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DEBUSSY AND THE FRAGMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Music

by
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ABSTRACT

The dissertation identifies and studies fragmentary structures--structures that give the impression of incompletion or interruption--in the music of Claude Debussy. Although fragments--which play a decisive role in nineteenth- and twentieth-century aethetics--have been discussed extensively in literature and the visual arts, relatively little critical attention was paid to them by musicologists until Daverio and Rosen, in the 1990s, investigated the romantic musical fragment.

The dissertation traces the history of the literary fragment from the late middle ages through the nineteenth century. With this history as background, it places Debussy's fragmentary musical structures in relation to those of composers like Schumann and Chopin.

Debussy's fragmentary structures are shown to be of four types: some are incomplete in their beginnings (e.g., the songs "Green" and "Spleen"), some in their endings (the prelude "Canope"); some mirror the fragmentary structure of literary works on which they are modeled (*Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune"* and the *Chansons de Bilitis*); some reflect the nineteenth-century fascination with the sketch (*D'un cahier d'esquisses*); some interrupt their progress with quotation or autoquotation ("La sérénade interrompue").

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On the basis of these investigations, Debussy is shown to be the heir of the nineteenth-century fragment tradition; in this respect he shared the interests of his many acquaintances among the French Symbolist poets.

INTRODUCTION

"Gifted as he was, there was nothing cosmic or inspired about Debussy's work, as is proved by the fact that he never produced anything incomplete."[1] These words of the Berlin critic Adolf Weissmann, written in the early 1920s—dated, opinionated, no doubt nationalistically prejudiced—echo Friedrich Schlegel's description of the romantic literary work from his often-quoted *Athenäums-Fragmente* 116: "the romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected."[2] Weissmann's equation of the inspired with the incomplete identifies him as an heir of German romanticism and indicates the extent of the influence held by certain aspects of that movement more than a hundred years after Schlegel's writings gave it direction.

Stefan Jarocinski, writing in the 1960s with a different agenda—the promotion of Debussy as a creator of the modern in music—continued to rely on the authority of the incomplete. Justifying his praise of Debussy's music by the presence of that very element Weissman found missing, he reiterated the romantic ideal of the forever becoming: "Sa [Debussy's] musique ne commence ni ne finit. . . . Sa forme n'est pas

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[1]Adolf Weissmann, *The Problems of Modern Music*, trans. M. M. Bozman (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1925), 171. Originally published as *Die Musik in der Weltkrise*, 1922.

[2]Friedrich Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde" and the Fragments*, ed. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 175.

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close. . . . [Elle] se forme, se renouvelle sans cesse. . . ." [Debussy's music neither begins nor ends. Its form is not closed. . . . It forms itself, it renews itself without ceasing. . . .][3]

The prejudices of these two writers must not be ignored; their opposing opinions of Debussy's work, both supported by the same regard for the incomplete, must raise questions about the role of historical perspective, political agenda, analytical method, and applicable aesthetic doctrine in the definition, identification, and interpretation of the incomplete in music.

Although frequently considered the property of early German romanticism and the twentieth century, the fragment, the incomplete entity, has been recognized and consciously employed in Western art and literature at least since the fourteenth century. Scholars are now devoting more serious study to the role of the fragment in other chronological periods; as a result, a history of the fragment is currently being constructed. This history offers an alternative and balance to the long-held Aristotelian perception of unity as the ultimate goal of art—a unity analysts and critics construct by marginalizing disorder and fragmentation, by concentrating on and valuing what binds together rather than what pulls apart, and consequently by weakening and devaluing the very powerful statements made by fragments prior to the modern era.[4]

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[3]Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: impressionnisme et symbolisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 74-75; my translation.

[4]On these points, see Lawrence D. Kritzman, Preface to *Fragments: Incompletion and Discontinuity* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1981), vii.

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In music criticism, scant attention has been paid to fragments outside discussions of music of the twentieth century and studies of sketches and works left incomplete at a composer's death. This omission is unfortunate since it distorts our view of the modern fragment by placing it in a vacuum, without prior history. Recently the importance of the fragment in the aesthetics of romantic music has been traced by a number of specialists, most significantly Charles Rosen and John Daverio.[5] They have demonstrated how romantic ideas of the fragment were reflected in the music of Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, Strauss, Wagner, and others. These studies have begun to create awareness of fragmentation in music and a more accurate view of the function of disorder, disruption, and incompletion in its history. They allow us to see Debussy's music from a new perspective.

Debussy's compositional output bridges the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; he inherited the romantic fragment tradition as surely as he pointed toward the modern. Although Weissmann may not have seen anything incomplete in Debussy's output, many other critics have used terms related to incompletion and fragmentation consistently in reference to his works: from negative assessments of his contemporaries ("fragments of the tonal wreck,"[6] "la décomposition de notre art . . . et

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[5] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993).

[6] Louis Elson, Boston *Daily Advertiser*, March 4, 1907, quoted in Nicholas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers since Beethoven's Time*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 93 (of *La Mer*, "We clung like a drowning man to a few fragments of the tonal wreck . . .").

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la ruine de notre être" [the decomposition of our art . . . and ruin of our essence][7]) to

neutral or positive descriptions today ("fragments of counterpoint,"[8] "fragments of

melody,"[9] "collage citations,"[10] "mosaic technique"[11]), critics and scholars often seek to

describe his music by stressing ruin and remnant; however, where some earlier critics

saw the ruin of a tradition, without potential, later analysts focus on Debussy's

originality, viewing the fragment as a pointer toward modernism. They see his

fragments as harbingers of the future and ignore their ties to fragments of the past.

Despite the rhetoric of fragmentation, there has been no systematic study of the forms

and significance of fragments he uses and no real interpretation of his works in light of

the fragment, other than vague connections to Symbolist syntax.

The connections that have recently been made between romantic fragment

theory and music, the far-reaching effects of the fragment traditions of German and

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[7]Camille Bellaigue, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Paris, May 15, 1902, quoted in
Slonimsky, *Lexicon*, 90-1 ("Aucun n'est mieux qualifié que l'auteur de *Pelléas et
Mélisande* pour présider à la décomposition de notre art. La musique de M. Debussy
tend à la diminution et à la ruine de notre être." [No one is better qualified than the
composer of *Pelléas et Mélisande* to preside over the decomposition of our art. The
music of M. Debussy leads to the emaciation and ruin of our essence.]).

[8]William Austin, *Music in the Twentieth Century from Debussy through Stravinsky*
(New York: W. W. Norton and Sons, 1966), 45 (of the "Ballade de Villon à s'amye").

[9]Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Oregon:
Amadeus Press), 172 (of "Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut").

[10]Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from
Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard
University Press, 1994), 298.

[11]Michael L. Friedmann, "Approaching Debussy's 'Ondine'," *Cahiers Debussy*, 6
(1982): 22.

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English romanticism particularly on French romanticism and Symbolism, Debussy's knowledge of music of the German romantic period, and claims of Debussy's influence on modern music all suggest that a study of the fragment in his music could provide a new means of understanding his position between romanticism and modernism. This dissertation studies the role of various forms of the fragment in the published works of Debussy: it takes into consideration his place in the tradition of the fragment; it investigates the various formal functions fragments serve; it raises questions of extra-musical significance; and it provides a means of assessing Debussy's position between romanticism and modernism.

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CHAPTER 1. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FRAGMENT IN LITERATURE

Man's fascination with the fragment is ancient, his uses of it as varied and rich

as imagination. From broken bits of reality--from disassociated heads, horns, wings,

and feet, stitched and glued improbably together--he has fashioned both his gods and

his monsters; from potsherds and ruins he has reconstructed his history and previewed

his fate; and from shreds of artistic convention he has confronted Aristotelian

perfection with the power of the incomplete, countering harmony, order, and unity with

discord, disorder, disjunction, and deformity.

The fragment in Western European art and literature never strays far from its

kinship with ruins and monsters, with the broken and the deformed: Petrarch titled the

rime sparse (scattered rhymes) of his *Canzoniere* "fragments" (*Rerum vulgarium*

fragmenta), Montaigne described his *Essais* as "monstrous bodies,"[1] Diderot equated

the unfinished statue with the ruin,[2] and Hugo compared his ideal theater to the

composite creatures of mythology.[3] All fragments, whatever the conditions of their

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[1]Oscar S. Kenshur, *Open Form and the Shape of Ideas: Literary Structures as Representations of Philosophical Concepts in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), 41, citing Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), 1:198.

