaniment does not consistently double the voice. Debussy's use of different figures in each stanza is not a rigid procedure. Although each stanza features a different idea in the piano, Debussy frequently

references or briefly brings back patterns from earlier in the song; the figure from St. 1, for instance, comes back at the ends of both St. 2 and 3.

The primary interest of the piano accompaniment figures is not when they occur or how long they last, but rather when they are interrupted. Debussy interrupts the flow of the pattern in unexpected ways at two conspicuous spots in the song. The first is in mm. 7–9 in the first stanza (Example 5.23).

Example 5.23: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” St. 1 – Interrupted Accompaniment Pattern

The image displays a musical score for the first stanza of Debussy's "Aimons-nous et dormons". It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 7 and 8. The piano accompaniment in the right hand features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern. In measure 7, this pattern is interrupted as the sixteenth-note motion shifts to the left hand, and the right hand plays a flowing stepwise line. The second system shows measures 9 and 10. In measure 9, a similar sixteenth-note figure appears in the right hand, imitating the left hand of measure 7. The lyrics are: "Sans son-ger au res - te du mon - de; Ni le flot de la mer, ni l'ou-ra-gan des monts, Tant que nous nous ai - mons".

In m. 7 Debussy breaks the right hand pattern for the first time; he shifts the sixteenth-note rhythmic motion into the left hand and changes the melodic profile from arpeggiations to a flowing stepwise line. He then writes a similar figure in the right hand in m. 9; the motive begins by imitating the left hand of m. 7 but changes toward the end of the measure to usher in the familiar St. 1 accompaniment pattern. The changes to the accompaniment clearly developed from

the text. The text leading into m. 7 is “Ni le flot de la mer” [Neither the surge of the sea]. The word “mer” – “sea” – occurs on the downbeat of m. 7; Debussy mimics the surge of the sea with a stepwise descending line that seems to flow from the previously established pattern. The line continues to say “ni l’ouragan des monts” [nor the mountain storm]. Again, at the conclusion of the phrase Debussy reprises the “sea” motive, slightly altered, to represent the mountain storm. The composer then returns to the familiar pattern to finish the stanza.¹⁵¹

Another instance of word painting occurs in the second stanza of the song at an analogous point in the text (Example 5.24).

Example 5.24: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Stanza 2 – Word Painting

The musical score for Example 5.24 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line and the beginning of the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Pour lais - ser ta blan - cheur plus pu - re. Le vent, qui jus - qu'à". The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "terre in - cli - - ne la fo - rêt,". Measure numbers 22 and 24 are marked in the piano part.

The third line of St. 2 reads “Le vent, qui jusqu’à terre incline la forêt” [The wind, which bends the forest to the ground]. In m. 22, with the arrival of “vent,,” Debussy changes the previous pattern to a gusty arching line, mimicking the wind. He then continues the figure over the text

¹⁵¹ Debussy dissipates the familiar pattern in the last four measures of St. 1 to provide a suitable transition to the second stanza.

“qui jusqu’à terre incline la forêt.” The sudden and then persistent motive represents not only the wind, but also the power of the wind to bend the forest. The word painting as represented in Examples 5.23 and 5.24 is an effective compositional device; it clearly conveys the text without disrupting the flow and atmosphere of the song. However, word painting is hardly a novel compositional device. Rather than illuminating a unique aspect of Debussy’s compositional style, the above examples show how the young Debussy was approaching the poetry of the time using tried and true techniques passed down to him by his predecessors.¹⁵²

Debussy composed “Rondeau” in 1882 on a poem by Alfred de Musset. The song is dedicated to Alexander von Meck; the dedication reads: “Pour mon ami Alexander de Meck, souvenir bien affectueux.” The text is a tender yet sad love poem (Example 5.25).

Example 5.25: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Text and Translation¹⁵³

Fut-il jamais douceur de cœur pareille
A voir Manon dans mes bras, sommeiller.
Son front coquet parfume l'oreiller,
Dans son beau sein, j'entends son cœur qui veille.
Un songe passe et s'en vient l'égayer.

Was there ever a sweetness of heart like
Seeing Manon in my arms, slumbering.
Her pretty brow perfumes the pillow,
Within her beautiful breast, I hear her heart awoken.
A dream passes and comes away to enliven her.

Ainsi s'endort la fleur d'églantier
Dans son calice enfermant une abeille.
Moi, je la berce, un plus charmant métier,
Fut-il jamais?

Thus sleeps the sweetbriar flower
In its flower cup enclosing a bee.
As for me, I cradle her—a more delightful occupation,
Was there ever?

Mais le jour vient, et l'aurore vermeille
Effeuille au vent son printemps virginal,
Le peigne en main et la perle à l'oreille
A son miroir, Manon va m'oublier.
Hélas! l'amour sans lendemain ni veille
Fut-il jamais?

But daybreak comes, and the rosy dawn
Scatters to the winds her virginal springtime,
With comb in hand and a pearl in her ear
At her mirror, Manon shall forget me.
Alas, love without yesterday or tomorrow
Was there ever?

In the poem, the narrator speaks of a woman named “Manon.” Manon is not an actual person in Musset’s (or Debussy’s) life, but rather a literary character from Antoine François Prévost’s late-

¹⁵² Word painting, of course, is in no way distinctly French or new to the nineteenth century. Composers were using text painting for hundreds of years before Debussy.

¹⁵³ Debussy made only small changes to Musset’s original text. In Stanza 2, line 1 Debussy substitutes “la fleur” for “une fleur.” In St. 3, line 2 he replaces “son bouquet printanier” with “son printemps virginal.” And in St. 3, line 4 Debussy uses “Manon va m’oublier” instead of “Manon court m’oublier.” The changes are minimal and were likely made to make the text more singable. Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993 1:11).

eighteenth-century story *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux, et de Manon Lescaut* [The Story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut]. Manon Lescaut is the lead female character who has a taste for luxury; she frequently leaves the lead male character, Chevalier des Grieux, when he runs out of money. Musset uses the ideal of Manon in his poem to represent love that is fleeting and not guaranteed; love that is sweet in the moment, but quickly dissipates and is soon forgotten.

There is not a clear connection between the poem and Debussy's life; the topic of the poem is at odds with a non-romantic dedicatee. Surely Debussy got to know Alexander de Meck while traveling with Nadezhda von Meck; perhaps the topic relates to events and experiences from when their friendship was closest. In regards to the accompaniment of the *mélodie*, it is both very Debussyian and also quite conventional for the time; the piano part – certainly far removed from the strict style of the *romance* – sets the mood for the poem, but also has some conventional uses of text painting. Each stanza of poetry has a different accompaniment pattern (Example 5.26)

Example 5.26: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Accompaniment Patterns¹⁵⁴

Stanza 1

The musical score for Stanza 1 of Debussy's "Rondeau" consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 8/8. The tempo is marked "Andantino" and the dynamics are "pp". The piano part features a complex accompaniment pattern with markings for "con sordino", "I add6", "V9", and "simile". The lyrics "Fut - il ja - mais dou -" are written below the vocal line.

¹⁵⁴ See Appendix for full song.

Stanza 2

16
Ain - si s'en - dort la fleur d'é-glan - ti - er

pp

D^4_2 $C\#^4_3$ C^4_2 B^4_3

Stanza 3

25 animez un peu
Mais le jour vient, et l'au - ro - re ver - meil - - le

expressif
p

vi vii⁰⁷/V

The accompaniment pattern in the first stanza calmly oscillates between a I^{add6} and V^9 . Although Debussy does stray from the pattern slightly towards the end of the stanza, the majority of the first fifteen measures of music is concerned with this pattern. The text is reflective, tender, and hopeful. The piano expresses the reflective nature superbly. Rather than having a teleological goal, Debussy creates a contemplative sound that exists in the now, giving the vocalist (narrator) the freedom to reflect. This mirrors the natural process of reflection: we exist in the now but remember past events. While we reflect, our minds are active, but the present passes by without comment. The harmonies (tonic and dominant) help convey the mood by creating a pleasant and unobtrusive progression that supports the reflective nature of the text; the added chord tones (added sixth and chordal ninth) create a lush texture without detracting from the mood of the text.

The accompaniment pattern in the second stanza builds upon the pattern from the first stanza. The left hand of the piano is not unlike the figure from the first stanza, but the right hand increases in rhythmic intensity. Much as the second stanza of poetry continues the line of thought from the first, Debussy's second piano pattern also continues and elaborates on the first. Debussy pairs the increased rhythmic activity with more chromatic harmony. In Example 5.26 (the beginning of St. 2 – above) the harmony is a sequence of descending major-minor seventh chords. This sequence leads to an extended focus on the subdominant harmony that ultimately resolves to the dominant in m. 22 (not shown in Example 5.26). The increased harmonic complexity contributes to the growing intensity established by the piano to help convey the dramatic motion leading into the third and final stanza.

The figure that Debussy uses in the third stanza is more tumultuous than those in the first and second stanza. The piano right hand plays short lyrical passages while the left hand has sharp, syncopated off-beats. This creates the tensest mood of the song thus far, which mirrors the story in the poetry. In the first two stanzas, the narrator reflects fondly on his love. In the third stanza he realizes that whatever affection Manon may have paid him, it is only temporary and will be gone with the morning. With the text “Manon, va m’oublier” [Manon shall forget me], Debussy stops the pervading accompaniment pattern and, following a short homophonic chordal passage (not shown) that finishes the text, returns to the opening pattern as a brief three-measure coda. Thus, we can see how each pattern supports the text in each of the three stanzas. In the first stanza Debussy uses a calm, consonant, almost trance-like oscillation of simple harmonies to establish a mood of timeless reflection. In the second stanza Debussy increases the activity of the pattern over less stable harmonies to propel the music toward the last stanza. In the third and final stanza Debussy uses the most rhythmically active and varied pattern (lyrical right hand over

syncopated left hand) to emphasize the growing anxiety of eventual loss that the narrator experiences at the end of the poem. Debussy, however, does not see fit to leave the listener wallowing in the dire mood of loss evident in the third stanza; rather, he brings back the calm and pleasant opening figure for the last three bars to convey a lighter, encouraging mood that allows the song to end on a more positive, perhaps even optimistic, note.

The above-mentioned patterns make up much of the piano part in each section; however, Debussy does break the patterns in a few spots to emphasize certain parts of the text. He accomplishes this with some basic and well-placed word painting. The first instance occurs in m. 9 in the first stanza of text and the first accompaniment pattern (Example 5.27).

Example 5.27: Debussy, “Rondeau,” Word Painting in First Stanza

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Rondeau". It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts at measure 7 and includes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "Son front co-quet par - fu - me l'o-reil-ler. Dans son beau sein, j'en - tends". The piano part features a syncopated left hand pattern. Chord symbols below the piano part are I^{add6}, V⁹, and V¹¹. The second system starts at measure 10 and includes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "son cœur qui veil - le. Un son-ge pas - se". The piano part features a syncopated left hand pattern. Chord symbols below the piano part are ii⁶₅, IV, and bII⁶. The tempo marking "Lentement" is present above the second system.

As stated above, the first section of the song and first stanza of poetry (mm. 1–16) features the accompaniment pattern seen in mm. 7–8 in Example 5.27. In mm. 9–10 Debussy breaks the

pattern with a fluttering of rhythmic activity in the right hand and a contrasting melodic line in the left hand. The text – “Dans son beau sein, j’entends son cœur qui veille” [Within her beautiful breast, I hear her heart awaken] references Manon’s heart being awakened. Debussy expresses the awakening of Manon’s heart with a somewhat sudden flourish of notes culminating in m. 11 on a rather striking (and beautiful) bII^6 before dissipating in intensity. The bII^6 is especially striking given that it emerges atop an arpeggiated flourish, it brings a sudden stop to the rhythmic motion established three measures earlier, and it is the first chromatic chord in a predominantly diatonic (though surely enriched by extended harmonies) harmonic environment.

After the sudden flourish and reference to Manon’s awakened heart, the text continues to with “Un songe passé et s’en vient l’égayer” [A dream passes and comes away to enliven her]; Debussy aptly, if perhaps a little too directly, crafts the music to mirror the text (Example 5.28).

Example 5.28: Debussy, “Rondeau,” “A Dream Passes...”

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Rondeau," "A Dream Passes...". It consists of two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 10, features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics "son cœur qui veille." and "Un songe pas - se". The piano part has a tempo marking of "Lentement" and a dynamic marking of "p". Below the piano part, harmonic analysis labels are provided: ii_5^6 , IV, and bII^6 . The second system, starting at measure 13, continues the vocal line with the lyrics "et s'en vient l'é-gay-er." and the piano accompaniment. The piano part has a dynamic marking of "p". Below the piano part, harmonic analysis labels are provided: V^{11} , I, V^9 , and I.

After the expressive flourish in m. 11, Debussy greets the text “Un songe passe” with silence before returning briefly to the familiar St. 1 accompaniment pattern in mm. 13–14. When the music enters after the silent pause Debussy resolves the Neapolitan from before to a dominant and then finally a tonic in m. 15 to close the section. Additionally, the cascading chords that close the first stanza (m. 15) seem to mimic the dreamy atmosphere previously mentioned. Debussy’s focus on the last couplet of the first stanza of poetry beautifully conveys the intangible atmosphere of the poem. The first two lines of the poem are fairly easy to imagine: the tender and sweet image of one’s love peacefully sleeping. The last three lines where the narrator sees subtle changes in Manon’s demeanor and surmises she is dreaming is much more introspective and difficult to represent directly. Fortunately Debussy excels in convincingly representing topics that are more suggestive than direct. The sudden silence (in m. 12) after a rhythmically robust passage conveys the subtle change in demeanor of the subject (Manon) and the continuation of the music signals a continuation in the story. The final cascading passage in m. 15 also expertly represents the dream that comes to enliven the sleeping Manon. Debussy’s penchant for malleable and less definable subjects clearly drew him to this section of the poem. The way he interacts with the poetry in passages such as this does much to show how the young Debussy was in some ways following the paths of his predecessors by using similar compositional techniques, but at the same time doing so in a unique and thoughtful way.

The preceding section has shown how Debussy used a number of rather conventional procedures to craft his piano accompaniments. At times he relies on standard devices such as word painting, but at others we see the burgeoning techniques of the unique and rebellious Debussy. It was my goal to show how Debussy interacted with the already established tradition of the *mélodie* via his piano accompaniments; however, it is difficult to find a large subsection of

songs within the greater repertoire that adheres strictly to conventional procedures. And the ones we do find tend to be placed among his earliest songs, most of which carry publication dates in the early 1880s but show evidence of being composed in the 1870s. I believe this shows that Debussy had a noticeably defined style even in his early songs. This is, of course, not to be confused with his mature style for which he is now well known, but rather a unique, subtle, and consistent compositional aesthetic native to his life and compositional career prior to his time in Rome beginning in 1885. Such a compositional aesthetic that both contributes to the long-term evolution of the *mélodie* as a genre and allows us to hear Debussy's early songs as a unified repertoire is discussed in the next chapter.

Melody

With the rise of the *mélodie* and ultimate decline of the *romance*, composers necessarily adapted their compositional approach. Perhaps it is better to say that the *mélodie* rose to prominence because composers were making fairly large-scale changes in their compositional procedures. This, of course, was intimately related to the rise of new and emerging trends in poetry and literature. Melodic writing in the mid to late nineteenth century varied greatly between composers. Faure, for instance, tended towards formulaic writing while Duparc, preferring a different type of text, was much more expressive with his melodic lines.¹⁵⁵ Despite the variations between composers, we can make some general statements that hold true through the repertoire. The most important is that melody lines were becoming more expressive. As the text subjects for songs became subtler and more expressive, vocal melodies had little choice but to follow. *Romance* melodic lines tended to be simpler (along with other compositional parameters, accompaniment chief among them), but with the emergence of the *mélodie* we start

¹⁵⁵ See Ch. 4 for a fuller discussion.

to see text and melody being treated as equally important in the compositional process.

Debussy's approach to melody was, much like his contemporaries (but perhaps to a much greater degree), based on the text and his desired interpretation. Other factors related to his personal life also contribute to his style. In fact, we see a marked change in his vocal melodies in the 1880s that both pushes the genre forward and helps define the songs as belonging to a more unified repertoire. But that is a subject for the next chapter. Despite some rather striking and unique advancements in melodic profile, many of Debussy's songs conform to the approaches that most composers were following at the time. In this section I examine a selection of Debussy's songs focusing on the melody in order to show how the young composer operated within conventions established by his colleagues and predecessors. Additionally, this section establishes a base line for situating the more uniquely Debussyian melodic features in the next chapter.

Debussy draws upon a wide-ranging arsenal of techniques when writing his songs. Many are distinctly Debussyian, some are even consistent enough to discern across large sections of his early repertoire. Others, such as word painting and modal mixture, however, are common expressive techniques that have been in the tool belts of composers for centuries. Simple instances of modal mixture and word painting abound in many of Debussy's songs. Sometimes there is a deeper significance attached to such techniques; however, often they are simply as they seem: an effort to convey the mood of the text or atmosphere of the poem in a direct and obvious way.

"Fleur des blés," as noted above (Examples 5.15–5.20), was composed quite early in Debussy's career. The composition date is generally accepted as 1880 but the *mélodie* has features that suggest that it was composed earlier. I have addressed some of these characteristics

above in relation to the song’s piano accompaniment. I address another here, concerning the melody. Before doing so, however, I would like to revisit and review a particular song by Fauré (review Ch. 4 for a fuller examination of the song). Fauré’s “Lydia” is fairly limited in melodic variety. It is comprised of two main sections; the second section is, with the exception of some minor changes, the same as the first. Despite the uncomplicated form, “Lydia” has some interesting features in regards to accompaniment, which includes some passages that create a link between piano and voice, and melody, which has some nice expressive moments. Notable among the melodic features is a linear tritone in the opening bars that propels the melody from the tonic scale degree (F) up towards scale-degree 5 (C), constituting a fairly conventional *Anstieg*¹⁵⁶ (Example 5.29).

Example 5.29: Fauré, “Lydia,” Melodic Tritone (reproduced from Example 4.26)

The image displays a musical score for Fauré's "Lydia". It consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the vocal line starting with the tempo marking "Andante." and dynamic "p". The melody begins with a tritone interval from F to C, which is highlighted by a star symbol (*). The lyrics "Ly-di-a sur tes" are written below the vocal line. The second system shows the piano accompaniment, with the tempo marking "Andante." and the instruction "sempre dolce." written above the treble clef. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with some melodic lines in the right hand. The third system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "roses jon-es Et sur ton col frais et si blanc, Roule é" and shows further piano accompaniment. A "Ped." marking is present under the piano part in the second system.

¹⁵⁶ An *Anstieg* is an initial ascent to the *Kopfton*.

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Fleur des blés". The score is in F major and 3/4 time. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The tritone is highlighted with a dashed line and labeled with Roman numerals: I, II 1/2, V/iii, iii, I.

Debussy's "Fleur des blés" is strikingly similar to Fauré's "Lydia." They are both in the same key (F major); they have the same A, A' formal construction; and they have a prominent and similarly expressive melodic tritone, although it serves a different purpose in Debussy's song. In "Fleur des blés," we find the tritone outlined in the most interesting part of the musical form and in the text (Example 5.30).

Example 5.30: Debussy, "Fleur des blés," Melodic Tritone

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Fleur des blés". The score is in F major and 3/4 time. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The tritone is highlighted with a dashed line and labeled with Roman numerals: I, II 1/2, V/iii, iii, I.

12
 toi...
 En retenant
 Ton pe - tit doigt, je le ga - ge, T'a dé - jà souf -

15
 flé ³ pour-quoi: _____
 Ces é - pis do - rés, c'est
 a tempo
 En retenant
 a tempo
più p
[p] 17

In Example 5.30, the passage in question (m. 13) occurs at the end of Section A. It is the first time that the wave-like accompaniment pattern breaks, thus signaling the end of the section and setting up a return to the opening material in m. 17. The text – “ton petit doigt, je le gage, T’a déjà soufflé pourquoi:” [Your little finger, I wager, Has already told you why:] – is an odd and not especially clear part of the text. Apparently the narrator and the subject’s little finger know why, but the reader/listener is left to wonder. As if to mirror the questioning, undefined nature of the passage, Debussy opens it with an ascending melodic tritone from F4–B5. The tension created reflects the peculiar nature of the text. The tritone motive combined with expression “En retenant” [hold back] and the change in accompaniment pattern really disrupts the atmosphere of the music; we are suddenly torn from the consistent, flowing pattern in the piano and the largely consonant melody in the voice to find ourselves in a very different musical environment in m. 13. The passage is very effective; it almost instantly dissolves the patterns established in the first twelve measures of the song and prepares for the coming reprise in m. 17. Because Debussy recycles the figures and patterns from the beginning in the second half of the song, such an abrupt change is appropriate.

The rising tritone figure in Debussy’s “Fleur des blés” has a much different functional purpose than in Fauré’s “Lydia.” Fauré uses the figure to get the music to the *Kopfton* of the *Urlinie*, scale-degree 5. Debussy, however, uses the figure for a more local purpose closer to the musical foreground (Example 5.31). The expected resolution of the F–B tritone would be to continue to scale-degree 5 (C). But instead of continuing up the scale, Debussy arrests the momentum of the line to step back down to A. The A eventually moves to Bb in m. 15. On a deeper level the goal of the passage is to prolong the time between the IV in m. 12 and the ii⁷ in m. 15; the rising tritone motive and underlying non-functional harmonies serve as an insertion

that abruptly alters the atmosphere of the song by dissipating the energy created in the first twelve measures of music. Afterwards Debussy brings the section to a close with a half cadence that quickly rebounds to tonic to begin the next section.

Example 5.31: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Melodic Tritone in Context

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Fleur des blés". It is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 12-14) shows the vocal line with lyrics "toi... Ton pe - tit doigt, je le ga - ge, T'a dé - jà souf -" and piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 15-17) shows the vocal line with lyrics "flé pour-quoi: Ces é - pis do - rés, c'est" and piano accompaniment. The third system is a harmonic analysis of the piano accompaniment, showing chords IV, B⁹, B⁹, ii⁷, V⁹, V⁹, and I. Above the analysis, there are markings for "a tempo" and "En retenant".

As previously mentioned, the second half of “Fleur des blés” is, aside from small changes and text, the same as the first. Thus, the end of the song includes a passage similar to the one cited in Example 5.31. In the second occurrence of the passage at the end of the song, Debussy slightly alters the melody to eliminate the rising tritone (Example 5.32).

Example 5.32: Debussy, “Fleur des blés,” Analogous Passage without Tritone

In m. 29 (the analogous measure to m. 13), Debussy shifts the first three notes – F-G-A – down a half step to E-F#-G#.¹⁵⁷ This passage is still fairly abrupt due to the sudden change in the piano, but removing the tritone motive in the voice softens the effect. This, of course, reflects a text (“Si bleus qu’on dirait, sur terre, Deux éclats tombés des cieux” [So blue that they seem like, Two shards of sky fallen to earth]) that is much less questioning. Furthermore, by occurring at the end of the song Debussy is free from any obligation to maintain forward motion; he allows the energy to dissipate and brings the song to a close shortly after the passage cited in Example 5.32.

The goals and effects of Debussy’s process in “Fleur des blés” and Fauré’s in “Lydia” are notably different. Fauré’s treatment of the rising tritone motive is more conventional – that is, it eventually resolves as would be expected – and serves the more structural function of creating a path to the initial *Kopfton* of the piece. Debussy’s treatment of the figure, on the other hand, is less conventional; the tritone melody ultimately resolves down rather than up. Furthermore, Debussy uses the motive as a local-level event. Surely it serves an important purpose – it creates a striking, though short-lived, step outside of the previously established character of the music

¹⁵⁷ There is also a change in the supporting harmony.

that brings about a swift change in the mood and atmosphere of the music – but it lacks significance on levels below the surface of the music. Despite the difference in effect, the similarities between “Lydia” and “Fleur des blés” are clear, perhaps lending credence to the assumption that Debussy’s song was composed earlier than its printed date of 1880, but certainly forging yet another connection between the young Debussy and his then better-known predecessor.

“Nuit d’étoiles” is commonly known as Debussy’s first published composition (see Example 5.9 for text and translation). Popular today and often performed, the song has a fairly uneventful melody line; it is primarily conjunct and stays mostly within the range of an octave (expanding on occasion to a major tenth or perfect eleventh). There is also a fair amount of chromaticism stemming from brief journeys through harmonically robust areas, but such instances are harmonically rather than melodically driven. The first stanza (and its subsequent returns as a refrain) has a clear and effective use of modal mixture that shades the color of the melody to fit the text. Example 5.33 shows mm. 7–23 of the song, which includes the second couplet of the first stanza of text. The song is in Eb major, but the passage in Example 5.33 features a brief move to F minor that culminates with a cadence in m. 17. Afterwards, the home key (Eb) returns and eventually closes the stanza with a cadence in m. 23. In m. 13, shortly after the word “triste” [sad] Debussy introduces a Db in the piano part; the addition of scale-degree b7 darkens the atmosphere of the song almost immediately. Additionally, it alters the quality of the supertonic chords in mm. 13 and 15 to be diatonic in the secondary key area of F minor. In m. 15 Debussy introduces the Db in the voice over the text “qui soupire” [that sighs]. The half step motions C-Db-C in mm. 14–16 aptly serve as a “sigh” motive. After the authentic cadence in F

minor in m. 17, Debussy shifts back to the home key of Eb major and corrects the Db back to a diatonic D natural.

Example 5.33: Debussy, “Nuit d’etoiles,” Modal Mixture in Melody

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Nuit d'etoiles". It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 7-13) features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "voies, Sous ta brise et tes parfums, Triste ly...". The second system (measures 14-19) continues the vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are: "re Qui sou-pire, Je rêve aux amours défunts, Je". The third system (measures 20-22) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "rêve aux amours défunts." Chord annotations are provided below the piano part: Fm: ii^{♭4} 2 ii^{♭7} (measures 7-13); V⁴ 2 V⁷ ii^{♭6} 5 ii^{♭7} V⁴ 2 Eb: i ii⁷ ii^{♭4} 3 ii^{♭6} 5 ii^{♭4} 2 ii^{♭7} (measures 14-19); V^{♭9} V¹¹♭9 I (measures 20-22).

Although Debussy extinguishes the Db in m. 17, he introduces a lowered submediant (Cb) in the voice and piano in m. 18; the piano right hand doubles the voice in mm. 17–19, making the modal alteration especially prevalent. Although the voice doesn’t sing a Cb after m. 20, the alteration remains in the piano, serving as a flattened ninth in the cadential dominant chord in mm. 21–22.

ii^{♭4}
2

The melody in the passage is well-constructed¹⁵⁸ but not especially novel. However, with the subtle addition of some modal mixture, Debussy carefully adjusts the melody to express the mood of the poem. The text “Triste lyre qui soupire, Je rêve aux amours défunts” [I am a sad lyre that is sighing, I dream of past loves] takes a notable turn (if a little unexpected after the vivid and optimistic first couplet), creating a darker, almost forlorn atmosphere. Debussy mirrors the text with some delicately placed modal chromaticism that helps convey the mood of poem. Debussy’s use of such a simple and transparent (but effective) melodic device in “Nuit d’etoiles” imitates the processes used by other composers. Notably examples include Fauré’s “Lydia,” which also uses inflections from the minor mode as a method of word painting, and Duparc’s “Élégie,” which uses minor intervals to convey sadness in a way that mimic Debussy’s C-Db-C “sigh” motive in this song. Although the modal mixture in “Nuit d’etoiles” isn’t a uniquely melodic feature, it is prominent nonetheless. That the modal chromaticism also occurs in the piano during the passage cited above only strengthens the song’s contribution to the genre of the *mélodie*. The text is important, the melody is important, the piano is important; they all work together to convey the mood and atmosphere of the poem.

“Beau soir” occupies an interesting position in Debussy’s œuvre. Considered by many to be an early song, the specific date of composition is unknown. We know that the song was published in 1891 (Debussy 1993, 1:12); however, it could have been composed as early as 1876. Lockspeiser (1978, 1:236) indicates 1876; Kœchlin argues 1878 (Briscoe 1979, 392); Dietschy (1990, 196) suggests 1886;¹⁵⁹ Lesure advocates for 1880 (Briscoe 1979, 392); and

¹⁵⁸ The melody checks all the boxes, so to speak, of a good melody as defined by many theory textbooks in classrooms today: the rhythm is simple and appropriate for the meter; pitches in the melody fit into the underlying harmonies; the contour is primary conjunct with a single focal point (the G5 in m. 17); large leaps are prepared and resolved properly; and there are no frustrated tendency tones. See Kostka, Payne, Almén 2018, 66–67.

¹⁵⁹ Briscoe (1979, 392) indicates that Dietschy claims the date of composition is 1879.

Briscoe dates the song to 1883 (Debussy 1993, 1:61). Briscoe, however, notes that the song is more stylistically advanced than many early songs and that it could very well have been composed closer to the publication date than most expect (1:12). For the sake of argument I regard “Beau Soir” as having been composed in the early 1880s. The source text is a poem by Paul Bourget (Example 5.34).

Example 5.34: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Text and Translation¹⁶⁰

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses,
Et qu’un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé,
Un conseil d’être heureux semble sortir des choses
Et monter vers le cœur troublé;

When the rivers are rosy in the setting sun,
And a warm shudder runs over the wheat field,
A plea for happiness seems to rise out of things
And climb towards the troubled heart;

Un conseil de goûter le charme d’être au monde
Cependant qu’on est jeune et que le soir est beau,
Car nous nous en allons, comme s’en va cette onde:
Elle à la mer—nous au tombeau!

A plea to relish the charm of life
While we are young and the evening is beautiful,
For we pass away, as the wave passes;
It to the sea, we to the tomb!

The poem reflects on the human condition, touching on the aspects of emotion (“troubled heart” “happiness”) and mortality. Bourget sets this meditation within the comforting and expressive backdrop of nature; one can almost feel the warmth of the sun, see the rustling wheat and rosy water, and hear the waves of the river. Though quite brief, Bourget expertly creates a vivid scene of a “beautiful evening.”

Debussy mirrors in his song the simple contemplation that is embedded in the poem. The vocal melody is, on the surface, fairly plain and unadorned. The range of the melody is moderately large – C4 to F#5 – but doesn’t explore any registral extremes; the upper limit isn’t especially challenging considering the range of many of Debussy’s early songs. Additionally, there aren’t any jagged dissonant intervals, wide leaps, or overly disjunct passages, as might be seen in the songs of Fauré or Duparc; rather, the melody is a healthy blend of stepwise motion and small, often triadic, leaps with a modest amount of modal mixture and chromaticism. But

¹⁶⁰ Text taken from Cobb 1982, 96.

slightly below the musical foreground there is tighter organization based around neighbor motives (Example 5.35).

Example 5.35: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Introduction Neighbor Motives¹⁶¹

The image displays three levels of musical analysis for the introduction of Debussy's "Beau soir".

- Level A:** Shows the original score for voice and piano. The voice part has the lyrics "Lorsque au sol-leil cou". The piano accompaniment features a prominent triplet figure in both hands.
- Level B:** Annotated version of the piano accompaniment from Level A. Dotted lines and arrows highlight specific neighbor motions (tritone relationships) between notes in the triplet figures.
- Level C:** A skeletal representation of the piano accompaniment. It uses dotted lines to show the underlying harmonic structure and the neighbor motions identified in Level B, stripping away the rhythmic and melodic details.

Example 5.35 shows the opening of the song on three different levels. Level A is the music as written, Level B is the music with several annotated neighbor motions, and Level C is a skeletal

¹⁶¹ See Appendix for full song.

reduction of the neighbor motions. One could easily choose which of these neighbors to privilege depending on the analytical point being observed. There is, however, another strain of neighbor motions that is less obvious but has a deeper significance (Example 5.36).

Example 5.36: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Turn Figure

The image displays two analytical readings, labeled A and B, of a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir". Both readings are in the key of D major and 3/4 time. Reading A shows a piano accompaniment with a vocal line. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and slurs. Reading B shows a different analytical perspective on the same piano accompaniment, focusing on a different neighbor motion structure. The vocal line in both readings includes the lyrics "Lorsque au sol leil cou".

In the above example, the upper voice of the piano includes two neighbor motions comprising a turn figure.¹⁶² This reading has a certain charm to it; it accounts for a deeper, more pervasive, neighbor structure; it creates an expressive line embedded within the accompaniment; it accounts for the entire four-bar introduction; and it creates interesting connections with the vocal melody (to be discussed presently) and the form and structure of the song as a whole (to be discussed in Ch. 6).

¹⁶² This is the preferred reading of Charles Burkhart (2016), who sees this motion as a fundamental structure for the song as a whole.

Neighbor motions are, of course, quite common in Debussy's music (in most music, actually – they just seem to have a larger, often more structural, significance in Debussy's music); some even suggest that the high prominence of neighbor motions contribute a sense of immobility in Debussy's work.¹⁶³ Such a statement may initially seem pejorative given that immobility implies a lack of direction, which, given the criticisms of Debussy for often downplaying traditional V-I closure and cadences, isn't always untrue. However, a more positive, and I think more accurate, way to interpret the issue of immobility is to cast it in an interpretive light. The text for "Beau soir" is quite thoughtful. By making substantial use of neighbor motions Debussy creates an environment that invites the listener to focus on the moment, rather than following a dramatic unfolding of the music.¹⁶⁴ The music may be immobile to a degree, but more importantly it is contemplatively expressive.

The vocal melody – though lacking the expressive features of melodies by Fauré and Duparc – is intimately connected to the piano. Measures 5–10 are a repetition of mm. 1–5 in the piano but with the notable addition of the voice; they feature the same neighbor motions and turn figure as in the beginning. At times the voice joins with the turn figure and at other times it provides a cover line (Example 5.37). In mm. 5–7 the first three members of the turn figure – G#-A-G# – align pretty well with the piano part. In mm. 8–9, however, the voice continues its ascent toward E5 in m. 9, providing a descant to the turn figure in the inner voice. Additionally, the G natural (F double sharp) of the figure in m. 8 does not actually appear in the voice; it appears only in the piano part. At the end of the passage in m. 9, the two parts join again on the G# to finish the figure.

¹⁶³ Saul Novack made this comment to Charles Burkhart (2016, 131).

¹⁶⁴ This statement, of course, aptly applies to much of Debussy's music in which the listener is invited to experience the music in the moment. (This characteristic is perhaps why Debussy is often labeled an impressionist).

Example 5.37: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Turn figure and Voice

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir," focusing on the "Turn figure and Voice" section. The score is divided into two parts, A and B.

Part A: This section shows the vocal line and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in French: "Lorsque au sol leil cou-chant les ri - viè - res sont ro - ses, Et qu'un tiè - de fris". The piano accompaniment features a prominent triplet figure in both the right and left hands, which is the "turn figure" mentioned in the title. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Part B: This section provides a detailed view of the piano accompaniment, specifically the right hand. It shows the triplet figure with fingerings (5, 3, 1) and articulation marks. The left hand is also shown with fingerings and articulation marks. The key signature and time signature remain the same as in Part A.