[2]Anne Betty Weinshenker, "Diderot's Use of the Ruin-Image," in *Diderot Studies XVI*, ed. Otis Fellows and Diana Guiragossian (Geneva: Librairie Droz S. A., 1973), 328 note 55 (citing Diderot, *Observations sur la Sculpture et sur Bouchardon*).

[3]Victor Hugo, *Cromwell* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), Preface, esp. 69-71.

creation or discovery, present similar problems to scholars and audiences. Since each fragment is--at least symbolically--the product of separation, each must refer to an absent original. An awareness of that original, or model--whether it exists in nature or by artistic convention--is essential, for the fragment can be successfully identified only by what it fails to become, its meaning fully realized only by understanding what it fails to achieve. This origin is concealed to some degree, whether through the course of nature or artistic intent, by the processes that acted, or seem to have acted, on the model and the fragment: the excision, omission, mutilation, or reordering of material; the intrusion of alien material; the introduction of the fragment into a foreign context. Thus the fragment exists in a double relationship with the past and the present: reference to its origin compromises its role in its current context; the same reference both enriches the current host and erodes its unity.

Isidore

Long before romanticism and modernism made the fragment a touchstone of creativity and criticism, Isidore of Seville confronted the problem of monsters. Monsters were imperfect, deformed, made of parts that did not coalesce into an organic whole, but Isidore believed they were worthy of study. He described them, classified them, located them geographically, gave their reasons for existence, and defended them against those who saw value only in perfection. His taxonomy of portentous monsters--an attempt to categorize both human deformity and the composite creatures of myth and legend--provided a remarkably prescient system of fragment classification

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and evaluation, and introduced basic issues of fragment study that are still problematic today.

For his classification system, Isidore required a model of perfection, usually the human body, against which the imperfect could be measured; he also required sources of spare parts, especially animal parts, and a list of processes or operations that could be used to explain his aberrations of perfection: cutting off (*decisio* created monsters begotten without a hand or a head, *praenumeria* indicated that only a head or a leg had been born), change of position (eyes in the chest or forehead, or ears above the temple), transformation (humans with the face of a lion or a dog, or the head of a bull), addition (monsters that arose from the addition of unnecessary or extra parts, including hermaphrodites), deformity (when one hand is very different from the other, or one foot from the other, or such deformities as the Antipodes in Libya, whose feet were turned backwards on their legs and who had eight toes on each foot).[4]

Isidore located the realm of the fragment: while the merely deformed are all around us, the transformed live in India, Libya, the Far East, Scythia, Ethiopia, and even Spain. Monsters, fragmented creatures, begin life in the margins and on the edges—of manuscripts, of maps, of what is known, of what is acceptable. Some—the novels of Sterne and Woolf, for example—begin outside acceptability and end up in the mainstream, but their fragment quality is seldom disregarded completely, for the

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[4]Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum Sive Originum Liber XI*, trans. William D. Sharpe in "Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, 54, pt. 2 (1964): 51-54.

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conventions these works flaunt are strong and vividly recalled by the very act of being

torn apart.

Isidore knew that monsters had to be defended:

> Varro says that portents are things which seem to have been
> born contrary to nature, but in truth, they are not contrary to
> nature, because they exist by the divine will, since the Creator's
> will is the nature of everything created.[5]

Isidore offered--as many other writers since have been compelled to offer--a

justification and a defense of the imperfect in the face of this inevitable negative

response. For Isidore, deformity could not be seen as a failing, since God cannot fail,

and therefore it must exist for a purpose: the word monster, Isidore complained, has

been corrupted by misuse; asserting that it originally derived from *monstrare*, meaning

"to show," he claimed that the role of the monster was to foretell the future. Critics

have not always been so kind to human creators of fragment works, often describing

them as "monstrous" and associating the fragment artwork with failure, whether failure

is the result of conditions external to the work itself--funding, health of the artist--or an

integral part of the artist's concept, as in the great "incomplete" romantic poems such as

Coleridge's "Kubla Khan."[6]

Fashioning fragment forms through processes analogous to Isidore's, artists

through the centuries have turned the familiar into the unfamiliar, creating not only the

monstrous creatures cavorting on the margins of medieval manuscripts, lurking at the

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[5] Isidore, 51.

[6] Elizabeth Harries, *The Unfinished Manner: Essays on the Fragment in the Later
Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 2-3.

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edges of the known world of medieval maps,[7] and carousing in the intergalactic bars at the boundaries of the science fiction universe, but also the disconnected *Essais* of Montaigne, the failure of system in Diderot's *De l'interpretation de la Nature*, the narrative discontinuities in the prose of Rabelais and Sterne, the dissolution of lines between reality and fantasy in the works of Hoffmann and Nerval, and the multiple-perspective paintings of Picasso. Born on the margins, like Isidore's monsters, these works often have to be defended; as portents, they often open the door to future developments in the arts. Isidore's creatures--products of bizarre copulation, composed of parts that detach inexplicably, migrate, reattach randomly, commingle irrationally, replicate needlessly--illustrate that the study of the fragment is not the study of perfection, but the study of lack, deformity, transgression, and failure.

The critical study of the literary fragment has long been dominated by attention to the romantic and modern periods, but the intentional use of fragmentation in literature is much older. The following survey of authors of fragments prior to romanticism is presented to dispel the notion that the literary fragment was a romantic invention or discovery, and will begin to show the extent of the use of the fragment, the variety of its forms and settings, and the issues and concerns that revolve consistently around it.

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[7]David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 17. Williams notes that the placement of monsters on the maps brands them as exiles, but also makes them God's only neighbors.

Petrarch

"Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono / di quei sospiri . . ." [You who hear in

scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs . . .].[8] So begins Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (final

version 1374), called *Rime sparse* (*Scattered Rhymes*)--sometimes considered the first

work of modern literature.[9] Petrarch gave it a Latin title: *Rerum vulgarium*

fragmenta. Robert Durling, editor of a recent edition of the poet's work, believes this

may have been the earliest documented use of the term "fragment" to describe a work

of (presumably Western European) art.[10] In Petrarch's time, there was no tradition for

presenting a chronological narrative through short, lyric forms.[11] There was, however,

the tradition of the *prosimetrum*, a genre that alternates lyric poetry with prose

commentary.[12] Dante's *Vita nova*, a principal model for the *Canzoniere*,[13] belongs to

this genre. Dante documents his love for Beatrice through a series of lyric poems, each

preceded and followed by a prose explanation of the poem's structure and the

circumstances of its creation. Petrarch's *Canzoniere* also documents a love affair, his

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[8] Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The "Rime Sparse" and Other Lyrics*, trans. and
ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), Poem #1, stanza
1, and translation, 36-37.

[9] Harries, 14.

[10] Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 26.

[11] Poems were grouped by genre; Italian manuscripts separated sonnets, ballate,
canzone. Durling, 13-18, citing E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago: University
of Chicago Press, 1961), no page number given.

[12] Peter Dronke, *Verse with Prose from Petronius to Dante: The Art and Scope of the
Mixed Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[13] Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 9-10.

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love for Laura, through a series of lyric poems,[14] but Petrarch omitted the prose

sections of the *prosimetrum*. Rather than containing his poems within a prose frame,

he "scattered" his lyric moments, suggesting (rather than stating) both a chronology

and a narrative. The result is a delicate and exquisite balance between elements that

frame and unify and those that separate and erode—and the invention of the lyric (or

sonnet) sequence.[15]

Though the rhymes are scattered, there are important elements in the collection

that point to unity. These include the intentional act of binding the poems together; the

pervasiveness of Laura as subject and inspiration; certain consistently recurring images,

even though they are images of fragmentation; references to specific dates and

occasions; and the correspondence of the number of poems in the collection to the

number of days in the calendar year, the length of Petrarch's relationship with Laura

(366 poems—365 plus a final hymn to the Virgin). That unity is thwarted by the poetic

images that consistently echo Petrarch's fragmentation of the *prosimetrum* form:

copious references to individual parts of Laura's body[16] and to parts of the poet's own

body; references to Acteon, Orpheus, and other wellknown myths of dismemberment

and dispersal; frequent use of words and images of fragmentation, such as

---

[14] Not only sonnets but also madrigali, ballate, sestine, canzone.

[15] As Durling reports, C. S. Lewis credited Petrarch with the invention of the sonnet sequence (more accurately the lyric sequence) by omitting the prose narrative found in the *Vita nova*. Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 9-10.

[16] This listing of body parts in praise of a woman is called *blason*. Petrarch did not invent the *blason*, but his use of it was so often copied that it became a common device associated with his poetry.

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"scattering";[17] and many quotations and auto-quotations that pull the reader into other works. In addition, any construction of the implied narrative is thwarted not only by the faulty chronology[18] but also by the lack of progression: there is no climax or turning point, not even at the point of Laura's death—simply repetitive situations and emotions.[19]

This web of connections and disconnections creates a system of fragments, each appearing, if separated from the rest, to be perfect and self-contained; but in fact each is imperfect, incomplete outside the collection, just as the collection is incomplete even with its full complement of poems.

Why did Petrarch "scatter" his rhymes? Perhaps to imply the impossibility of grasping love in its totality, the necessity of breaking that experience into manageable pieces. Mazzotta writes, "desire knows only shreds and fragments, even if plenitude is its ever elusive mirage."[20] Petrarch depicted memories, stored and retrieved like snapshots, but memories are far from perfect. Did he seek to reflect both the ruin of

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[17]Harries, 177, quoting Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," in *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981): 85-97 gives a tally of 43 occurrences of forms of the Italian verb *spargere*, to scatter.

[18]The concrete facts and dates often disagree with the calendar and with those recorded in Petrarch's own obituary of Laura, written on the flyleaf of Petrarch's copy of Virgil. See Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 78-9; Durling, 5-7 and 9-10.

[19]Harries, 18. Since Laura's existence has been questioned (Durling, 4), and since in the poems both Laura and the poet's relationship with her are as much a fabrication of the poet's mind as of reality, his attitudes toward her and feelings for her need not change so drastically after her death.

[20]Mazzotta, 78.

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time and the ruin of memory on the written word? As a reader of classical manuscripts, he knew both the widening holes in parchment and the widening gap between the author's intent and the reader's interpretation. Had he mutilated his own manuscript, not only to reflect the inadequacy of telling but also the inadequacy of reading? As he assigns to the reader the task of creating a narrative from his fragments, he acknowledges the inability of any reader to recreate accurately, regardless of information given or withheld.

Why then did Petrarch collect and bind his poems as he did? Perhaps to restore Laura and to restore himself in the only way he could. If the poems correspond to the body pieces of the hero in certain myths of dismemberment, then only by being gathered can they either be laid to rest (Orpheus) or reborn (Osiris).[21] Only by collecting, could Laura, and his love for her, be both laid to rest and reborn, yet Petrarch must have known that collection and preservation are ultimately impossible:

> For Petrarch the term [fragment] expresses the intensely
> self-critical awareness that all integration of selves and texts is
> relative, temporary, threatened. They flow into multiplicity at
> the touch of time, their inconsistencies juxtaposed as the
> successive traces of a subject who dissolves and leaves only
> words behind.[22]

Petrarch worked over the poems of the *Canzoniere* for more than forty years, collecting, reviewing, reorganizing, and refining his fragments and his memories. Mazzotta speaks of the palimpsests of memory,[23] memory writing over reality, memory

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[21]See Harries, 15-17.

[22]Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poetry*, 26.

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creating reality, memory creating memory. Perhaps Petrarch wrote and rewrote as

much for himself as for posterity, for forgetting is also a form of ruin.

Today, the sonnet sequence, or lyric sequence, is a commonplace. It has

become a convention, but as with all fragments, there remains always some sense of

lack. Surely no interpreter of lyric cycles could argue that the unsaid, the missing

narrative, is any less powerful today than it was over 600 years ago.

Montaigne

In the late fifteenth century, frescoes discovered during the excavation of Nero's

Golden House in Rome were labeled grotesque because viewers had to be lowered

through tunnels into the excavated rooms--hence the Italian root of grotesque, *grotta*,

meaning cave.[24] The function of these grotesques was decorative: profuse linear

designs formed borders around a series of small portraits. The content was fanciful:

vegetation merged into both composite creatures--creatures made of assembled parts

that do not belong together in nature--and other constructions that defied natural laws.

Isidore's creatures are reborn here, not as portents and prodigies, but as frames, still

relegated to the margins. The style of the grotesque was adopted by Renaissance

artists, notably Raphael, and subsequently spread throughout Europe.[25]

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[23]Mazzotta, 4.

[24]Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 19.

[25]Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On The Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and
Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 29. Illustrations of the
grotesque may be found in Harpham, Kayser, and E. H. Gombrich: *The Sense of
Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, Limited,
1984), 21 and 278-83.

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A century after the discovery of the grotesques in Rome, but well before

Friedrich Schlegel would make the grotesque—by then as commonly called

arabesque—into a literary category, Montaigne described his *Essais* as a work made of

parts, mere decoration, a grotesque:

> As I was considering the way a painter I employ went
> about his work, I had a mind to imitate him. He chooses the
> best spot, the middle of each wall, to put a picture labored over
> with all his skill, and the empty space all around it he fills with
> grotesques, which are fantastic paintings whose only charm lies
> in their variety and strangeness. And what are these things of
> mine, in truth, but grotesques and monstrous bodies, pieced
> together of divers members, without definite shape, having no
> order, sequence, or proportion other than accidental?
>
> A lovely woman tapers off into a fish.
>
> HORACE
>
> I do indeed go along with my painter in this second
> point, but I fall short in the first and better part; for my ability
> does not go enough for me to dare to undertake a rich, polished
> picture, formed according to art.[26]

Where Petrarch fragmented by omitting the commentary, leaving only the

poetry as center/subject, Montaigne fragmented by omitting the center/subject, leaving

only the framing grotesques,[27] and what Montaigne omitted, what he could not form

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[26]Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, I:28, "Of Friendship," *The Complete Works of
Montaigne: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford,
California: Stanford University Press, 1957), 135. Harpham, 26, reports that this
quotation is from Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

[27]Constructing an image that parallels that of the decorative, framing grotesque,
Anthony Grafton writes, " . . .the introspective, wide-ranging Essays of Montaigne
sometimes resemble a set of commentaries set loose from the texts they originally
applied to." Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge:
Harvard University Press, 1997), 28.

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according to art, was himself, for he writes, "I am myself the matter of my book."[28]

Instead of Petrarch's complex of perfect fragments, lyric snapshots, framed by what he

does not tell, Montaigne has compiled a collection of imperfect fragments, frames for

conclusions he will not draw, for the steps of a plan, an organization, he will not reveal.

Both are responses to the atemporal quality of memory. Petrarch retrieves, at will,

isolated incidents; Montaigne follows the wandering of a mind not held to the

discipline of order.

Montaigne began writing his *Essais* in 1578 and published the first edition in

1580; he continued writing and publishing them until his death in 1592.[29] In them he

juxtaposes and mingles genres—confession, meditation, maxim collection, and others;

his topics range from lofty ideals to the functioning of the human body: "Of Idleness,"

"Of Liars," "Of Cannibals," "Of the Power of the Imagination," "Of Sleep," "Of Age,"

"Of Solitude," "Of Drunkenness," "Of a Monstrous Child," "Of Three Good Women,"

"Of Cripples," "Of Coaches"; the individual essays contain digressions within

digressions and rarely treat the proclaimed topic directly or consistently. They are not

organized, merely collected. Not even chronology structures them:

> . . . at each new edition, so that the buyer may not come off
> completely empty-handed, I allow myself to add, since it is only
> an ill-fitted patchwork, some extra ornaments. . . . Thence,
> however, it will easily happen that some transposition of

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[28]Montaigne, Preface, *Complete Works*, 2.

[29]Revised and enlarged editions appeared in 1582 and 1588; his final additions were included in a posthumous edition of 1595, which was in all likelihood heavily edited by Montaigne's adopted daughter, Marie de Gournay, and his friend Pierre de Brach. Richard L. Regosin, "Montaigne and his Readers," *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 249.

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> chronology may slip in, for my stories take their place according
> to their timeliness, not always according to their age.[30]

> Our actions are nothing but a patchwork. . . . We are all
> patchwork, and so shapeless and diverse in composition that
> each bit, each moment, plays its own game.[31]

Montaigne's groteserie is comparable to Isidore's monsters born with the "lower parts of several animals."