Thus, the voice and piano are inseparably linked; neither is sufficient alone and together they strengthen the fabric of the music beyond their individual contributions. Although the connection between the melody and the piano here is different from the approaches one would expect to see from other composers of the time, the effect is similar. As the *mélodie* continued to mature as a genre, the piano part became more important and the melody itself gained prominence as more than simply a conveyor of text. In “Beau Soir,” Debussy represented the poetry in a way that showed a great deal of thought and consideration of the text, but also did so in a way that upheld the conventions of the genre; text, melody, and piano accompaniment occur not as separate but related parameters, but rather an inseparable trinity promoting Debussy’s interpretation of Bourget’s meditation on the human condition. I address this song further in the next chapter

when I examine the more unique aspects of Debussy's early songs and delineate their merit as an independent repertoire.

The melody in "Aimons-nous et dormons" (see Example 5.21–5.24 for text and translation and an examination of the accompaniment) is, like many of Debussy's songs composed around the same time ("Rondeau" and "Fleur des blés" in particular), fairly triadic in design. There are certainly conjunct passages, some bordering on lush, but the character of the vocal line is predominantly defined by small chordal leaps. One novel aspect of this *mélodie*, however, is Debussy's motivic organization. As noted earlier in this chapter, Debussy designed his piano part around three identifiable patterns, one for each stanza of poetry and section of the song. He also relied on motivic organization in the vocal melody, but focused on a much tighter family of motives that function throughout the entire song; rather than demarcating formal boundaries, the melodic motives serve to convey motion, or a lack thereof. Example 5.38 shows each of the motives; Motive 1 has three variants (A, B, and C), Motive 2 has two variants (A and B), and Motive 3 has only a single presentation. Motive 1 is the most prevalent throughout the song; it occurs three times (labeled A, B, and C in the above example). It occurs in each of the three stanzas, is set against each of the three identifiable accompaniment patterns, and is present in every key area of the song. Furthermore, Motive 1 initiates the first and third stanzas of poetry; the second stanza begins differently. Motive 2 is a variation on Motive 1 and always occurs as a response eight measures later. Debussy uses Motive 2 quite consistently; it always comes at the same place in the poem, initiating the fourth line of poetry in the first and third stanzas. Motive 3 is a descending line and is clearly different from the first two motives. It occurs only once at the beginning of the second stanza.

Example 5.38: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Melodic Motives¹⁶⁵

Motive 1

A
St. 1
mm. 2-3

Ai - mons - nous et dor - mons

B
St. 2
mm. 26-27

En pas - sant n'o - se - drai

C
St. 3
mm. 36-37

Et lors - que nos deux cœurs S'en i -

Motive 2

A
St. 1
mm. 10-11

Tant que nous nous ai - mons

B
St. 3
mm. 45-46

A - lors, com - me deux fleurs,

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix for full song.

Motive 3

St. 2
mm. 18-19

Le so - leil s'è - tein - drait

Under the immediate musical surface, all of the motives fall into two types, Type 1 and Type 2. The first type is an idea that includes a scalar line. The second type includes a neighbor motive. See the reduction below the music in Example 5.39. Motive Type 1 occurs in ascending and descending versions. The rising version – Type 1A – is the most common, occurring three times in the song. The descending version – Type 1B – only occurs once at the beginning of the second stanza.¹⁶⁶ The difference between Type 1A and Type 2 is subtle. Both make their way back to scale-degree 5 (B), but in Type 2 Debussy does not arrive at scale-degree 1 (E) in the second measure of the motive. This small difference changes the goal of the line. In Type 1A, Debussy carries the momentum through the leading tone to the tonic, satisfying expectations for resolution. Although he then descends back to B on the second beat, the rhythmic and textual stress fall on the first beat, making the beginning of the measure a natural and satisfying point of arrival. Type 2 still resolves on the first beat of the second measure of the motive, but Debussy frustrates the leading tone by never ascending to the tonic scale degree. This elevates the preceding C# to a higher status; C# (scale degree 6) is better suited to resolve down to B than is D# (leading tone). No longer is the resolution from D#-E prominent (or even present); rather, the shape of the figure is now an upper neighbor motion – B-C#-B – elaborating scale degree 5.

¹⁶⁶ In Example 5.39 I have shown only one occurrence Motive 1A. Although it occurs in different keys and at different pitch levels (as shown in Example 5.38), they all include the same figure and are thus unnecessary to reproduce.

Motive Type 1B reverses the direction of the scalar line to prolong a I^{M7} . It is, as previously mentioned, different than either Type 1A or Type 2 and factors less prominently in the song as a whole.

Example 5.39: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Two Types of Motives

Type 1

A

Ai - mons - nous et dor - mons.

B

Le so - leil s'é - tein - drait

Type 2

Considering the main two motives – Type 1A and 2 – I am drawn back to Saul Novack’s comment to Charles Burkhart mentioned earlier (footnote 163) that neighbor motions convey a sense of immobility. If neighbor figures are inherently stagnant, then surely more linear melodic figures convey motion. This suggests that in “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Types 1A and 1B are more active motives and Type 2 is more contemplative. Debussy’s placement of active versus contemplative motives is intentional and consistent throughout the song (Example 5.40).

Example 5.40: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Distribution and Placement of Motives

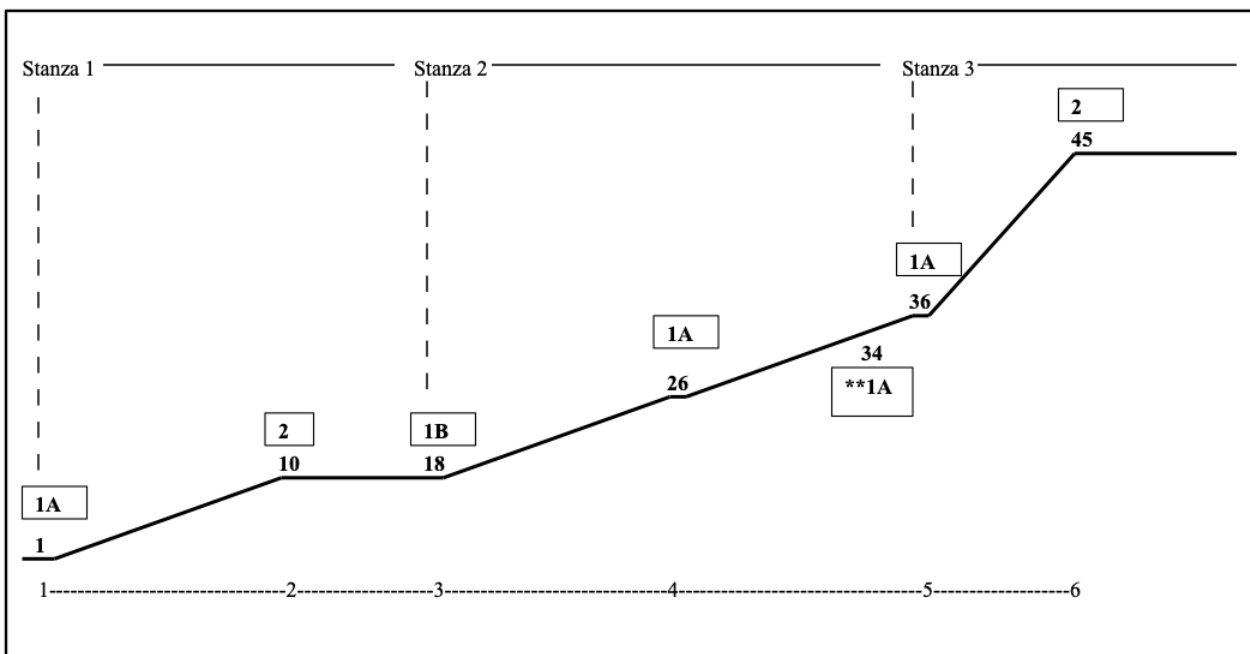
Stanza:	1		2		3	
Measure:	1	10	18	26	36	45
Line/Type:	1 – 1A	4 – 2	1 – 1B	4 – 1A	1 – 1A	4 – 2
Motion:	Active	Contemplative	Act.	Act.	Act.	Cont.

Notice in the above example that the motives occur consistently on the first and fourth lines of each stanza. Furthermore, each stanza begins with an active motive. The first and third stanzas begin with the rising motive (Type 1A) and have the contemplative neighbor motives, Type 2, at

their rough midpoint.¹⁶⁷ The second stanza begins with the lone occurrence of motive Type 1B (descending melody) and has Type 1A at its midpoint; both motives in St. 2 are of the active type.

“Aimons-nous et dormons” is comprised of six 8-bar phrases, each of which begins with one of the motives mentioned above.¹⁶⁸ Debussy’s distribution of motives helps guide and direct momentum throughout the *mélodie* (Example 5.41).

Example 5.41: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Motive Momentum Graph



In Example 5.41, unboxed bolded numbers represent measures in the music, boxed numbers identify motives, and the solid black line represents motion; ascending lines signify active motion (Types 1A and 1B) and long horizontal plateaus signify contemplative motion (Type 2). The dotted line on the lower X axis of the example marks each of the six phrases. It is important to keep in mind that, although I am focusing my discussion on the momentum initiated by each

¹⁶⁷ Each stanza has seven lines. So, although the fourth line isn’t exactly the midpoint, it is as close as you can get without splitting lines.

¹⁶⁸ The six phrases account for forty-eight of the total fifty-three measures. An extra measure at the beginning and end, and a two-bar extension before the third stanza account for the remaining measures.

motive, the music throughout each phrase ebbs and flows as would be expected of a good melody. The first stanza begins with an active motive [1A], creating the initial energy for the song. Debussy then stalls the momentum in m. 10 with the first contemplative motive [2]. Stanza 2 begins with another active motive – this time Type 1B – and continues with an additional active motive [1A] at the midpoint in m. 26. In mm. 34–35 at the end of St. 2 Debussy writes a brief two-bar extension that includes a statement of motive Type 1A in the piano. This statement of the motive – the only time it occurs in the piano – is doubled in octaves in the right hand and bridges the gap between the second and third stanzas, further emphasizing motive Type 1A and the general gain in intensity between mm. 18–45 (shown in the graph by the progressively ascending line).¹⁶⁹ Stanza 3 begins in m. 26 with motive Type 1A, but Debussy extends this rendition of the motive by making the melody longer, lush, and more dramatic (to be discussed shortly). Stanza 3 concludes with one final statement of the Type 2 motive that slows momentum and prepares for the end of the song.

The overall effect of Debussy's motivic organization is one of growing intensity. The first stanza has a driving, energetic opening (which is also conveyed by the rhythmic intensity of the piano) and a contemplative ending. The second stanza reestablishes and maintains the energetic drive, ultimately leading into St. 3 and the climax of the song. Growing out of the energy created in St. 2, the third stanza begins with an elaborate, climactic version of motive Type 1A¹⁷⁰ before abating in intensity with one final statement of the contemplative Type 2

¹⁶⁹ Measures 34–35 are also the only time Debussy significantly deviates from the 8-bar phrase structure of the song. Using a familiar motive in this passage not only continues the intensity of the song, it also helps create a discernable connection between the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment.

¹⁷⁰ In the graph of Example 5.41, the line representing this motive in m. 36 is steeper than preceding 1A lines, symbolizing the increased intensity created by this version of the motive.

motive. Shortly after the final statement of the Type 2 motive, Debussy brings the song to a close.

As noted in Example 5.41, the second stanza only has active motives, which creates a powerful drive into the third stanza; Debussy’s use of motive Type 1A in the piano as a connective gesture between sections (mm. 34–35) only adds weight to the drive. As shown in Example 5.42, at the beginning of St. 3 Debussy extends motive 1A an additional two measures (mm. 38–39).

Example 5.42: Debussy, “Aimons-nous et dormons,” Extended Motive Type 1A, Third Stanza.

The image shows a musical score for the third stanza of Debussy's "Aimons-nous et dormons". It consists of two systems of vocal and piano parts. The first system covers measures 36 and 37, and the second system covers measures 38 and 39. The vocal line is in French, with lyrics: "Et lors - que nos deux cœurs S'en i - ront aux sphè - res heu - reu - - ses". The piano accompaniment features a rising scalar motive in the right hand and a more active bass line. Roman numerals (iv, bVI, I) are indicated below the piano part, and measure numbers 36 and 39 are clearly marked. Dotted lines connect the vocal line to the piano accompaniment, showing the alignment of notes.

Measures 36–37 feature the familiar rising scalar motive (Type 1A); however, Debussy slightly alters the end of the motive in m. 37 by extending the length of the Ab4 that is the goal of the line. Extending the Ab4 allows the following Eb4 – a subsidiary note in previous motives – to become the anacrusis to the next measure. Measure 38 then includes a more elaborate drive back

to the tonic scale degree of the passage (Ab5), this time via an arpeggio outlining the lowered submediant (Fb). Then in m. 39 we see the familiar descent from scale degree 1 to 5 that was expected in m. 37. By extending the motive, Debussy creates two goal points marked by arrivals at the tonic scale degree. The first falls expectedly on the first beat of the second measure of motive Type 1A (m. 37), but this turns out to be a temporary goal. Debussy then extends the melody through an additional measure to arrive at the tonic in m. 39 – an octave higher than expected – to complete the extended motive.

Fitting for the climax of the song, Debussy does more than extend his melody; he combines it with a shift in harmonic color and some text painting. Harmonically, in m. 38 Debussy shifts temporarily to the minor mode, briefly touching on iv but focusing primarily on bVI. This shift to and from a chromatic mediant is rather lush and draws the listener's attention to the melodic extension. The text – “Et lorsque nos deux cœurs, S'en iront aux spheres heureuses” [And when our two hearts, Shall go away to happy realms] – speaks of the final destination of the lovers in the poem; they go away – presumably up¹⁷¹ – to happy realms. Debussy mimics the ascent of the lovers in the poem by soaring up to the highest pitch¹⁷² of the song over the text “Shall go away to happy realms.” The passage in mm. 36–39 is brief, but in it Debussy brings together several compositional strands. The melody begins with an active motive and is then extended beyond what is expected, the harmony makes a quick and unexpected shift in mode to catch the listener's attention, and the text and melody work together to emphasize the

¹⁷¹ The next line of text, “Where celestial lilies shall bloom beneath our tears,” confirms that the lovers are ascending.

¹⁷² The highest note of the song in the voice is a G#5/Ab5. Debussy writes G#5 several times, but the Ab5 only once in m. 39. Although the pitches are enharmonic, there is something symbolic about the Ab occurring visually higher on the staff that emphasizes the note in this climactic passage.

lover's ascent to "happy realms." The result is an effective climax to the song.¹⁷³

Perhaps two of the most unique sections of this song are the ends of the first and third stanzas where Debussy uses a Type 2 neighbor motive to stall forward motion and create a more contemplative atmosphere. Example 5.43 shows the first and third stanzas of text.

Example 5.43: Debussy, "Aimons-nous et dormons," First and Third Stanzas of Text.

Stanza 1

Let us love and sleep
Without thinking of the rest of the world;
Neither the surge of the sea, nor the mountain storm,
As long as we love each other,
Shall touch your blonde head,
For love is stronger
Than the Gods or death!

Stanza 3

And when our two hearts
Depart for happy realms
Where celestial lilies will bloom beneath our tears,
Then, like two flowers,
Let us join our loving lips,
And try to extinguish
Death with a kiss!

In Example 5.43, the last four lines of each stanza are bolded; a Type 2 neighbor motive begins the fourth line in both passages. The ends of both stanzas share an interesting textual connection: they both mention death, more particularly love being more powerful than or overcoming death. In St. 1, the message seems to be that natural forces (be it nature or death), or even God, are no match for the love shared by the couple in the poem.¹⁷⁴ In St. 3 the couple takes action, seeking to overcome (extinguish) death with a kiss. Debussy likely chose to focus on these two passages precisely because their message is strong and daring; aside from the allusions to nature, the "love over death" idea is the most consistent theme in the poem. Furthermore, the text in each of these passages tends to be, like the motives that begin them, very contemplative. The text (and reflective motives) in other passages is more active; themes of nature (the sea, the storm, the

¹⁷³ It is interesting to note that the beginning of this passage very nearly coincides with the golden ratio. Since the song is fifty-three measures, the golden mean would occur around m. 33, which is slightly before this passage begins in m. 36. Although not exact, I think it noteworthy that the beginning of the climactic phrase and the golden point of the song are in such close proximity.

¹⁷⁴ The poetic phrase is a little peculiar when examining the last four lines because the fifth line is a response to the third line. So, the last four lines of St. 1 are partially dependent on the third line. This slight disjuncture is likely due to Debussy's effort to make the musical phrasing consistent at eight bars each.

wind, the forest, the sun) abound and seem determined to undermine the couple's love. Debussy's use of motive Type 2 (neighbor motive), and indeed his motivic design throughout "Aimons-nous et dormons," is a subtle but effective way to align musical gestures with important parts of the poem. These small two-measure figures set the tone for each phrase and create a motivic map of sorts that guides the listener through the song. This perhaps straddles the line between conventional approaches and those that are more distinctly Debussyian. The young composer used text painting and motivic unity throughout the song, but went a little deeper than many of his predecessors would have gone by integrating his motivic design with the direction of the piece and his interpretation of the poetry. As the 1880s progressed, Debussy used this type of compositional approach (that is, integrating musical and poetic interpretive elements on a deeper, even structural, level) more and more, ultimately contributing much to the evolution of the genre of the *mélodie*.

Debussy's approach to melody in his early songs, at times, very much aligns with the approaches used by his colleagues and predecessors. Some common techniques are necessarily unavoidable. To attempt to do so would be to actively resist the rich tradition of art-song composition forged by major and minor composers alike not only from France, but from many countries. A staunch avoidance of parameters such as modal mixture, text painting, and motivic design would suggest a profound disconnection from the culture of the art and would almost certainly reflect poorly on a composer of any age, in any stage of their career, from any country. This is doubly true for a young composer such as Debussy was in the early 1880s. There are surely other melodic features that I did not address, but many are difficult – and less informative – to categorize in a concise way. An example would be the similarity in melodic profile of "Fleur des blès," "Rondeau," and "Aimons-nous et dormons," all of which feature overly triadic

melodies. Triads are ubiquitous throughout tonal music, so much so that to say that melodies include triads has little significance, especially when examining a larger repertoire. Melody will, of course, be a parameter that receives further attention in the next chapter when I discuss more distinctly Debussyian characteristics of the early song repertoire. However, it would be ineffective and less meaningful to examine Debussyian characteristics in the early songs without first addressing the less distinctly Debussyian features that I have addressed in this chapter.

Conclusion

Despite his burgeoning rebellious spirit that was moving ever closer to the fore of his personality during his time at the conservatoire in the early 1880s, Debussy participated quite peacefully in the tradition of the *mélodie* in many of his earliest songs. We can see many similarities between the approaches taken by the young Debussy and many other composers – both young and old – of the time. Text, piano accompaniment, and melody are three especially prevalent areas but I believe such a statement applies equally well to other parameters, harmony perhaps most notable among them. I have avoided harmony as a separate category for discussion because it remained fairly consistent throughout and beyond Debussy's early song repertoire and plays less of a part in defining the repertoire or Debussy's compositional style during this period. Furthermore, many have used harmonic structure (or a lack thereof) as the basis for their discussions of Debussy's music. In addition to the larger goals of this project, I also hope to emphasize that Debussy's charm as a composer and the sound he cultivates are driven by much more than harmony.

By the 1880s the *mélodie* had become a fully developed genre. It was, however, still growing and maturing as composers continued to push boundaries and develop their compositional languages in an effort to cultivate a distinctly French style of art song on par with

the German *Lied*. Considering Debussy's music within this already vibrant and growing tradition is essential for interpreting his development as a composer in an appropriate way, apart from the anachronistic comparisons made by some that cast a somewhat pejorative light on the young composer. When examined anachronistically under the looming shadow of the twentieth-century Debussy, many features of the early songs amount to little more than stepping stones on the path to maturity. When viewed within a proper chronological narrative, however, we are able to see how he grew out of and built upon the style and conventions of the time. In this respect, many features of Debussy's music and his compositional approach become more noteworthy and his early song repertoire earns significance not dependent on comparisons with his more mature compositional style. I hope that this chapter has laid suitable groundwork for appreciating Debussy's early songs as significant in their own right, and has established a basis for interpreting the truly novel Debussyian characteristics to be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

PUSHING THE GENRE FORWARD – DEFINING A REPERTOIRE

“Il n’ya pas de théorie! Suffit d’entendre. Le plaisir est la règle” [There is no theory! Just listen. Pleasure is the law] (Branger et al. 2012, 284). I opened the second chapter of this document with these very words (Debussy’s own), but I find them to be an apt way of beginning this chapter in my study. The more one studies Debussy and the more time one spends with his music, the more the meaning of this statement changes. This declaration – made to Ernest Guiraud in the late 1880s – is a popular Debussyism and is often quoted, mostly for the initial shock value of the statement. Initially it seems to explain much. Debussy’s music, after all, has a reputation for defying many of the rules we were taught to hold sacred as young musicians. Taken at face value, Debussy’s words pose a real problem for analysts everywhere, myself included. Thankfully the statement is more a testament to Debussy’s personality than an indisputable fact. Of course there is a theory (or theories); without a somewhat unified approach to composition Debussy’s music wouldn’t sound like Debussy.

A deeper layer of understanding relates to the second half of the statement – “Just listen. Pleasure is the law.” This gets us closer to the truth. Regardless of the extent to which there is or is not a theory, a greater understanding of Debussy’s music inevitably arises from listening without specific expectations (resolutions, thematic development and organization, harmonic function, etc). When we loosen our expectations, we begin to appreciate the sounds themselves and tend to be drawn to the most compelling and consistent ones. Furthermore, we begin to view the oddities in a more positive light; they may be difficult to explain, but they are what make the music exciting and beautiful. They also make us wonder why he chose the sounds he did and how he achieved them, which inevitably leads us to consider other, potentially non-musical,

contributing factors. Poetry; painting; Debussy's life and career; and the political, economical, and artistic culture of the time are just some areas that one is drawn to when seeking to understand and explain Debussy's music. Because so much of Debussy's music goes against the grain of theoretical principles, fully appreciating Debussy's music requires a more holistic approach, one that blends Debussy's life and the culture he lived in with theory and analysis.

An additional way to interpret the statement is more abstract than the first two. When Debussy said there is no theory, I believe he was saying there is no one unified, strictly musical path for understanding and appreciating his music. After spending a great deal of time examining Debussy the man and studying his music, it has become quite clear that there is always more at work in his music than can be explained by musical procedures alone; we almost always have to look to other arts, Debussy's biography, or current trends for his time to fully appreciate his music, particularly the seemingly bizarre or difficult to explain passages. However Debussy intended his statement from above to be taken, it has become more valuable as an indication to look beyond the music for understanding than a statement to be taken verbatim. Debussy's early songs are much more receptive to theoretical explanation via common analytical parameters (functional harmony, melody, voice leading, etc.) than some of his later work; nonetheless, looking beyond the immediate musical environment has provided fruitful guidance for determining the factors that allow the early songs to be considered a unified repertoire, for discovering characteristics that give the songs significance beyond the origin of his mature compositional style, and for uncovering some distinctly Debussyian approaches to art song composition.

The songs Debussy composed prior to his departure for Rome after winning the coveted Prix de Rome form a unique repertoire within his larger compositional output but are also highly

varied. Debussy rarely uses the same compositional technique in exactly the same way in more than one song; nevertheless, there are consistencies in his compositional approach. In previous chapters I have organized my discussion of music by compositional parameter with a heavy focus on the text, piano accompaniment, and melody, addressing several songs within each category. In this chapter, rather than discussing the same feature or parameter across several songs, I put a greater emphasis on addressing larger sections or entire songs. Examining the songs more holistically helps illustrate the collective features of each song that contribute to their classification as a repertoire and also allows me to situate the different features of a song within a larger context, thus giving a fuller account of the musical events; it is often the case that the sum of different compositional features within a song is greater than the individual worth of each parameter. Although I address the songs in a more comprehensive manner, not all songs receive the same amount of discussion and certain features may receive more discussion in some songs than in others.

Presenting a fuller analysis of each song makes some parameters that have received less attention thus far more viable for illustrating consistencies among the songs. Schenkerian structures are notable among such features. Debussy's songs often have background structures that do not align with traditional *Ursatzen*. Rather, other figures – such as neighbor motions, turn figures, and arpeggios – function as the deepest structural paradigms. Alternate background structures are not uncommon in much of Debussy's music but are nonetheless relevant in the early songs, especially because they point the way to more significant middle- and foreground features. Textual anomalies are perhaps among the most important characteristics that are highlighted by structural features, which, in turn, generally tie directly into Debussy's biography or some other non-musical factor. Deep middleground and background structures can reveal a

web of interconnected features that contributes much to understanding the songs and relates them to each other in the repertoire. In addition to creating consistencies between songs, this particular feature (or string of connected features) gives each song a depth of significance, demonstrating compositional prowess worthy of much more than a starting point for comparing later works.

Another way that addressing whole songs helps contribute a sense of cohesiveness to the early song repertoire is that characteristics that have been previously addressed in an effort to situate Debussy within the culture and tradition of the *mélodie* can be addressed in terms of their distinctly Debussyian qualities. Melody and accompaniment both fall into this category and are dependent upon Debussy's personal relationships and interest in other art forms. One especially clear example is Debussy's relationship with Marie Vasnier and the effect she had on his writing. Debussy's relationship with Mme. Vasnier is a tangled web of personal and professional interactions, documented evidence, and circumstantial assumptions, but from a strictly musical standpoint Vasnier's influence on Debussy's *mélodies* is clear. Songs in which Mme. Vasnier is the dedicatee make up the bulk of Debussy's songs composed between 1880 and 1885; the poetry he selected, the way he designed his vocal melodies, and the subtext imbedded in the intended performance medium – Vasnier singing and Debussy playing the piano – contributes much to establishing a set of consistent features across many different songs.

This chapter is dedicated to the dual purpose of showing how Debussy contributed to the growing sophistication of the *mélodie* in the 1880s and to identifying characteristics that group the songs into Debussy's first clearly definable repertoire. I address both goals simultaneously for two primary reasons. The first reason is that many of my observations contribute to both goals; many features evident across the repertoire are also distinctly Debussyian and contribute to the evolution of the genre. The second reason is that both goals contribute to the larger and

perhaps more significant endeavor of establishing a foundation for regarding the songs as significant compositions in their own right. In addition to contributing to the growth of the genre of the *mélodie* and to establishing a consistency in design and sound, the characteristics of Debussy's complex yet subtle and intelligent compositional aesthetic, examined within the context of the genre of the *mélodie*, make a convincing argument for the inherent worth of each song. In order to establish an order for discussion that does not directly or indirectly privilege any one *mélodie* over another, the following discussion of Debussy's early songs is organized chronologically.

“Nuit d'étoiles”¹⁷⁵

“Nuit d'étoiles” (L. 4) is based on a poem by Théodore de Banville and is Debussy's first published song; it is, however, likely not his earliest composed song.¹⁷⁶ Banville's original poem has four stanzas and is very melancholy (Example 6.1). The first stanza sets the mood for the poem; it includes the title of the poem (Starry Night) and sets up a dark, sad, and longing atmosphere. The second stanza reflects on the first, emphasizing the gloomy and despondent character of the poem, and ends by introducing the primary subject of the poem: the narrator's lost love. The third stanza returns briefly to focus on the narrator but ends with a physical description of his lost love as an awakened soul and ghostly apparition. The fourth stanza elaborates more fully on his love, offering a picturesque description of her features, and moves away from the grim scene set up in the previous stanza.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix for music.

¹⁷⁶ It is preceded in his thematic catalogue by “Ballade a La Lune” (L.1), “Madrid” (L.2), and a Piano Trio in G major (L.3). “Ballade a La Lune” was composed ca. 1879 on a text by Alfred Musset; it is unpublished and the manuscript has not been found. The song is known only via the recollection of Paul Vidal from May 1926 (Briscoe 1990, 49). “Madrid” was also based on text by Musset; it is unpublished and the manuscript is housed in the Morgan Library (57). The piano trio was published posthumously in 1986.

¹⁷⁷ See Ch. 5 for more on Banville's text.

Example 6.1: Banville, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Text and Translation¹⁷⁸

Nuit d’étoiles, sous tes voiles, Sous ta brise et tes parfums, Triste lyre qui soupire, Je rêve aux amours défunts.	Starry night, beneath your veils, Beneath your breeze and your perfumes, I am a sad lyre that is sighing, I dream of past loves.
La sereine mélancolie Vient éclore au fond de mon cœur, Et j’entends l’âme de ma mie Tressaillir dans le bois rêveur.	Quiet melancholy comes and breaks forth The depths of my heart, And I hear the soul of my love Tremble in the dreaming wood.
Dans les ombres de la feuillée Quand tout bas je soupier seul, Tu reviens, pauvre âme éveillée, Toute blanche dans ton linceuil.	In the leafy shadows When I sigh alone You return, poor awakened soul, All white in your shroud.
Je revois à notre fontaine Tes regards bleus comme les cieux; Cette rose, c’est ton haleine, Et ces étoiles sont tes yeux.	I again see in our fountain Your gaze, blue as the sky; This rose, it is your breath, And these stars are your eyes.

Debussy set the first, second, and fourth stanzas in his *mélodie*, omitting the third stanza entirely. The question as to why he chose to omit the third stanza is a curious one. Three stanzas would fit more easily into a three-part form; most of his early songs are rounded binary or ternary in design. But such is not the case with this song (to be discussed shortly). To find an answer we have to deconstruct Debussy’s interpretive process, keeping in mind that he had a deeper – certainly a more opinionated and somewhat obstinate – process than others. Where other composers might have sought to express the poet’s intention, Debussy quite unashamedly sought to express his own, regardless whether it matched the poet’s interpretation or not. The third stanza in Banville’s original poem greatly affects the tenor of the poem. When present, it casts a grim, almost macabre, light on the narrator’s lost love. We discover that she is lost because she has died; her reappearance shrouded in white confirms her death and opens the door for thought as to the manner of her death (sudden? tragic? why has she returned in ghoulish

¹⁷⁸ Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:7).

form?). The stanza at once encourages one to rethink the previous stanzas and sets up expectation for the final stanza.

When the third stanza is omitted, the entire poem becomes a little less defined, a little lighter in mood, and more impressionistic. This is clearly the route that spoke to Debussy. In this interpretation of the poem the first stanza sets up a pleasant, if a little sad and reflective, environment. The narrator's demeanor darkens in St. 2 as he begins to conjure an image of his lost love. In the absence of the third stanza, the fourth continues directly from the second and the narrator quite beautifully recounts (via simile) the features of his love. This rendition of the poem keeps focus more directly on the lost love; it becomes a poem of melancholic reflection without the grim tinge of the third stanza. Debussy's interpretation could perhaps have been influenced by his intended dedicatee. The song is dedicated to Mme. Moreau-Sainti, a singer and vocal coach of some renown that ran a moderately robust studio in Paris in which Debussy (and Paul Vidal before him) served as an accompanist. Considering Mme. Moreau-Sainti as a dedicatee, it makes sense why Debussy would have chose to omit the specific references to death. Doing so emphasizes the pleasant atmosphere defined in the first stanza and the lovely descriptive features in the fourth; it keeps the primary focus on the main character (love interest) of the poem; and it promotes a lighter, more appropriate, positive dedication.

In addition to omitting the entire third stanza, Debussy makes an additional, and perhaps more substantial, change to the original poetry by using the first stanza as a refrain (Example 6.2). The resulting form of the song is a five-part rondo: ABACA. This arrangement puts much emphasis on the first stanza by initially establishing the character of the poem, maintaining a consistent mood, and providing a suitably reflective ending to the song. Debussy adds further

weight to the first stanza by lengthening the original quatrain with a repetition of the last line of the stanza – “Je rêve aux amors défunts” [I dream of past loves] – each time it occurs.

Example 6.2: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Form

A	B	A	C	A
St. 1	St. 2	St. 1	St. 4	St. 1
m. 1	m. 25	m. 37	m. 58	m. 72
“Starry night...”	“Quiet melancholy...”	“Starry night...”	“I again...”	“Starry night ...”

This particular change emphasizes the primary action of the poem but also has a more analytically significant feature that I will discuss shortly. Debussy clearly found the first stanza to be the most compelling part of the poem; it not only includes the titular line, but also has the expressive and indefinable qualities to which Debussy was frequently drawn. Debussy’s own words shed some insight on the composer’s textual preferences: “J’aimerai toujours mieux une chose où, en quelque sorte, l’action sera sacrifiée à l’expression longuement poursuivie des sentiments de l’âme” [I would always prefer a subject where, in some way, the action would be sacrificed to the long-pursued expression of the feelings of the soul] (Debussy 1980, 10). These words are not a precise declaration, but they are very Debussyian. The first stanza of “Nuit d’étoiles” fits the description. Each line is ripe with expressive potential and, although the stanza does much to establish a mood or character, is noncommittal about the direction it must go; the stanza works decently well as a stand-alone statement. The expressive possibilities combined with the independent nature of the stanza are likely why Debussy elevated the prominence of this stanza by using it as a refrain in his *mélodie*.

From an analytical viewpoint, the first stanza is the primary driving force of the song, supplying both direction and closure. Example 6.3 is the music for the first stanza (A) and a reduction that begins in m. 4 (B).

Example 6.3: Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles,” Stanza 1 Music and Graph
A

5
Allegro
Nuit d'é - toi - les, Sous - tes

una corda pp
I⁶ 6/4 vi I⁴.....

7
voi - les, Sous ta brise — et tes — par - fums, Tris - te ly - -

I

14
re Qui sou - pi - - re, Je rêve aux a - mours — dé - funts, Je

dim.

21
rêve aux — a - mours dé - funts.

B

The image displays a musical score for section B, spanning measures 4 to 21. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 9/8 time signature. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 4-9) features a melodic line in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. The second system (measures 10-16) continues the melodic and bass lines. The third system (measures 17-21) concludes the section. Harmonic analysis is provided below the bass staff of each system, including Roman numerals and figured bass notation. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes, and articulation marks like accents (^) and slurs are present. Measure numbers (m. 4, m. 9, m. 13, m. 16, m. 21) are placed above the corresponding measures.