A new genre arises from Montaigne's disregard for convention. Though founded on the epigrams and maxims of the ancients, his *Essais* are the predecessor of the essays of Bacon, the *Pensées* of Pascal, the *Pensées, Maxims et Anecdotes* of Chamfort, and, ultimately, the fragments of Schlegel. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy describe the romantic fragment collection as a genre "whose paradigm is established for all of modern history by Montaigne's *Essays*."[32]

Why did Montaigne write fragments? According to Rendall, Montaigne claimed he had a bad memory, distrusted it, and subsequently chose this format—nonlinear, following no system—over a discursive unity that required an accurate recall.[33] "If my mind could gain a firm footing," he wrote, "I would not make

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[30]Montaigne, *Essais*, III:9, *Complete Works*, 736.

[31]Montaigne, *Essais*, II:1, *Complete Works*, 243-4.

[32]Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 40.

[33]Steven Rendall, "In Disjointed Parts/Par articles decousus" in *Fragments: Incompletion and Discontinuity*, 74-80.

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essays, I would make decisions."[34] His own research reinforced the belief that the text is not incorruptible, that the future would change both its interpretation and its physical state. After studying a Virgil manuscript in the Vatican Library, he observed, "This Virgil confirmed me in what I have always judged, that the first four lines that they put in the *Aeneid* are borrowed: this book does not have them."[35] Perhaps Montaigne fragmented to reflect the inevitable future ruin of his works—both physical state and interpretation—or to get one jump ahead of it, to make a work so imperfect that future ruin would be less destructive than to a more perfection. Clearly he also fragmented to reflect the wanderings of his own mind. His work is intended, according to his own preface, to be a self-portrait, complete with all his defects, for the use of his friends and relatives to remember him when he is dead: that is also the reason Montaigne collected.

Rabelais

When Cardinal Jean du Bellay (uncle of the poet Joachim du Bellay) arrived in Rome in 1534, he joined the ranks of French antiquarians quite literally seizing for France "the glory that once was Rome," dragging into exile artifacts and reproductions of artifacts—including a copy of the famous *Laocoön*—to adorn France's gardens and palaces.[36] Among the Cardinal's retinue was his private physician, François Rabelais;

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[34]Montaigne, *Essais*, III:2, *Complete Works*, 611, quoted in Dan Engster, "The Montaignian Moment," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59/4 (1998), 633.

[35]Montaigne, *Complete Works*, "Travel Journal," 950-51.

[36]Eric MacPhail, "Antiquities and Antiquaries," in *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 209-11.

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while the French antiquarians were dismantling Rome for the decoration of France, Rabelais was dismantling the traditions of the epic and epic romance for the diversion of the French reader. *Gargantua*, which begins Rabelais's chronological history of the lives and exploits of the fictitious giant Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, was published in late 1534 or 1535. In this novel and the others in the series, Rabelais confiscated the goal-directed quest of the epics of Homer and Virgil, the story line of the medieval epic romance (the birth, education, and exploits of the hero),[37] and the episodic and digressive narrative fostered by both conventions. He then peopled that mixed tradition with his own bizarre creatures and situations, substituting giants (with rather coarse habits) for the likes of the noble warrior Aeneas and a detailed description of Gargantua's baby clothes for the depiction of the shield of Achilles.[38]

Montaigne, quoting Horace, compared the lack of order, coherence, and logic in his own *Essais* to the imaginative, decorative grotesques: "A lovely woman tapers off into a fish."[39] Edwin M. Duval uses this same image, and this same reference from Horace, to describe modern reaction to the convoluted structure of Rabelais's works:

> . . . their inconsistencies and internal contradictions, their
> episodic structure, their radical open-endedness—conspire to
> suggest to postclassical readers not a coherent and ordered
> composition but something akin to those grotesque composite

[37]Edwin M. Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 1.

[38]Rabelais, *Gargantua*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon, (Gallimard: Paris, 1994), Chapter 8, "Comment on vestit Gargantua," 24-27; Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), Book 18, "The Shield of Achilles," 482-4.

[39]Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, I:28, "Of Friendship," *Complete Works*, 135.

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> images described by Horace, which start as a beautiful woman
> and end as an ugly fish . . ."[40]

As Duval later points out, Rabelais's lack of coherence and order can best be
understood as transforming the norms and conventions of accepted genres: the epic
and the related epic romance.[41] More than comic stories, parodying political figures,
drawing themes and images from classic and folk traditions,[42] these novels both tear at,
and are contained by, the narrative fabric and the pre-ordained story lines of these
genres. Since the broadest outline of the plot is common knowledge, and since the
reader is familiar with the episodic nature of the narrative, Rabelais can weave his
infinitely diverse digressions throughout his books, yet avoid total chaos. The genre
itself functions in a similar fashion to the frame in works such as Chaucer's *Canterbury
Tales*: the narrative frame binds the separate tales together even as they
simultaneously interrupt and fragment it; the epic models bind Rabelais's digressions
even as the digressions disrupt those conventions. The frame story and Rabelais's are
defined by this balance between continuity and disruption; the identity of the fragment
depends on its relationship to the whole, on the recognition of the model it mutilates.

    Gargantua begins with a fragment—a treatise that has been partially eaten "by
rats and moths or other vermin;"[43] the mutilated beginning is reproduced in the text:

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[40]Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel*, xiii-xiv.

[41]Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel*, xiii-xvi.

[42]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, 1984).

[43]Harries, 22-23.

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a i ? enu le grand dompteur des Cimbres
v sant par l'aer, de peur de la rousée,
　'sa venu on a remply les Timbres
_a_ 'beure fraiz, tombant par une bousée
= uquel quand fut la grand mere arrousée
Cria tout hault, << hers par grace pesche le.
Car sa barbe est pres que toute embousée
Ou pour le moins, tenez luy une eschelle.>> [44]

[ai? . . . great conqueror of the Cimbri
V . . . ing through the air, in terror of the dew,
'. . . his arrival every tub was filled
) . . . fresh butter, falling in a shower,
　= . . . ith which, when the great ocean was bespattered,
He cried aloud; "Sirs, please to fish it up,
His beard is almost clotted with the stuff;
Or, at the least, hold out a ladder to him."][45]

The narrator, Alcofribas Nasier (an anagram of François Rabelais) has discovered (or perhaps invented) an account of Gargantua's lineage, taken from a "great greasy, grand, grey, pretty little, mouldy book" that is "so worn scarcely three letters could be read"; he has translated it "following that art by which letters can be read that are not apparent." Alcofribas performs the job of the audience for any fragmented work: he reconstructs a whole from the partial. Rabelais thus begins with the mutilated text, questioning the accuracy of writing, of telling, and of interpretation.

Rabelais's characters are Isidore's monsters and their cousins. Giants, out of context in the human world, "uncompleted in the sense of the overcompleted, overfinished," the whole plus more, added material that should not be present.[46]

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[44]Rabelais, _Oeuvres complètes_, 11.

[45]Trans. Harries, 23. Harries notes that, as part of the joke, the complete lines make no more sense than those missing the first word.

[46]Williams, 113.

Physical deformity and character deformity abound in all the books.[47] Not only the physical descriptions of Rabelais's characters, but many of their situations as well, are reminiscent of the Roman grotesques. The following is a description of Gargantua's birth. His mother, eleven months pregnant, ill from having eaten too much tripe, has taken an astringent that constricts all her sphincter muscles. As a result, Gargantua cannot be born in the normal fashion.

> By this mishap were loosened the cotyledons of the matrix,
> through which the infant sprang up into the vena cava; and,
> climbing up by the diaphragm up above the shoulders, where
> the said vein divides in two, took the route to the left, and came
> out through the left ear.[48]

Though reminiscent of the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus, a drawing of this image would find company with Horace's lovely woman tapering off into a fish.

The forms Rabelais's writings take are as varied and absurd as his characters and their situations; Bakhtin described them as forms that are "interwoven as if giving birth to each other."[49] A partial list includes pointless insertions; quotes and, more often, misquotes; long poems; series of clichés and maxims, strung together with no connectives; and whole chapters that consist of nothing but lists, often in double columns:

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[47]Lawrence D. Kritzman, "Rabelais's Splintered Voyage," in *Fragments: Incompletion and Discontinuity*, ed. Lawrence. D. Kritzman (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1981). Kritzman includes an extensive discussion.