Harmonic analysis for the first system (measures 4-9):
m. 4: (I) VI¹² I⁶ VI¹² 7 4 2
m. 5: I⁶ VI¹² 7 4 2
m. 6: I⁶ VI¹² 7 4 2
m. 7: I⁶ VI¹² 7 4 2
m. 8: I⁶ VI¹² 7 4 2
m. 9: I⁶ VI¹² IV⁷ V⁹ I 6

Harmonic analysis for the second system (measures 10-16):
m. 10: 6 4 5 3
m. 11: Fm: ii¹² iii¹² 7
m. 12: V¹² 7
m. 13: ii¹² 7
m. 14: V¹² 7
m. 15: Eb: ii¹² 7
m. 16: Eb: ii¹² 7

Harmonic analysis for the third system (measures 17-21):
m. 17: II 3 VII 3 II 5 7 4 2
m. 18: V⁷ 7
m. 19: V⁷ 7
m. 20: V⁷ 7
m. 21: I

The *Kopfton* of the song occurs in the piano in m. 1 but Debussy transfers it into the voice in m. 4; the Bb *Kopfton* remains present as a cover tone in the higher register (Bb5 in the piano) for much of the stanza (see Example 6.3-A). The song begins with an introductory passage (before the entrance of the voice) that rolls block tonic and submediant chords in both left and right hands. This figure in the piano persists through the first eight measures of the song and Debussy doesn't find a root position tonic harmony until the end of the first couplet of text in m. 11. In subsequent returns of the first stanza, this is not the case. The pattern in the piano is different in each time St. 1 returns as a refrain, but Debussy initiates all but the first with a root position tonic harmony. Thus, each statement of St. 1 is a little different. The stanza concludes with a five-line linear descent from Bb in mm. 21–23 (see Example 6.3-B). In the first two statements of the first stanza, this line is a lower-level event that happens beneath a prolonged scale degree 5; in the final stanza, and end of the *mélodie*, this descent represents the structural close of the song.

The first stanza has two significant analytical features, one on a more local level within the stanza itself, and one on a larger scale within the song; both relate to the issue of textual alteration and repetition. The first involves the line that Debussy repeats at the end of St. 1: “Je rêve aux amours défunts” [I dream of past loves]. In Example 6.4, the top system is the music and the bottom system is a graph. The first statement of the text begins in m. 16 with a melodic leap up to G5 in m.17. Harmonically the movement from m. 16 to m. 17 at the beginning of the line tonicizes a supertonic (ii⁹) chord; Debussy then prolongs the harmony through m. 20. Musically, the passage containing the first statement of “Je rêve...” is stagnant because in mm. 16–17, the melody simply descends to eventually settle on a Cb in m. 19, and the harmony is solely focused on a prolonged supertonic chord.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Debussy does, however, pass through several different shades of supertonic. The modal mixture contributes some interest and breaks the potential monotony of prolonging a diatonic ii chord.

Example 6.4: Debussy, "Nuit d'étoiles," Textual Repetition in Stanza 1

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Nuit d'étoiles," focusing on the first stanza. It consists of three systems of music. The top system shows the vocal line with the lyrics: "Je rêve aux a-mours_ dé-funts. Je rêve aux_ a-mours dé - funts." The middle system shows the piano accompaniment, with measures 16, 19, 21, and 23 marked. The bottom system provides a harmonic analysis for the piano part, including a 3-measure rest, measures 16 and 21, and a final cadence. The analysis includes Roman numerals and figured bass notation.

Je rêve aux a-mours_ dé-funts. Je rêve aux_ a-mours dé - funts.

16 19 21 23

3

m. 16 m. 21

Eb: V⁷/ii ii⁹ 1 ii⁷ vi⁷ ii⁷ 7 1 7 V⁷ I

On the foreground this passage is indispensable: the leap up to G5 (the highest note thus far) is exciting, there is an appealing tension created by the leap and following relaxation via the descending melody, and it helps draw focus to the text. On deeper levels, however, the passage merely serves as a preamble to the second statement of text and accompanying middle ground gesture.

The second statement of the line “Je rêve aux amors défunts” in mm. 20–23 has a deeper function than the initial statement and, despite being only slightly longer than three measures, has several important features. The first is that the passage continues to diffuse the tension created by the first statement. After the voice leaps to the G5 in m. 17, the melody descends consistently and primarily by step through both statements of “Je rêve...”; the second statement of the line relaxes into a cadence in m. 23. It is notable that, although Debussy sets the first statement of text over a prolonged predominant, the second statement occurs over a cadential dominant to tonic gesture. Thus, the second statement is less harmonically stagnant than the first and, as a cadential figure, exemplifies the basic paradigm of motion and direction in tonal music.

One of the most significant features of the second statement of the line in mm. 20–23 is that it includes a stepwise descent to scale-degree 1 (refer to Example 6.4). This gesture serves a structural purpose, both on surface and deeper levels. On a local level the figure – combined with cadential harmonies – closes St. 1; it is, of course, ultimately downgraded as a surface level event. When the stanza returns the third and final time to close the song, however, this foreground event gains a much deeper significance as the structural close of the song. In mm. 88–90, the Bb *Kopftón* that has been prolonged through the entire song finally descends to end the *mélodie*.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ In the last statement of the refrain, Debussy resolves the final dominant (mm. 88–89) to an Eb augmented chord (m. 90) before quickly correcting it to Eb major (m. 91). This is clearly different from other statements of the refrain

The second statement of “Je rêve...” in all appearances of St.1 includes a linear descent; however, the voice never gets the final scale degree 1 (refer back to Example 6.4). In mm. 22–23, the voice descends from the prolonged Bb *Kopfton* – Ab-G-F – but then steps back up to G rather than descending to Eb. To close the descent, we have to look at the piano. The piano provides the final Eb needed to close the line; it is articulated on beat 1 of the measure and in the exact range as would be expected from the voice if it were to finish the linear descent. This partnership points out two important facts. The first is the intimate connection between the voice and piano. True to spirit of the *mélodie* as a genre, voice and piano are inextricably linked. Without looking to the piano, the linear descent never makes it to the tonic. It is interesting to note that, in the two measures before the close of the line (mm. 21–22 in Example 6.4), the piano does not double the voice. So, the two parts are serving completely separate and unique functions in the passage – the voice primarily melodic and the piano primarily harmonic – culminating in one brief but shining moment in which they blend together to complete the cadence, resolve the linear descent, and close the stanza.

The second feature of the blended relationship between voice and piano at the close of the linear descent is not a precise or technical feature, but rather one related to atmosphere and aesthetics. As mentioned earlier, the first stanza is pivotal for defining the dark and expressive atmosphere of the poem. The final line of the stanza is fairly inconclusive; the narrator dreams of past loves, but we do not yet know anything about those lost loves, or even how many there are. These details are, of course, addressed in subsequent sections of the poem; but Banville’s words at the end of the first stanza leave us temporarily wondering. I believe that particular undefined quality is part of what drew Debussy to the poem in general, and the last line of the first stanza in

and is a subtle but effect way of signaling the end of the song.

particular. And he imbued his music with the same undefined character. By resolving the melody in m. 22 up to scale degree three (G) rather than allowing it to descend to Eb to complete the linear motion, Debussy frustrates expectation for the voice. Leaving the voice hanging on scale degree 3 helps convey the undefined qualities of the line and creates a need for continuation. At the end of the stanza, the narrator continues to dream; his situation is not resolved. In the music, Debussy reflects the same sentiment, leaving the melody in the voice open for continuation and allowing the piano to provide a convincing, though weakened, sense of closure. Both the story line and the music are thus crafted to avoid the firmest sense of closure.

Although the second statement of “Je rêve...” is arguably more important than the first, such a distinction is only practical in certain situations. It is, for example, relevant for examining the changes Debussy made to Banville’s text, for situating them in the music, and for revealing their musical and interpretive significance. But a larger view of the stanza reveals how the two statements work together. The most obvious way the two statements of “Je rêve...” work together is that they emphasize the text; two statements provide more emphasis than a single statement. Musically they are both needed to complete a larger phrase-model progression that begins at m. 11 (refer to Example 6.3). As previously mentioned, the first root position tonic chord in the song occurs in m. 11.¹⁸¹ The first statement of “Je rêve...” in mm. 16–17 tonicizes and then prolongs the supertonic, providing the predominant function of the phrase model; the second statement of “Je rêve...” begins with a motion to the dominant and ultimately tonic in mm. 21–23. Thus, the first stanza – each time it appears, but more clearly in its second and third statements due to the placement of the first tonic chord – is at once a prolonged and expanded version of a very basic and ubiquitous harmonic paradigm (phrase model) and a miniature

¹⁸¹ Subsequent returns of the first stanza begin with a tonic chord.

representation of the basic structure of the entire song. This aligns with Schenker's own ideas regarding the fundamental structure of music and the way it echoes through the structural levels to materialize closer to the foreground.

The features of the first stanza are made all the more prominent when examined within the larger context of the song. The first stanza (each time it appears) offers much to the development of the song: it has a complete phrase model progression, it includes a linear descent (that in its third statement functions as the structural close to the song), and it has some significant and interpretive textual repetition. The second and fourth stanzas, however, have fewer significant features (Example 6.5). On levels below the foreground there is not much harmonic direction.¹⁸² Whereas the first stanza has a complete progression, the second and fourth stanzas lack tonic chords, amounting to auxiliary half cadences. Additionally, there is no structural motion or motivic replication in the middle stanzas; they merely prolong the *Kopftön* and tonic harmony. Stanzas 2 and 4 lack significant middleground features; however, I don't mean to suggest that they are dispensable. The text they contain didn't seem to resonate as profoundly with Debussy, but it keeps the storyline moving, and their presence between statements of the more significant first stanza are necessary to emphasize the return of St. 1 as a refrain (further marking it as especially prominent), thus further promoting the atmosphere it creates and the text it conveys. The first stanza and all that Debussy did to imbue it with significance is made all the more effective because of the relaxed and relatively uneventful middle stanzas.

¹⁸² For the purpose of my discussion, deeper levels are closer to the background. Thus, levels below the foreground are closer to the background of the music.

Example 6.5: Debussy, "Nuit d'étoiles," Deep Middleground Graph

Stanza:	1				2				1					4				1
Measure:	1	11	17	21	23	25	37	38	54	56	58	62	71	72	84	88	89	91

I^6 ii^9 V^7 I II^9 iv^7 V^2 I ii^9 V^7 I II^9 $biii$ V_3^6 I ii^9 V^7 I

In “Nuit d’étoiles” we see a depth of compositional prowess and musical and poetic insight that is a credit to the young Debussy. This song (Debussy’s first to be published) shows a kinship with the genre of the *mélodie* but also exhibits features that are more varied and complex than many of the songs written by previous or contemporaneous composers. Retracing Debussy’s interpretation of Banville’s poem helps justify the unique characteristics of the song. It begins with the text, particularly the irregularities in Debussy’s song that are not part of the original poem. Textual irregularities quickly point to the first stanza as something significant within the song. This significance turns out to be multitiered. On the surface level, Debussy’s repetition of the last line of the stanza and use of the entire stanza as a refrain stand out. On a deeper level we discover how Debussy supported the textual irregularities musically, both in terms of the harmonic and melodic features of the music over the text “Je rêve aux amours défunts,” and the prominence of these features as they return throughout the song, eventually providing structural closure. This is all, of course, on top of features (like the interconnectedness of voice and piano) that place the song firmly within the tradition of the *mélodie*, resulting in a work that fits within the canon of French art song, but also begins to stretch the boundaries of that tradition.

“Beau soir”

Debussy’s *mélodie* “Beau soir,” from the 1880s,¹⁸³ is based on Paul Borget’s poem by the same name. Both are highly expressive and quite contemplative. The poem is fairly short – only eight lines in two stanzas – and addresses several aspects of human emotion. It is a brief meditation on the human condition in which Bourget skillfully crafts an atmosphere of a

¹⁸³ As mentioned in Ch. 5, the date of composition for this song is debated.

“beautiful evening” (Example 6.6). Debussy seems to have been satisfied with the text; he made no changes.

Example 6.6: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Text and Translation¹⁸⁴

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses,
Et qu’un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé,
Un conseil d’être heureux semble sortir des choses
Et monter vers le cœur troublé;

When the rivers are rosy in the setting sun,
And a warm shudder runs over the wheat field,
A plea for happiness seems to rise out of things
And climb towards the troubled heart;

Un conseil de goûter le charme d’être au monde
Cependant qu’on est jeune et que le soir est beau,
Car nous nous en allons, comme s’en va cette onde:
Elle à la mer—nous au tombeau!

A plea to relish the charm of life
While we are young and the evening is beautiful,
For we pass away, as the wave passes;
It to the sea, we to the tomb!

In order to demonstrate how Debussy interpreted the poem and how he set the text in a musically and poetically sensitive way, I’d like to examine several different possibilities for the musical structure of the song. The different readings fall on a spectrum from more to less conventional and all have something to offer; however, certain readings (the less conventional ones) tend to be more apt, showing a greater sensitivity to the poetry and making more abundant musical connections. The first option is a fairly standard Schenkerian 3-line (Example 6.7). This reading is perhaps the most convincing conventional option. Debussy begins the song with a short introduction (mm. 1–4) that establishes the tonic harmony and, in m. 1, combines a low E2 in the bass with a G#4 *Kopftön* in the treble to mark the opening of the fundamental structure. The same two tones are again present in m. 5 when the voice enters for the first time. The high B natural in m. 1 is a cover tone that is present, either literally or implied, throughout much the piece; Debussy emphasizes the B5 in the introduction and conclusion of the piece as well as in lower registers throughout the intervening measures.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Text taken from Cobb 1982, 96.

¹⁸⁵ This provides a tempting option for an additional reading, which I discuss in due course.

Example 6.7: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Option 1: 3-line *Urlinie*

The image displays a musical score for the piano accompaniment of Debussy's "Beau soir," Option 1, featuring a 3-line *Urlinie*. The score is organized into four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

- System 1 (Measures 1-11):** The *Urlinie* is marked with a '3' and a caret (^) above it, indicating a triplet. Chord symbols below the bass staff include I, B⁷, I, biii, I, B⁷, I, biii, I, C', and C'.
- System 2 (Measures 12-23):** Measure numbers m.12, m.16, and m.19 are indicated. Chord symbols include I, F# (ii), V⁷, ii, V⁷, ii, V⁷, and ii.
- System 3 (Measures 24-31):** Measure numbers m.24 and m.28 are indicated. Chord symbols include iii, I⁷, V, iii⁷, I⁷, VII⁷, and I.
- System 4 (Measures 32-39):** Measure number m.32 is indicated. Chord symbols include V⁷, I, B⁷, I, bIII⁷ (V⁷), I, and I.

The *Urlinie* is represented by a solid line with a caret (^) above it, and its constituent notes are connected by dashed lines. The bass staff contains various chord symbols and measure numbers. The treble staff contains the melodic line with various articulations and dynamics.

After establishing the *Kopfton* and tonic harmony, Debussy prolongs them through m. 18. The first eighteen measures include the first stanza of poetry and create a tidy first section of the song.

The next structural musical event coincides with the next structural poetic event in mm. 19–21. Example 6.8 is an annotated version of the music in mm. 19–21.

Example 6.8: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Structural Predominant and Second Stanza of Text

In m. 19 the bass moves to an F#2 as a part of a major supertonic (II) harmony; this represents a chromaticized version of the structural predominant of the song and signals the end of the first stanza of text. The voice and piano right hand supply an A# to go along with the low F#, filling out the harmony. In m. 20, Debussy corrects the supertonic harmony to its diatonic version by introducing an A natural in the right hand of the piano. The voice then enters with pickups to m. 21, initiating the second stanza of text and confirming the A natural established by the piano in the measure before.

The musical and poetic events are slightly displaced. At m. 19 Debussy achieves the necessary tone for the structural predominant in the bass, but the chord is chromaticized. It is, in fact, the goal of a temporary focus on the key area of F# major that begins in m. 13 and ends in m. 19, resulting in an auxiliary cadence on F# (refer back to Example 6.7). In m. 20, Debussy

corrects the predominant to a diatonic minor harmony and continues with the second stanza of text. At this point in the music, the predominant harmony and low F# are operative members of the fundamental structure, but the A natural in the treble is not the *Urlinie* tone. The A natural in the voice in mm. 21–22 serves as partner to the structural bass F# and persists well into the deep middleground, but does not carry structural weight on the deepest levels. The G# *Kopfton* remains operative until m. 33 when it steps down to scale-degree 2 (F#). In an idealized Schenkerian structure the structural predominant and scale-degree 2 would happen simultaneously, but the disjuncture here is not without its charm. In a way, this displacement of structural tones reflects on a larger scale the displacement of the musical and poetic events represented in Example 6.8 above. This is perhaps one of the most damning marks against a 3-line interpretation. Despite the appeal of a consistency in displacement, the reading feels a bit forced.

The next important large-scale event happens in mm. 32–33, which is then quickly followed by the close of the structure (Example 6.9).

Example 6.9: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Close of Structure

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir" in G major, measures 32-33. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "Elle à la mer,—". The piano accompaniment (bass clef) features a prominent bass line. Above the score, a Schenkerian structure is indicated with a line connecting measure 32 to measure 33, labeled with "2" and "1" at the top and "V⁹" and "I" at the bottom.

In m. 32 – a brief transitional measure between the last two lines of text (the seventh and eighth) – Debussy moves to a V^9 that serves as the structural dominant of the song. The dominant is then prolonged through mm. 33–34, supporting the first half of the final line of text (“Elle à la mer,”). In m. 33, after being delayed well past the advent of the structural predominant, the structural top line descends to scale degree 2. This passage resembles the arrival of the structural predominant in mm. 19–20 (Example 6.8) where the most significant surface level pitch in the treble is delayed a measure past the arrival of the harmony.¹⁸⁶ Both V^9 and scale-degree 2 quickly resolved to I and scale-degree 1 in m. 35, completing the structure. The music continues for another seven measures after the close of the *Ursatz*. This short passage resembles the introduction of the song and seems like a pretty standard coda; however, it has one peculiarity: there is still half a line of text to be sung in the “coda.” Not only is there text left, the text is especially important – the punch line of the entire poem! This feature of a 3-line reading of the song feels unnecessarily forced, even more than the disjuncture between the structural predominant and scale degree 2. To simply ignore text, especially text that bears the weight of closure for the poem, is very un-Debussyian.

To summarize, the 3-line interpretation of “Beau soir” has some obvious and notable pros and cons. In the pro column we begin with the fact that this interpretation is a very conventional Schenkerian paradigm. Thus, it is substantiated by Schenkerian tradition and is supported by the reputation and success of countless other pieces that have a similar structure. Another item in the pros column is the relationship between structural tones and the poetic structure. Debussy initiates the opening of the structure early in the song and then prolongs the *Kopftön* and

¹⁸⁶ The passage in mm. 32–33 is a stronger passage because there is less fluctuation in harmony (no chromaticism as there was in mm. 19–20 – see Example 6.8), the operative *Urlinie* pitch occurs in the voice over the structural dominant harmony (there is more of a displacement of upper-voice tones and harmony in mm. 19–20), and both V^9 and scale degree 2 are structural (the A natural above the structural predominant in m. 20 is not a member of the *Urlinie*).

structural I through the entire first stanza of text before moving to the structural predominant (ii - F#) in the bass at the beginning of the second stanza. He then introduces the structural dominant at the beginning of the last line of text and quickly closes the structure with a reprise of the introductory material. Each of the important musical events happens at a significant point in the poetry, creating strong connections between the music and the poetry. This last point is, of course, softened by my earlier observation that the musical structure closes before the poetic structure.

The list of cons is more formidable. The structural tones are often displaced, the most far-reaching example being focused around structural bass F# in m. 19 (Example 6.7). When the F# enters, the operative upper tone is still the *Kopftone* (G#); the primary tone doesn't move until it descends to F# in m. 33, near the end of the song. It would be more comfortable for the structural F# in the bass to have a more consonant counterpart in the *Urlinie*, but such is not the case.¹⁸⁷ A more egregious con is that this reading does not account for all of the text. Debussy uses the second half of the last line – “nous au tombeau” [we to the tomb] – as a tag at the very end of the song; it occurs during the reprise of the introduction material, presumably after the close of the structure. Lastly, in this song the three-line reading implies a clear sense of direction that is at odds with the contemplative nature of the poetry. The character of the text is a meditation on the human condition; there is a clear goal to the poetry but the primary purpose of the text is to encourage reflection in the reader. (I discuss an alternative reading below that does account for the aesthetic of the poem). The list of cons, particularly those related to the text, is enough evidence to seek out alternative readings.

An alternative reading to the 3-line interpretation detailed above that would still fit

¹⁸⁷ One could perhaps make a case for the structural predominant being a ii⁹, which would account for the upper G#. This reading would be a little less orthodox in the Schenkerian canon, but much more Debussyian.

comfortably within the Schenkerian canon is one that posits a 5-line descent in the *Urlinie*. Example 6.10 is a deep middleground reading of the song that features the 5-line *Urlinie*. This interpretation clears up some of the issues from the 3-line reading, but also creates new ones. In the 3-line reading, the structural predominant (ii – F#, m. 19) did not have a matching *Urlinie* tone. In the 5-line, however, the F# in the bass in m. 19 pairs with scale degree 4 in the *Urlinie* in m. 20. There is still a slight disjuncture between the tones, but the preceding chromaticism (A# over II) accounts for and smooths over the short distance between the arrival of lower F# and the upper A natural. Although the F#/A¹⁸⁸ pairing of tones is resolved in the 5-line reading, scale degree 3 (G# - m. 27) must now go without structural support. This is, however, less of an issue in the five-line reading; it is more commonly acceptable for an *Urlinie* tone to go without structural harmonic support in a 5-line reading than in a 3-line reading. Additionally, a 5-line interpretation places more emphasis on B as the *Kopftön*. B5 is prominent in the piano in the introduction and continues in the piano well after the voice has entered, making it a tempting choice as the primary tone of the song. But elevating B to the primary tone places a greater emphasis on the piano and deemphasizes the voice, which tends to focus more on scale degree 3 (G#). In music with text, downplaying the text (and thus the voice part) is a dangerous procedure. Misplaced focus away from the text can perhaps yield relevant musical observations, but it can also disguise deeper, more meaningful connections between the music and the text.

Aside from the obvious differences between 3-line and 5-line readings, many features listed above during my discussion of a 3-line reading hold true for the 5-line reading.

¹⁸⁸ In this and future instances when two pitches are separated by a slash, it refers to a harmonic pairing. The left side corresponds to the note on bottom and the right side corresponds to the note on top: bottom/top.

Example 6.10: Debussy, "Beau soir," Deep Middleground 5-Line Reading

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir," specifically a "Deep Middleground 5-Line Reading." The score is presented in four systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Roman numerals and chord symbols are placed below the bass staff to indicate harmonic structure. Measure numbers (m. 5, m. 9, m. 12, m. 16, m. 19, m. 24, m. 28, m. 32) are also present. The score is annotated with a 5-line reading, indicated by a horizontal line with a '5' above it, spanning across the systems. The annotations include Roman numerals (I, B⁷, biii, V⁷, ii, VII⁷, V⁷) and chord symbols (F# (ii), V⁷, V⁷, V⁷). The score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system covers measures 1-11, the second system covers measures 12-23, the third system covers measures 24-31, and the fourth system covers measures 32-39. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Roman numerals and chord symbols are placed below the bass staff to indicate harmonic structure. Measure numbers (m. 5, m. 9, m. 12, m. 16, m. 19, m. 24, m. 28, m. 32) are also present. The score is annotated with a 5-line reading, indicated by a horizontal line with a '5' above it, spanning across the systems. The annotations include Roman numerals (I, B⁷, biii, V⁷, ii, VII⁷, V⁷) and chord symbols (F# (ii), V⁷, V⁷, V⁷).

The 5-line has the same connections with the poetic form – with the obvious addition of scale degrees 5 (B) and 4 (A), which neither contribute nor detract from the musical and poetic connections – and still closes the musical structure before the text is finished. Neither reading accounts for all of the text. Additionally, the sense of direction in the 3-line reading that is at odds with the contemplative nature of the poetry is still very much present in the 5-line reading. Thus, while both of the above-mentioned interpretations are certainly defensible and do contribute a deeper understanding to the song, they are ultimately less nuanced and less revealing than less traditional models.

After spending some time with the song I developed my preferred reading that solves many of the issues present in the more conventional readings mentioned above. Example 6.11 is a middleground graph of “Beau soir” that conveys a large-scale neighbor motion as its fundamental framework. The neighbor motion is in both upper and lower voices, moving between scale-degrees 3 and 4 over the harmonies I-ii-I. Debussy begins the piece right way with the structural tones – E and G#, both in the piano – but more clearly emphasizes the upper G# when the voice enters in m. 6. The official opening of the structure is in m. 5 because of the entry of the voice and more pronounced emphasis on G#. Both E in the lower voice and G# in the upper voice move up to the neighbor note of the figure in m. 20, coinciding with the beginning of the second stanza of text. This point in the music is important in this reading as well as in the more traditional readings described above. Debussy closes the structure in m. 37 and then prolongs the music another four measures. Choosing m. 37 as the point of closure is perhaps a little unintuitive at first blush. Two measures before (m. 35) Debussy reprises the material from the introduction to create a coda; however, since there is still text to be sung, it makes sense to delay the resolution of the structural upper neighbor (A) until the voice resolves it in m. 37.

Example 6.11: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Neighbor Motive Structure

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir," focusing on the neighbor motive structure. The score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is two sharps (D major), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various annotations:

- Measures 1-3:** Anomalous triads are indicated by a bracket with a hat and the number 3. Chord symbols below include I, B⁷, I, biii, I, B⁷, I, biii, C', and C'.
- Measures 4-11:** Measure numbers m.5 and m.9 are marked. Chord symbols include I, B⁷, I, biii, I, B⁷, I, biii, C', and C'.
- Measures 12-19:** Measure numbers m.12, m.16, and m.19 are marked. Chord symbols include I, F# (ii), V⁷, ii, V⁷, II, ii, I, ii, and V⁷.
- Measures 20-23:** Measure numbers m.24 and m.28 are marked. Chord symbols include iii, I^b, V, iii⁷, I^b, and V⁷.
- Measures 24-31:** Measure numbers m.32 and m.28 are marked. Chord symbols include V⁷, I, B⁷, I, biii⁷ (V⁷'), I, and I.

The score features extensive use of neighbor notes, indicated by dashed lines and arrows, and includes various rhythmic markings such as triplets and a 4-measure rest.

There are many precedents for neighbor motions in Debussyian literature. Richard Parks (1989) notes that neighbor motions often control small and large scale events in Debussy's music and Felix Salzer (1982) in his text *Structural Hearing: Tonal Coherence in Music* – which is not Schenker's theory but is heavily indebted to it – makes an observation regarding Debussy's "Bruyères" that is very similar to my own in "Beau soir." In his analysis of "Bruyères" (Préludes, Book 2), Salzer suggests a neighbor motion in perfect fifths as the deepest structural artifact (252–55). Others have also noted the prominence of neighbor motions in Debussy's music; their opinions range from purely surface level diminutions and prolongations to more structural, fundamental figures. Thus, while the neighbor figure does not have a reputation as a background figure in orthodox Schenkerian analysis, the less canonical Schenkerian methodology that has been applied to Debussy's music is perfectly comfortable giving the neighbor figure more weight as a fundamental element of the music.¹⁸⁹

The placement of the three members of the neighbor motion emphasize important parts of the text to a greater degree than either the 3-line or 5-line readings. This is due largely to how the neighbor motion is able to account for the last half line of text at the end of the song. Much like the more traditional readings, the neighbor motion starts at the beginning of the song and moves to the second part of the figure at the beginning of the second stanza of text. Then, rather than closing the structure before the text is complete (in m. 35, as in the 3-line and 5-line readings mentioned above), this reading extends the resolution of the figure until m. 37 (Example 6.12). This interpretation does necessitate downgrading some seemingly important musical events centered around the final measures of the piece.

¹⁸⁹ Structural neighbor motions are, of course, not limited to Debussy's music; they are prominent in French music from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See "Jacques Ibert: An Analytical Study of Three Movements from *Histoires*" (Waldroup 2012).

Example 6.12: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Resolution of Neighbor Motive

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir". It consists of two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is F# major (three sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line starts with a single note in measure 34, followed by a rest in measure 35, and then the lyrics "Nous au tom -" in measure 37. The piano accompaniment features a neighbor motive in the bass line, with a "V°" symbol under the first measure and an "I" symbol under the second measure. Measure numbers 34 and 37 are indicated in the piano part.

The first event is the very obvious and conclusive sounding authentic cadence in mm. 34–35. This is one of very few authentic resolutions in the song and the most high profile one in the tonic key area. Although the entrance of the voice in m. 37 does help to emphasize that point in the music, it is hard to discount the clear cadence just a few measures before. The second event is the beginning of the coda and the reprise of material from the beginning of the song. The cadence in mm. 34–35 ushers in a reprise of material used in the introduction of the piece, creating a not unexpected coda. Placing the structural resolution of the neighbor motive two bars into the coda seems to be at odds with the emphasis Debussy puts in m. 35. Despite these issues, I believe the neighbor note motive is a better alternative to traditional linear descents. There is no doubt that Debussy would have privileged the voice, perhaps even imbued it with some yet-to-be-seen significance. Discounting the final entrance of the voice thus seems more detrimental to the piece as a whole than downgrading an authentic cadence and the beginning of the coda.

The neighbor figure has two additional relevant features; one is more technical and precise, and the other is more an issue of aesthetics. The first is the correlation between neighbor motives towards the background and those projected toward the surface level. This type of

parallelism is a prominent musical feature that is highlighted by traditional Schenkerian analysis; for instance, generally we see subsidiary linear descents on levels closer to the surface that mirror larger motions in the middleground.¹⁹⁰ In “Beau soir,” surface-level linear descents are less prominent than neighbor motions. This can be seen clearly in the introduction (Example 6.13).

Example 6.13: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Surface Neighbors in Introduction

A

B

Example 6.13-A is the music and 6.13-B is a chordal reduction. Some of the voice-leading motions shown in Example 6.13-B occur in the register as shown, but others are displaced.¹⁹¹

Notice that this passages is replete with neighbor motions. One could potentially tease out

¹⁹⁰ Motivic replication is, of course, not limited to background echoes. All kinds of motives can be replicated across structural levels.

¹⁹¹ The most notably change in register involves moving the piano left hand G#-A-G# motion that occurs in the C3 register in Level A to the C4 register in Level B. This change draws a clearer connection between the G#-A-G# portion of the motive in mm. 1–3 with the G natural-G# portion that occurs in the C4 register in mm. 4–5.

additional relationships, but there is little doubt that the neighbor motion figures prominently in the passage. A similar presentation of neighbor motions can also be seen in the final measures of the song in which Debussy reprises the introductory material.

Example 6.13 demonstrates a technical aspect of the song that emphasizes neighbor motions. There is another, more aesthetic, feature of the neighbor motions that relates to the atmosphere of the poem. In his analysis and brief commentary on the song, Charles Burkhart (2016) reflects on a discussion with Saul Novack in which Novack remarks that the prevalence of the neighbor tone in Debussy's music accounts for a certain sense of immobility. Burkhart interprets this static immobility as an invitation for contemplation (131). Their discussion is, of course, almost tailor-made for "Beau soir." The original poem is quite contemplative; Debussy's use of neighbor motions throughout – both on surface and in deeper levels – promotes the meditative nature of the original poem. As previously mentioned, a linear descent (such as the 3-line and 5-line interpretations offered above) implies more direction than seems comfortable in this song. A fundamental structure based on neighbor figures, however, is much more appropriate for the poetry. The neighbor motive interpretation better fits the atmosphere conveyed by the poetry, makes more abundant musical connections across structural levels, and creates a more intimate relationship between music and text. Thus, this reading allows for a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the song and is preferable to other – more traditional, but less revealing – models.

The goal of any analysis, Schenkerian or otherwise, is to provide a greater understanding of the music than can be discerned through a casual interaction with the music. The above readings all do this to a degree, but some are more sensitive to the character of the song and the poetry than others. One final reading that is perhaps the most sensitive to the poetry, and that

synthesizes many of the central features of earlier readings is – unfortunately – not my own analysis. As mentioned above, Charles Burkhart spent some time with “Beau soir” and produced a very subtle and nuanced analysis that I believe suits the character of the text and music and promotes many distinctly Debussyian characteristics. Burkhart (136) posits a turn figure in the treble as the most essential structural feature of the song.¹⁹² Example 6.14 (A) shows the turn figure motive and a background graph (B) of the song that situates the motive within the song. In Example 6.14-A, the turn figure – comprised of the pitches G#-A-G#-G natural (F^X)-G# – appears at the beginning, the end, and is composed out through the song. In Example 6.14-B we see that important parts of the background structure occur at important points in the song.

Example 6.14: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Burkhart’s Turn Figure

A

B

¹⁹² A turn figure is similar to a double neighbor. Thus, Burkhart’s reading is not too dissimilar from my own; both privilege a type of neighbor motion as the fundamental structure of the song.

The structure begins in m. 1 and moves (in both treble and bass) to the next part of the motive in mm. 19–20, which coincides with the second stanza of poetry. Measures 32–35 mark the third note in the turn in the treble as well as an authentic cadence represented by scale-degrees 5-1 in the bass. Measures 35–40, the purported coda of the piece, complete the turn figure over an additional bass arpeggiation. The bass outlines a I-ii-V-I-V-I harmonic structure (not shown in the example), and the treble is the turn figure; both voices supply structural tones in support of the other.¹⁹³ I address this reading in more detail below in a comparison with other readings.

The placement of the motive is reminiscent of Edward Laufer’s concept of a Prime Sonority. In “An Approach to Linear Analysis of Some Early Twentieth-Century Compositions,” Laufer (2003) describes the prime sonority as an alternative referential sonority that replaces the triad and governs the work. He offers the following criteria for defining prime sonority: it will consist of three or more notes (but not too many) emphasized in characteristic ways, it will occur at the end of the piece, it will contribute to the motivic coherence of the music, it will be subjected to some form of composing out, and it must be identifiable via musical intuition (133–34). Burkhart’s idea is similar to Laufer’s, but is notably different. As evident in Example 6.14 above, Burkhart’s turn figure satisfies Laufer’s conditions: it has an appropriate number of notes, it occurs at the end of the piece (as well as the beginning and throughout the song), it creates a web of motivic connections, it is composed out through the song, and it is identifiable via musical intuition. The last condition is perhaps the hardest to satisfy because it is less precise than the others; nonetheless, a focused ear can discern the turn figure, thus satisfying Laufer’s condition. The main difference between the ideas of Burkhart and Laufer is, of course, that Laufer’s Prime Sonority is a harmonic figure whereas Burkhart’s turn is a melodic figure. In his

¹⁹³ Burkhart is following Schenker’s less-known model of a two-part bass arpeggiation. In *Free Composition*, Schenker (1979) provides an explanation and examples for a two-pronged bass arpeggiation (1:34, 2:Figures 19 A-B). Carl Schachter (1999, 121–33) also addresses this concept in “Either Or.”

article, Laufer defines the Prime Sonority as just that – a sonority. So, it seems that he conceived of the concept as a harmonic entity. The turn figure in “Beau soir” is not a harmonic construct, but rather a linear motive. Despite the obvious difference, I believe that the turn figure bears conceptual similarities to Laufer’s Prime Sonority and satisfies the necessary conditions to qualify as a Prime Motive.

Burkhart’s reading focuses on many of the points in the music that were prominent in the 3-line and 5-line readings as well as in my own neighbor motive reading. Refer to Example 6.15, which is Burkhart’s foreground reading. The *Ursatz* begins in m. 1 with an opening tonic harmony and scale-degree 3 in the treble. Much like the 3-line and neighbor motive readings, Burkhart privileges G# as more significant than B; he regards the B as a cover tone that occurs above the structural turn figure. The next musical event occurs in mm. 19–20 and coincides with the second stanza of text. This point in the music is important in all of the readings I have presented. In the 3-line and 5-line readings, mm.19–20 signal a move to the structural predominant; in the neighbor motive reading mm. 19–20 represent the upper neighboring tones of the figure. For Burkhart, mm. 19–20 represent a predominant F# (ii) in what is at this point a very traditional looking *Bassbrechung* and the upper neighbor portion of the turn figure (A) in the treble. Burkhart synthesizes the prominent features from traditional and neighbor readings; the bass reflects traditional readings and the treble resembles the neighbor reading.

In mm. 32–35 Debussy writes a very clear and convincing authentic cadence that seemingly ends the song prior to a brief coda. Much like the more traditional readings, Burkhart privileges this motion in the bass. The bass is paired with a treble motion to G# from a prolonged A, thus completing the first half of the turn motive. Where Burkhart’s turn reading really sets itself apart from other readings is in the final measures of the song.

Example 6.15: Debussy, “Beau soir,” Burkhart’s Foreground Reading

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Beau soir," divided into two parts, (a) and (b). The score includes a vocal line labeled "cover" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part is divided into two systems, (a) and (b). The vocal line is marked with measure numbers 5, 9, 13, 16, 19, and 20. The piano part (a) features complex chordal textures with annotations such as δ^{912} , 6^b , and a slash symbol. Below the piano part (a), chord symbols are provided: I, III (F#: II), VI# (V $\frac{9}{4}$), and II# (I). The piano part (b) shows a simplified version of the piano accompaniment, with a δ^{912} annotation at the beginning.

20 24 28 30 32 35 38 40

cover

a)

b)

II (bVII) V I V I

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is divided into two systems, 'a)' and 'b)', each with a vocal line (labeled 'cover') and a guitar accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. System 'a)' shows a vocal line with a melodic line and some ties. The guitar part has a complex texture with many slurs and ties. System 'b)' shows a different version of the guitar accompaniment, with a simpler melodic line in the right hand. Roman numerals II, (bVII), V, I, V, I are placed below the guitar part in system 'a)'. There are also some 'x' marks on the guitar strings in the right hand of system 'a)'.

The traditional readings regard the final measures as a coda, and the neighbor motion analysis extends closure into the “coda” a few measures to account for the beginning of the last bit of text. But the turn figure reading continues the fundamental structure to the very end of the song, accounting for all of the text. Much happens during the final five measures. Most importantly, the treble completes the turn with the lower neighbor portion of the figure; it is accompanied by an additional V-I motion (the second part of the two-pronged bass arpeggiation) in the bass. These final measures are a relatively small portion of the song, but they are significant, and Burkhart’s reading provides an analytical reason for elevating their prominence.

The turn figure reading solves a lot of issues present in other interpretations; it synthesizes the important features of the other readings and provides a unique perspective on the final measures of the song that is noticeably absent in other analyses. The turn reading features a less common (but still acceptable in orthodox Schenkerian theory) two-part *Bassbrechung* that highlights the final cadence in mm. 32–36. An orthodox bass arpeggiation is also part of the traditional readings but is necessarily downgraded in the neighbor motion reading.¹⁹⁴ The turn reading also makes use of the motivic connections from the neighbor reading; the motivic connections are an important aspect of the neighbor motion reading, but also validate the turn motive. Burkhart’s reading also makes better use of the introduction and coda of the song. The turn motive begins in the first measure (on the surface level, even though the *Kopftön* of the turn is delayed until the entrance of the voice in m. 5) and extends through the coda. The outer portions of the form are no longer analytically annexed from the body of the song. Most importantly, Burkhart’s reading is more sensitive to the character of the poem and the text. The most significant mark against the neighbor reading or either of the traditional readings is that

¹⁹⁴ The neighbor motion reading is admittedly unconventional and would not serve as a background structure in traditional Schenkerian analysis.

they, to varying degrees, fail to account for an important line of text at the end of the song in the way that Burkhart's reading does. Given Debussy's known sensitivity to poetry, readings that account for more of the text are more comfortable than those that account for less of the text. Burkhart's reading not only accounts for all of the text, it does so in a musically defensive way.

"Beau soir" is a member of Debussy's early song repertoire. Although it is among the most popular songs from the repertoire today, many of the truly novel features of the song go largely unnoticed (or at least they receive little commentary). Examining the song within the tradition from which it emerged shows how Debussy was pushing the genre of the *mélodie* forward. Debussy's treatment of Bourget's text is among the most significant features that point towards growth in the genre. Debussy made no changes to the original text – which is, in itself, significant – but situated the text in a novel way. He clearly found the last line of the poem ("nous au tombeau," [we to the tomb]) to be the punch line of the poem. He could have included the text in the main body of his song in a clearer, more conventional manner – making the final measures a true coda – but he didn't. Instead he extended the text into the final measures, elevating them to a more prominent position within the form of the song and blurring traditional formal boundaries. Thus we can see that Debussy was beginning to challenge and move beyond predictable formal conventions that had become very commonplace in the music of his predecessors.

We see a burgeoning prominence of neighbor motions in Debussy's early songs that, although they are not unique to Debussy, find elevated significance in his music. I believe that the prominence of neighbor motions in Debussy's music is merely the tip of an interpretive iceberg. Yes, neighbor figures as large-scale structural paradigms are prevalent in Debussy's music. But more importantly, they are a tool Debussy used unlike any before him to convey his

interpretation of the poem. Identifying a neighbor figure in Debussy's early songs is a fairly unremarkable observation, but linking the motive to the poetry and design of the song helps reveal Debussy's interpretive process and creates a pathway for examining recurring features across the repertoire. Neighbor motions, as well as other non-traditional background figures that promote textual sensitivity, are common throughout the early songs. There is some consistency in the kind of background structures one can expect to find, but more important than the specific type of background figure are the facts that they are common, and that they are intimately related to the text. We, therefore, can uncover a hidden unity among the early songs by examining their alternate fundamental structures.

"Fantoches"

"Fantoches" was written by Paul Verlaine. The original poem is in four stanzas, each with three lines, and features characters from the *Commedia dell'arte*: Scaramouche, Pulcinella, "the doctor from Bologna" (potentially Columbine's father, Pantomime), the doctor's daughter (possibly Columbine), and a Spanish pirate (possibly the Captain).¹⁹⁵ The first two stanzas convey a dark, almost sinister, clandestine scene and stanzas three and four present the primary action and main characters of the poem (Example 6.16). Debussy repeats three lines of poetry: Stanza 1, line 3 – "Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune," [Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon]; Stanza 3, line 3 – "Se glisse demi-nue, enguête" [Glides half-nude, in search]; and Stanza 4, line 1 – "De son beau pirate espagnol" [Of her handsome Spanish pirate] (Example 6.17). The repetitions are italicized in Example 6.17. In each instance Debussy states and then immediately repeats the text, converting the stanzas from tercets to quatrains.

¹⁹⁵ Briscoe suggests that the doctor from Bologna might be Pantalone, Columbine's father (Debussy 1993, 1:17). Kimball (2006, 195) surmises that the Spanish pirate and the doctor's daughter could be the Captain and Columbine.

Example 6.16: Verlaine, “Fantoche,” Text and Translation¹⁹⁶

Scaramouche et Pulcinella Qu’un mauvais dessein rassembla Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune.	Scaramouche and Pulcinella Brought together by some evil scheme Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon.
Cependant l’excellent docteur Bolonais cueille avec lenteur Des simples parmi l’herbe brune.	Meanwhile, the good doctor From Bologna slowly gathers Simples in the brown grass.
Lors sa fille, piquant minois, Sous la charmille, en tapinois, Se glisse demi-nue, en quête	While his daughter, that saucy looker, Beneath the bower, slyly, glides half nude, in search
De son beau pirate espagnol, Don’t un languoureux rossignol Clame de détresse à tue-tête.	Of her handsome Spanish pirate, Whose distress a languorous nightingale Proclaims at the top of its voice.

Example 6.17: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Text with Debussy’s Alterations

Scaramouche et Pulcinella Qu’un mauvais dessein rassembla Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune. <i>Gesticulent, noirs sous la lune.</i>	Scaramouche and Pulcinella Brought together by some evil scheme Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon. <i>Gesticulate, dark beneath the moon.</i>
Cependant l’excellent docteur Bolonais cueille avec lenteur Des simples parmi l’herbe brune.	Meanwhile, the good doctor From Bologna slowly gathers Simples in the brown grass.
Lors sa fille, piquant minois, Sous la charmille, en tapinois, Se glisse demi-nue, en quête <i>Se glisse demi-nue, en quête</i>	While his daughter, that saucy looker, Beneath the bower, slyly, glides half nude, in search <i>glides half nude, in search</i>
De son beau pirate espagnol, <i>De son beau pirate espagnol,</i> Don’t un languoureux rossignol Clame de détresse à tue-tête.	Of her handsome Spanish pirate, <i>Of her handsome Spanish pirate,</i> Whose distress a languorous nightingale Proclaims at the top of its voice.

In the first and third stanzas Debussy repeats the last line of text, and in the fourth stanza he repeats the first line of text. The first repetition helps set the atmosphere from the poem and the subsequent instances relate to the two main characters: the doctor’s daughter, who is gliding half

¹⁹⁶ The term “saucy looker” comes from James Briscoe’s translation of the poem. See Debussy 1993, 1:17.

naked, and the Spanish pirate. The textual repetitions in the third and fourth stanzas are especially important. The repeated lines are in different stanzas, but are otherwise adjacent to each other. Together these lines expand sections of the poem and song that are focused around the end of the third and beginning of the fourth stanza. Furthermore, combined with a particular element of Debussy's biography, the alterations take on a decidedly interpretive function.¹⁹⁷

Debussy may not have written "Fantoches," but he certainly found the poetry meaningful and appropriated the text to convey something that he was unable to openly express. The text aptly represents the young composer's interest and feelings for Marie Vasnier, the song's dedicatee. Many of the features of Debussy's early songs that helped pave new paths for the genre of the *mélodie*, and certainly many of the characteristics of the early songs that contribute to their identity as a unified repertoire, are related to or inspired by Debussy's infatuation with the young Parisian socialite with the light agile voice. Vasnier-inspired compositional techniques are not present in all of the early songs; however, Marie Vasnier was the dedicatee of twenty-seven (approximately sixty-eight percent) of Debussy's songs between 1880–1885. Thus, her influence on the young composer, if not complete, was certainly predominant.

Before examining "Fantoches" in greater detail I would like to speak a little more generally about Vasnier's musical influence on the young Debussy, particularly in regards to his melodic lines. Certainly some of Vasnier's influence on Debussy was more personal than musical; however, Marie was known to be a talented singer and Debussy responded to her talent by writing very specific and identifiable melodies to suit her voice. Paul Vidal confirms Marie's influence on the young Debussy:

¹⁹⁷ It is also interesting to note that middle of the third stanza coincides with the golden ratio. If, counting Debussy repetitions, the poem is fifteen lines long, the golden point would be in approximately in Line 9. This point is just before Debussy made the most prominent textual alterations.

His succubus is battenning on to all his little weaknesses. She's pretty and much pursued by admirers, which pleases her jealous vanity; it appears she's a talented singer (I haven't heard her) and sings his songs extremely well; everything he writes is for her and owes its existence to her. How can one expect him in the circumstances to exile himself for two years in Rome...? (Nichols 1998, 22)

Vidal's words confirm Marie's reputation for being a talented singer and help explain why Debussy was so hesitant about accepting the Prix and leaving Paris. Vasnier's voice was light, and agile with a clear upper range (Prunières 1926, 24). When writing a Vasnier-inspired song, Debussy, clearly intending for the work to be sung by Marie (with him at the piano), the young composer played to the strengths of his muse. Vasnier melodies make use of the upper range, often reaching above A5; they frequently contain large leaps, sometimes more than an octave; and there are many instances of vocal coloratura. Furthermore, in many songs Debussy wrote extended passages designed to showcase Vasnier's strengths as a singer. These passages – what I call the “Vasnier Vocalise” – almost always fall at the end of song and have four identifiable characteristics: 1. true to Marie's vocal style, the vocalizes require a light and agile voice; 2. they are sung on a neutral syllable; 3. they are quite technical, tending toward virtuosic or improvisatory; and 4. they explore the vocalist's upper range. The Vasnier Vocalise is present in many of Debussy's early songs and is one of the clearest defining features of his early song repertoire.

The Vasnier Vocalise and Debussy's melodic construction in Vasnier songs illustrates in miniature the main points of my study: they link him to the tradition of the *mélodie* as defined by his predecessors and show how he was pushing the genre of the *mélodie* forward, thus creating a framework for regarding the compositions as significant in their own right; and they provide a very tangible compositional feature that contributes to a coherent and identifiable repertoire within his larger œuvre. I briefly outline the reasoning for each of these conditions. Debussy was

not the first composer to be enamored with a woman to the point that his music took on definable features related to a specific performer or love interest. Gabriel Fauré did the same thing. At a certain point in Fauré's compositional career, all of his songs were inspired by and written for Pauline Viardot. Viardot influenced Fauré's choice of poetry and approach for writing for voice. Furthermore, Fauré was remarkably consistent in his melodies, to the point that a particular idea has come to be known as the "Viardot Motive." This motive is defined by a rising sixth or octave that is followed by a conjunct stepwise descent (Nectoux 1991, 70) and can be seen in many of Fauré's songs.¹⁹⁸

Debussy's approach to melody and his approach to the Vasnier melodies in particular show how he was pushing the boundaries of French art song. The range of Debussy's melodies often reaches well above the staff, which was not especially common in the songs of many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Fauré, for example, would sometimes experiment with wide tessituras¹⁹⁹ but avoided higher notes. Nectoux (1991, 70) surmises the following reasons for Fauré's avoidance of the upper range: 1. There were no singers specializing in the *mélodie* at the time – most were amateurs with limited technique; 2. High notes tended to become the focus of singers and audiences to the detriment of the performance and song as a whole; and 3. High notes made the words harder to understand.²⁰⁰ Debussy pushed ahead of *mélodie* standards because he had a performer at his disposal that had the technique and ability to sing the higher notes well and without disrupting the fabric of the musical composition. Furthermore, by writing his "Vasnier Vocalizes" (he was most adventurous with range during these passages) on a neutral syllable, he avoids the issue of understanding the text.

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter 4 for an illustration of the "Viardot Motive" in "Barcarolle."

¹⁹⁹ See "Après un Reve," which has a range of a perfect eleventh from C4-F6.

²⁰⁰ Additionally, well-supported, resonant high notes were not conducive to common (small) performance spaces like salons and drawing rooms.

The final condition of Debussy's melodies – that the features, particularly the vocalizes – contribute to a unified repertoire – is fairly straightforward. Debussy's frequent use of a technique that stands out as unique in many songs creates a noticeable consistency. Debussy's approach to melody summarizes the main points of my study by situating him within the tradition of the *mélodie* and showing how he was advancing French art song in the late nineteenth century; by showing how he was, at a young age, defining an identifiable compositional approach that validates his early songs as significant compositions in their own right, apart from anachronistic comparisons with his mature compositional style; and by establishing criteria that make it possible to regard his early songs as a unified and identifiable sub-repertoire.

To return to “Fantoches,” we see Vasnier's influence in Debussy's choice, interpretation, and alteration of the text (as illustrated above) as well as in the melodic profile of the song (discussed below). The third and fourth stanzas unfold the drama of the poem and, given his attention and alteration, are a focal point for Debussy. In the final two stanzas, the daughter – scantily clad – searches for the pirate, and a nightingale sings out the distress of the pirate in full voice. Arthur Wenk (1976, 28–29) suggests that there is more to the pirate's distress than is immediately obvious; he argues that the distress represents sexual desire. Given the nature of the last two stanzas of poetry, Debussy's interest in the poem is clear: it represents his own secret desire for Marie Vasnier. Debussy himself is the Spanish pirate and Marie Vasnier is the doctor's daughter. Debussy mirrors the poetry and reflects his own infatuation by imbuing the melodic material with special significance; see Example 6.18. The melody associated with the doctor's daughter is evocative of her behavior and is characteristic of Vasnier melodies: the passage includes large leaps (G4-A5 – see bracket in mm. 37–38), it has a wide tessitura (D4-A5), and it

necessitates an agile voice. Additionally, when the poem reads “Se glisse demi-nue, en quête” [glides half-nude, in search] in mm. 42–46, Debussy mimics the gliding motion with triplets and a wave-like motion in the melody that finally settles on E4 on to close the third stanza in m.

46.²⁰¹

Example 6.18: Debussy, “Fantoches,” Evocative Melody

The image displays a musical score for the vocal line of 'Fantoches' by Debussy. It consists of four staves of music in G major, 3/4 time. The lyrics are: 'ne. Lors sa fil - le, pi - quant mi - nois, Sous la _ char-mil - - le, en - ta - pi - nois, Se glis - se de - mi - nu - e, Se _ glis - se _ de - mi - nue, en quê - te De son beau pi - rate es - pa -'. The score includes various musical markings: a slur over the first staff, a red bracket over the second staff, a red bracket over the third staff, and a slur over the fourth staff. There are also triplets and a 'très retenu' marking.

The cry of the nightingale follows after the close of the poem and is quite technical; it satisfies all the conditions for a “Vasnier Vocalise” (Example 6.19). It requires a light and agile voice and is quite technical, evidenced by the trill elaborations and very quick arpeggios in mm. 74–75; it is sung on a neutral syllable (La); and it explores the upper register by being primarily focused around A5 but occasionally going as high as Bb5. The trills and arpeggios accurately represent the tension in the distressed cry of the pirate.

²⁰¹ Carol Kimball (2006) makes a similar point. She suggests that the doctor’s daughter is “etched in evocative vocal shapes that match her demeanor, mood, and actions...” (195).

Example 6.19: Debussy, “Fantoches,” Nightingale Vocalise

66

te. [p] *tr*

[La]

8-

[mf] *sim.* *p*

71 *tr*

(8)-

76

(8) *loco* [pp]

Following Wenk’s views regarding the association of the Pirate’s cry with sexual desire, the passage also seems to suggest the feelings of eagerness and anxiety that Debussy would have felt toward Mme. Vasnier. The musical features are completely justified by the poetic content; however, Debussy’s emotional investment adds an extra dimension of interest to the song. Although Debussy interacted with Marie Vasnier and the whole Vasnier family on regular basis, he was only able to express his romantic desire through limited channels; the most obvious and accessible method was through his songs. The time spent in Mme. Moreau-Sainti’s studio with Debussy at the piano and Vasnier singing the songs crafted especially for her was meaningful for

the young composer and likely the most intimate interaction he would have with his *fée mélodieuse*.²⁰²

The trope of the nightingale representing sexual desire is not unique to “Fantoche.” We see something similar in “En Sourdine” (Example 6.20).

Example 6.20: Debussy, “En Sourdine,” Nightingale Reference

Calm in the half-light
That the high branches make,
Let us permeate our love
With this profound silence.

Let us melt together our souls, our hearts
And our senses in ecstasy,
Among the vague languors
Of the pines and strawberry trees.

Half close your eyes,
Fold your arms on your breast,
And from your sleeping heart
Drive away all care forever.

Let us be drawn
By the gentle, rocking wind,
That comes and ripples at your feet
The waves of russet grass.

And when solemnly the evening
Shall fall from the dark oaks,
That voice of our despair,
The nightingale will sing.
That voice of our despair,
The nightingale will sing.

“En Sourdine” is similar to “Fantoche” in many ways: both songs are from 1882, are dedicated to Mme. Vasnier, and are based on texts by the same author (Paul Verlaine). “En Sourdine” is tender, delicate, and more directly intimate than “Fantoche.” Thus, there is little doubt that the

²⁰² Debussy likened Vasnier to a “melodious fairy” in his dedication found on the title page of the Vasnier Songbook: “à Madame Vasnier, Ces chansons n’ont jamais vécus que pare ell, et qui perdront leur grâce charmeresse, si jamias plus ells ne passent par sab ouch de fée mélodieuse.” (“For Madam Vasnier, these songs only lived through you, and will lose their enchanting grace if ever they cease to pass through you melodious fairy lips”).

cry of the nightingale in the last stanza represents intimacy. Debussy clearly found the nightingale reference meaningful and conveyed his interpretation by repeating the last couplet of text. Each of the five stanzas of “En Sourdine” is a quatrain; Debussy extends St. 5 by an additional two lines to emphasize not only the nightingale references, but also (and perhaps more aptly) the feelings of despair and frustration he must have felt not being able to pursue Marie openly. The textual similarities between “Fantoche” and “En Sourdine” is, of course, not Debussy’s doing; but the use of both combined with clear references to extra-musical features of Debussy’s biography helps unify the early songs.

The form of “Fantoche” is A-A’-B and is revealed primarily through cadence points, notable melodic reprises, and a consistency in motives throughout the sections. There are four main motives, all of which occur in the piano and occasionally the voice (Example 6.21).

Example 6.21: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Four Main Motives²⁰³

The image displays four musical motives labeled A, B, C, and D, arranged vertically. Motives A, B, and C are written in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. Motive A is a complex, flowing eighth-note melody with various accidentals. Motive B is a simpler, more melodic line with a few accidentals. Motive C is a rhythmic eighth-note pattern with a consistent intervallic structure. Motive D is presented in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and consists of a few chords and notes, including a prominent chord in the treble clef.

²⁰³ See Appendix for full song.

Section A begins with a short intro that presents three (A-C) of the four main motives. In m. 8 Debussy introduces Motive D in the piano, which then persists through the section ultimately leading to a half cadence in m. 16. Section A' begins in m. 18 with a reprise of the introductory material (Motives A and B) before settling back in to the accompaniment Motive D in m. 26. Debussy then recycles motives C (mm. 30–33), B (mm. 34–35 and 38–39), and A (mm. 34–35 and 38–39). It is worth noting that the motives occur both at the same pitch level as the original statements and as transpositions throughout the song. In m. 42 Debussy brings back Motive D and brings Section A' to a close with a half cadence in m. 46. Once introduced in the first eight measures of the piece, at least one of the four main motives is operative throughout Section A and A' (mm. 1–48). Although the voice melody rarely has one of the main motives (except for mm. 22–25 – Motive B), there is a certain coherence that Debussy creates with the pervasively recurring motives in the piano. Both sections not only recycle the same motives, they both end on half cadences and support similar parts of the fundamental structure (discussed below).

Section B begins in m. 48 and for the first time in the song, none of the four main motives are present (Example 6.22). The absence of any of the ubiquitous motives (A-D) instantly marks this passage (mm. 48–56) in the music as something different. The passage also coincides with the text that originally occurs at the end of the third (“Se glisse demi-nue, en quête”) and beginning of the fourth (“De son beau pirate espagnol”) stanzas of the poem. As noted above, the lines had special significance for Debussy, which he emphasized by repeating each. To further draw attention to the text (and subsequently his interpretation of the text), Debussy creates a musical marker by introducing a new pattern in the piano; or perhaps more aptly, he creates a musical marker by withdrawing all previously established, and thus expected, patterns.

Example 6.22: Debussy, “Fantoches,” Beginning of Section B

There are two additional points of interest regarding this passage. The first is that Debussy focuses on the second half of his repeated text: “en quête, De son pirate espagnol.” There is perhaps a connection between the text “in search...” in a passage where we are suddenly without the piano accompaniments to which Debussy has accustomed us. The second is that Debussy severs the last line of the third stanza; Section B begins before the St. 3 text is finished. Debussy could have begun Section B with the first line of St. 4 – “De son beau pirate espagnol” – but instead he began it with the last two words of St. 3 – “en quête.” In doing so, he created a stronger connection between the third and fourth stanzas. Moreover, he strengthened the connections between the two characters – the Doctor’s daughter in St. 3 and the Spanish Pirate in St. 4 – and further promoted biographical connections with his musical and interpretive decisions. Debussy likely regarded Marie Vasnier as the Doctor’s daughter and himself as the Spanish pirate. He emphasized the text by repeating the lines that directly reference the Doctor’s

daughter and the Spanish pirate and he linked the stanzas of poetry featuring those characters (the end of St. 3 and beginning of St. 4) together musically via the overlap of text within the musical form. In m. 56, coinciding with the end of the line “De son beau pirate espagnol,” Debussy returns to the expected motives from Sections A and A’; Motive D returns in m. 56 and leads to a focus on Motive B in mm. 62–78. Motive B in mm. 62–78 occurs in both right (m. 62) and left (mm. 66 and 70) hands of the piano and in the voice (m. 76); it is combined with a pattern that, although not exactly like, is reminiscent of Motive A. The extended focus on Motive B in mm. 62–78 supports and is ultimately subordinate to the Nightingale Vocalise that brings the song to a close.

Key points in the structure of the song emphasize Debussy’s motivic arrangement and formal construction. Example 6.23 is a deep middleground graph of the song that shows each of the larger formal sections and the placement of structural tones throughout the song. Sections A and A’ both start with tonic harmonies and scale-degree 5 in the treble (preceded by an *Ansteig* in Section A). Furthermore, each concludes with a half cadence.²⁰⁴ The tonic harmony and *Kopftön* of the piece are therefore prolonged through the first two sections of the form. At the beginning of Section B in mm. 48–56, the ubiquitous motives seen up to this point are conspicuously absent; as previously mentioned, this absence draws focus to Debussy’s textual alterations and a place in the poetry that he found especially relevant or compelling. The placement of structural tones also helps to emphasize this point in the music. Section A’ ends with a clear focus on scale-degree 5 in the treble. Section B starts with a new motive and a focus on the subdominant harmony, which then resolves to the dominant in m. 52.

²⁰⁴ Section A’ ends with a minor dominant, which is not generally used in a half cadence. Given the similarities with the previous section and larger formal structure of the song, I think it is still fair to call it a half cadence.

Example 6.23: Debussy, "Fantoques," Middleground Graph

mm: 8 10 13 15 16 22 25 33 34 45 46 48 52 56 57 58 62 66 70 74 75 76

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

5 5 5 5 5 4 3 b2 1

A A' B

V i III iv⁷ V bII⁶ V²/_{III} III iv⁷ v IV V v IV bI VI[♯] I #III I bII[♯] I

i i IV bII[♯] I

Ultimately, however, both IV and V prolong the minor dominant from the end of the previous section to m. 56. In m. 56, the motivic drought ends with the entrance of Motive D and the reemergence of scale degree 5. This return initiates a quick, though incomplete, *Urlinie* descent (scale-degrees 5–4–3) in mm. 56–58, and the arrival of the structural predominant harmony (IV) in m. 57. Although scale-degree 5 is still operative in mm. 48–56, it is not literally present; this makes the literal return of the *Kopftón* both noticeable and significant, especially since it is combined with the return of Motive D. Measures 48–56 thus stand out not only due to the focus Debussy places on the text, but also due the absence of other musical features (motives and literal structural tones).

Another important, although slightly peculiar, feature of Section B is the close of the song and its structure, especially the final cadence. One would perhaps expect the Schenkerian structure of a song to end with a V-I authentic cadence with scale-degrees 2 or 7 resolving to scale-degree 1. Debussy does something different (Example 6.24). As previously mentioned, m. 56 signals the return of Motive D and the *Kopftón* – scale-degree 5 – of the piece. We then get a quick stepwise *Urlinie* descent in mm. 57–58 as well as the structural predominant in the bass in m. 57. These are all likely, even expected, features of a Schenkerian 5-line. The likely conclusion of the song and the background structure – an authentic cadence with scale degrees 2 or 7 resolving to scale degree 1 – is, however, not to be found. Instead, Debussy substitutes the dominant harmony in the final cadence with a Bb major-minor seventh chord in third inversion. This harmony does not include a diatonic scale degree 2 (B); thus, Debussy uses a flattened scale degree 2 in the soprano.

In “Fantoche” the background structure is very close to an orthodox five-line descent with tonic, predominant, and dominant harmonies. Debussy’s structural substitutions for the

dominant harmony and scale degree 2 are notably different than what would be expected in traditional Schenkerian repertoire, but the harmonic situation is, in itself, more common and better known by the term “tritone substitution.”²⁰⁵

Example 6.24: Debussy, “Fantoches,” Final Cadence

The image displays a musical score for Debussy's "Fantoches," specifically the final cadence. It is divided into three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

- System 1 (Measures 56-60):** The vocal line begins with the lyrics "un lan-gou-reux ros-si-gnol Cla-me sa dé-tres-se". Above the staff, three vertical lines mark scale degrees 5, 4, and 3. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, with dynamics ranging from *mf* to *pp*.
- System 2 (Measures 61-65):** The vocal line continues with "à tue-tête". The piano accompaniment includes a *loco* section and a *pp* section. A Roman numeral "IV" is placed above the piano staff at the beginning of this system.
- System 3 (Measures 66-70):** The vocal line has the syllable "tc." followed by a long note marked "[La]". The piano accompaniment features a *mf* section, a *sim.* section, and a *p* section.

²⁰⁵ The tritone substitution is described in classical analysis as a secondary or alternately resolving German augmented sixth chord.

71 \square $\hat{b}2$

(8)

76 bII_2^4

(8) *loco* [*pp*]

I

The tritone substitution is based around the idea that the interval of a tritone in any dominant chord (between scale-degrees 7 and 4) is enharmonically shared with another dominant chord whose root lays a tritone away (Example 6.25).

Example 6.25: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Tritone Substitution

E7 Tritone in E7 Enharmonic Spelling Bb7

Because the Bb dominant chord – above in Example 6.25 and in mm. 74–75 in the music (Example 6.24) – shares a tritone with the primary dominant (E7), it can resolve similarly, thus exploiting the diminished fifth/augmented fourth enharmonic relationship of the tritone interval.

An added detail from the song is that Debussy does not write the substituted dominant in root position (Bb-D-F-Ab), but rather in third inversion (Ab-Bb-D-F). The resolution of Ab to A natural in the bass in mm. 75–76 further illustrates the enharmonic relationship. In a traditional dominant seventh chord, the seventh (in this case Ab) would generally resolve down (in this case, to G). In this instance, however, Debussy resolves the seventh up (to A natural) because he is preserving the tendencies of the tritone in the primary dominant (E7); Ab is behaving like a G#.

The tritone substitution and the close of the structure further highlight the vocalise and emphasize a passage that carries interpretive as well as musical significance. The vocalise stands out as significant because it is a notably Debussyian feature that expands certain compositional parameters beyond what would have been common for the *mélodie* at that time (see my discussion of the “Vasnier Vocalise” above). That the young composer clearly wrote the passage with Marie Vasnier in mind creates a distinguishable biographical connection. Additionally, following the work of other analysts who have made connections between the characters in the poem (the Doctor’s Daughter and the Spanish Pirate) and Debussy (and all his frustrations and desires) and Vasnier, and those that find amorous significance in the distressed cry of the Pirate, we find a deeper interpretive significance to the passage. The aforementioned substitutions in the structural framework of the song thus serve to emphasize the vocalise passage and, perhaps more importantly, the interpretive features embedded within it.

In addition to showing how Debussy was challenging the conventions of the *mélodie* – creating justification for the significance of his early songs independent from comparisons with his more mature style – the vocalise in “Fantoches” also helps create connections with other songs from the same period, thus establishing a criteria for regarding the early songs as a unified

sub-repertoire within Debussy's larger œuvre. The formal expectations created in "Fantoches" resemble those in "Beau soir." Recalling my earlier discussion of "Beau soir," one of the most interesting features of the piece is that Debussy places the last line of the poem in a passage that seems to be a coda (refer to Examples 6.12 and 6.14). Whether or not the end of "Beau soir" is actually a coda depends on how you read the piece, where you read the structural closure of the song, and how much significance you place on the text. As noted above, more orthodox Schenkerian readings would likely close their structure before the text is finished, thus legitimizing the reprise of the opening material as a coda. If, however, one prefers a less orthodox approach that promotes a neighbor or turn figure as the deepest structural feature, then the reprise is not a coda; it is, rather, part of the main body of the song. My preferred reading of "Beau soir" does not include a coda, relying instead on an alternate background structure that better fits the character of the poetry and places proper emphasis on the text.

The end of "Fantoches" presents a problem similar to that of "Beau soir." The text finishes in m. 66, but the song continues for another fourteen measures. The text concludes on a tonic harmony and is accompanied by motives from the beginning of the song (Example 6.26). Notice in Example 6.26 that m. 66 arrives on a convincing tonic harmony and is accompanied by a variation of Motive A in the piano right hand and Motive B in the left hand. These are the same motives that began the song, but are presented slightly differently here.²⁰⁶ The tonic arrival, completion of text, and reprise of introductory motives set the stage for considering the rest of the song as a coda or some other annexed part of the form; however, each of these conditions is negated with a closer examination of the music and the context of the passages in which they occur.

²⁰⁶ Here, Motive A is more elaborate and includes harmonic as well as melodic intervals. Additionally, the primary leap in the sixteenth-note passages is a sixth rather than the third presented in early statements. Motive B is set an octave lower than in earlier statements and is accompanied by a low A pedal.

Example 6.26: Debussy, “Fantoche,” Close of Text

61
à tue - tète

(8) *loco*
[pp]

66
te. [La]

Motive A

[mf] *sim.* [p]

Motive B

I

The close of the text happens in m. 66, but the effects of the text continue to echo through the end of the song. The poem ends with the text “Of her handsome Spanish Pirate, Whose distress a languorous nightingale, Proclaims at the top of its voice.” Then, although there is no text left to sing, Debussy continues to emphasize the text by composing out the cry of the nightingale over the neutral syllable “La.” The vocalise is not set over text from the original poem, but it does continue to represent the text by extending the final stanza of the poem in a purely musical way. The tonic arrival may initially seem like a conclusive harmonic gesture, but it is not part of a cadence. Notice in Example 6.26 that the tonic chord in m. 66 is not preceded by a dominant or other harmony that would provide a convincing cadential gesture. Furthermore, the tonic is an A major chord in a predominantly minor song (this A major tonic harmony turns out to be a secondary dominant that tonicizes IV on the second beat of m. 68). Finally, the reprise of introductory motives is hardly a novel feature of this song. As noted above, the four main motives – including those that began the song – are stated and restated many times

throughout the piece. Their presence in combination with the end of the text is perhaps noteworthy, but given Debussy's motivic organization of the song as a whole, the event is not substantial enough to merit labeling the remainder of the song a coda.

An additional, and quite substantial, reason for not considering the last fourteen measures of "Fantoques" as a coda is that the fundamental structure of the song is not closed until m. 76. The Schenkerian structure of the song is a fairly convincing 5-line with some notable alterations, but no matter how you choose to read the piece, you are hard-pressed to find a way to close the structure before the final measures of the song. Thus, while it may be tempting to discount the vocalise, the passage is absolutely indispensable: it continues to emphasize the text after the poem is closed, it provides closure to the fundamental structure of the song, and perhaps most importantly it helps to convey the interpretive elements that link the song to Debussy's biography.²⁰⁷

In "Fantoques" – like in "Beau soir" – what initially seems like an elaboration or ultimately dispensable section or gesture at the end of the song turns out to be one of the most important and defining features of the *mélodie*. In addition to the effect that each has in its individual song, the passages also forge a link between songs that helps define a consistency in Debussy's compositional approach that legitimizes the early songs as a unified repertoire.²⁰⁸ Additionally, Debussy's approach in these works (and indeed in many of the early songs) shows that the early songs are important contributions to the genre of the *mélodie* and are significant in their own right.