[48]Rabelais, *The Complete Works of François Rabelais*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 20.

[49]Bakhtin, 32.

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Then, when the green cloth was laid out, they brought out
plenty of cards, plenty of dice, and enough boards for checkers
or chess. There he played:

Flush,	Primiera,
Grand slam,	Robber,
Trump,	Prick and spare not,
One hundred,	The spinet,
Poor Moll,	The fib,

. . . [continuing for 206 more entries to end the chapter][50]

Gargantua does complete his quest, but the achievement of his goal is compromised: the book ends not at the point of his military victory, but with a disagreement about the meaning of another found text, this one engraved on a bronze plate. Framed by the uncertainty of time on the written word--on the physical document and on its interpretation--Rabelais's story states clearly what Petrarch's *Canzoniere* only hints: the ravages of time work on both document and meaning. The physical condition and circumstances of found manuscripts--damaged, incomplete, nearly illegible, only partly decipherable, author or authors unknown--bring to the forefront questions of origin, originality, authenticity, and the power of language to communicate over time.

Cervantes

The physical fragment and its defects continue to provide props and structural models for the digressive narratives that follow Rabelais.[51] Writers reflect in their styles, as well as their characters' bodies, minds, and predicaments, the mutilated manuscript, the ruin, and the grotesque image. In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes retains the

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[50]Rabelais/Frame, 50-51.

[51]Harries, *The Unfinished Manner*, especially Chapter I.

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illusion of a dependence on the physical fragment as the narrator, Cid Hamete, tells

Don Quixote's misadventures through a framework of incomplete found-manuscripts,

all suffering the appropriate deterioration of age and munching vermin, all missing

endings or beginnings, all falling into the hands of the narrator completely by chance, in

strange marketplaces, written in exotic languages that must be translated.[52]

In addition to these old manuscripts that supposedly generated the story of Don

Quixote, other texts appear—texts that Cid Hamete's story itself has generated: an

unauthorized, printed version of the first manuscript and a spurious sequel result in

Don Quixote's being followed about by two different versions of himself, reduced to

wearing a sign declaring his identity. Cervantes fragments Don Quixote by duplication,

just as surely as Petrarch fragmented Laura by breaking her body into separate parts.

Don Quixote's duplicates and the manuscripts that are the sources for them are

fragments of replication and destroyers of true origin. They raise questions of

authenticity that remain problematic today—questions Borges addresses in "Pierre

Menard, Author of the Quixote" and Andy Warhol questions with his multiple

Marilyns.[53]

Within this frame of fragmented and duplicated texts, Cervantes draws on an

encyclopedic array of literary fragmenting techniques: digressions (including

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[52]Don Quixote's narrator first relies on a manuscript that ends in the middle of a battle. The outcome can be related only after the discovery of a second manuscript that picks up at the point the first left off. A third manuscript, appropriately chewed, must eventually be found to allow Cid Hamete to finish the story.

[53]Harries, 24-26, gives a more complete analysis of this aspect of the *Quixote*.

digressions that condemn digression),[54] temporal paradoxes and inconsistencies, interpolated narratives, mixed styles, borrowing and quotation, repetition, multiple perspectives, authorial intrusion, plus many more.[55] As with Petrarch and others, Cervantes weaves from threads of what has gone before, his fragments broken and pulled from the genres he inherited. Carroll B. Johnson believes that no other book owes as much to the works that came before it, and yet is so different from those works.[56] Kenshur's observations further qualify Johnson's. He notes that Cervantes not only takes from existing genres, but from the most countergeneric, the most fragmenting, elements in those genres. *Don Quixote* was in part a response to the chivalric romance; multiple plots and digression were the elements singled out by critics when they compared the romance to the epic, and they are the elements that Cervantes highlights and expands.[57]

Why does Cervantes write fragments? Kenshur believes that for Cervantes, order was founded on the subordination of all detail to truth: pertinence to truth was the criterion for inclusion or exclusion. In his view, when Cervantes/Cid Hamete realizes that the truth cannot be known, he is faced with an unsolvable problem: he has no basis for excluding or including anything. Digression, the representation of disorder

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[54]Kenshur, 60.

[55]These elements are discussed at length by Johnson, Martínez-Bonati, Harries, Kenshur, and others.

[56]Carroll B. Johnson, *Don Quixote: The Quest for Modern Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 71.

[57]Kenshur, 67.

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and the inability to know, becomes his only option. Ultimately, "Cervantes's subject is not reality itself, but the human efforts to comprehend it,"[58] and ultimately, that has been and will continue to be a driving force behind such fragmented works.

Isidore condemned his grotesques to the outer edges of the world, to the exotic and faraway; so Don Quixote exists on the fringes of acceptable society, and Cervantes' story exists on the fringes of acceptable narrative. When Don Quixote is brought back to his real life, brought back in from the edge, he dies. When Isidore's creatures are brought into the light of modern thought, they seem silly and useless; when Cid Hamete's ancient manuscripts are brought out of their dark hiding places, they crumble. As Martinez-Bonati has written, there is in the *Quixote* a layer that is "disquieting, pessimistic, and tragic, where the ultimate reality of the body creeps in, with its inevitable corruption of all happy dreams."[59]

Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Fragments

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced their own rich stores of fragments. Building on Renaissance predecessors, writers tailored both the digressive narrative and the collection of disconnected units to express contemporary concerns. These forms of fragmentation provided the models that would open the way to the romantic fragment, models so numerous and rich that Harries reinterprets one of Schlegel's famous aphorisms ("Many works of the ancients have become fragments.

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[58]Kenshur, 67.

[59]Félix Marintez-Bonati, *"Don Quixote" and the Poetics of the Novel*, trans. Dian Fox (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 225.

27

Many works of the moderns are already fragments at the time of their origin. ")[60] as referring to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition rather than the more common designation, the "broken, incomplete texts that proliferated in the romantic period."[61]

In contrast to the use of fragments to represent chaos and disorder, some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers used them in an attempt to express belief in an underlying, though incompletely understood, natural order. Cervantes, Petrarch, and Montaigne fragmented to represent the impossible; Cervantes was overwhelmed by the realization that truth must represent everything and yet narrative can never include everything; Petrarch expressed the inadequacy of memory and of writing to capture love and the beloved; with his writings, Montaigne drew a picture of the disorder he perceived in his own mind. Bacon, Diderot, and Hamann chose both the form (disconnected and disjunct thought) and the physical format (physical separation of short sections on the page) of the aphorism to express concerns about man's ability to know, organize, and categorize the knowledge he acquires, but they also indicated a belief in the existence of a system—a system that man could, through examination and logic, come ever closer to understanding. To encourage further investigation, they used the fragment and its ability to encourage—perhaps demand—that the whole be completed.[62]

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[60]Harries, 2, citing Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment* 24.

[61]Harries, 5.

[62]See Harries and Kenshur for detailed discussions of the following.

28

Kenshur, in a chapter titled "Knowledge Broken,"[63] studies Bacon's

seventeenth-century *Novum Organum* and its eighteenth-century counterpart, Diderot's

De l'Interprétation de la nature. Both are presented in aphoristic format—in short

sections separated by blank spaces. Kenshur credits Montaigne's *Essais* and the ancient

Greek and Roman collections of aphorisms as models for both. These modern works

are concerned with the interpretation of the outside world through scientific method,

and with recording those interpretations. Bacon, by his own admission, believed that

the state of man's knowledge was incomplete; to express that incomplete knowledge in

a written form that was systematic and gave the impression of completeness was

misleading. Such a form did not inspire further investigation. He turned to the

authority of the ancients for a solution:

> But the first and most ancient seekers after truth were wont,
> with better faith and better fortune, too, to throw the
> knowledge which they gathered from the contemplation of
> things, and which they meant to store up for use, into
> aphorisms; that is, into short and scattered sentences, not linked
> together by an artificial method.[64]

Aphorisms represented "knowledge broken" and would "invite men to enquire farther;

whereas a systematic presentation, appearing to be complete would "secure men, as if

they were at furthest."[65] For Bacon, the aphoristic format represented fragmentary

knowledge and stimulated further thought and investigation, but as Kenshur notes, it

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[63]Kenshur, 38-54.