²⁰⁷ I know of at least one commercial recording that alters the ending of "Fantoques" to omit the vocalise, perhaps due to the complexity of the passage. Whatever the case, it is very detrimental to the song.

²⁰⁸ Consistencies between songs in Debussy's early song repertoire are often most easily discerned by comparing Vasnier songs. The connection between "Fantoques" – a Vasnier song – and "Beau Soir" – not a Vasnier song – especially helps unify and strengthen the repertoire.

“Pantomime”

Echoing my introductory discussion of the poem in Chapter 5, Verlaine’s “Pantomime”²⁰⁹ features characters from the *Commedia dell’arte* and includes several instances of textual repetition. Example 6.27 is the text as it appears in Debussy’s song. The italicized lines are repetitions added by Debussy; they did not occur in Verlaine’s original poem.

Example 6.27: Debussy, “Pantomime,” Text and Translation²¹⁰

Pierrot, qui n'a rien d'un Clitandre, Vide un flacon sans plus attendre, Et, pratique, entame un pâté. <i>Pierrot, qui n'a rien d'un Clitandre, Vide un flacon sans plus attendre.</i>	Pierrot, who is nothing like Clitandre, Empties a flask without further ado, And, being practical, cuts into a pastry. <i>Pierrot, who is nothing like Clitandre, Empties a flask without further ado.</i>
Cassandre, au fond de l'avenue, Verse une larme méconnue Sur son neveu déshérité.	Cassandre, at the end of the path, Sheds a unnoticed tear Over his disinherited nephew.
Ce faquin d'Arlequin combine L'enlèvement de Colombine Et pirouette quatre fois, <i>Et pirouette quatre fois.</i>	That rascal Harlequin schemes The kidnap of Columbine And whirls about four times, <i>And whirls about four times.</i>
Colombine rêve, surprise De sentir un coeur dans la brise Et d'entendre en son coeur des voix, <i>Et d'entendre en son coeur des voix.</i>	Columbine dreams, surprised To feel a heart in the breeze And hear voices in her heart, <i>And hear voices in her heart.</i>

Each stanza features a different character and a different mood: Pierrot casually eats and drinks, Cassandre laments the fate of his nephew, Harlequin plots to kidnap Columbine and jokingly twirls about, and Columbine dreams and seems forlorn. The only stanza that does not include any textual alteration is the second. The most extensive change is in the first stanza where Debussy repeats the first two lines at the end of the original tercet, extending the stanza and underscoring the casual behavior of Pierrot, and emphasizing the fact that Pierrot and Clitandre

²⁰⁹ See Appendix for music to the full song.

²¹⁰ Translation by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:13–14). Translation of St. 1, Line 3 is my own.

are nothing alike. The repetitions in the third and fourth stanzas merely echo the last lines of each stanza, extending the poetry and allowing the final line to resonate more fully with the listener.

Debussy's "Pantomime" (1882) features the range and melodic agility that is both common in the early songs and a notable way in which Debussy was advancing the genre. Throughout the song, Debussy frequently writes triadic or disjunct passages and several leaps of an octave (Example 6.28).

Example 6.28: Debussy, "Pantomime," Complex Passages in Voice

A

17
dre, Et, pra-tique, en-tame un pa-té.

21
Pier-rot, qui n'a rien d'un Cli-tan-dre, Vide un fla-con sans

B

29
Cas-sandre, au fond de l'a-ve-nue,

32
Verse u-ne lar-me mé-con-nue Sur son ne-

C

Example 6.28 includes three examples (A-C) of the vocal melody in the song. Example 6.28-A shows two examples of octaves leaps in a modest range; both happen in fairly quick rhythmic values. Example 6.28-B shows an example of the type of disjunct line that characterizes “Pantomime” as well as many others in the early song repertoire. Notice that in mm. 32–33 the melody quickly descends a minor ninth from E5 to D#4 via a mix of triadic leaps and chromatic stepwise motion. Example 6.28-C – mm. 53–56 – includes a rather complex passage, replete with chromaticism and rhythmic activity. Furthermore, the passage is almost entirely leaps and briefly touches on the highest note in the song, B5. In these three examples we see the type of melodic writing typical of Debussy’s early songs. This style of writing for the voice is certainly more complex than is evident in the songs of other French composers of the *mélodie*.

The most substantial and virtuosic melodic passage in “Pantomime” begins in m. 57 (Example 6.29).

Example 6.29: Debussy, "Pantomime," Vasnier Vocalise

55

d'en - ten - dre en son cœur des voix. Ah

ritenuto

ritenuto

Octave leap

Tempo I

57

pp

60

[Ah]

m.d.

m.d.

63

m.d.

m.d.

The image shows a musical score for a vocalise by Debussy, measures 66-70. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. Measures 66-69 show a vocal line with a high note (B5) circled in red, and piano accompaniment with sixteenth-note triplets. Measure 70 shows a vocal line with a high note (B5) and piano accompaniment with a final chord.

This passage is fourteen measures long, occurs after the poetic text is finished, and satisfies all the conditions for the “Vasnier Vocalise:” it requires a light and agile voice, it is sung on a neutral syllable, it is quite technical and virtuosic, and it explores the upper range. Some additional notable features of the passage are an extended focus on the highest note of the piece (B5) and greater rhythmic variety. Debussy only touches on the highest pitch once very briefly (m. 55) leading up to m. 57, but does so several times during the vocalise (circled in red). He also begins the vocalise with an octave leaps from B4 to B5, further highlighting the highest note of the song. Additionally, for the first time in the song, Debussy expands his rhythmic focus to include sixteenth-note triplets in mm. 61 and 63. The vocalise is generally more conjunct than many other passages in the song, which, combined with the other features of the passage, further conveys the improvisatory nature of the vocalise.²¹¹

²¹¹ Generally, “improvisatory” melodies are more scaled-based than leap-based.

The form of the song, background structure, and textual repetitions interact in interesting ways. The musical form is A-A'-B. Section A includes the first stanza of poetry, Section A' includes the second and third stanzas, and Section B includes the fourth stanza. The song closes with the above-mentioned vocalise that lasts fourteen measures.²¹² A deep middleground reading of the song presents not only the fundamental structure, but also some deep musical markers that reflect the repeated text (Example 6.30).

Example 6.30: "Pantomime," Deep Middleground

Stanza: I ————— II — III ————— IV ————— Vocalise "Ah"

mm: 10 16 20 22 30 34 37 43 44 46 47 49 55 56 57 59 61 64 67 73 74

As shown in Ex. 6.30, the background structure of "Pantomime" is a larger-scale neighbor motion in both treble and bass. The fundamental structure opens in m. 10 after an introduction; Debussy then prolongs the E/B pair through Sections A and A'. At the beginning of Section B in m. 47, both voices move to the neighbor note over a vii^{o6}_5 harmony.²¹³ In m. 57, both voices step back to complete the neighbor figure. The completion of the neighbor figure is dependent upon the vocalise. The text of the poem (including repetitions) ends in m. 56; without the vocalise, the neighbor structure would remain unfinished.

²¹² The vocalise is followed by a short, four-measure, closing figure in the piano.

²¹³ Section B and the structural neighbor note closely coincide with the golden ratio. Section B begins in m. 47 and the golden ratio for this piece would be at approximately m. 46.

The passages of repeated text (as shown in Example 6.27) are marked by a double asterisk in Example 6.30. Although they don't contribute directly to the deepest, most abstract levels, they do act as important middleground markers. Sections A and A' are linked together in that they both convey the structural tones (the E/B perfect fifth) that open the fundamental neighbor figure. Harmonically, they also work together to progress from the opening tonic harmony in m. 10 to a dominant harmony in m. 46, thus ending Section A' on a half cadence. The first passage with repeated text is in m. 22 and initiates an important focus on the supertonic harmony; this harmony not only ends Section A, but also supplies a middleground predominant harmony that comes between the opening I and the V that concludes Section A'. Additionally, the ii in m. 22 also begins (or perhaps more appropriately, continues) an ascending linear motion to the next passage with repeated text in m. 43. The repeated text in m. 43 emphasizes the submediant harmony and is a deceptive resolution to the dominant that occurs in m. 37. Ultimately the vi is less important than the preceding V, but its presence initiates a circle of fifths progression (vi-ii-V) that prolongs the dominant harmony and brings Section A' to a close on a half cadence. Thus, the first two instances of textual repetition create the outer boundaries of a middleground stepwise harmonic progression (ii⁷-iii-IV-V-vi).

The third instance of repeated text occurs in m. 55 over a G major harmony. This passage has less significance than the first two, acting as a middleground predominant harmony leading to V⁴₃ in m. 56. The first passage of repeated text (over ii) has the most significant function as the predominant in a I-ii-V progression that occurs over Sections A and A'; it continues to be prominent into all but the deepest levels of abstraction. The second passage (over vi) would be reduced sooner than the first textual repetition, but still persists into the deep middleground as a means for prolonging an important dominant harmony. The third instance of textual repetition in

m. 55 is, like the second instance, a way of elaborating V, but perhaps a little less prominent. Although the passages with repeated text do not persist into the deepest levels, they do provide significant middleground markers.

The neighbor background structure and the role of the vocalise in “Pantomime” have some notable similarities to others songs in the repertoire. First, we see in this song an alternate, less orthodox, background structure, the likes of which is quite common in Debussy’s early songs. Recall that “Beau soir” is best suited to a less orthodox reading; although the song can be read as a more traditional 3-line or 5-line, the most appropriate reading – and the one most sensitive to the poetry – is a turn or neighbor motive. The second feature that links “Pantomime” to other *mélodies* in the early repertoire is the role of the vocalise. Although the text ends well before the vocalise begins, the structure of the song is not yet complete; thus, the vocalise takes on a decidedly formal role and is necessary to complete the structure of the song.²¹⁴ This is quite similar to Debussy’s approach in “Fantoche.” Recall that in “Fantoche,” Debussy relies on the vocalise to supply the last two scale degrees in the treble (b2-1) and the structural dominant harmony in the bass (an alternate, tritone substitution, dominant harmony). Without the vocalise, both “Pantomime” and “Fantoche” would be incomplete.

The type of structure that each respective vocalise completes is, of course, different; but the fact that they are necessary features of the composition beyond the surface level remains the same. Thus, in the vocalizes we see two types of unifying features; one that is recognizable on the foreground – the vocalise itself, with all its unifying, consistent characteristics – and one that is only recognizable on the middleground – the structural and formal significance of the passages. The surface-level significance of the vocalizes is substantial and easily discernable, but

²¹⁴ At the beginning of the vocalise in m. 57, the accompaniment recalls the beginning of the song. This could encourage reading the vocalise as an additional large section of the form.

the deeper, more structural, impact of the passages is only evident by examining many songs in detail with attention to Debussy's biography as a clue to the importance of the passages. Such a deeper examination provides analytically based evidence for regarding the early songs as a unified repertoire and substantiates my endeavor to illustrate (in an analytically driven way) that Debussy's early songs are significant compositions in their own right.

“Fête galante”

Debussy composed “Fete galante”²¹⁵ on a poem by Théodore de Banville in 1882. The song is dedicated to Marie Vasnier and was premiered by Debussy and Vasnier on May 12, 1882 at the Salons Flaxland (Briscoe 1990, 54). This song bears a strong resemblance to the Menuet movement of the *Petite Suite* from 1889²¹⁶ and is an example of how Debussy would sometimes revive a compositional idea, poem, or title to create a new composition. We see a similar approach in “La fille aux Cheveux de lin,” which exists as a song and a piano prelude, and in “Clair de Lune,” which exists as two separate songs and the more famous third movement from *Suit Bergamasque*. Additionally, the *mélodies* “Fantoques” and “En Sourdine” have at least two versions each, the first from the 1880s and the second from the 1890s.

The extent to which paired compositions share material varies from one instance to another. The song and prelude “La fille aux Cheveux de lin” share some compositional similarities, the key (Gb major) being the most conspicuous; the three compositions entitled “Clair de lune” are related in title, poem, and aesthetic inspiration, but are mostly unrelated musically; the later version of “Fantoques” has few changes from the earlier version; and “En Sourdine” “occupies an intriguing middleground between revision and recomposition” (Yates

²¹⁵ See Appendix for music to the full song.

²¹⁶ The *Petite Suite* is a piano duet.

2002, 183). Regarding the *mélodies* “Clair de lune,” “Fantoches,” and “En Sourdine,” Arthur Wenk (1976, 222) asserts that each of the songs were “revised” in the 1890s and amount to new compositions; however, Paul Yates (2002, 179–91) demonstrates that “Clair de lune” and “En Sourdine” are rightly described as recomposed, but “Fantoches” remains remarkably similar in both versions and is thus better described as a revision. Debussy recycled much of the material from “Fête galante” in the Menuet. The introductions of the song and the minuet are very similar but differences arise as the compositions progress. James Briscoe (1981) has examined the differences between “Fête galante” and the Menuet as well as between the song and prelude “La fille aux Cheveux de lin” in greater detail in “Debussy *d’après* Debussy: The Further Resonance of Two Early *Mélodies*.”²¹⁷

True to its name and the style of painting with which it shares its name, the original poem of “Fête galante” features an idealistic courtly outing. Example 6.31 is both Banville’s and Debussy’s versions of the poem.

Example 6.31: “Fête galante,” Text and Translation²¹⁸

Banville

Voilà Silvandre et Lycas et Myrtil,
 C’est aujourd’hui fête chez Cydalise.
 Enchantant l’air de son parfum subtil;
 Au clair de lune où tout s’idéalise
 Avec la rose Aminthe rivalise.
 Philis, Églé, que suivent leurs amants,
 Cherchent l’ombrage et les abris charmants;
 Dans le soleil qui s’irrite et qui joue.
 Luttant d’orgueil avec les diamantes,
 Sur leur chemin la Paon blanc fait la roué.

There are Silvandre and Lycas and Myrtil,
 Today there is an outing at Cydalise’s.
 Charming the air with a subtle perfume;
 In the moonlight where all is perfection
 Aminthe rivals the rose.
 Philis, Églé, who are following after their lovers,
 Search among the shadows and the charming places;
 In the bright sun that excites and plays about,
 Vying proudly with diamonds,
 Across their path the white peacock vaunts his plumage.

²¹⁷ Among other things, in this article Briscoe seeks to refute Léon Vallas’s claims that little of Debussy’s mature style is evident in his more youthful composition.

²¹⁸ This translation is mostly by James Briscoe. In instances – lines 2, 3, 4, 7 – where Debussy’s text differs from Banville’s, the translation is my own.

Debussy

Voilà Silvandre et Lycas et Myrtil,
Car c'est ce soir fête chez Cydalise.
Partout dans l'air de son parfum subtil;
Dans le grand parc où tout s'idéalise
Avec la rose Aminthe rivalise.
Phillis, Églé, que suivent leurs amants,
Cherchent l'ombrage en mille endroit charmants;
Dans le soleil qui s'irrite et qui joue.
Luttant d'orgueil avec les diamantes,
Sur leur chemin la Paon blanc fait la roué.

There are Silvandre and Lycas and Myrtil,
For this evening there is an outing at Cydalise's.
All about a subtle perfume fills the air;
In the great park where all is perfection
Aminthe rivals the rose.
Phillis, Églé, who are following after their lovers,
Search among the shadows in a thousand charming places;
In the bright sun that excites and plays about,
Vying proudly with diamonds,
Across their path the white peacock vaunts his plumage.

Debussy makes a few small changes to Banville's original poem: in Line 2, Debussy changes the text to "Car c'est ce soir..." [this evening....] rather than "C'est aujourd'hui..." [today...]; in Line 3, he replaces the word "Enchantant" [charming] with "Partout dans" [all about], thus creating a smoother line; in Line 4, Debussy changes the scene from "Au clair de lune" [in the moonlight] to "Dans le grand parc" [in the park]; and in Line 7, he alters the poem to say "en mille endroit charmants" [in a thousand charming places] instead of "et les abris charmants" [and the charming places]. Generally, the meaning doesn't change between Banville's and Debussy's versions; however, Debussy's changes arguably improve the poem: in the second line, the change of the time of the party to the evening more appropriately matches the shadows mentioned later in the poem (Line 7); Debussy's Line 3 is a more delicate and expressive; although moonlight is a favored subject for poets and composers alike in this era, changing Line 4 to "Dans le grand parc" offers a potential biographical connections (to be discussed below); and Debussy's change to a thousand charming places in Line 7 gives the poem more expressive weight.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Briscoe (1981, 111) notes that the changes are more the result of "youthful flourishes of independent poetizing" rather than carelessness. Although Briscoe means well in defending the young Debussy, I find justifying Debussy's alterations as an instance of youthful immaturity to be yet another example of discounting the early songs in favor of the composer's more mature style.

There is a possible biographical connection associated with Debussy's textual alteration in Line 7 ("Dans le parc" for "Au clair de lune"). Jean-Antoine Watteau is commonly associated with *Fête Galante* in regards to painting; he created the style and it was for him that the French Academy created the category in the eighteenth century. It is possible that Banville in his original poem was trying to convey a similar atmosphere as Watteau in his sketch "Assemblée dans un parc," which is sometimes also known as "Fête galante." It is not out of the question to surmise that Debussy changed the text to "Dans le parc" to more closely reflect Watteau's sketch (Briscoe 1981, 111). The biographical connection to the altered text lies in whether Debussy would have known Watteau's work when composing the song. We know that Debussy encountered a large collection of Watteau's work while studying in Rome after winning the Prix (Lockspeiser 1978, I:81), but given that "Assemblée dans un parc" was on display in the Musée du Louvre in the nineteenth century, it is quite possible that Debussy would have known of Watteau and his work in the early 1880s (Briscoe 1981, 111).

"Fête galante" has a number of features that make it unique within the early song repertoire – perhaps most notably a focus on the Dorian mode – but one characteristic firmly connects the *mélodie* with others in early song repertoire: the "Vasnier Vocalise" (Example 6.32). The vocalise begins in m. 42 and lasts until the end of the song in m. 47. The passage, though shorter than many vocalizes in songs previously discussed, satisfies all the conditions for a "Vasnier Vocalise." The passage occurs after the close of the poem and is thus set to the neutral syllable "Ah;" the passage is quite florid and rhythmically robust, which necessitates an agile voice; the vocalise also features a wide tessitura (an eleventh from E4 to A5) with frequent arpeggios in a wave-like oscillation, which satisfies the technical requirement of the "Vasnier Vocalise;" and the passage explores the upper range of the song. The last note of the passage

(and the song) is A5, which is just shy of the highest note of the piece (in m. 24, the voice touches very briefly on A#). In regards to range, the song ascends to A5 several times, but only for short periods (lasting a sixteenth note in rhythm). The last note of the passage holds the A5 for two whole beats; thus, while the passage isn't unique in the range it covers, it does place a greater emphasis on the upper range by sustaining one of the highest notes for a longer duration than anywhere else in the song.²²⁰

Example 6.32: Debussy, “Fête galante,” Vasnier Vocalise

²²⁰ The Vasnier Vocalise in “Fête galante” links the song to others in the repertoire, but it should be noted that it serves a much less structural function. In this song, the vocalise occurs after the close of the structure of the song and, of course, after the text has finished. In other songs, Debussy emphasizes the vocalise as a more important part of the song by extending the fundamental structure into the passage, often relying on the vocalise for structural closure. In “Fête galante,” the Schenkerian structures is a more orthodox 5-line (possibly interpreted to include an interruption) that closes in m. 42, just before the beginning of the vocalise.

The “Vasnier Vocalise,” found in “Fête galante” and in others as evidenced above, is a prominent feature in many songs that I have not addressed in detail. And at times the passages stretch the boundaries of the vocalise as I have defined it. Example 6.33 (A-D) includes four additional examples of the “Vasnier Vocalise” from the early song repertoire. Example 6.33-A is the vocalise from “La Romance d’Ariel” and aligns with my previously established conditions for a “Vasnier Vocalise: it is quite improvisatory, it requires no small amount of vocal agility, and it explores the upper range. There is not, however, an indication for the passage to be sung on a neutral syllable. But, given that the passage must be sung on something, it is safe to assume that Debussy intended for the vocalist to use a neutral vowel. The complexity of the rhythm and the leap of a major ninth between C6 and Bb4 are especially novel features of this vocalise. Example 6.33-B is an excerpt from “Pierrot” and is a common “Vasnier Vocalise:” the range is high – up to C6, the passage is sung on a neutral “Ah,” there is a certain improvisatory nature to it, and the vocalist would need a light and agile voice. The last two conditions are especially evidenced by the last line, which traverses the range of a perfect eleventh over the span of six beats, has a rather disjunct final climb to the last note (B5), and includes a series of trills.

Example 6.33-C is from “Mandoline.” Despite being intended for Marie (the song is dedicated to her), it is among the tamer examples of a “Vasnier Vocalise.” It is sung on a neutral syllable but does not explore the upper range. Additionally, it is not especially virtuosic or improvisatory. It does, however, have some notable features. The first is that the vocalise passage begins after the text finishes (m. 48), but before the last phrase that includes text is finished (m. 50). The final texted phrase ends in m. 50, but the text ends in m. 48; Debussy thus melds the vocalise with the rest of the song, giving it an ancillary function.

Example 6.33: Debussy, Additional “Vasnier Vocalizes.”

A – “La Romance d’Ariel”

Musical score for "La Romance d'Ariel" by Debussy. The score is in G-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line with trills and a piano accompaniment with triplets and trills. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes a vocal line with a trill and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The second system includes a vocal line with trills and a piano accompaniment with triplets and a trill. The score ends with a G chord.

B – “Pierrot”

Musical score for "Pierrot" by Debussy. The score is in G-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line with a long note and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The score is divided into three systems. The first system includes a vocal line with a long note and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The second system includes a vocal line with a long note and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The third system includes a vocal line with a long note and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The score ends with a G chord.

C – “Mandoline”

46 *più p* *FP*

bri - se. La, la, la, la,

più p *FP*

77

51

la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,

sempre pp

56 *pp*

la la la la

pp *più pp*

61

la la la

s

toujours en allant se perdant

s *fp*

66

la

fp

Ped. sourde

fp *Ped. sourde*

D – “Serenade”

This, of course, completely aligns with other songs that I have addressed in more detail in which the vocalise is an indispensable part of the form. Another unique characteristic of the vocalise from “Mandoline” is that, rather than exploring the upper range, it explores the lower range. The range of this *mélodie* does not extend as high as most from this repertoire; the highest note is a G5 and the overall tessitura is from C4-G6. Thus, the C4 in mm. 56–58 and mm. 60–62 is the lowest note of the entire song. Furthermore, it only occurs in the vocalise passage. The passage still qualifies as a “Vasnier Vocalise,” but is a notable exception to the norm.

The final portion of Example 6.33 (D) is from “Serenade” and is a quintessential Vasnier-style passage and one of the more extreme versions of the “Vasnier Vocalise.” The overall

tessitura of the passage is a staggering two octaves plus a whole step and the highest note is a D6 in m. 55. The passage requires an agile voice and is quite virtuosic. In fact, this song includes an alternate, optional second ending that is marked “ad lib.” The optional ending does not go as high, but allows the singer to be quite improvisatory if she decides to be so. Regardless of the ending the singer chooses, the passage is quite impressive and very Vasnier-esque. Each of the vocalise passages in Example 6.33 have features that not only allow them to be considered “Vasnier Vocalises,” but also connect them in a very musical way to other early songs and lend credence to my endeavor to justify the early songs as a unified repertoire within Debussy’s larger catalogue.

“Clair de lune”

Debussy composed his first version of “Clair de lune” in 1882 and dedicated the song to Marie Vasnier. As noted above, this is not the only version of “Clair de lune” that Debussy composed; there is an additional song from the 1890s and a work for piano that carry the same title. Of the many *mélodies* that comprise Debussy’s early song repertoire, “Clair de lune” was the first that I found especially beautiful; in many ways my entire study on the early songs was inspired and initiated by this work. This song is often compared to later version from the 1890s. The comparison almost always involves making a value judgment as to which version of the song is “better;” and many contend that the later version is the superior song.²²¹ I don’t entirely agree, and it is from this perspective that I endeavored to legitimize Debussy’s early songs as substantial compositions whose value is not dependent on anachronistic comparisons with later works or Debussy’s more mature compositional style.

Both Charles Koechlin (1926) and Roger Nichols (1967) have assessed the early version

²²¹ Evidence almost always bears some sort of comparison based on compositional maturity.

of “Clair de lune” and found it wanting in comparison to the later version. Furthermore, both authors have used the two versions of the song as a means for showing Debussy’s compositional development. Koechlin (1926, 126) admits that the early version of the song has an undeniable charm, but finds the 1890s version to be more beautiful. Nichols (1967) is more precise in his criticism. One fault of the 1882 song is Debussy’s inability to properly capture the atmosphere with the piano accompaniment, something that, according to Nichols, Debussy does much better in the later version of the song (230). Additionally, Nichols argues that Debussy’s approach in the earlier version is insensitive to the poetry and strays too far from the form of the poem. Debussy altered the original poem by repeating two lines of text; Nichols attributes the alterations to a lack of compositional ability suggesting that, by repeating the text, Debussy was trying to establish a mood that he was otherwise unable to convey in his music. The 1890s song, however, amounts to a “more responsible and sensitive attitude to the poetry” and “an increase in the composer’s ability to recreate the form of the poem in musical terms” (231). Additional criticisms by Nichols include the meter, which he finds to be more leisurely in the later song than in the earlier song; and the text setting, which in the early version he finds to be too melismatic with dull instances of word painting (231–234).

Paul Yates (2002) addresses the criticisms of the early version of “Clair de lune” in his study of the *Recueil Vasnier* and defends Debussy’s compositional decisions. Indeed, Yates contends that much about the song is missed or obscured when it is discounted as an instance of juvenilia. He refutes Nichols’s criticisms of the atmosphere of the song, claiming that Debussy creates a more appropriate and serene atmosphere by avoiding cliché instances of word painting in order to better portray the general atmosphere of the poem (203). Yates further notes some compelling features related to phrase rhythm and a conspicuous G natural that manifests both

melodically and harmonically throughout the song; he even goes as far as surmising that a G# vs. G natural opposition is prominent in other early songs (“En Sourdine”) as well (203–08).

The poem “Clair de lune”²²² was written by Paul Verlaine and is based on a juxtaposition of two simultaneous but contrasting feelings: an outward, admitted happiness; and an inward, unacknowledged sadness. This contrast can be seen in each of the three stanzas (Example 6.34).

Example 6.34: Verlaine, “Clair de lune,” Text and Translation²²³

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi tristes
Sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Your soul is a choice landscape
Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go about
Playing the lute and dancing and are almost
Sad beneath their whimsical disguises.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L’amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n’ont pas l’air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

While singing in the minor mode of
Love triumphant and of the good life,
They seem not to believe in their own happiness
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d’extase les jets d’eau,
Les grands jets d’eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,
That makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob in ecstasy,
Those tall, slender fountains among the statues.

The first stanza focuses on the masqueraders and bergamaskers who happily dance and play the lute; but on the inside, behind their whimsical masks, they are sad. On the surface they are happy but below the surface lays an unacknowledged sadness. The first two lines of St. 2 set up a somber and conflicting scene that more directly addresses the juxtaposition from the first stanza. The characters are singing about love and the good life – both presumably happy themes – but they are singing in the minor mode. The themes of their song are at odds with their delivery. The third line of that stanza elaborates on the first two lines. They don’t believe in their own

²²² Much of the following discussion of Verlaine’s poem and Debussy’s repetitions is reproduced from my brief discussion of textual repetition in Ch. 5. I have reproduced it here both as a reminder and as a means of quickly getting reacquainted with the song.

²²³ Translation is mostly by Briscoe (Debussy 1993, 1:15). The translation of St. 2, line 1 is my own.

happiness; despite claiming to be happy on the outside, their inner, unacknowledged emotions suggest a latent sadness.

The main focus of the poem comes at the end of the second stanza and beginning of the third. The last line of St. 2 first introduces the primary theme of the poem – moonlight – and absorbs the ambivalent feelings conveyed in the poem thus far: like smoke escaping a chimney the song of the characters – both outwardly happy and inwardly sad – blends and is lost in the moonlight. We discover in the first line of St. 3 that moonlight is perfectly representative – perhaps even the progenitor – of the character’s conflicting feelings. It is both sad and beautiful and creates a perfect atmosphere for dreaming birds and sobbing fountains. Although Verlaine opens the poem by focusing on the masqueraders and bergamasquers, towards the end of the poem we realize that the actions of the characters are merely a preamble to the main subject: moonlight. Furthermore, we realize that the ambivalent feelings of the characters exposed in the beginning of the poem are a result of the somber influence of the pervading moonlight that encourages distant, almost lonely, happiness.

In “Clair de lune,” Debussy alters the original poem by repeating two lines of text in two separate parts of the song. Debussy’s repetitions are italicized in Example 6.35. Debussy immediately repeats the last line of St. 2 – “*Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune*” [And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight] – and then brings back the first line of St. 3 – “*Au calme clair de lune triste et beau*” [In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful] – at the end of the song. The two repeated lines originally occur in separate stanzas but are otherwise consecutive (the last line of St. 2 is followed by the first line of St. 3). Furthermore, they are two of the most important lines in the entire poem; together they convey the mood of the poem and help establish the atmosphere in which all the characters exist and in which all the events take place.

Example 6.35: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Text and Translation

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi tristes
Sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L’amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n’ont pas l’air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d’extase les jets d’eau,
Les grands jets d’eau sveltes parmi les marbres.
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau.

Your soul is a choice landscape
Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go about
Playing the lute and dancing and are almost
Sad beneath their whimsical disguises.

While singing in the minor mode of
Love triumphant and of the good life,
They seem not to believe in their own happiness
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,
And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight,

In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,
That makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob in ecstasy,
Those tall, slender fountains among the statues,
In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful.

By immediately repeating the last line of St. 2, Debussy expands the section of the poem that directly references moonlight (the primary subject of the poem) and lingers on Verlaine’s compelling and vivid reference to song mixing with moonlight. Debussy’s reprise of the first line of St. 3 at the end of the song leaves the listener (or reader) with a palpable feeling of the character of the work.

The titular subject of the poem, moonlight, represents both the moods and the ambivalent feelings of the characters. Debussy’s alterations further articulate the “sad and beautiful” nature of the poem. The subject of moonlight, especially as it is portrayed in Verlaine’s poem, is rich in its potential for expression and clearly appealed to Debussy. Furthermore, the ambivalent feelings of happiness and sadness associated with moonlight and reflected in the actions of the characters align with Debussy’s feelings for Marie Vasnier. His intense, secret desire to be with Vasnier plagued him with an inner sadness. Thus, he had to appear to be outwardly happy while being inwardly forlorn; much like the characters in the poem, he could not (or would not) believe in his own happiness. His music provided the only external means of expressing the feelings towards Vasnier that he necessarily kept secret. Realizing how and in what ways Debussy

identified with the concept of moonlight in the poem is important for appreciating and fully understanding the musical idiosyncrasies in his *mélodie*.

Marie Vasnier's influence can be seen in this song in many ways. Besides the facts that Debussy dedicated the song to her and that the poetry is reflective of the young composer's feelings and attitudes towards her, we see her influence in the music itself. Debussy's melodic construction is very characteristic of Vasnier specifically and the early songs more generally (Example 6.36).²²⁴

Example 6.36: Debussy, "Clair de lune," Characteristic Melodies

(A)

12

Votre âme est un pa - y - sa - ge choi -

Detailed description: This musical staff shows measures 12 through 15. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G#4, a half note A4, and a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next two measures: a half note C5 and a quarter note D5. The final measure contains a quarter note E5 and a quarter rest.

16

si Que vont char-mant masques et ber - ga - mas - ques

Detailed description: This musical staff shows measures 16 through 19. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps, and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note F#4, followed by a quarter note G#4, a half note A4, and a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next two measures: a half note C5 and a quarter note D5. The final measure contains a quarter note E5 and a quarter rest.

(B)

32

tant sur le mo - de mi - neur

L'a - mour vain -

Detailed description: This musical staff shows measures 32 through 35. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps, and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note F#4, followed by a quarter note G#4, a half note A4, and a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next two measures: a half note C5 and a quarter note D5. The final measure contains a quarter note E5 and a quarter rest. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the final measure.

36

queur et la vie op - por - tu - ne, Ils n'ont pas

Detailed description: This musical staff shows measures 36 through 39. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps, and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note F#4, followed by a quarter note G#4, a half note A4, and a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next two measures: a half note C5 and a quarter note D5. The final measure contains a quarter note E5 and a quarter rest. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the final measure.

²²⁴ See Appendix for full song.

(C)

52 11
ne, Au

56 12
cal - - me clair ___ de lu - - ne triste ___ et

60 13
beau, Qui fait rê - ver ___ les oi - seaux dans les

Detailed description: This musical score is for Example 6.36-C. It consists of three staves of music in G# major. The first staff (measures 52-55) starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 52 has a boxed number '11' above it. The lyrics 'ne,' are written below the first measure. A bracket on the right side of the staff spans from measure 52 to measure 55, with the word 'Au' written below it. The second staff (measures 56-59) has a boxed number '12' above it. The lyrics 'cal - - me clair ___ de lu - - ne triste ___ et' are written below. The third staff (measures 60-63) has a boxed number '13' above it. The lyrics 'beau, Qui fait rê - ver ___ les oi - seaux dans les' are written below. The music features a wave-like contour with various intervals and rests.

(D)

69 13 *p* *ritenuto* *a tempo*
Les grands jets d'eau svel - tes par - mi ___ les mar - - bres.

Detailed description: This musical score is for Example 6.36-D. It consists of one staff of music in G# major. Measure 69 has a boxed number '13' above it. The lyrics 'Les grands jets d'eau svel - tes par - mi ___ les mar - - bres.' are written below. The music starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. It includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) above measure 69, *ritenuto* above measure 70, and *a tempo* above measure 71. The melody has a wave-like contour with various intervals and rests.

These melodies are all fairly similar: they all have a tessitura of at least a major ninth; they are all quite disjunct, requiring a certain agility; and they all have a wave-like contour. Example 6.36-A is the opening phrase in the voice and spans the range of a minor tenth. Furthermore, the passage briefly seems to focus on the key area of G# in mm. 17–18 despite never leaving the home key of F# major.²²⁵ Paul Yates (2002, 205) points out a similarity between mm. 19–20 and two passages from “En Sourdine” (mm. 9–10 and 17–18). Example 6.36-B has a slightly smaller tessitura, but reaches into the upper range, touching on the highest note of the song (A#5). Example 6.36-C combines the unique features of the previous melodies (A and B) to expand the overall range to a major tenth and again reach up to the highest note of the piece, and Example 6.36-D further broadens the tessitura to a perfect eleventh. These passages of melody, taken from

²²⁵ The melody in mm. 18–19 is over a V¹¹-I cadential progression (not shown).

all parts of the song, create a consistency with the song as well as between “Clair de lune” and other early songs.

Although “Clair de lune” does not include a “Vasnier Vocalise,” it does include a brief glimpse of one in the final bars (Example 6.37).

Example 6.37: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Vocalise-esque Passage

The image shows a musical score for a vocalise passage from Debussy's "Clair de lune". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/8. The lyrics are "mar - bres. Ah". A bracket above the vocal line indicates a specific melodic phrase over the word "Ah". The piano accompaniment includes measures 73 and 75, which are marked with the number 73 and 75 respectively. The piano part features complex chords and arpeggiated figures.

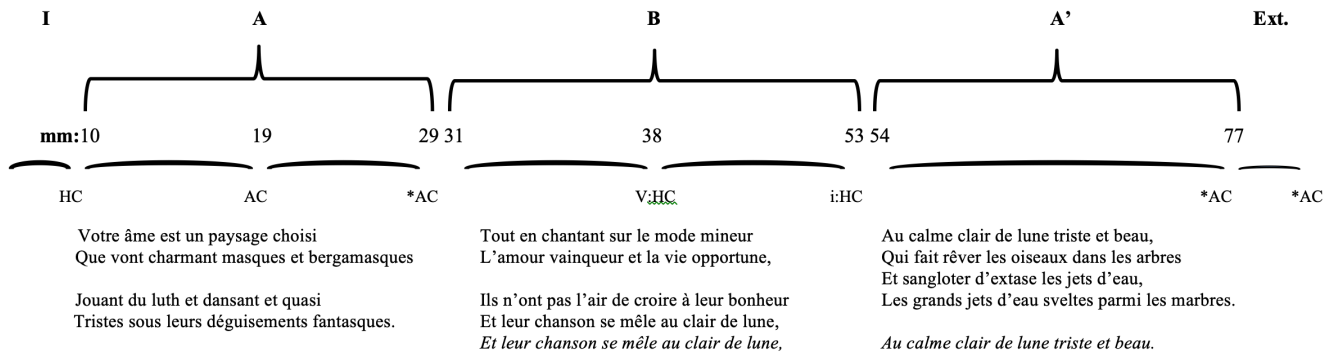
The text of the original poem ends in m. 74 and the repetition of the last line of St. 3 begins in m. 77 (not shown in Example 6.37). In the intervening measures (75–76) Debussy writes a brief passage over the text “Ah.” This of course resembles the text one would expect from a more developed “Vasnier Vocalise,” but none of the other identifying features are there. Thus, while this passage does not qualify as a full-fledged vocalise, it is certainly reminiscent of passages from other songs in the repertoire. Curiously, the brief melody over “Ah” is not retained in all modern editions and very well may not have been written by Debussy. James Briscoe does not include the passage in his 1993 critical edition (Debussy 1993). This is because the “Ah” passage does not appear in the autographed manuscript presented to Mme. Vasnier prior to Debussy’s departure for Rome (*Recueil Vasnier*) or the manuscript held by the Newberry Library in Chicago.²²⁶ The “Ah” passage does conspicuously appear in the 1926 special edition of the

²²⁶ In editions where the “Ah” is not present, the voice part rests in mm. 75–76.

Révue musicale, which is the first posthumous edition of the song. That the passage may not have been composed by Debussy perhaps explains why it provides only a truncated approximation of what would be expected from a vocalise in a Vasnier-dedicated song.

The form of the song is A-B-A' and initially follows that of the poem, but direct formal connections between the two deteriorate as the song progresses (Example 6.38).

Example 6.38: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Form and Text



The main body of the song includes one stanza of poetry for each large section of the form; it is preceded by an introduction and followed with a brief cadential extension. The first stanza can be further divided into two phrases, each comprised of a couplet of text that ends with an authentic cadence. The second stanza is divided similarly but the phrases end on half cadences: the first in the dominant key area and the second in the tonic key area.²²⁷ Debussy treats the third stanza differently from the first two. There is no clear break in the first four lines of text; the only cadences are placed very late and prompt some curious questions (to be discussed below).

Three of the cadences (marked with asterisk in Example 6.38) feature a substitute dominant harmony. This happens at the end of Section A, the end of Section A', and at the very end of the piece. Example 6.39 shows each of these passages as well as a reduction below the music (third system).

²²⁷ Nearly all cadences in this song include dominant harmonies with chordal extensions, most notably ninths and flat ninths.

Example 6.39: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Substitute Dominant Harmonies

Section A

Sous leurs dé-gui-se - ments fan - tas - ques.

25 27

V⁹ G⁷ TTSub I

Section A'

(svel -) tes par - mi les mar - bres. Ah. Au cal - me

71 77

V G⁷ TTSub I

Cadential Extension

beau...

80

I I I G/F# I G⁴ TTSub I

Section A ends in m. 30; the closing cadence includes not only a dominant ninth, but also an additional G7 harmony (mm. 27–28) that comes between the dominant and ultimate resolution to

tonic in m. 29.²²⁸ This interpolated harmony in mm. 27–28 is an example of the tritone substitution and is a common dominant substitution.²²⁹ A tritone substitution is, however, less commonly seen combined with the dominant, making its occurrence in this *mélodie* especially notable. In this instance, the G7 dominant substitution acts as a dominant prolongation. Although the chord changes from mm. 26–27, the tritone shared by each chord (E#/F – B) does not. Thus, we get a change of color, but the overall effect of a dominant to tonic progression is preserved.²³⁰

The end of Section A' includes a similar event. The cadential dominant occurs in mm. 71–72, but does not resolve to tonic until m. 77. In mm. 73–76 Debussy reprises material from the introduction over a tonic harmony, but this is not the true resolution of the dominant from the prior two bars; rather, the dominant in mm. 71–72 connects with a G7 in m. 76 before resolving to I in m. 77. It is, of course, tempting to resolve mm. 71–72 directly to I in m. 73: the dominant to tonic progression is evident, the pedal point in mm. 73–76 emphasizes the tonic, and the reprise of the introductory material in the piano right hand seems to signal a convincing cadence and the beginning of a coda. However, the text is not yet finished; both in terms of the poem proper and in terms of the text that Debussy adds to the end of the song in m. 77. As I have pointed out in other songs, it is truer to the spirit of Debussy's compositional style to privilege the text whenever possible. Furthermore, there are many instances throughout the song in which Debussy connects a V with a tritone substitution to create a more substantial dominant; doing so at the end of Section A' promotes consistency throughout the *mélodie*. I discuss this section more below via discussion of the Schenkerian structure of this *mélodie*.

²²⁸ The example only shows through m. 29. Measure 30 is omitted because it is an extension of the previous measure.

²²⁹ Review my discussion of “Fantochez,” Examples 6.24–25, for a deeper explanation of the tritone substitution.

²³⁰ There is perhaps a similarity between the text “Sad beneath their whimsical disguises” and the “disguised” dominant.

The final portion of Example 6.39 is from the very end of the song. Following the final cadential figure in mm. 71–77, Debussy extends the song an additional eight measures. This last phrase finishes out the added text and is primarily an extension of the previous cadence; the passage is focused on the tonic harmony with scarcely any other harmonic activity. As a final reference to the ends of Sections A and A', Debussy concludes the song with an additional tritone substitution; we see two brief flashes of the G7 harmony (mm. 82–83), the second of which provides the final resolution of the song. This example of the tritone substitution is notable for two reasons. First, it is not preceded by a dominant as in the previous examples from the ends of Sections A and A; this makes the cadences a little less significant, which, given that it occurs in a passage designed to extend the final cadence, it appropriate for the passage. Second, Debussy respells the seventh (F) of the G7 as an E#.²³¹ This enharmonic spelling exploits the enharmonicism of the interval of the tritone and makes the resolution to F# a little clearer. It is common and expected for an augmented fourth to resolve out to a sixth; thus, if the interval is spelled as F-B, we expect a resolution to a minor sixth (E to C). This is at odds with the key of F# major. If, however, the tritone is spelled as a diminished fifth, it is more common for it to resolve in to a third. Therefore, if the tritone is spelled E#-B (as Debussy did here), it quite expectedly resolves to a major third from F#-A#, confirming the home key of the song and providing a satisfactory final resolution that references prior points in the song.

The tritone substitution harmony in “Clair de lune” is reminiscent of the final measures of “Fantoche.” Recall that “Fantoche” ends with a very prominent tritone substitution that acts as the main dominant of the structure and supports an altered scale-degree 2 in the top line.²³² The

²³¹ Making it resemble a German augmented sixth chord in the key of B. This interpretation still works since the resolution of the chord is to F#, which in addition to being the tonic of F# major is also the dominant of B.

²³² Refer back to Examples 6.24 and 6.26.

final resolution of the song has a Bb dominant in third inversion (Ab-Bb-D-F) resolving to an A minor chord (A-C-E); the final bass notes are spelled as Ab-A, but they function as G#-A.

Debussy is again exploiting the enharmonicism of the tritone, but not respelling the chord. In “Clair de lune,” Debussy follows a similar procedure but is more direct in the appearance of the resolution.

The tritone substitutions as shown in Example 6.38 are the most high profile occurrences of the chord, but the G7 harmony occurs at other points in the *mélodie*. Example 6.40 shows two additional points in the music in which Debussy uses the tritone substitution.

Example 6.40: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Additional Occurrences of the Tritone Substitution.

(A)

(B)

Example 6.40(A) shows a piano accompaniment in 3/8 time. The first measure is marked with a dynamic of *[p]* and a fingering of 1. The second measure is marked with a dynamic of *[p]* and a fingering of 1. The third measure is marked with a dynamic of *[p]* and a fingering of 1. The fourth measure is marked with a dynamic of *[p]* and a fingering of 1. The chords are labeled as V⁹, G⁶₄ TTSub, V⁹, and G⁶₄ TTSub.

Example 6.40(B) shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts at measure 44 with the lyrics "son se mêle au clair de lune, et leur chan". The piano accompaniment starts at measure 44. The chords are labeled as E: I and F⁴₃ TTSub.

son de mêle au clair de

(8)

48

I F³ I F³

TTSUB TTSUB

Example 6.40-A is the very beginning of the piece. Debussy opens the song with a short piano introduction that cycles between a dominant ninth chord and a G major dominant substitution. This example is unique in the song because the harmony in question is only a triad (in second inversion), not a major-minor seventh. Technically, since the G harmony does not include a seventh, it does not have a tritone to share with the primary dominant. For this reason, and considering that the introduction is a ten-measure dominant prolongation, it is tempting to label the G harmony as a Neapolitan, thus giving it a predominant function rather than a dominant substitute function. In either case, the purpose of the chord is clear – to prolong the dominant; but regarding the G harmony as a tritone substitution makes for more fruitful connections throughout the song.

Example 6.40-B is from mm. 47–49. This passage comes near the conclusion of Section B and follows a harmonically robust area of the song that passes through several different key areas, starting with the dominant (C#) in m. 31, then to F major in m. 43, and finally to E major in m. 47. (Soon afterwards, Debussy returns to the home key (F#) to conclude Section B).

Example 6.40-B occurs during the E major passage and features a figure similar to that from the beginning in the piano right hand (Example 6.39-A). Aside from the operative key area, this

passage has two notable differences from the passage in Example 6.40-A. First, the dominant substitution in this passage is prolonging the tonic, not the dominant. Second, the substitute harmony is a major-minor seventh rather than a triad, making it a more satisfying dominant substitution. Additionally, note that Debussy spells the chord with a D# rather than an Eb; using a D# instead of an Eb to resolve to E is more visually direct. Debussy's spelling of the chord here makes a clear connection with the end of the song.

As evidenced in Examples 6.39 and 6.40, a tritone substitution occurs at five separate points in the music. Three of these passages – at mm. 1–6, 47–49, and 73–76 – have a similar figure in the piano right hand: the cascading chords from the introduction. This is the figure that Nichols (1967) finds to be ineffective for creating a sense of unity; he argues that Debussy is unable to integrate the figure into the composition and that it disturbs the atmosphere (230.) I believe, however, that the figure quite effectively promotes a sense of unity throughout the song and also helps establish the atmosphere. Aside from the fact that the pattern and harmonies occur at several points in the music, the dissonance the substituted dominant provides against the surrounding harmonies and the subsequent relaxation provided by its resolution conveys the relationship between the calm sadness and the reluctant happiness from the poem.²³³ This reflects Yates's (2002, 203) position regarding the atmosphere of the song: Debussy's "refusal to take up the more tangible extra-musical gambits offered by the poem" (that is, he often avoids direct instances of word painting) promotes a more general focus on the atmosphere of the song. I believe the cascading figure from the introduction and accompanying harmonic events aptly convey the atmosphere suggested by the poem and promote unity throughout the song.

²³³ Yates (2002, 204–08) mentions each of the instances of the tritone substitution but situates the passages within his larger discussion of an "intruding" G natural. He posits that a recurring G natural is at odds with G#, creating a "intricate tonal argument." He supports his discussion with the examples of the tritone substitution mentioned in my discussion as well as with a few other isolated occurrences of G natural that he finds compelling.

The fundamental structure of “Clair de lune” is a 5-line *Urlinie*, with an interruption, supported by tonic and dominant *Stufen*. Example 6.41 is a deep middleground graph that shows the structural lines, the form, and each of the previously mentioned tritone substitutions. The introduction begins with a dominant prolongation that leads to the opening of the structure in m. 11. Over the course of Sections A and B, the structural top line descends to scale-degree 2 over a dominant flat ninth harmony. Note also that Section B travels through some rather tumultuous key areas (C#-F-E). The structure resets in m. 54 and, over the course of Section A’, descends again to land on scale-degree 1 in m. 77; the structural bass supports the top line with a large-scale I-V-I progression.

There are two especially compelling passages shown in Example 6.41; both are related to Debussy textual repetitions. The first is clearly evident in the graph: a curious but conspicuous lowered scale-degree 3 (A natural in m. 43) in the *Urlinie* that occurs amidst a turbulent harmonic environment. This structural anomaly occurs in conjunction with the first line of text that Debussy repeats: “Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune” [And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight]. The poetic and aesthetic significance of repeating the line is apparent; it is the first time the title of the poem – “clair de lune” [moonlight] – is stated and it conveys a sense of the loss of something intangible (song). Debussy clearly found the line to be meaningful. To make a connection between the bergamasquers and their ambivalent feelings towards “love triumphant and the good life” one the one hand, and Debussy and his relationship with Marie Vasnier on the other hand is all too easy. The line “Et leur...” is the point in the poem in which the singing of the characters is lost and consumed by the moon; the sense of loss in this poem seems to have profoundly impacted Debussy.

Example 6.41: Debussy, "Clair de lune," Middleground Graph

MM:

1 6 7 11 22 27 29 31 37 39 43 47 49 50 52 54 61 70 71 70 76 77 83 84

Intro. A B A' Cad. Ext.

V^9 G_4^6 V^9 V^7 G_3^4 ii V^9 I V_{4-3}^{8-b9} F_3^4 I $TTSub$ I v^6 I^6 I G_5^4 $TTSub$ G_2^4 $TTSub$ I
 C# F E (E#=F)

I I V^{b9} I V^9 I

Debussy mirrors the poetic impact of the line with a similar musical impact. Section B begins in the dominant key area (C# major) in m. 31, progresses through the key area of F major (m. 43), and then to E major (m. 47). The E major section leads to a C# dominant ninth chord in m. 52 that recalibrates the key of the song back to the home key of F# major. The section ends on a half cadence shortly thereafter. The line “Et leur...” first occurs in m. 43; the repetition happens four measures later in m. 47. The first statement of the line corresponds to the passage in F major and the repetition corresponds to the following section in E major (Example 6.42).

Example 6.42: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Repeated Text in Context – Annotated Music

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Debussy's "Clair de lune". Each system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system covers measures 38 to 43. The vocal line begins with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 38. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Harmonic annotations below the piano part include a C# major triad (V⁷) in measure 38, a first inversion C# major triad (I) in measure 39, and a first inversion F major triad (F: V¹) in measure 43. The second system covers measures 44 to 47. The vocal line repeats the phrase "et leur chan-". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Harmonic annotations below the piano part include a first inversion E major triad (E: I) in measure 47 and a first inversion E major triad with a flattened seventh (E: TTS_{ub}) in measure 48. The key signature changes from C# major to E major between the two systems.

At first blush, the musical settings for both statements seem very similar (aside from being in different key areas). A closer examination of the music, however, reveals some notable differences. First, Debussy sets the initial statement (m. 43) over the most unstable four measures

of the entire song. The key of F major is wildly distant from the home key (F# major) and the passage consists entirely of dominant harmonies (cadential six-fours resolving to dominant flat ninths). In addition, Debussy adds to the instability of the passage by adding a chromatically altered tone (A natural) in the top line.

In contrast, the passage that includes the repetition of the line (m. 47) is much more stable. Although not a closely related key, E major is closer to F# major than F major and the passage prolongs the tonic of the key area via root position tonic chords with intervening dominant substitutes.²³⁴ Additionally, in m. 47 Debussy moves away from the chromatic inflection in the *Urlinie* by resolving it down to diatonic scale-degree 2 (G#). We thus discover that the first statement of “Et leur...” – with its extreme instability, distance from the home key, and chromatic *Urlinie* inflection – is an interpolation that would ultimately be omitted from the deepest levels of analysis.

The passage of the song focused around the text “Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune” is especially effective when all features are considered collectively and in relation to Debussy’s biography. The young composer found the line to be especially significant and likely quite relevant to his life. He repeated the text for added effect and set it against a series of striking musical features. Musically, the effect is one of extreme tension blending into relaxation. The F major passage and chromic inflection in the top line create the initial tension, which is then partially relaxed in the E major section. The E major section stabilizes the music and eventually leads to a half cadence and ultimately a reprise of Section A; by m. 54 the anxiety and unrest of the previous eleven measures has completely abated. What initially seems like a

²³⁴ Only the first measure of the passage in E is shown. Subsequent measures recycle the same figure. See the music in the appendix for the full passage.

peculiar passage in the music is given new meaning when examined analytically and measured against Debussy's biography.²³⁵

The second line of text that Debussy repeats is the first line of St. 3 – “Au calme clair de lune triste et beau” [In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful]; the repetition occurs in m. 77, after the end of original poem. This point in the music is ripe with interpretive possibilities. The most obvious choice is represented in Example 6.43.

Example 6.43: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Final Cadence – Option 1

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Debussy's "Clair de lune". The first system covers measures 69 to 73. It features a vocal line with lyrics: "Les grands jets d'eau svel - tes par - mi... les mar - bres. Ah...". Above the vocal line, there are three numbered boxes (3, 2, 1) and a "CODA" label with an arrow pointing to the right. Below the vocal line, there are three numbered boxes (1, v, 1). The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The second system covers measures 77 to 81. It features a vocal line with lyrics: "Au cal - me clair de lu - ne triste et beau...". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The score is in 3/4 time and G major.

²³⁵ Yates (2002) points out another compelling feature centered on the first line of repeated text. He argues that Debussy establishes a two-bar phrase rhythm emphasizing the odd numbered bars from the beginning of the song, which remains consistent until the final word of the repetition of “Et leur...”. At the start of the final word of the line in m. 50, Yates argues that an “elision” takes place creating a structural syncopation that shifts the focus of the phrase rhythm to the even numbered measures. An ambiguous stretch of music from mm. 60–68 washes out any sense hypermeter and adjusts the structural focus back to odd-numbered bars in m. 69 (203–4)

This interpretation closes the structure of the piece in m. 73, making the remaining measures a coda. It is a compelling and convenient option, but leaves a lot of loose threads.²³⁶ The cadential motion in mm. 71–73 and the reprise of the introductory material in m. 73 make this reading tempting, but it does not account for the text. If one were to accept this interpretation, not only is Debussy’s final line of (repeated) text relegated to a less important part of the form, the original poem is interrupted.²³⁷ This seems at odds with Debussy’s compositional style and is reminiscent of my discussion of “Beau soir.” Recall that “Beau soir” could be read as having or not having a coda, the latter of which necessitates downgrading the text (refer to Examples 6.7–6.15). I believe that here (as well as in “Beau soir”) the better approach involves more thoroughly accounting for the text, especially the repeated text. Debussy clearly saw fit to endow the text “Au calm...” with significance by repeating it. The musical and analytical interpretation should support that.

Therefore, I prefer delaying the close of the structural framework of the song until the advent of the last line of text (Example 6.44). In this interpretation, the potential cadence in m. 73 is subordinated in order to delay tonic confirmation until m. 77 with the entry of the final line of text. By downgrading the cadence, the text is given a more prominent focus: the final line of the poem (...marbres) in mm. 73–74 is not cut short, and the repeat of “Au calme...” in m. 77 is highlighted by the close of the structure. Following the close of the structure in m. 77, Debussy prolongs the tonic through the end of the repeated text in m. 80. This reading eliminates the need for a coda. The final measures of the piece become an extension that brings the song to a quick and efficient conclusion.

²³⁶ Most who have examined this song prefer this reading.

²³⁷ Yates (2002, 208) justifies this as follows: “the postlude starts in bar 73 with the final arrival in the tonic, although the voice carries on winding down for a few bars.”

Example 6.44: Debussy, “Clair de lune,” Final Cadence – Option 2

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the final cadence of Debussy's "Clair de lune".

The first system (measures 69-73) features a vocal line in treble clef and piano accompaniment in bass clef. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Les grands jets d'eau svel - tes par - mi les mar - bres. Ah...". Above the vocal line, there are two breath marks labeled with a hat and the numbers 3 and 2. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A V^9 chord is indicated below the piano part at measure 71. A G^7 chord with a TTSub (Tritone Substitution) is indicated below the piano part at measure 73. Measure numbers 69 and 73 are marked in the piano part.

The second system (measures 77-80) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Au cal-meclair de lu - ne triste et beau...". The piano accompaniment features a dense texture of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. $Em7$ chords are indicated below the piano part at measures 77, 78, and 79. TTSub chords are indicated below the piano part at measures 80 and 81. Measure numbers 77 and 80 are marked in the piano part.

As previously mentioned, whether or not mm. 75–76 include a short vocalise over “Ah” is a matter of conjecture. Early autographed manuscripts do not include the short melody, but the first posthumous edition of the song (from 1926) does. My preferred reading benefits from including the vocalise. The melody in mm. 73–77 is the one of the most convincing features that demotes the cadence in m. 73; because the melody continues, it is possible to downgrade the V^9 – I motion in mm. 71–73. If the text did not continue in mm. 73–77, it would be easier to

consider m. 73 as the most important cadential arrival. If, however, the “Ah” passage is present and the melody in the voice continues through mm. 75–76, our ears more readily dismiss the V⁹-I motion. My preferred reading also makes a nice connection with Section A earlier in the song via the G7 tritone substitution. The end of Section A had a very prominent V^{b9}/TTSub pairing. Pushing the tonic resolution at the end of the piece to m. 77 allows for a similar harmonic construction.

The pairing of V⁹ in mm. 71–72 with the G7 TTSub in m. 76 is necessary to signal a final resolution to I in m. 77.²³⁸ With the added “Ah” in mm. 75–76, the melody remains continuous until m. 80. This bypasses the potential cadence in m. 73, but also creates the need for an additional marker to signal closure. The TTSub on the last eighth of m. 76 (primarily in the upper voices) is the last potential dominant function chord until the final measures of the piece (after the text has finished).²³⁹ Measures 77–80 are similar to mm. 73–77 in the piano left hand, but the third eighth in mm. 77–80 spells an E minor seventh chord rather than a tritone substitution harmony (as in mm. 73–77). The E minor harmony is less effective as a dominant function but aptly prolongs the tonic harmony through the end of the text. Although the G7 in m. 76 is short and obscured by a tonic pedal point, it is enough to rein in the momentum of the piece at the precise moment the repetition of “Au calme...” begins, thus closing the structure and further highlighting the repeated text.

Like the first instance of repeated text (“Et leur...”), the line beginning “Au calme...” made an impression on Debussy. “In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful” aptly summarizes

²³⁸ The G natural in m. 76 of Example 6.44 is in parenthesis because it is not literally present in the music. Although the chord changes to a G7 on the third eighth of the measure, the lowest voice in the piano left hand continues playing the F#/C# pedal from the previous measures. The G natural has been added to highlight the tritone substitution, both in terms of its connection with the dominant in m. 71 and its resolution to tonic in m. 77.

²³⁹ After m. 76, the next dominant function occurs in mm. 82. This is after the close of the text and serves to provide the closing resolution of the song.

the mood of the poem and the ambivalence of the characters, but more importantly is a response to the previous line of repeated text. Stanza 2, ending with two statements of “Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune” [And their song is mixed and lost in the moonlight] is somewhat of a climax in the poem; the characters sing, but don’t believe their own happiness, and then their song mingles and slips away. I have previously addressed the potential connection Debussy could have made with his own life concerning the ambivalent feelings of the characters and the slipping away of their song. At the start of St. 3 (“Au calme...”), the poetic stage is reset and is almost reflective. No longer does Verlaine address any specific characters; rather, he merely sets a peaceful, almost serene, restful scene. It feels very much like relaxation after a period of tension. By repeating the first line of the stanza at the end, Debussy emphasizes the calm beauty of the scene and leaves the listener (and perhaps himself) with an inner, peaceful calm.

The two lines of text that Debussy repeats thus serve different purposes in the song and are dependent upon each other for balance. The first line of repeated text (“Et leur...”) heightens the tension of the poem; the second (“Au calme...”) dissipates that tension. If the first is repeated, the second must also be repeated. There is little option but to include the first repeated line in the main body of the song, but we have a choice with the second. To annex the last line of the song to a coda would be to discount the text and would leave the message of the song unbalanced. Eliminating the coda in favor of a brief cadential extension, however, includes the text in the main body of the song and gives it the proper emphasis – for the song, and for

Debussy.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ There is an interesting connection between the poem, Debussy’s repetitions, and the Golden Ratio. For the original, unaltered, poem. The Golden point would be just short of 7.5 lines, which would coincide with the text “Et leur...”. If we add the two lines that Debussy repeated, creating fourteen lines total, the Golden point would still coincide with the text “Et leur...”. In the *mélodie*, there are eighty-four bars of music, which would put the Golden point at approximately m. 52. This measure in the music perfectly coincides with the articulation of the last syllable (including the repeat) of the text “Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune.” Thus, Debussy maintains the Golden position of the original poetry despite his textual alterations, in both the poem and his music.

“Clair de lune” includes some peculiarities regarding text, form, and fundamental structure, but all the anomalous spots work together to convey Debussy’s interpretation of the poetry. I hope that my examination has shown that this song is a well-developed, thoughtful, and compelling piece of music that needs no undue comparisons with other works (the 1890s version of “Clair de lune” chief among them) to validate its worth. Furthermore, I hope to have at least partially dethroned the mostly negative reception of the song by Nichols, Kœchlin, and others. In addition to the features within the song itself, “Clair de lune” also has some notable similarities to others in the early song repertoire. Two of the most prominent are “Beau soir” and “Fantoches.” Recall that one of the most compelling features of “Fantoches” is how the “Vasnier Vocalise” that ends the song, and the substitute dominant and accompanying flat second scale degree in the top line, work together. Although “Clair de lune” does not feature a tritone substitution in its fundamental line, Debussy’s prominent use of the harmonic device creates an apparent connection between the two songs. “Beau soir” (a non-Vasnier song) presents a similar problem as “Clair de lune” in regards to the final line of the text and potential for a coda. In both songs it is better to privilege the text and eliminate the coda.

“Clair de lune” includes a number of characteristics that are prominent in the early songs such as repeated text with strong musical and biographical connections, melodies that are more complex or technical than those in the songs of Debussy’s contemporaries, and alternative or anomalous fundamental structures. These features not only create unity within the repertoire, but also demonstrate how the early songs are creative and significant compositions in their own right. Little is to be gained with anachronistic comparisons. But when viewed through a proper historical lens, it is evident that Debussy’s early songs are valuable contributions to the *mélodie* that encouraged growth and drove the genre forward. They are not written in Debussy’s mature

style, but they don't need to be; their value is greater than as a mere starting point for assessing an evolution of compositional style.

“La fille aux cheveux de lin”

“La fille aux cheveux de lin” is well known in Debussyian literature as a prelude for piano (Préludes, Book 1). But before it was a piano prelude, it was a *mélodie*.²⁴¹ Debussy composed the song around 1881, situating it comfortably in the early song repertoire, but it has since received even less attention than other songs from the same period. The song has not been published and only exists in manuscript form, one of which is located in the Frederick R. Koch Collection in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Yale University).²⁴² The manuscript is messy and inconsistent and includes the following dedication on the front page:

a Mme Vanier
qui a réalisé ce problème
que, ce n'est pas la musique qui fait le beau du chant...
mais le chant, qui fait la beauté de la musique.
(surtout pour la mienne.)
L'auteur humble et reconnaissant.
Ach. Debussy

to Mrs. Vasnier
who realized the problem
that, it is not the music that makes the song beautiful
but the song, which is the beauty of music.
(especially for me.)
The humble and grateful author.
Ach. Debussy.

The dedication is organized similarly to how it appears above and is very poetic, both in aesthetic and in construction. The end of the manuscript includes two options for the ending of

²⁴¹ James Briscoe (1981) addresses some similarities between the song and the prelude in his article “Debussy *d'après* Debussy: The Further Resonance of Two Early *Mélodies*.”

²⁴² The manuscript has been digitized and is available to the public at <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3540161>.

the song, one that features an additional statement of a refrain, and one that has an extended and untexted “Vasnier Vocalise.” Following the version with the vocalise, Debussy signs his name, but there isn’t a double bar or other clear indication of the end of the song. The ending with the refrain concludes with a double bar and the inscription: “Tout que je peux avoir de bon [illegible] est là-dedans. Voyez et jugez / Ach. Debussy” [Everything I have that is good [illegible] is in there. See and judge. Ach. Debussy].²⁴³ I address the alternate endings in some detail below.

The text for the song is a poem by Leconte de Lisle consisting of four stanzas (Example 6.45).

Example 6.45: Leconte de Lisle, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Poem Text and Translation²⁴⁴

Sur la luzerne en fleur assise, Qui chante dès les frais matin? C’est la fille aux cheveux de lin, La belle aux lèvres de cerise.	Seated among the flowering alfalfa, Who sings in the cool morning? It is the girl with the flaxen hair, The beauty with the cherry lips.
L’amour, au clair soleil d’été, Avec l’alouette a chanté.	Love, in the clear summer sun Sings with the lark.
Ta bouche a des couleurs divines, Ma chère, et tente le baiser! Sur l’herbe en fleur veux-tu causer, Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines?	Your mouth has divine colors, My dear, and invites kisses! Would you like to chat here on the flowering grass, Girl with long eyelashes and delicate curls?
L’amour, au clair soleil d’été, Avec l’alouette a chanté.	Love, in the clear summer sun Sings with the lark.
Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle! Ne dis pas oui! J’entendrai mieux Le long regard de tes grands yeux Et ta lèvre rose, ô ma belle!	Do not say no, cruel girl! Do not say yes! I would rather listen To the long look of your wide-open eyes and your pink lip, O my love!

²⁴³ In examining the song, Briscoe (1981, 112) referenced a photocopy of the manuscript from the Salem collection kept at the Centre de documentation Claude Debussy, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France. He acknowledges this inscription as a dedication and notes the absence of the first dedication found on the Koch manuscript.

²⁴⁴ Translation adapted from Cobb 1980, 32.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Love, in the clear summer sun
Sings with the lark.

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres
Et les rouges perdrix! Je veux
Baiser le lin de tes cheveux,
Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!

Farewell deer, farewell hares
And the red partridges! I want
to kiss the flax of your hair,
Press the purple of your lips!

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Love, in the clear summer sun
Sings with the lark.

In Example 6.45, each of the four stanzas of poetry (a quatrain) is followed by a refrain. Debussy makes a few changes to the poem (Example 6.46).

Example 6.46: Debussy, "La fille aux cheveux de lin," Song Text and Translation.

Sur la luzerne en fleur assise,
Qui chante dans le frais matin?
C'est la fille aux cheveux de lin,
La belle aux lèvres de cerise.

Seated among the flowering alfalfa,
Who sings in the cool morning?
It is the girl with the flaxen hair,
The beauty with the cherry lips.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Love, in the clear summer sun
Sings with the lark.

Ta bouche a des couleurs divines,
Ma chère, et tente le baiser!
Sur l'herbe en fleur veux-tu causer,
Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines?

Your mouth has divine colors,
My dear, and invites kisses!
Would you like to chat here on the flowering grass,
Girl with long eyelashes and delicate curls?

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Love, in the clear summer sun
Sings with the lark.

Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle!
Ne dis pas oui! J'entendrai mieux
Le long regard de tes grands yeux
Et ta bouche fine, ô ma belle!

Do not say no, cruel girl!
Do not say yes! I would rather listen
To the long look of your wide-open eyes
And your thin mouth, O my love!

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres
Et les rouges perdrix! Je veux
Baiser le blond de tes cheveux,
Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!
Je veux
Baiser le blond de tes cheveux,
Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!

Farewell deer, farewell hares
And the red partridges! I want
to kiss the blond of your hair,
Press the purple of your lips!
I want
to kiss the blond of your hair,
Press the purple of your lips!

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Love, in the clear summer sun
Sings with the lark.

Most are minimal. He changes “dés le” in Line 2 to “dans le,” “ta lèvre rose” in L. 16 to “ta bouche fine,” and “le lin” in L. 21 to “le blond.”²⁴⁵ Debussy makes two additional larger changes to the text. The first is that he omits the refrain after the third stanza. The second is that he repeats the last two and a half lines of text of the fourth stanza (italicized in Example 6.46). These larger alterations highlight the climax of the poem where the narrator, after having created a lovely image of a field and wildlife in the summer sun and describing the girl with the flaxen hair, confesses his amorous affection in lines 3–4 of St. 4. It takes little imagination to see why Debussy chose to repeat this section of the poem. In addition to its function as the poetic climax, “Je veux baiser le blond des tes cheveux, Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres” [I want to kiss the blond of your hair, Press the purple of your lips] conveys vivid imagery and a desire for intimacy that would have been very appealing to the young Debussy in a song dedicated to his muse.

In terms of melody, “La fille aux cheveux de lin” is very characteristic of the early songs. Perhaps to a greater degree than any other song, this *mélodie* caters to Marie Vasnier’s voice. Example 6.47-A is the introduction to the song and Example 6.47-B is the end of the song following the last line of text.²⁴⁶ Aside from variations in piano accompaniment, the passages are the same and both satisfy the conditions for a “Vasnier Vocalise:” they require a light and agile voice; no syllable is indicated on the manuscript, but we can reasonably assume they would be sung on a neutral vowel; they are quite technical; and they explore the vocalist’s upper range. “Vasnier Vocalizes” generally occur at the ends of songs following the last line of text, but in this song Debussy includes one at the beginning as well.