[64]Kenshur, 40, quoting Bacon, "The Advancement of Learning," from *Works*, ed.
Spedding, Ellis, and Heath (Boston, 1861-64), 6:292.

[65]Kenshur, 40, quoting Bacon, *Novum Organum*, aphorism 86.

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was primarily the format—the short paragraphs separated on the page by white space—that Bacon created. His ideas actually flow together and would easily make sense if written without the spaces.

Diderot, in his concern with the way nature presents information to us in disconnected fragments, also turns to the aphoristic format, and to the aphoristic form; the sections of *De l'Interprétation de la nature* do not flow together to make a cohesive narrative.[66] His first aphorism echoes Montaigne and a concern not only with the way nature gives information, but also with the way the brain stores and retrieves it.

> Je laisserai les pensées se succéder sous ma plume, dans l'ordre
> même selon lequel les objects se sont offerts à ma réflexion;
> parce qu'elles n'en représenteront que mieux les mouvements et
> la marche de mon esprit.
>
> [I shall let my pen record my thoughts in the same order in
> which the objects present themselves to my reflection; thus they
> will better represent the changes and the progression of my
> mind.][67]

Diderot's statement, echoing Montaigne, also coincides with the attitude of another fragment writer in Harries's study: Johann Georg Hamann wrote,

> My remarks will be just as unsuitable for a specific treatise as they
> would be for a book. I will pursue those thoughts that I come across,
> and follow them at my convenience; . . . truths, principles, systems are
> too much for me. Crumbs, fragments, whims, ideas. Each to his
> own."[68]

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[66]Kenshur admits there are other opinions.

[67]Original and translation from Kenshur, 41, recalling Montaigne, 721, "And when shall I make an end of describing the continual agitation and changes of my thoughts, whatever subject they light on . . ." quoted earlier in this chapter.

[68]See Harries, 36.

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Hamann is more embedded in Christian thought and belief than in scientific study, but Harries interprets his writings as yet another example of the ability of the disconnected and the unsystematic to reflect our inadequacy to comprehend and yet to express the belief in an underlying greater order.[69] Implying the whole through the use of fragment creates the same sort of tension Petrarch created when he implied his narrative but refused to supply it, the tension between what we can express and what we believe to exist.

The line of succession in the digressive narrative in the eighteenth century was no secret to those who followed. Gérard de Nerval, plagiarizing Charles Nodier, traced a microcosm of Rabelais's descendants and a chain of influence—a history of fragmented, digressive, and discontinuous texts presented in a form that exhibits many of the outward signs of the literary fragment:

> "Et puis . . ." (C'est ainsi que Diderot commençait un conte, me
> dira-t-on.)
> —Allez toujours!
> —Vous avez imité Diderot lui-même.
> —Qui avait imité Sterne . . .
> —Lequel avait imité Swift.
> —Qui avait imité Rabelais . . .
> ["And then . . ." (That is how Diderot began a tale, they will tell
> me.)
> —Go on anyway!
> —You have imitated Diderot himself.
> —Who had imitated Sterne . . .
> —Who had imitated Swift.
> —Who had imitated Rabelais . . .][70]

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[69]Harries, 36-37.

[70]Rae Beth Gordon, *Ornament, Fantasy, and Desire in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 73-74.

31

Opening *in medias res*, a list made of sentence fragments that trail off into dots of ellipsis (the holes in the manuscript, in memory, in logical thought), interrupted by asides, mesmerizing with word repetition—this excerpt, by using many of the strategies of fragmentation that mark the narratives it enumerates, becomes a tiny *mise en abyme* of the broad subject it both summarizes and embodies.[71] The titles of works by the writers mentioned emphatically declare the telling of a story—Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*, Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; even Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* opens with the Master's initial request that Jacques tell the story of his loves—but these titles and opening strategies are only setups, backdrops for narratives that thwart the very expectations they raise. In stories often still revolving around the requisite journey or quest, ruins and ruined manuscripts, monsters, the atemporal quality of memory, and the interruptions of daily life, these writers question how, where, and when a story begins and ends; they weave and interweave digressions that overpower, obscure, or (in the case of *Tristram Shandy*) completely block the supposed main narrative; and they interrupt the idea of the fiction itself by allowing the author to intrude in the text.

Walter Bagehot's (1826-77) negative evaluation and description of *Tristram Shandy* not only sums up Sterne's debt to Rabelais, but also illustrates the importance given to the chronological model in narrative, the very model these writers flaunt:

> In *Tristram Shandy* especially there are several defects which,
> while we are reading it, tease and disgust so much that we are
> scarcely willing even to admire as we ought to admire the
> refined pictures of human emotion. The first of these, and

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[71]Gordon, 74.

perhaps the worst, is the fantastic disorder of the form. It is an imperative law of the writing-art, that a book should go straight on. A great writer should be able to tell a great meaning as coherently as a small writer tells a small meaning. . . . But Sterne's style is *un*natural. He never begins at the beginning and goes straight through to the end. He shies-in a beauty suddenly; and just when you are affected he turns round and grins at it. "Ah," he says, "is it not fine?" . . . People excuse all this irregularity of form by saying that it was imitated from Rabelais. But this is nonsense. Rabelais, perhaps, could not in his day venture to tell his meaning straight out; at any rate, he did not tell it. Sterne should not have chosen a model so monstrous. Incoherency is not less a defect because a foreign writer once made use of it. [72]

Defects, disgust, disorder, unnatural, monstrous, incoherency: these words describe

the digressive narrative—negatively to Bagehot, more positively to those who treasure

the playfulness, the humor, the disrespect of these parodies of the act of writing, the act

of producing a fiction.

Schlegel and the Romantic Fragment

The fragment lies at the heart of Friedrich Schlegel's critical and aesthetic

theories and Schlegel's theories lie at the heart of many studies of the fragment that

came after him; however, as Raymond Immerwahr notes, Schlegel was a discoverer,

not an inventor.[73] His theories relied on fragment makers of the past, including most of

those mentioned earlier in this chapter, just as later writers relied on his interpretations

of fragmentation. He labeled Petrarch's poems "classical fragments of a novel,"[74] and

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[72]Walter Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, Vol. II, ed. Richard Holt Hutton (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1879, reprint New York: AMS Press, Inc. 1973), 118-19.

[73]Raymond Immerwahr, "Romantic Irony and Romantic Arabesque Prior to Romanticism," *The German Quarterly* 42 (1969), 665.

[74]Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I*, lvi, n. 4. quoted in Harries, 14.

noted Diderot's authorial intrusions: "When Diderot does something really brilliant in his *Jacques*, he usually follows it up by telling us how happy he is that it turned out so brilliantly."[75] His preferred contemporary writers, in their turn, had been influenced by the earlier fragments as well: Hoffmann's debt to Sterne is well known,[76] Jean Paul translated Cervantes; others, including Tieck and Novalis, also follow the fragment tradition.

Schlegel's own writings fall into the two broad categories chosen by earlier writers: his collections of fragments—the *Athenaeum Fragments*, the *Critical Fragments*, among others—are aphoristic in form and in format, and his only novel, *Lucinde*, is a digressive narrative, a genre Schlegel alternately labels *Arabeske* or *Groteske* after decorative styles in the visual arts.

Lucinde was Schlegel's attempt to unite all genres, all modes of writing (mixing epic, dramatic, lyric, critical, and philosophic elements),[77] and to combine poetry and prose in the belief that any writing could and should be poetic in content and meaning.[78] The work is autobiographical, written when Schlegel was 26 (in 1798-9); it follows the life and loves of Julius (Schlegel), ending with his relationship with Lucinde (Dorothea Veit, whom Schlegel married) and the birth of their child. *Lucinde* is far from a

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[75]Schlegel, *Critical Fragments*, in Peter Firchow, *Friedrich Schlegel's* Lucinde *and the Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 143.

[76]Steven Paul Scher, "Hoffmann and Sterne: Unmediated Parallels in Narrative Method," *Comparative Literature*, 28 (1976): 309-25.

[77]Firchow, Introduction, *Lucinde*, 19.

[78]The following summarizes Blackall, Firchow, Immerwahr, and Bishop.

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chronological narrative or comprehensive story; it is a sequence of atemporal images (only the central episode, "Apprenticeship for Manhood," is chronological) with virtually no plot, and is concerned with internal workings of the mind rather than external matters. Schlegel tells his story through a melange of thirteen sections of unequal length: narratives, dialogues, letters, visions, and character sketches. In addition to being fragmented internally, *Lucinde* is itself a fragment: Schlegel intended to continue it with a collection of poems, and in its complete version, it was to have been one of a set of four novels.[79] *Lucinde* also contains that element so dear to the romantics and so influential in later writing--self-reflexivity. The first section, a letter from Julius to Lucinde, describes their relationship in terms of the form of the novel he is writing, and in which he is the protagonist. Blackall notes Schlegel's use of the phrase "romantic confusion";[80] I add "re-creation and integration of the most beautiful chaos of sublime harmonies and fascinating pleasures."[81]

Lucinde was not well received: the form was problematic, as was its overt sensuality, although Schlegel's society reacted less to the sexual nature of the work than to the fact that it was so blatantly autobiographical and referred to the sexuality of real people. Firchow reports that criticism of Lucinde was harsh from the beginning and remained so. Even when it was reissued in 1835, Heine called it "ludicrously Romantic"; in 1870, Rudolf Haym labeled it an "aesthetic monstrosity," and his

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[79]Firchow, Introduction, *Lucinde*, 38.

[80]Blackall, 39.

[81]Schlegel, *Lucinde*, 45, trans. Firchow.

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contemporary Wilhelm Dilthey wrote that it was "morally as well as poetically formless and contemptible." Though reception is more positive today, Firchow still writes of critics who are "slow and grudging" in giving approval. Born on the margins of accepted formal structure and accepted content, *Lucinde* was moved to the margins of literature (Schlegel even omitted it from the publication of his complete works in 1823), and has lived there, with other monsters, since its publication in 1799.[82]

Schlegel's collections of fragments—inheritors of the tradition of Montaigne, Chamfort, Pascal[83]—were more successful and more influential than *Lucinde*, both in his own time and today. As a scholar of ancient Greek, and familiar with the poetic fragments in the *Greek Anthology*, Schlegel knew as well as anyone the power of the implied but unsaid. As Firchow notes, Schlegel must surely have made "ruins and not complete edifices" because he wanted the reader to "intuit what might have been but never was."[84] The fragments are much like the fake ruins so prominent in the eighteenth century, built to resemble something once whole, now broken, forcing the viewer to reconstruct something that never actually existed—in Schlegel's case, a system even he had not yet uncovered. Many of Schlegel's fragments were, in fact, just that: bits and pieces (as Firchow calls them) of varying lengths, taken from notebooks that Schlegel kept for years in an attempt to construct an ordered critical system, a philosophy of literature. The collections of fragments represent his failure and his

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[82]Summarized from Firchow, Introduction, *Lucinde*, 4-7.

[83]Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 40-42.

[84]Firchow, Introduction, *Lucinde*, 18.

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response to it, but also his belief that there is an order that underlies literature, and thus life. This absolute, since it encompasses all things, must admit both order and chaos.

Both *Lucinde* and the fragment systems were Schlegel's attempts to come to terms with contradiction, to admit both order and chaos—a chaos from which order may be intuited but never completely realized. The acceptance of the fragmentary is an attempt to transcend contradiction rather than resolve it.[85] Romantic poetry is "always becoming"; our understanding is always becoming. The Absolute can never be reached; the attempt is ultimately futile, but infinitely necessary and infinitely rich. From fragments we constantly create and recreate new connections, draw new conclusions: they "multiply in an endless succession of mirrors."[86]

Schlegel's theories are central to fragment study and their influence is evident not only in studies of early romantic works. His large categories—the fragment system and the arabesque—and the characteristics he uses to identify them have proved useful to literary scholars and are now proving useful to those in other disciplines. Rosen and Daverio have shown that certain of Schlegel's theories can be translated to romantic music, finding musical structures that parallel the incomplete fragment (structures that do not begin or end on the tonic, or that introduce elements that weaken closure), the system of fragments (quotations among works that create a network of connections, much like characters that appear in different novels by the same author), and the

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[85]Lloyd Bishop, *Romantic Irony in French Literature From Diderot to Beckett* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1989), 2-3.

[86]Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment* 116. Firchow, Introduction, *Lucinde*, 175.

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digressive arabesque (digression from the main tonal motion). These will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

The romantic fragment, itself so influenced by Diderot, Chamfort, and other French writers, finds its way into France through various routes throughout the nineteenth century. Victor Hugo, in the preface to his drama *Cromwell*, provides a manifesto of French romanticism that relies heavily on his understanding of German romanticism (particularly as translated by Victor Cousin). He retains the grotesque as a method of justification for "modern" or romantic art. Nerval, who translated *Faust*, used alternating digressions—the arabesque—in his novels; in *La main enchantée* in particular, they depict the protagonist's battle between madness and sanity, dream and reality.[57] Maeterlinck translated Novalis, Baudelaire knew Hoffmann, and later, of course, Laforgue lived in Germany; the works of these writers and of others show influence from the fragment tradition.

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[57]Gordon, Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2. BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

"Que signifie donc un discours parfait, achevé? Un texte qui commence et finit?" [What is the meaning of a perfect, complete discourse? A text that begins and ends?][1] Much may be forgiven in a work if only the beginning presents, with certainty, even a few concrete expository details, and the ending ties its bits and pieces together convincingly. Beginnings and endings are powerful and privileged edges; they function as both formal divisions and physical boundaries. As frames (to paraphrase Calvino), they isolate the work—separating it from what came before and what comes after; simultaneously, through the very act of separation, they acknowledge those surroundings.[2] As thresholds, points of entry and exit, they usher the listener from the world outside the work to the world within and back, from silence to sound, from sound to silence. Beginnings raise possibilities and set expectations, endings fulfill or frustrate them; their effect on the work is crucial.

In his study *Poétiques du fragment*, Pierre Garrigue writes: "Tout fragment tient donc du miracle: suspendu dans un espace sans espace. Ses arêtes, courbes ou tranchantes, l'attirent en lui-même et hors de lui. [Every fragment is like a miracle: suspended in a space without space. Its edges, curved or sharp, pull it into itself and

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[1]Pierre Garrigues, *Poétiques du fragment* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), 11; my translation.

[2]Italo Calvino, Note to *Under the Jaguar Sun*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1988), 86.

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outside itself.]"[3] When beginnings and endings are fragmented, those powerful edges

acquire Garrigue's multi-directional pull of the fragment, reaching both into and outside

the work in search of what the fragment lacks. The act of separation is no longer clean,

boundaries are no longer clear; the distinction between the work and its surroundings

blurs. Fragmentation makes suspect the expectations and conclusions that beginnings

and endings present; it compromises their formal functions, sometimes provoking a

search for an alternate--a real--beginning or ending within the work, somehow

camouflaged by these deformed, now outcast, first and last sections.

     Convention defines beginnings and endings: in literature, narrative largely

depends on temporal sequence (on the linear temporal progression from a beginning to

middle to end advocated by Aristotle), and on the identification of time, place and

character; in tonal music, the archetype of a complete work, or movement, begins and

ends on a tonic. Works that do not conform to these conventions are

incomplete--fragments. The power of the beginning and ending is such that even a

minor or brief fragmentation--opening with a sentence fragment or a pronoun without

an antecedent--potentially of little consequence in itself, will cast the shadow of the

fragment, the shadow of uncertainty, over an entire work.

     Well before Debussy's time, musical works that begin off the tonic had become

accepted (if not common). Schenker lists among his examples the second movement of

Chopin's Prelude in A Minor, op. 28, no. 2; Beethoven's Sonata op. 26; and Brahms's

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[3]Garrigues, 41; my translation.

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Intermezzo, op. 118, no. 1.[4] Romantic composers, with far less frequency and far more

caution, had manipulated and compromised endings as well: Rosen cites Chopin's

Prelude in F major, op. 28, and Liszt's 1844 setting of "S'il est un charmant gazon"[5] as

two examples of the rare practice of ending on a dissonance that clouds the final tonic,

though without negating it; Schenker provides at least two examples of pieces that do

not end on the tonic, Bach's Prelude no. 3, BWV 999 and Chopin's Mazurka op. 30,

no. 2;[6] the first song in Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai"

(also analyzed by Rosen), neither begins nor ends on its tonic.