²⁴⁵ Briscoe (1981, 114) finds Debussy alteration of “lin” to “blonde” to be obtrusive. He comments: “It is quite uncharacteristic even in his youth, for Debussy to obliterate carelessly a primary image, such as “le lin de tes cheveux” of line 21.”

²⁴⁶ Recall that the manuscript includes two different endings, both of which have Debussy’s signature. One version includes the vocalise seen in Example 6.47, the other ends directly with the close of the text.

Example 6.47: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Beginning and Ending Vocalizes

(A)

Musical score for Example 6.47 (A), showing the beginning and ending vocalizes. The score is in 2/4 time and features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The piano accompaniment includes a first ending marked '1' and a section marked '8'. The vocal line consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs and accents.

(B)

Musical score for Example 6.47 (B), showing the ending vocalizes. The score is in 2/4 time and features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The piano accompaniment includes a section marked '70'. The vocal line consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs and accents.

In addition to the beginning and ending vocalizes, Debussy also writes an additional vocalise within the song. As shown in Example 6.48, the additional vocalise begins in m. 17 and includes the last few words of the first stanza of text. Following the text, Debussy writes an impressive eight-bar interlude that features a technical passage in the voice before introducing the first refrain.

Example 6.48: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Middle Vocalise



17
la belle aux lè vres de ce - rise.

Refrain
L'a - mour au clair so - leil d'é -

One primary purpose of this passage is as a modulatory transition from G minor back to the home key of Gb major. Like the beginning and ending vocalizes, this passage is quite technical and presumably sung on a neutral syllable. The previous two examples show specific instances of vocalizes, but the character of the melody throughout the song is much the same, if only a little more subdued. Thus, we see in “La fille aux cheveux de lin” an approach to melody that is much more advanced than one would find in the songs of Fauré, Duparc, or other contemporary composers.

In terms of musical form, Debussy follows the structure of the poem. Example 6.49 outlines the form of the *mélodie*.

Example 6.49: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Form

									69
									Ref.
									Gb
									
mm.	1	9	20	28	32	40	44	52	55
Section:	Intro.	St.1	(Trans.)	Ref.	St. 2	Ref.	St.3	(Trans.)	St.4 w/trans.
Key:	G ^b	Gm	Gm to G ^b	G ^b	G ^b	G ^b	C ^b	(F# Dorian)	E to G ^b
									
									70
									Vocalise
									Gb

The song begins with an introduction (in Gb major) that includes not only the piano, but also the vocalise mentioned above. The first stanza begins in m. 9 and is marked by a swift change to the key of G minor. Stanza 1 flows into a modulatory transition in mm. 20–28 (with vocalise, as mentioned in Example 6.48) before arriving at the first refrain in m. 28 in the key of Gb major. Stanza 2 begins in m. 32, now comfortably in the home key (Gb), and leads directly into the second refrain in m. 40.²⁴⁷ The third stanza begins in m. 44 and has a strong focus on IV (Cb).²⁴⁸ Debussy follows Stanza 3 with a short transition that briefly suggests F# Dorian before moving to St. 4 in m. 55. The fourth stanza begins in the key of E major, but, beginning in m. 60, modulates back to Gb via texted transition.²⁴⁹ Depending on which ending Debussy intended (it

²⁴⁷ Debussy sets each refrain to the same music in the voice each time; the piano part is slightly different with each presentation of the refrain.

²⁴⁸ There is a penciled in Fb in m. 44 that would confirm the key area of Cb, but it does not seem to be in Debussy’s hand.

²⁴⁹ The first two transitions (mm. 20 and 52) are instrumental. The transition in m. 60 is notable because it includes the voice and text.

is not clear from the manuscript), the song either ends with one final presentation of the refrain in m. 69 or the above-mentioned vocalise in m. 70. Both endings have something to offer. Ending with a refrain matches the poetic form and is perhaps more convincing given that the manuscript has a clear double bar, signature, and an additional inscription. The ending with the vocalise is less defined as an ending in the manuscript – there is a signature, but no clear double bar line – but more consistent with Debussy’s procedure in other Vasnier-dedicated early songs.

The fundamental structure of “La fille aux cheveux de lin” is difficult to discern. Inconsistencies (omitted clefs, enharmonic relationships, etc.) and the cleanliness of the manuscript present difficulties that make certain musical features unclear. What is clear, however, is that Bb (scale-degree 3) plays an important role in the structural top line of the song. Debussy begins the song on Bb5 (in both piano and voice), thus establishing Bb as the *Kopfton* of the song. Debussy continues to highlight the *Kopfton* with each statement of the refrain, which builds to a Bb in each of its presentations (Example 6.50).

Example 6.50: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Introduction and Refrain

A - Introduction

The musical score for the introduction of "La fille aux cheveux de lin" is presented in two systems. The top system is the vocal line, and the bottom system is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (three flats) and the time signature is 2/4. The vocal line begins with a trill on a note marked with a '3' and an accent (^). The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A first ending bracket is shown above the vocal line, indicating a repeat of the first two measures.

B - Refrain

L'a - mour, au clair so - leil d'é - té a - vec l'a - lou - ette a - chan - te.

Notice in Example 6.50-A that Debussy establishes the Bb in the first measures of the song and, in Example 6.50-B, soars up to Bb5 at the end of the refrain. This is a consistent feature of all the refrains. Additionally, note how Debussy uses the piano in the refrain. He doubles the voices in the piano in m. 28 and then continues the line in the piano through m. 29 before passing focus back to the voice in m. 30. The piano then flows out of the Bb in the voice in m. 31, supplying a connective gesture that guides the refrain to the next section of music. This creates a very symbiotic relationship between voice and piano and reflects trends in composition that distinguish the *mélodie* from the *romance*.²⁵⁰

At the beginning of St. 4, Debussy makes an interesting connection between the structural top line – with its persistent Bb – and the repeated text. The text that Debussy chose to repeat is one of the most intimate lines of the song: “Je veux baisser le blond de tes cheveux, Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres [I want to kiss the blond of your hair, Press the purple of your lips]. Given that Debussy wrote the song for and dedicated it to Marie Vasnier, there is little question as to why Debussy chose this line of the poem to emphasize via repetition. Musically, the repeated text is set within a turbulent harmonic environment (refer back to Example 6.49).

²⁵⁰ Piano accompaniments in the *romance* were generally simpler than in the *mélodie*. One of the most important features of the *mélodie* that distinguished it from the *romance* is a piano part that was not simply accompanimental.

Stanza 4 is the culmination of a complex succession of key areas: St. 3 focuses on Cb major; the transition to St. 4 briefly touches on F# Dorian; St. 4 is in E major; and the transition to the final refrain, which includes the repeated text, modulates back to Gb.

At the beginning of St. 4 in m. 55, Debussy moves from prolonged scale degree 3 (Bb) to chromatically raised scale-degree 3 (B natural) in the top line (Example 6.51).

Example 6.51: Debussy, “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” Raised Scale Degree 3 in Top Line

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Debussy's "La fille aux cheveux de lin". Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex harmonic structure with various chords and textures.

System 1 (Measures 54-58): The vocal line begins with the lyrics "A-dieu les daims a-dieu les liè - vres et les rou - ges per - drix". The piano accompaniment starts with a whole note chord of E: (E3, G#3, B3) and a bass line of F#2. Above the staff, a bracket labeled "3" spans the first two measures, indicating a prolonged scale degree 3 (Bb). The piano part includes chords labeled E: and V¹ (F#3, A3, C#4).

System 2 (Measures 59-62): The vocal line continues with "Je veux bai-ser le blond de tes che - veux, pres - ser la pour - pre de tes". The piano part is marked "Transition" and features a series of chords: G⁴ (G4, B4, D5), Cm⁶ (C4, E4, G4), and Fm⁷ (F4, Ab4, Cb5, Eb5). A bracket labeled "3" spans the first two measures of this system.

System 3 (Measures 63-64): The vocal line concludes with "lè - vres Je veux bais - ser le blond de tes che - veux, Pres -". The piano part features chords Fm⁷ (F4, Ab4, Cb5, Eb5) and Ebm⁷ (Eb4, Gb4, Bb5, Db5). A bracket labeled "3" spans the first two measures of this system. The piano part ends with a chord of Gb (Gb4, Bb4, D5) and a final bass note of Gb2.

Debussy introduces the natural scale degree 3 (B) in association with a key change to E major and maintains it into the transition (m. 60). The first statement of “Je veux baiser...” begins with the pickup to the transition in m. 60 and supports the altered scale degree in the top line. The repetition of “Je veux baiser...” then begins with the pickup to m. 64. In m. 63, B is still being retained from m. 59, but with the repeat of the text in m. 64 Debussy reintroduces the diatonic scale degree 3 (Bb) in the piano. In m. 65 the voice once again soars up to Bb5 and the home key of Gb major snaps back into focus. The effect is similar to that in “Clair de lune.” Debussy repeats a significant line from the poem and accompanies the first statement with an altered scale degree in the structural top line. The repetition of the text then corresponds to a return to the diatonic scale degree of the upper line. Additionally, the first statement of text occurs in a turbulent or unstable harmonic environment and the repeat marks a move back to a less chaotic harmonic environment. In both songs the repetition of the text is more important than the first statement, which would ultimately be downgraded in deeper levels of analysis.²⁵¹

Although “La fille aux cheveux de lin” hasn’t been published and only exists in manuscript form (resulting in some challenging analytical decisions), the song nonetheless exhibits some compelling features, some of which situate it within the French art song tradition as established by Debussy’s predecessors and contemporaries. Chief among these characteristics are the textual alterations (which was a freedom taken by many composers when setting a text to music) and the role of the piano as more than just accompaniment (which is a hallmark trait of the *mélodie*). Additionally, some features of “La fille aux cheveux de lin” suggest significant steps forward for the genre and help establish a connection between this *mélodie* and other songs in the early repertoire. Debussy’s vocal melodies in this song are considerably more elaborate

²⁵¹ “Nuit d’étoiles also has an instance in which repeated text has a connection to the structural framework of the song.

than would normally be seen in the French *mélodie* (demonstrating how Debussy was advancing the genre). Furthermore, features such as the “Vasnier Vocalise” and the association of textual issues with significant features in the structural framework of the piece exemplify notable consistencies across the repertoire. The above-mentioned features of “La fille aux cheveux de lin” also provide justification for considering Debussy’s early songs as significant compositions in their own right. The connection between anomalous musical features and text reveals a hidden complexity and sophistication that transcends the reputation of the early songs as instances of juvenilia, valuable only as a starting point for interpreting an evolution of compositional style.

“Regret”

I’d like to wrap up my examination of Debussy’s early songs with a discussion of one final *mélodie*. “Regret” was composed in 1884 on a text by Paul Bourget and is the last song in the *Recueil Vasnier*, which Debussy presented to Mme. Vasnier just before he left for Rome (Cobb 1982, 79). The text is richly melancholic and clearly resonated with Debussy on a personal level (Example 6.52). The first stanza sets up a comfortable setting – the warm, calm summer sky – but shifts toward somber reflection towards the end of the quatrain. Stanza 2 delves deeper into reflection as the narrator likens the memory of his love to the unchanging and consistent features of nature and the sky. The third stanza is the climax of the poem; the narrator reveals that, although he has lost his love, he will never get over her. Debussy’s most conspicuous and important change to Bourget’s original is that he repeats the first couplet of the song at the end of the third stanza (italicized in Debussy’s version of the text in Example 6.52). The poem is appropriate for Debussy prior to leaving for Rome. He was happy about winning the Prix de Rome, but was not excited to leave Paris and the Vasniers. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Debussy even considered forfeiting the prize in order to stay in his beloved Paris (and with Marie). The

theme of loss and regret (a true cognate in French and English) is clear in the poem and almost palpable in Debussy's life.

Example 6.52: Debussy, "Regret," Text and Translation²⁵²

Bourget

Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé,
Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe,
Et mon regret fidèle aime et prolonge
Les heures où j'étais aimé.

Les astres brilleront dans la nuit noire;
Le soleil brillera dans le jour clair;
Quelque chose de toi flotte dans l'air,
Qui me pénètre la mémoire.

Quelque chose de toi qui fut à mois:
Car j'ai possédé ta douce pensée,
Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée,
Est encor tout entière à toi.

Under the summer sky, warm and calm,
I remember you as in a dream,
And my constant regret relishes and draws out,
The hours when I was loved.

The stars will shine in the black night;
The sun will shine in the clear day;
Something of you is suspended in the air,
That penetrates my memory.

Something of you that was mine:
For I possessed all of your thoughts,
And my soul, betrayed and forsaken,
Is still completely yours.

Debussy

Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé,
Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe,
Et mon regret fidèle aime et prolonge
Les heures où j'étais aimé.

Les astres brilleront dans la nuit noire;
Le soleil brillera dans le jour clair;
Quelque chose de toi flotte dans l'air,
Qui me pénètre la mémoire.

Quelque chose de toi qui fut à mois:
Car j'ai possédé ta douce pensée,
Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée,
Est encor tout entière à toi.
*Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé,
Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe.*

Under the summer sky, warm and calm,
I remember you as in a dream,
And my constant regret relishes and draws out,
The hours when I was loved.

The stars will shine in the black night;
The sun will shine in the clear day;
Something of you is suspended in the air,
That penetrates my memory.

Something of you that was mine:
For I possessed all of your thoughts,
And my soul, betrayed and forsaken,
Is still completely yours.
*Under the summer sky, warm and calm,
I remember you as in a dream.*

Reflecting the nature of the poetry and the biographical connections with Debussy's personal life, the song is musically more subdued than many early songs; Debussy reflects the

²⁵² Translation adapted from Cobb 1982, 91.

forlorn aesthetic conveyed by the poem and the ambivalent feelings he had about assuming his Prix residency. The melody of the song includes the tessitura that would be expected of an early song, particularly one dedicated to Marie Vasnier, but is much less technical. Example 6.53-A is the first ten measures of the song; the melody occupies the space of an octave and is very reserved. Example 6.53-B is the climax of the song. The text reads “Car j’ai possédé ta douce pensée, Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée, Est encor tout entière à toi” [For I possessed all of your thoughts, And my soul, betrayed and forsaken, Is still completely yours] and is a highly cathartic and emotionally charged part of the poem that clearly conveys Debussy’s intended message. In Example 6.53-B, Debussy reaches up to the highest pitch in the voice (Bb5), but does so gradually and via mostly stepwise motion; the vocal agility seen in many of his early songs is absent.

Throughout the song, Debussy seems poised on the edge of two key areas: D major and B minor. Replete with extended harmonies, accidentals, and enharmonic spellings, the *mélodie* seems to suggest both key areas. This can be seen directly from the beginning (Example 6.54). The introduction is harmonically complex and it can be hard to discern the key of the song. I interpret the song in D major throughout, but there strong features of B minor as well. The first measure includes a dominant harmony extended to the thirteenth with a flat ninth; Debussy sets this measure and the next seven over a D/A pedal that seems to confirm the key of D major.²⁵³

²⁵³ I read the song as beginning on a dominant chord over the D/Apedal. The richness of the harmonic environment promotes some ambiguity and the tones in the piano right hand in m. 1 seem to resolve convincingly as a dominant in m. 2; the C# resolves to D and the G resolves to F#. Additionally, each time Debussy repeats the two-measure pattern initially established in mm. 1–2, the dominant to tonic resolution becomes more apparent.

Example 6.53: Debussy, "Regret," Examples of Vocal Melody

A

De - - vant le ciel d'été, tiède et cal -

- mé, Je me souviens de toi comme d'un son - - - - ge,

B

moi : Car j'ai possédé tout de ta pensée. Et mon â - me, tra - hic et délaissé - e,

Est en - cor tout en - tière à toi _____ De - vant le

Example 6.54: Debussy, “Regret,” Ambivalent Key Areas

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's "Regret." It consists of a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The tempo is marked "ANDANTINO." The piano part features a consistent D pedal point in the right hand. The vocal line enters in measure 3, with a blue box highlighting the phrase "De - - vant le ciel d'c-té, tiède et cal -". Below the piano part, chord annotations are provided: V^{13}_{b9} D, I^{add6} , V^{13}_{b9} D, I^{add6} , and V^{13}_{b9} D. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "6 mé. Je me souviens de toi comme d'un son - - - - ge." and is accompanied by chords I^{add6} and I^9 .

The consistent D over A pedal roots the piece in D major, but if one were to discount the pedal, the remaining tones in m. 1 would spell a dominant flat ninth in B minor – F#-A#-C#-G. The A# is, of course, spelled as a Bb. The second measure is a tonic resolution of the previous dominant, but is it I^{add6} in D, or a tonic (i) seventh chord in B minor? The piano recycles this two-bar pattern two more times before the I^9 in m. 7 tips the scales toward D major.²⁵⁴

The voice part further mires the decision. The voice enters in m. 3 (blue box in Example 6.54) and, if taken in isolation, fits well in the key of B minor. The A# in m. 3 is more at home in B minor than D major. The enharmonic spelling of A# and Bb is pervasive in the opening

²⁵⁴ This chord wouldn't function well as a minor-minor dominant in B minor.

measures. As noted by the thin red line, mm. 3 and 5 feature the opposition between A# and Bb. The enharmonic relationship is primarily between the voice and piano but also occurs between the left and right hands of the piano in m. 5. This sort of ambiguity is common throughout the song and, combined with the persistent triplet rhythm in the piano that is present in all but six measures of the song, contributes a sense of uncertainty.²⁵⁵ The harmonic ambivalence conveyed by the opening bars (and much of the remainder of the song) would seem to reflect Debussy's own ambivalent attitude towards leaving Paris. He was excited to have finally won the prize, but accepting meant disrupting his life and his pursuit of relationships, something he resolutely did not want to do. The two key areas could be interpreted to represent his opposing feelings about leaving France.

The form of the song is rounded binary (A | BA'). Section A is comprised of the first two stanzas of poetry and Section B is the third stanza of poetry. The return to the final A section is supplied by Debussy's textual repetition (Example 6.55).

Example 6.55: Debussy, "Regret," Form and Text

<p>Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé, Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe, Et mon regret fidèle aime et prolonge Les heures où j'étais aimé.</p>	<p>A</p>		<p>Under the summer sky, warm and calm, I remember you as in a dream, And my constant regret relishes and draws out, The hours when I was loved.</p>
<p>Les astres brilleront dans la nuit noire; Le soleil brillera dans le jour clair; Quelque chose de toi flotte dans l'air, Qui me pénètre la mémoire.</p>	<p>B</p>		<p>The stars will shine in the black night; The sun will shine in the clear day; Something of you is suspended in the air, That penetrates my memory.</p>
<p>Quelque chose de toi qui fut à mois: Car j'ai possédé ta douce pensée, Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée, Est encor tout entière à toi. <i>Devant le ciel d'été, tiède et calmé, Je me souviens de toi comme d'un songe.</i> A'</p>	<p>A'</p>		<p>Something of you that was mine: For I possessed all of your thoughts, And my soul, betrayed and forsaken, Is still completely yours. <i>Under the summer sky, warm and calm, I remember you as in a dream.</i></p>

²⁵⁵ The passage is, however, very stable. This is due largely to the pedal point.

Section A is mm. 1–30, Section B is mm. 31–39, and Section A' is mm. 40–50. Many of Debussy's early songs, and indeed the songs of most composers of the time, use a three-part form (ternary, bar form, etc); it is especially true given a text with three stanzas. In "Regret" however, the second stanza is primarily transitional and sets up a modulation to E at the beginning of Section B in m. 31 (Example 6.56). Stanza 2 begins in m.19 on a D major tonic chord (with a ninth). Debussy alternates between a tonic ninth chord and a B major-minor seventh with an added sixth twice in mm. 19–22. In m. 23 Debussy begins a descending circle of fifths progression that lasts until m. 31 and the beginning of Section B: G# moves to C# in m. 25; C# yields to F# in m. 27; and F# moves to B in m. 28.²⁵⁶ Debussy repeats the F#-B progression in mm. 29–30, ultimately creating $V^9/V - V^9$ motion in the key of E that resolves to I in m. 31. The arrival of Section B is further highlighted by a change in the piano left hand; Debussy changes the texture to double the voice melody in the left hand in m. 31. Debussy then prolongs the E harmony through m. 39, changing the quality and inversion of the chord several times to reinterpret it as a predominant (ii^7) in D major that leads to a dominant (in m. 40) that initiates a return to introductory material and Section A' (not shown).

The fundamental structure of "Regret" is an upper neighbor motion in both voices. Example 6.57 shows the form, text placement by stanza, and fundamental structure. The *Ursatz* opens in the first measure of the piece; Debussy prolongs the D in bass and the F# in the treble through Section A and the first two stanzas of text. The bass then steps up to E in m. 31. The treble, however, moves to a G#. The G is chromaticized due to the modulation to E in section B.

²⁵⁶ The B major-minor with an added sixth in mm. 20 and 22 could potentially be regarded as a $G\#m^9$ in first inversion. Doing so would extend the descending circle of fifths progression back to begin in m. 19. However, this would create the only chromatic root movement in the progression (D to G#) and would necessitate downgrading the B/F# pedal.

Example 6.56: Debussy, "Regret," Transitional Second Stanza

Stanza 2

p

· tais aimé où j'étais ai - mé. Les as - tres bril - le - ront

19

dans la nuit noi - re; Le soleil bril - le - ra dans le jour

22

clair. Quel - que chose de toi flot - te dans

25 27

29 l'air. Qui me pé - nè - tre la mémoi - re. Quel - que chose de toi qui fut à

31

I⁹ **BMm⁷ add6** **D** **G#m** **C#Mm⁹** **F#Mm⁹** **BMm⁹** **F#Mm⁹** **BMm⁹** **B** **I**

(D) **E: V⁹/V**

Example 6.57: Debussy, “Regret,” Deep Middleground Graph.

MM: 1 4 11 15 18 19 23 25 29 30 31 33 34 35 37 40 41 44 46 47 49 50

Stanza: 1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— Repeat

The musical score is presented in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three stanzas: Stanza 1 (measures 1-15), Stanza 2 (measures 18-30), and Stanza 3 (measures 33-44), followed by a repeat of the first couplet (measures 40-44). The graph above the staff indicates structural tones: ^3, ^3, #4, ^4, ^3, ^3, ^3. The graph below the staff shows chord symbols: I^{add6}, I, I⁰, E: V⁷/V, V⁹, I⁷, D:, ii⁷, V¹³_{b9}, IV⁹, V¹³_{b9}, V¹³_{b9}, I^{add6}, I^{add6}, I.

When Debussy reinterprets the II⁷ as a ii⁷ in m. 35, he corrects the structural treble tone to a diatonic scale degree 4 (G natural). Both treble and bass step down in m. 40 to complete the neighbor figure. There are two especially notable features of “Regret” that are highlighted in Example 6.57. The first is the presence of an anomalous chromatic tone in the structural top line. This is reminiscent of both “Clair de lune” and “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” both of which have a high-profile alteration in the structure treble line. Admittedly, “Clair de lune” and “La fille aux cheveux de lin” both connect the altered tone to a textual repetition. “Regret” includes both a chromatic tone in the top voice and an instance of textual repetition, but they do not coincide.

The second notable characteristic of “Regret” emphasized by the graph in Example 6.57 is the relationship between the repeated text and the structural framework. As previously mentioned, Debussy repeated the first couplet of text at the end of the song (beginning in m. 40). This puts the repeated text immediately after the climactic and cathartic couplet: “Et mon âme, trahie et délaissée, Est encore tout entire à toi” [And my soul, betrayed and forsaken, Is still completely yours]. Ending the song on these lines would give it a decidedly darker, lonely, and forlorn aesthetic. Given that much of the song is focused around Debussy’s ambivalent feelings,

and that one side of those feelings is excited and optimistic, it makes sense that he would choose to end the song on a lighter note. The repeated passage – “Devant le ciel d’été, tiède et calmé, Je me souviens de toi comme d’un songe” [Under the summer sky, warm and calm, I remember you, as in a dream] – shifts the focus of the end of the song from dark and desolate to calm and reflective, almost as if he is making a promise to never forget. Musically he highlights this passage by associating it directly with the fundamental structure of the song, marking the text not only by repeating it, but also by connecting it with the close of the structural neighbor motion.

Debussy’s compositional approach in “Regret” is a familiar one. In addition to the previously mentioned connections between “Regret,” “Clair de lune,” and “La fill aux cheveux de lin,” this *mélodie* has some notable similarities to other works in the early song repertoire. Both “Regret” and “Pantomime” have neighbor motions as their fundamental structure; “Beau soir,” with its turn figure, is also quite similar in design. Furthermore, “Nuit d’étoiles,” “Clair de lune,” and “Regret” all rely on repeated text to close their structural framework. Finally, almost every song reviewed in this chapter relied on some anomalous feature to provide closure or guide a large stretch of middleground events. Thus, although “Regret” is in some ways much different from other songs in the repertoire,²⁵⁷ it nonetheless shares some prominent analytical and biographical features with other songs that not only help draw connections between songs, but also demonstrate that Debussy’s early *mélodies* are noteworthy, valuable contributions to nineteenth-century French art song.

Conclusion

My goals in this chapter were to show how Debussy contributed to burgeoning

²⁵⁷ Although the range is consistent with other songs in the repertoire, the melody is much less technical, there isn’t a vocalise, and the harmonic environment is much more convoluted.

sophistication of the *mélodie* in the 1880s by writing subtle, complex, wonderfully thoughtful songs that are valuable as significant compositions in their own right, and to identify characteristics that allow the songs to be grouped into Debussy's first clearly definable repertoire. Many features contribute to both goals, being both consistent across the repertoire and distinctly Debussyian. Debussy's compositional style, when examined within a proper historical narrative, is reasonably consistent in sound and design. In addition to demonstrating consistency, the collective features of the songs make a convincing argument for the inherent worth of each *mélodie*.

The songs Debussy composed in the early 1880s are unified, but also highly varied. Debussy rarely used the exact same technique in more than one song, but certain identifiable features remain. Some of the more prominent consistencies include textual repetitions, altered tones in the structural treble, vocalise sections, and unorthodox background structures. Perhaps even more meaningful is how the different features work together on different levels to convey Debussy's interpretation of the poetry. Although the means by which Debussy introduces and uses unexpected features on deeper levels differs from song to song, the fact that something anomalous is expected remains the same and simultaneously promotes consistency and variation.

Appreciating the significance of the early songs is dependent on viewing them within the time and culture in which they were created. The early songs all bear similarities to songs composed by other notable composers of the genre. Noting these similarities not only situates Debussy firmly within the culture of the *mélodie*, it also highlights the more advanced qualities that make the early songs such lovely compositions. The assimilation of tried and true approaches fostered by prominent composers of the *mélodie* and more uniquely Debussyian techniques combined with the people and events from the young composer's personal life make

the early songs a rich tapestry of musical design and distinguishes them as compositions worthy of note in their own right, apart from anachronistic (and unnecessary) comparisons with Debussy's more mature compositional style.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The years between 1880 and 1885, referred to by some as Debussy's formative period, were a rather dynamic time in Debussy's life. In 1880 he published "Nuit d'étoiles" (his first composition to be published) and in 1885 he embarked for Rome to assume his residency after winning the Prix de Rome (on his third attempt). It was during this time that Debussy was finding his place in the music composition world. He cultivated two personas, what Briscoe (1979) deems the "academic" Debussy and the "rebellious" Debussy. Debussy's academic compositions were written primarily for the conservatoire. He had a notorious reputation at the conservatoire and many of his compositions (and his attitude and behavior) fell under the scrutiny of the professors. His rebellious compositions were composed outside of school where he was free to follow his instincts and imbue his personality into his work. It is in these compositions that we see the most compelling and nuanced compositional approaches.

In the fall of 1880, Debussy assumed the post vacated by his friend and colleague Paul Vidal as the pianist in the studio of Mme. Moreau-Sainti. Here Debussy met Marie Vasnier for the first time. Vasnier was a thirty-two year old woman (married with children) with a notably light and agile voice. Debussy was smitten. For the next four years Debussy developed a relationship with Marie and the whole Vasnier family. He had a dedicated room at their home, often joined them on vacation, gave lessons to their daughter, and received a considerable amount of support – monetary or otherwise – from them. Eugène Vasnier became an important mentor for the young Debussy, but it is Marie that provided the most profound influence. The extent to which Debussy and Marie had a physical relationship is debated. What is clear is that he was enamored by her and much of his music from this time shows her influence.

The songs that Debussy composed in the early to mid-1880s are on a variety of texts – perhaps most notably Verlaine, Bourget, and Banville – and are dedicated to various people; Marie Vasnier is, of course, the most prominent dedicatee. These songs have developed a reputation as lesser compositions than those Debussy composed later in his career. The early songs, when discussed at any length in Debussyian literature, are almost always dismissed as instances of juvenilia. We find them frequently situated on one end of a continuum designed to show an evolution of compositional style. Furthermore, the early songs are often subjected to anachronistic comparisons with Debussy’s later compositional style, which removes the songs from the time, era, and culture in which they were created and largely devalues them. Debussy’s songs between 1880–1885 are not in his mature style, but they don’t need to be in order to justify their worth and significance.

The early songs (ca. 1880–1885) represent the first clearly definable repertoire in Debussy’s career and, when examined in the context of the genre of the French *mélodie* that evolved over the middle to late nineteenth century, exhibit a subtle, intelligent, and sometimes complex compositional aesthetic. Many features of the early songs are not only noticeably consistent throughout the repertoire, but are also significant contributions to the genre of the *mélodie*. An analytical examination of many of the songs, placed within the proper historical narrative, emphasizes these features and further reveals the inherent worth of the songs without the need for comparisons with Debussy’s later style.

Compositional parameters such as text and melody, combined with analytical insights related to deeper structural levels and a focus on Debussy’s biography and poetic preferences, are especially fruitful areas of study in the early songs. Debussy had a remarkable fondness for other art forms and developed profound poetic sensibilities. Deconstructing his interpretive

process in regards to the text often helps explain anomalous features of the music. It was common in the nineteenth century for composers to adapt or alter poetic texts. Usually the changes were minimal and amounted to small changes in wording or repetitions. At times composers would omit stanzas or otherwise adapt poetry to make it more suitable for their songs. Debussy participated quite willingly in this tradition, making small changes with little effect on the meaning or aesthetic of the poetry. But in some cases his textual alterations were more pronounced, conspicuously repeating whole stanzas, couplets or other large sections. This is, of course, not random. The text Debussy repeats is strongly dependent on his interpretation of the poem and his intended audience. For example, many songs dedicated to Vasnier emphasize text that is especially intimate or even suggestive. Thus, we see the effect of Debussy's biography imbedded in his compositions; the choice of poem, the use of the text, and the design of the song almost always relate back to Debussy's personal life in some way. In this way, he is certainly more the "rebellious" versus the "academic" Debussy. The idiosyncrasies of Debussy's treatment of a text often help reveal the composer's interpretation of the poetry, which in turn helps reveal deeper, more significant analytical insights and contributes to a greater understanding of the music. Although there is no completely consistent way in which Debussy alters text, there is a consistency in that he frequently does alter the text; the way and extent to which he changes a text is dependent upon his interpretation of the poetry.

Melody is a compositional parameter that sees some development in Debussy's early songs and helps create consistencies through the repertoire. French art song in the early to mid-1800s tended to be more subdued than we see in Debussy's early songs. This was partially due to the amateur tradition of *salon* culture. Many singers didn't have the technical ability to sing complex or overly disjunct melodies, and many weren't able to sing pitches in the upper register.

Furthermore, in the case of range, high notes too often became the focus of performers and listeners alike, much to the detriment of the rest of the composition and the text on which it was based (Nectoux 1991, 70). Debussy's songs, however, tended to be more technical, higher in range (frequently reaching above the staff, sometimes as high as D6), and much more virtuosic. Additionally, Debussy frequently made use of vocal coloratura by writing light, agile, and improvisatory vocalizes in his songs. Many of the characteristics related to Debussy's melodic style are due to the singers Debussy had at his disposal.

Debussy's approaches to text and melody simultaneously place him within the tradition of the *mélodie* as it was defined in the mid-1800s and demonstrate how he was pushing the genre in new directions. They are foreground musical features that create consistencies within the repertoire and legitimize the early songs as significant compositions. Both parameters, however, gain an even deeper, more profound meaning when examined in terms of the deeper structure of the music. For this, Schenkerian analysis has been most illustrative. Schenker's theory was not created with Debussy's music in mind, and Schenker himself didn't particularly care for Debussy. However, following the lead of other analysts who have made compelling use of the method with Debussy's music, I have found that a necessarily adapted, less orthodox version of Schenker's theory provides some important and otherwise easy to miss insights to Debussy's early songs.

One of the ways that Schenkerian analysis provides especially revealing insights when applied to Debussy's early songs is by making connections between textual alterations, vocalizes, and the overall structure of the songs. Often these connections occur along with alternate or less orthodox background structures. Throughout the repertoire we see instances of textual repetition being connected or emphasized by chromaticized tones in the fundamental

structure of the song. This connection often strengthens the peculiar features of the songs, turning them into signposts for deconstructing Debussy's poetic interpretation. The connection between chromatic structural tones and textual repetitions is especially prominent in "Nuit d'étoiles," "Clair de lune," and "La fille aux cheveux de lin." Schenkerian theory also reveals connections between vocalise passages and the structure of the song. In many songs, the vocalise passage that ends the tune is considered to be a dispensable part of the composition, typically a coda. A deeper examination, however, reveals that the vocalizes are often essential for completing the structure of the song. This is especially prominent in "Fantoche" and "Pantomime." "Beau Soir" and "Regret" have similar connections between text and structure. In "Regret" the repeated text at the end of the song supplies the final A' section of the form and closes the fundamental structure, and in "Beau Soir" completing the turn figure that acts as deepest structural paradigm is dependent upon extending the structure to include the last line of text. These features are in addition to the countless connections across structural levels that Schenkerian analysis reveals so expertly.

It is my hope that in this study I have provided a convincing case for considering Debussy's early songs as significant compositions in their own right; that I've at least partially extinguished the need to compare the songs to later, more mature, compositions in order to establish their value; and that I have created a foundation for considering the early songs as belonging to a unified compositional aesthetic that creates a definable repertoire in Debussy's larger oeuvre. Finally, though I have tried to be extensive and detailed in my examination of the early song repertoire, there is still much to discover. Debussyian scholarship would be significantly enriched by a greater presence of the early songs as an oeuvre in their own right, independent of anachronistic comparisons with Debussy's mature compositional style.

APPENDIX
SONG SCORES

Nuit d'étoiles

[c. 1880]

à Madame Moreau-Sainti

Théodore de Banville

Allegro

mf

Nuit d'é - toi - les, Sous - tes

una corda pp

This system shows the first two staves of the piece. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff. The lyrics 'Nuit d'é - toi - les, Sous - tes' are written below the vocal line.

7
vo - les, Sous ta brise — et tes — par - fums, Tris - te ly - -

This system shows the next two staves, starting at measure 7. The lyrics 'vo - les, Sous ta brise — et tes — par - fums, Tris - te ly - -' are written below the vocal line.

14
re Qui sou - pi - - re, Je rêve aux a - mours — dé - funts, Je

f *dim.*

This system shows the next two staves, starting at measure 14. The lyrics 're Qui sou - pi - - re, Je rêve aux a - mours — dé - funts, Je' are written below the vocal line. Dynamics *f* and *dim.* are indicated.

21
rêve aux - a - mours dé - funts. La se - rei - ne mé - lan - co - li - e Vient é -

un peu animé

This system shows the final two staves, starting at measure 21. The lyrics 'rêve aux - a - mours dé - funts. La se - rei - ne mé - lan - co - li - e Vient é -' are written below the vocal line. The tempo marking *un peu animé* is present.

Words by Theodore de Banville

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

clore au fond de mon cœur, Et j'en - tends l'â - me de - ma mi - e Tres - sail -
etc.]

lir dans le bois rê - veur.

un poco rit.

p

Nuit d'é - toi - les, Sous - tes voi - les, Sous ta

a tempo [*p*]

brise — et tes — par - fums, Tris - te ly - -

47

re Qui sou - pi - - re, Je rêve aux a - mours - dé - funts,

53

Je rêve aux - a - mours dé - funts. Je re - vois à no - tre fon -

animé

59

tai - ne Tes re - gards bleus com - me les cieux; Cet - te ro - se, c'est ton ha -

sempre cresc.

cresc.

64

lei - ne. Et ces é - toi - - les sont tes - yeux.

f

69 *pp*

Nuit d'é - toi - les, Sous - tes

f *pp* *una corda*

74 *diminuendo*

voi - les, Sous ta brise — et tes — par - fums,

79

Tris - te ly - - re Qui sou - pi - - re, Je

8

84 *morendo jusqu'à la fin* *ritenuto*

rêve aux a - mours - dé - funts, Je rêve aux - a - mours dé - funts.

loco *rit. e dim.*

Beau soir

[c. 1883]

Paul Bourget

Andante ma non troppo

pp

4 *p*

Lorsque au so - leil cou - chant les ri - viè - res sont

pp

8

ro - ses, Et qu'un tiè - de fris - son court sur les champs de

By Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

11 *pp*

blé, Un con-seil d'être heu - reux sem-ble sor - tir des

più pp

15

cho - ses Et mon - ter vers le cœur trou -

19 *p*

blé; Un con - seil de goût - ter le char - me d'être au

poco rit. *a tempo*

23 *animato poco a poco e cresc.*

mon - de Ce - pen - dant qu'on est jeune et que le soir est

animato poco a poco e cresc.

26 *f* *dim.*
 beau, Car nous nous en al - lons.

30 *dim. molto* *p* *Plus lent*
 com - me s'en va cette on - de: Elle à la

34 *pp*
 mer, nous au tom -

38 *più pp* *morendo*
 beau!

Fleur des blés

[c. 1880] □

André Girod

à Madame E. Deguingand

Andantino moderato, tempo rubato

P
Le long des blés que la bri - se fait on - du - ler puis dé - fri - se

pp

3
En un dé - sor - dre co - quet, J'ai trou - vé de bon - ne

mp □

6
mf pri - se De t'y cueil - lir *dim.* un bou - quet.
dim. *p* □

Words by Andre Girod

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

9 *p* *cresc.*
 Mets-le vite à ton cor - sa - ge, - Il est fait à ton i - ma - ge En même temps que pour

12 En retenant *p*
 toi... Ton pe - tit doigt, je le ga - ge, T'a dé - ja souf -

15 *a tempo* *p*
 flé - pour-quoi: Ces é - pis do - rés, c'est

En retenant *più p* *lpl* *a tempo*

18
 l'on - de De ta che-ve-lu-re blon - de Tou - te d'or et de so - leil;

21

Ce co-que-li-cot qui fron-de, C'est la bouche au sang ver-

24

meil. Et ces blu-ets, beau mys-tè-re! Points d'a-zur que rien n'al-

27

tè-re, Ces blu-ets ce sont tes yeux. Si bleus qu'on dir-ait, sur

30

ter-re, Deux é-clats tom-bés des cieux.

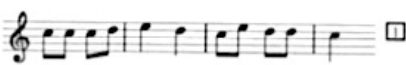
Pierrot

[c. 1881]

Théodore de Banville

à Madame Vasnier

on the tune



Moderato



Words by Theodore de Banville

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

17 *tr*

d'Ar - le - quin, Suit en son - geant - le

[*m.g.*]

21

bou - le - vard du Tem - ple. U - - ne fil - lette au

25

sou - ple ca - sa - quin En vain l'a - ga - ce

29

de son - oeil co - quin; Et ce - pen - dant mys -

33

té - ri - euse et lis - se Fai - - sant de - lu - i sa plus

[1]

[m.g.]

37

chère dé - li - - ce, La blan - che lune aux

[4]

[m.g.]

41

cor - nes de tau - reau Jette un re -

[5]

[m.g.]

45

gard de son oeil en cou - lis - - se

[6]

[m.g.]

48

Musical score for measures 48-51. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics: "À son a - mi Jean Gas - pard De - bu - reau. □". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

52

Musical score for measures 52-54. The vocal line (treble clef) includes the vocalization "[Ah]". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand.

55

Musical score for measures 55-57. The vocal line (treble clef) includes the vocalization "[Ah]". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) maintains the eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand.

58

Musical score for measures 58-61. The vocal line (treble clef) features trills marked "tr" and a first ending bracket. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues with the eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand.

Aimons-nous et dormons

Théodore de Banville

[c. 1881]

Moderato *[p]*

Ai-mons-nous et dor-mons ___

4

Sans son-ger au res-te du mon-de; Ni le flot de la mer,

8

ni l'ou-ra-gan des monts, Tant que nous nous ai-mons

Words by Theodore de Banville
Music by Claude Debussy
Arranged by James Briscoe
Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved
Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

12

Ne cour - be - ra ta tê - te blon - de, Car l'a-mour est plus fort

This system contains measures 12 through 15. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "Ne cour - be - ra ta tê - te blon - de, Car l'a-mour est plus fort".

16

ritenuto [a tempo]
Que les dieux et la mort! Le so - leil s'é - tein - dra!

This system contains measures 16 through 19. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "Que les dieux et la mort! Le so - leil s'é - tein - dra!". Performance markings include "ritenuto" above measure 16 and "[a tempo]" above measure 17. The piano part also has a "ritenuto" marking below measure 16.

20

Pour lais - ser ta blan - cheur plus pu - re. Le vent, qui jus - qu'à

This system contains measures 20 through 22. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "Pour lais - ser ta blan - cheur plus pu - re. Le vent, qui jus - qu'à".

23

terre in - cli - - ne la fo - rêt,

This system contains measures 23 through 25. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature changes to two sharps (F#, C#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "terre in - cli - - ne la fo - rêt,". The system ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to two flats (Bb, Eb).

26 *[mf]*

En pas - sant n'o - se - rait _____ Jou - er a - vec

[mp]

29

ta che-ve-Ju - re, Tant que tu ca - che - ras Ta tête en-tre mes

33

bras!

[legato]

36

Et lors - que nos deux cœurs S'en i - ront aux sphè - res heu -

sim.

39

reu - ses OÙ les cé - les - tes lys é - clo -

Musical score for measures 39-41. The vocal line is in a soprano clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "reu - ses OÙ les cé - les - tes lys é - clo -".

42

ront sous - nos - pleurs,

Musical score for measures 42-44. The vocal line is in a soprano clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "ront sous - nos - pleurs,".

45

lors, com-me deux fleurs, Joig-nons nos lè - vres a-mour - eu - ses,

Musical score for measures 45-48. The vocal line is in a soprano clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "lors, com-me deux fleurs, Joig-nons nos lè - vres a-mour - eu - ses,". Dynamic markings include *[dim.]* above the vocal line and *[dim.]* below the piano accompaniment.

49

Et tâ-chons d'ê-pui - ser La mort dans un bai - ser!

Musical score for measures 49-51. The vocal line is in a soprano clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Et tâ-chons d'ê-pui - ser La mort dans un bai - ser!". Dynamic markings include *[p]* above the vocal line and *[pp]* below the piano accompaniment.

V. Fantoches

83

1882 □

Paul Verlaine

à Madame Vasnier

Allegretto vivace

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand features a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. Dynamics include *f* and *[p]*.

6

Measures 6-10 of the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. Dynamics include *[pp]*, *[p]*, and *sim.*

Sca - ra - mouche et Pul - ci - nel - la Qu'un mau - vais des - sein ras - sem - bla □ Ges - ti - cu - lent.

11

Measures 11-15 of the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with the lyrics. Dynamics include *[p]* and *[pp]*.

noirs sous la lu - ne. Ges - ti - cu - lent. noirs sous la lu

16

Measures 16-20 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand has a more active melodic line, while the left hand remains accompanimental. Dynamics include *[p]*, *dim.*, and *[pp]*.

Words by Paul Verlaine

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

84

21

[mp]

Ce - - pen - dant l'ex-cel-lent doc - teur Bo-lo-nais

26

[f]

cueille a - vec len - teur Des sim - ples par - mi l'her-be bru -

31

[mf] *[ff]*

ne. Lors sa fil - le,

36

[pp] *[ff]* *[pp]*

pi - quant mi - nois, Sous la - char-mil - - le, en - ta - pi -

41

nois, Se glis - se de - mi - nu - e, Se - glis - se - de - mi -

46

nuc, très retenu en qué - te De son beau pi - rate es - pa -

51

gnol, en qué - te De son beau pi - rate es - pa - gnol, Dont

56 a tempo

un lan - gou - reux ros - si - gnol Cla - me sa dé - tres - se

61

à tue - té

(8) *loco*

[pp]

66

te.

[La]

8

[mf] *sim.* *[p]*

71

(8)

76

(8) *loco*

[pp]

Fête galante

1882

Théodore de Banville

à Madame Vassier

Andantino (tempo di minuetto)

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is for piano, marked *p*. The second system (measures 5-8) is also for piano, marked *pp*, and includes the instruction *dim. e rit.* with a square box. The third system (measures 9-11) is for piano, marked *p*, and includes the instruction *a tempo*. The vocal line begins at measure 9 with the lyrics: "Voi - là Syl - van - - dre et Ly - cas et Myr -". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and arpeggiated figures. The fourth system (measures 12-14) includes the instruction *cresc.* and the lyrics: "Car c'est ce soir fê - te chez Cy - da -". The piano accompaniment features a prominent arpeggiated figure in the right hand.

Words by Theodore de Banville

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

58

15 *cresc.* *p*
li - se. Par - tout dans

18
l'air court un par - fum sub - til;

21 *[pp]*
Dans le grand parc où tout s'i - dé - a - li - se

24 *cresc.* *p dim.*
A - vec la ro - se A - min - the ri - va -

26 *pp* *p*

li - se. Phil - lis, É - glé, que sui - vent leurs a -

28 *pp*

mants Cher - chent l'om-brage en mille en-droits char - mants;

31 *p*

Dans le so - leil qui s'ir - ri - te et qui -

34 *mf*

jou - e, Lut - tant d'or - gueil a - vec les di - a -

37

mants, Sur le che - min,

dim.

40

le Paon blanc fait la roue.

più dim. *p*

42

Ah

p *pp*

45

rit. *PPP*

PPP *rit.*

II. En sourdine

1882

à Madame Vasnier

Paul Verlaine

[Lent, dans une sonorité très voilée]

[p]

Cal - mes dans le

de - mi - jour Que les branch - es hau - tes font,

Pé - né - trons bien no - tre a - mour De ce si - len - ce pro - fond.

Words by Paul Verlaine

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

11 *[p]*

Fon - dons nos âm - es, nos cœurs Et nos sens ex - ta - siés, Par - mi les

8

15 *[pp]*

va - gues lan - gueurs Des pins et des ar - bou - siers.

19 *mf*

Fer - me tes yeux à de - mi, Croi - se tes bras sur ton sein,

8

23 *pp*

Et de ton cœur en - dor - mi Chasse à ja - mais tout des - sein.

(8)

27 **[pp]**

Lais - sons - nous per - sua - der Au souf - - fle ber - ceur et

(8)

30

doux, Qui vient à tes pieds ri - der Les on -

(8)

cresc. poco a poco

33

des de ga - zon roux

(8)

36 **pp**

Et quand, so - len -

(8)

ritenuto

pp a tempo

39

nel, le soir Des chê - nes tom - be - ra,

(8)

42

Voix de no - tre dés - es - poir, Le ros - si - gnol chan - te - ra.

(8)

46

pp [morendo e ritenuto]

Voix de no - tre dés - es - poir, Le ros - si - gnol chan - te - ra.

(8)

50

[m.g.] [pp]

III. Mandoline

1882

Paul Verlaine

à Madame Vasnier

Allegretto [Follement Gai] 1

p et léger 1

Les don-neurs de

5 sé - ré - na - des Et les bel - les é - cou - teu - ses E-chan - gent des pro-pos fa - des

10 *p dim.* *pp* 1
Sous les ra - mu-res chan-teu ses.

p dim. *pp*

The musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with a fermata, followed by the lyrics 'Les don-neurs de'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of chords and eighth notes. The second system starts at measure 5 and includes the lyrics 'sé - ré - na - des Et les bel - les é - cou - teu - ses E-chan - gent des pro-pos fa - des'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The third system starts at measure 10 and includes the lyrics 'Sous les ra - mu-res chan-teu ses.'. The piano accompaniment features a change in dynamics and a more complex rhythmic pattern. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (sfz, sfp, pp, p dim.), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (con sordino).

Words by Paul Verlaine

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

15

mf

C'est Tir-cis et c'est A-min - te, Et c'est l'é-ter-nel Cli -

p *mf*

19

tan - dre, Et c'est Da-mis qui

p *più dim.* *p*

23

un peu retenu

pour main-te Cru-el-le fait maint vers ten - dre.

f *dim.*

27

[a tempo]

p

Leurs cour-tes ves-tes de soie, Leurs lon-gues

pp *pp*

31

ro - bes à queu - es, Leur é - lé - gan - ce, leur joi - e Et leurs mol - les

36

om - bres bleu - es Tour - bil - lon - nent dans l'ex - ta - se

41

D'u - ne lu - ne rose - et gri - se, Et la man - do - li - ne ja - se par - mi les fris - sons de

46

bri - se. La, la, la, la, la, la,

51

la, la, la, la, la, la, la, — la, la, — la, la, — la, la, — la, la, —

sempre pp

56

pp

la ————— la ————— la —————

più pp

61

la ————— la ————— la —————

8.....

toujours en allant se perdant

66

la —————

sfpp

Ped. sourde

Rondeau

1882

[to Alexander von Meck]

Alfred de Musset

Andantino *pp*

Fut - il ja-mais de -
4
ceur de coeur pa-reil - le A voir Ma-non, dans mes bras, som-meil-ler.
7 *un poco cresc.*
Son front en-quet par - fu - me l'o-reil-ler, Dans son beau sein, j'en - tends
un poco cresc.

Words by Alfred de Musset

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

10 Lentement

son cœur qui veil - le. Un son-ge pas - se

13 Tempo I

et s'en vient l'é-gay-er.

16

Ain - si s'en - dort la fleur d'é-glan - ti - er

18

Dans son ca - lice en - fer - mant une a - beil - - le.

20

Moi, je la ber - ce,

22

un plus char - mant mé - tier, Fut - il ja - mais?

25

animez un peu
Mais le jour vient, et l'au - ro re ver - meil - - le

27

Ef - feuille au vent son prin - temps vir - gi - nal, □

29 *cresc.* *animato*
Le peigne en main et la perle à l'o - reil - - le

31 *cédéz*
À son mi - roir, Ma - non va m'ou - bli - er

33 *Adagio*
Hé - las! l'a - mour sans len - de - main ni veil - le fut - il ja -

35
mais?

I. Pantomime

Paul Verlaine

[1882] □

Allegro moderato

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a whole rest. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a first ending bracket. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking appears at the end of the system.

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a whole rest. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with a first ending bracket. The system concludes with the vocal line starting on the word "Pier -".

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with the lyrics "rot - qui n'a rien d'un Cli - tan". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a *détaché* marking and a piano (*p*) dynamic. A first ending bracket is present in the piano part.

Words by Paul Verlaine

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

13
dre, Vide un fla - con sans plus at - ten

17
dre, Et pra - tique, en-tame un pa - lé.

mf *tec* *p*

21
Piep - rot, qui n'a rien d'un Cli - tan - dre, Vide un fla-con sans

p *pp et léger*

25
plus at - ten - dre.

mf

29

Cas - sandre, au fond de l'a - ve - nue,

32

Verse u - ne lar - me mé - con - nue Sur son ne -

35

veu dés - hé - ri - té. Ce fa - quin - d'Ar - le -

38

quin com - mi - ne - L'en - lè - ve - ment de Co - lom - bi - ne

41

Et pi-rou-et - te qua - tre _ fois, Et pi-rou-et - te qua-tre fois.

45

Andante
pp

Co - - - lom - bi - - - ne

48

rève, sur - pri - se De sen -

50

tir un cœur dans la bri - - - se

52

Et d'en

This system contains measures 52 and 53. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has a flowing, arpeggiated texture. The lyrics 'Et d'en' are written under the vocal line.

53

ten - dre en son - cœur des voix, Et

This system contains measures 53 and 54. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar arpeggiated pattern. The lyrics 'ten - dre en son - cœur des voix, Et' are written under the vocal line.

55

d'en - ten - dre en son cœur des voix Ah

ritenuto

This system contains measures 55 and 56. The tempo is marked *ritenuto*. The piano accompaniment features a more pronounced arpeggiated texture. The lyrics 'd'en - ten - dre en son cœur des voix Ah' are written under the vocal line.

Tempo I

57

pp

This system contains measures 57 and 58. The tempo is marked *Tempo I* and the dynamic is *pp*. The piano accompaniment has a more rhythmic, chordal texture. The vocal line is mostly silent in this system.

60 [Ah]

63

66

70

IV. Clair de lune

[c. 1882]

à Madame Vasnier

Paul Verlaine

Andantino

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a piano accompaniment in the left hand and a vocal line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics are 'p' (piano). The second system continues the piano accompaniment and vocal line. The third system shows the piano accompaniment and vocal line. The fourth system shows the piano accompaniment and vocal line with the lyrics: 'Votre âme est un paysage choi'.

By Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

16

si Que vont char-mant masques et ber-ga-mas-ques

20

Jou-ant du luth et dan-sant et qua-si

24

tris-tes Sous leurs dé-gui-se-ments — fan-tas-

28

ques. Tout — en-chant-

32

tant sur le mo - de - mi - neur L'a - mour vain -

36

queur et la - vie op - por - tu - ne, ils n'ont pas

40

l'air de croi - re à leur bon - heur Et leur chan -

44

son se mêle au clair de - lu - ne, et leur chan -

48

son de mèle - au clair de - lu

(8)

52

ne, Au

56

cal - me clair - de lu - ne triste - et

60

beau, Qui fait rê - ver - les oi - seaux dans les

64

ar - bres Et san - glo - ter *f* d'ex - ta - se les jets d'eau,

69

Les grands jets d'eau svel - tes *p* par - mi les mar - bres. *ritenuto* *a tempo*

75

crescendo et très retenu
Au cal - me clair de lu - ne triste et

80

beau. *ritenuto* *pp*

Apparition

1884

à Madame Vasnier

87

Stéphane Mallarmé

Andantino 

(rêveusement)



La lu - ne s'at - trie -

pp



3
tair. Des sé - ra - phins en

(8)



5
pleurs Ré - - vant, l'ar - chet aux

(8)

Words by Stéphane Mallarmé

Music by Claude Debussy

Arranged by James Briscoe

Copyright (c) 1993 by HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

pp un peu retenu

7
doigts, dans le cal - me des fleurs Va - po - reu - - ses,

9
ti-raient de mou-ran-tes vi - o - les De blancs san - glots glis - sants sur l'a - zur des co -

12 *Fièvreux*
rol - les. - C'é - tait le jour bé - ni de

15
ton pre - mier bai - ser. Ma son - ge - ri - e ai -

18

mant à me mar - ty - ri - ser S'en - iv - rait sa - vam - ment du par - fum de tris -

21

tes - se Que mè - me sans re - gret et sans dé - boi - re lais - se

25

La cueil - lai - son d'un Rêve au cœur qui l'a cueil -

28

li. J'er - rais donc, l'œil ri - vé sur le pa - vé vieil -

32 *animez peu à peu* *crescendo et toujours plus animé*

li Quand a - vec du so - leil aux che - veux, dans la rue Et dans le

36 *ff* *Ap*

soir, Tu m'es en ri - ant ap - pa - ru - - e Ap - pa -

40

ru - e Et j'ai cru - voir la fée

43 *p*

Au cha - peau de clar - té Qui ja - dis sur mes beaux som-meils d'en-fant gâ -

47

pp

té Pas - sait, lais - sant tou - jours de ses mains mal fer -

50

mé es Nei - ger [8.....] de blancs bou - quets d'é -

sim. *pp* *mf (p)*

53

pp et en allant toujours se perdant

toi [8.....] les par - fu - mé - es, d'é - toi - les par - fu -

56

mé - es.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Debussy, Claude. 1987. *Debussy Letters*. Edited by François Lesure and Roger Nichols. Translated by Roger Nichols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 1980. *Lettres, 1884–1918*. Edited by François Lesure. Paris: Hermann.
- Emmanuel, Maurice. 1926. *Pelléas et Mélisande de Debussy: Étude et analyse*. Paris: Éditions Mellottée.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1768. *Dictionnaire de musique*. Paris: Veuve Duchesne.
- Vidal, Paul. 1926. “Souvenirs d’Achille Debussy.” *Revue musicale* 7, no. 7 (May): 107–12.

Secondary Sources

- Abbate, Carolyn. 1998. “Debussy’s Phantom Sounds.” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10, no. 1 (March): 67–96.
- Beltrando, Marie-Claire. 1987. “La mélodie à la recherche de sa forme et de son style.” In *Autour de la mélodie française*, edited by Michelle Bigit. Rouen: University of Rouen.
- Benjamin, William E. 1987. “Pour les Sixtes: An Analysis.” *Journal of Music Theory* 22, no. 2 (Autumn): 253–90.
- Bergeron, Katherine. 2010. *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Époque*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bloom, Peter Anthony. 1995. “Episodes in the Livelihood of an Artist: Berlioz’s Contacts and Contracts with Publishers.” *Journal of Musicological Research* 15: 219–73.
- Branger, Jean-Christophe, Sylvie Douche, Denis Herlin, and Pierre Boulez. 2012. *Pelléas et Mélisande cent ans après: études et documents*. Lyon: Symétrie.
- Briscoe, James R. 1979. “The Compositions of Claude Debussy’s Formative Years (1879–1887).” PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- . 1981. “Debussy d’après Debussy: the further resonance of two early melodies.” *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 (Fall): 110–16.
- . 1984. “Debussy’s earliest songs.” *College Music Symposium* 24, no. 2 (Fall): 81–95.
- . 1990. *Claude Debussy: A Guide to Research*. New York: Garland Publishing, INC.

- Brown, Matthew. 1993. "Tonality and Form in Debussy's *Prélude à L'Après-midi d'un faune*." *Music Theory Spectrum* 15, no. 2: 127–43.
- . 2003. *Debussy's Iberia*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2004. "Composing with Prototypes: Charting Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse*." *Integral: The Journal Of Applied Musical Thought* 18-19 (January): 151–88.
- . 2005. *Explaining Tonality: Schenkerian Theory and Beyond*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Burkhart, Charles. 2016. "A Note on Debussy's *Beau Soir*." *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* VI, no. 9: 131–37.
- Cheng, William. 2011. "Hearts for Sale: The French Romance and the Sexual Traffic of Musical Mimicry." *19th-Century Music* 35, no. 1: 34–71.
- Cobb, Margaret G. 1982. *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters*. Translated by Richard Miller. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Dayan, Peter. 2005. "On Nature, Music, and Meaning in Debussy's Writing." *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 3 (Spring): 214–29.
- Day-O'Connell, Jeremy. 2009. "Debussy, Pentatonicism, and the Tonal Tradition." *Music Theory Spectrum – The Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 31, no. 2: 225–261.
- Debussy, Claude, and James R. Briscoe. 1993. *Songs of Claude Debussy*. 2 vols. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation.
- Dietschy, Marcel. 1962. *La passion de Claude Debussy*. Neuchâtel: A la Baconnière.
- . 1990. *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*. Edited and Translated by William Ashbrook and Margaret G. Cobb. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dratwicky, Alexandre. 2005. "Les 'Envois de Rome' des compositeurs pensionnaires de la Villa Médicis (1804–1914)." *Revue de Musicologie* 91, no. 1: 99–193.
- Eimert, Herbert. 1961. "Debussy's *Jeux*." In *Reports Analyses*, edited by Herbert Eimert and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Translated by Leo Black, 3–20. Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser Co.
- Forte, Allen. 1959. "Schenker's Conception of Musical Structure." *Journal of Music Theory* 3, no. 1 (April 1959): 1–30.
- Gauldin, Robert. 1978. "An Analysis." *Journal of Music Theory* 22, no. 2 (Autumn): 214–52.
- Guck, Marion A. 1975. "Tracing Debussy's '...des pas sur la neige'." *In Theory Only* 1, no. 8 (November): 4–12.

- Hepokoski, James A. 1984. "Formulaic Openings in Debussy." *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 1 (Summer): 44–59.
- Holloway, Robin. 1979. *Debussy and Wagner*. London: E. Eulenburg.
- Jensen, Eric Frederick. 2004. *Debussy*. The Master Musicians. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Graham, and Richard Stokes. 2000. *A French Song Companion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Katz, Adele. 1945. *Challenge to Musical Tradition: A New Concept of Tonality*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.
- Kimball, Carol. 2006. *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard.
- Kostka, Stefan, Dorothy Payne, and Byron Almén. 2018. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Post-Tonal Music*, 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Kresky, Jeffrey. 1977. *Tonal Music: Twelve Analytic Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kœchlin, Charles. 1925a. "La Mélodie." In *Cinquante ans de musique française, de 1874 à 1925*. Edited by Ladislav Rohozinski, 2: 1–62. Paris: Librairie de France.
- . 1925b. "Tendances de la musique française moderne." In *Encyclopédie de la musique et Dictionnaire du conservatoire*. Edited by Albert Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie, 56–145. Paris: Delagrave.
- . 1926. "Quelques anciennes melodies inédites de Claude Debussy." *Revue musicale* 7, no. 7 (May): 211–36.
- Laufer, Edward. 1981. Review of *Free Composition* by Heinrich Schenker. *Music Theory Spectrum* 3 (Spring): 158–84.
- . 2003. "An Approach to Linear Analysis of Some Early Twentieth-Century Compositions." *A Composition as a Problem: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Music Theory Tallin*: 89–134.
- Legouvé, Ernst. 1885. *Soixante ans de souvenirs*. Quoted in J.G. Prod'homme, "Schubert's Works in France." *Music Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (October 1928): 497.
- Lenormand, René. 1940. *A Study of Twentieth-Century Harmony*. Translated by Herbert Antcliffe. Boston: The B.F. Wood Music Co.
- Lesure, François. 1977. *Catalogue de l'œuvre de Claude Debussy*. Genève: Minkoff.
- . 1994. *Claude Debussy: Biographie Critique*. Paris: Klincksieck.

- Lewin, David. 1987. "Some Instances of Parallel Voice-Leading in Debussy." *19th-Century Music* 11, no. 1 (Summer): 59–72.
- Locke, Ralph P. 2009. "Spanish local color in Bizet's *Carmen*: Unexplored borrowings and transformations." In *Music, theater, and cultural transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*, 316-360. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lockspeiser, Edward. 1940. "The French Song in the 19th Century." *The Musical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (April): 192–99.
- . 1978. *Debussy: His Life and Mind*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Masci, Michael. 2013. "Theory as Practica: The Theoretical Study of Tonality and the Practical Study of Harmony in French *Harmonie Pratique*." *Theoria* 20: 5–37.
- . 2015. "Three Leçons in Harmony: A View from the Nineteenth-Century Paris Conservatory." *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 28: 101–44.
- McFarland, Mark. 1997. "Claude Debussy and The Concept of Chromatic Harmony in His Late Works (1911-1915)." PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara.
- . 2004. "Debussy: The Origins of a Method." *Journal of Music Theory* 48, no. 2 (Fall): 295–324.
- . 2005. "Transpositional Combination and Aggregate Formation in Debussy." *Music Theory Spectrum: The Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 27, no. 2 (Fall): 187–220.
- Meister, Barbara. 1980. *Nineteenth-Century French Song: Fauré, Chausson, Duparc, and Debussy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Murphy, Kerry. 2009. "*Carmen*: Couleur Locale or the Real Thing?" In *Music, theater, and cultural transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, 293–315. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Nectoux, Jean-Michel. 1991. *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*. Translated by Roger Nichols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nichols, Roger. 1967. "Debussy's Two Settings of 'Clair de Lune.'" *Music and Letters* 48, no. 3: 229–35.
- . 1973. *Debussy*. London: Oxford University Press.
- . 1992. *Debussy Remembered*. Portland: Amadeus Press.
- . 1998. *The Life of Debussy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Noske, Frits. 1970. *French Song from Berlioz to Duparc: The Origin and Development of the Mélodie*. Translated by Rita Benton. New York: Dover Publications.

- Park, Raymond Roy. 1967. "The Later Style of Claude Debussy." PhD diss., University of Michigan.
- Parks, Richard. 1989. *The Music of Claude Debussy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Pasler, Jann. 2012. "Debussy the Man, His Music, and His Legacy: An Overview of Current Research." *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 69, no. 2 (December): 197–216.
- . 2016. "De la 'publicité déguisée' à la performativité du gout: Partitions et suppléments musicaux dans la presse française à la Belle Époque." *Revue de Musicologie* 102, no. 1: 3–60.
- Prunières, Henry. 1926. "À la Vilal Médicis." *Reveu musicale, numéro special: La jeunesse de Claude Debussy*: 119–38.
- Rolf, Marie. 1984. "Orchestral Manuscripts of Claude Debussy: 1892-1905." *The Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (Fall): 538–66.
- . 1997. "Semantic and Structural issues in Debussy's Mallarmé Songs." In *Debussy Studies*. Edited by Richard Langham Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothgeb, John. 1990. "Schenkerian Theory and Manuscript Studies: Modes of Interaction." In *Schenker Studies*, 4–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salzer, Felix. 1982. *Structural Hearings: Tonal Coherence in Music*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Schachter, Carl. 1982. "Beethoven's Sketches for the First Movement of Op. 14, No. 1: A Study in Design." *Journal of Music Theory* 26, no. 1 (Spring): 1–21.
- . 1983. "Motive and Text in Four Schubert Songs." In *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory*, edited by David Beach, 61-76. New Haven: Yale University press.
- . 1991. "The Adventures of an F#: Tonal Narration and Exhortation in Donna Anna's First-Act Recitative and Aria." *Theory and Practice* 16: 5–20.
- . 1999. *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*. Edited by Joseph N. Straus. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schenker, Heinrich. 1973. *Harmony*. Edited by Oswald Jonas. Translated by Elisabeth Mann Borgese. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- . 1979. *Free Composition (Der freie Satz): Volume III of New Musical Theories and Fantasies*. 2 vols. Edited and translated by Ernst Oster. Hillsdale: Pendragon Press.
- . 1987. *Counterpoint: a translation of Kontrapunkt*. Edited and translated by John Rothgeb. New York: Schirmer Books.

- . 1994–97. *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook*. Edited by William Drabkin. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004–05. *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a new Generation of Youth*. Edited by William Drabkin. Translated by Ian Bent. 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitz, Robert. 1950. *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*. Edited by Merle Armitage. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce Publishers.
- Seldin, Herbert. 1965. “An Analytical Study of the Debussy *Préludes* for Piano.” PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Slottow, Stephen P. 2009. *A Vast Simplicity: The Music of Carl Ruggles*. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press.
- Smith, Richard Langham. 1981. “Debussy and the Pre-Raphaelites.” *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 (Autumn): 95–109.
- Somer, Avo. 1995. “Chromatic Third-Relations and Tonal Structure in the Songs of Debussy.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 17, no. 2 (Autumn): 215–41.
- . 1998. “Musical Imagery, Digression, and Coherence in the *Étude Pour Les Agréments* of Debussy.” In *A Composition as a Problem II*. Tallinn: Eesti Muusikaakadeemia.
- . 2003. “*Fantasque, Ironique*: An Interpretation of the *Sérénade* of Debussy’s Cello Sonata.” In *A Composition as a Problem IV/1*. Tallinn: Eesti Muusikaakadeemia.
- . 2005. “Musical Syntax in the Sonatas of Debussy: Phrase Structure and Formal Function.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 27, no. 1 (Spring): 67–96.
- . 2006. “Interpreting Thematic Reprise and Transformation in the Later Chamber Works of Debussy.” In *A Composition as a Problem II*. Tallinn: Eesti Muusikaakadeemia.
- Straus, Joseph. 1987. “The Problem of Prolongation in Post-Tonal Music.” *Journal of Music Theory* 31: 1–22.
- Tunely, David and Frits Noske. *Grove Music Online*.
<http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000042953>.
- Väisälä, Olli. 1996. “On the Coordination of Tonal Functions, Pitch, Sets, Meter, and Form in Debussy’s *L’isle Joyeuse*.” *A Composition as a Problem: Proceedings of a Conference on Music Theory*. Tallinn: Eesti Muusikaakadeemia.
- . 1999. “Concepts of Harmony and Prologation in Schoenberg’s Op. 19/2.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 21, no. 2 (Autumn): 230–59.

- . 2002. “Prolongation of Harmonies Related to the Harmonic Series in Early Post-Tonal Music.” *Journal of Music Theory* 46, no. ½ (Spring-Autumn): 207–83.
- . 2004a. “Prolongation in Early Post-Tonal Music: Analytical Examples and Theoretical Principles.” PhD diss., Sibelius Academy.
- . 2004b. “New Theories and Fantasies on the Music of Debussy: Post-Triadic Prolongation in *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest* and Other Examples.” In “Prolongation in Early Post-Tonal Music: Analytical Examples and Theoretical Principles.” PhD diss., Sibelius Academy, 2.
- Vallas, Léon. 1973. *Claude Debussy: His Life and Works*. Translated by Marie and Grace O’Brien. New York: Dover Publications.
- Varvir Coe, Megan Elizabeth. 2016. “Composing Symbolism’s Musicality of Language in Fin-de-siècle France.” PhD diss., University of North Texas.
- Waldroup, William Allan. 2012. “Jacques Ibert: An Analytical Study of Three Movements from *Histoires*.” Master’s thesis, University of North Texas.
- Whittall, Arnold. 1975. “Tonality and the Whole-Tone Scale in the Music of Debussy.” *The Music Review* 36: 261–71.
- Wenk, Arthur. 1976. *Claude Debussy and the Poets*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yates, Paul. 2002. “The Song Cycle in Nineteenth Century France and Debussy’s *Recueil Vasnier*.” PhD diss., Cambridge University.