The music written by these composers was part of Debussy's musical

inheritance.[7] If, as Harries has noted, writers often developed their techniques and

strategies of fragmentation in response to earlier models,[8] why should composers do

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[4]Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)*, New Musical Theories and
Fantasies, No. 3, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster, 2 vols. (New York: Longman, 1979),
88-89 (par. 244-5) and Fig. 110/a3, a5, d3.

[5]Rosen, 79-80 and 96-98.

[6]Schenker, 130-1 (par. 307) and Fig. 152/6 and 7.

[7]Debussy wrote in a letter to Jacques Durand dated 11 September 1905, "Have you
played the *Images* ... ? Without false vanity, I think these three pieces work well and
will take their place in piano literture . . . to the left of Schumann or to the right of
Chopin . . . as you like it." Claude Debussy, *Debussy Letters*, ed. François Lesure and
Roger Nichols, trans. Roger Nichols (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 158. For
instances of Chopin's influence on Debussy's music, see Roy Howat, "Chopin's
Influence on the Fin de Siècle and Beyond," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*,
ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 246-283. For works
by Schumann and Chopin that Debussy played in competitions while at the
conservatory, see John R. Clevenger, "Achille at the Conservatoire," *Cahiers Debussy*
19 (1995): 3-35. Note also that Debussy edited Chopin's works for Durand
(1915-1917).

[8]Harries, 13.

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otherwise? In this chapter I will examine Debussy's development of compositional strategies that fragment beginnings and endings in two works that begin off the tonic—the songs "Green" and "Spleen"—and one that is not tonally closed—the Prelude "Canope."

Beginnings: "Green" and "Spleen"

Lewis Carroll's King of Hearts is quoted often in discussions of narrative openings: "Begin at the beginning," he says, but narrative is filled with opening strategies that obscure the temporal order of events, the identity of characters, and the very purpose of a beginning. Variants of the *in medias res* opening,[9] such as Nutall's *in medias sententias* (where the reader does not enter in the midst of things but in the midst of thoughts or opinions or conversation[10]) as well as the use of initial sentence fragments, antecedentless pronouns, unnamed characters, and other strategies that omit or reposition important expository material have come to be used so frequently in the novel that Gérard Genette can speak of a topos of initial ignorance, the development of a practice of beginning narratives in this manner even if the initial mysteries are answered almost immediately.[11] Such openings create fragments: some part of the true beginning has been severed; the information necessary to reconstruct it, if provided at

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[9]A convention in the epic before being adopted by the novel. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 36. Originally published as "Discours du récit," a portion of *Figures III* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972).

[10]A. D. Nuttall, *Openings: Narrative Beginnings from the Epic to the Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 156.

[11]Genette, 191.

all, has been repositioned later in the work. As noted in Chapter 1, Isidore of Seville explained that some monsters are created "by reason of cutting off, *decisio*, such as those who are begotten without a hand or a head . . . others involve a change of position . . . such as eyes in the chest or the forehead."[12]

Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is an example of such an opening. It begins without any clue to the identity of the characters speaking or their circumstances:

> He lay flat on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest, his chin on his folded arms, and high overhead the wind blew in the tops of the pine trees. The mountainside sloped gently where he lay; but below it was steep and he could see the dark of the oiled road winding through the pass. There was a stream alongside the road and far down the pass he saw a mill beside the stream and the falling water of the dam, white in the summer sunlight.
> "Is that the mill?" he asked.
> "Yes."
> "I do not remember it."[13]

Such strategies are not limited to modernism;[14] Debussy knew several examples well. He praised Pierre Louÿs in 1896 after having read Louÿs's novel *Aphrodite*, which opens as follows:

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[12]Isidore, 52.

[13]Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 1.

[14]Eric Rabkin labeled this opening tactic—beginning narration with pronouns that have no antecedents—a twentieth-century technique, but it is not. Eric S. Rabkin, "Spatial Form and Plot," in *Spatial Form in Narrative*, edited by Jeffrey R. Smitten (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 95.

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Couchée sur la poitrine, les coudes en avant, les jambes écartées
et la joue dans la main, elle piquait de petits trous symétriques
dans un oreiller de lin vert, avec une longue épingle d'or.[15]

[Lying on her breast, her elbows forward, her legs apart, and
her cheek resting in her hand, she pricked little symmetrical
holes in a green linen pillow with a long gold pin.]

Also, Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande* opens (in a scene Debussy did not set)

with unidentified servants opening the doors to an unidentified building for reasons that

are not revealed. Even the scene Debussy did use to open his opera offers more

questions than it answers: Golaud explains himself and his situation (he is a prince, out

hunting) but Mélisande, in symbolist fashion, responds to his queries vague nonanswers

or with answers to questions that were never asked.

Joseph Conrad used a related fragmenting tactic by creating multiple beginnings

for his novel *The Secret Agent*. The main character leaves his shop in Chapter I, his

journey immediately interrupted by a digression that supplies background information;

Chapter II begins at the same spatial and temporal point as Chapter I.[16] Debussy read

the novel and commented on it to Jacques Durand in a letter dated 8 July 1910:

Have you been following Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* in *Le
Temps*? It's full of the most splendid scoundrels, and the end is
magnificent. It's expressed in an absolutely calm and detached
style and it's only when you think about the story afterwards
that you say: "But all those people are monsters" . . .[17]

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[15] Pierre Louÿs, *Aphrodite: Moeurs antiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 43. Originally
published in installments in the *Mercure de France*, in 1885-86, then under separate
cover in April, 1886. My translation.

[16] See Gennette, 37 for a discussion of this.

[17] *Debussy Letters*, 221.

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These openings are fragments, as torn and mutilated as the fictitious manuscript of Gargantua's lineage so vividly depicted by Rabelais (discussed in Chapter 1). Their function is not entirely clear. They provide a point of entry but they do not usher the reader into the work with comfort and assurance; instead they initiate a need to look both outside the work (to outside sources, experience, or knowledge) and further into the work, in search of the missing information, the missing part of the manuscript. The fragment, as Garrigue wrote, pulls "into itself and outside itself."[18]

The opening of a piece of music off the tonic corresponds to the fragmented opening in literature: the true beginning, the tonic, has been severed, the information necessary to reconstruct it must be revealed within the work. Schenker calls progressions that begin off the tonic but end on it auxiliary cadences; he explains them as incomplete transferences of the fundamental structure I-V-I, lacking the initial tonic of the bass arpeggiation. The identity of the missing initial tonic is revealed only in retrospect, with the appearance of the final tonic; the identity and function of the remaining portion of the progression—the remnant—also becomes clear only in retrospect, when the model progression can be reconstructed. When a work or movement begins with an auxiliary cadence, the work itself, by Schenker's definition, becomes a fragment, in some way incomplete at its beginning.[19]

Debussy uses auxiliary cadences often and in many different circumstances; following the example of other composers, he frequently chooses to begin pieces with

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[18]Garrigues, *Poétiques du fragment*, 41; my translation.

[19]Schenker, 88-89 (par. 244-45).

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such structures for more than just introductions: complete sections of a work may be formed by an auxiliary cadence (Brahms's Intermezzo, op. 118, no. 1,[20] and Debussy's song "Green"; see below); or an entire work may consist of an auxiliary cadence progression (Chopin's Prelude in A minor, op. 28, no. 2,[21] and Debussy's Prelude "La terrace des audiences du clair de lune".)[22]

Verlaine's poems "Green" and "Spleen"—the first two "Aquarelles" in his collection *Romances sans paroles*—are companion poems: addressed to a silent and unresponsive beloved, they present progressive stages in a love affair.[23] In "Green"[24] the poet experiences physical fatigue as a result of the exertions of love: unable to grasp the whole of this new love affair, he tells his story out of order, he changes tone abruptly, and he can speak of himself, the beloved, and nature only in fragments—yet

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[20]Schenker, 88-89 (par 244-45) and Fig. 110/d/3.

[21]Schenker, 88-89 (par. 244-45) and Fig. 110/a/3.

[22]Matthew Brown, *Iberia: Studies in Genesis and Musical Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[23]The rhyming English titles stand out more in Debussy's collection—poems taken from three different parts of the *Romances sans paroles*—than in Verlaine's, since all seven of the titles in the "Aquarelles" are in English; of those, "Green," "Spleen," "Streets" [I and II], and "Beams" all stress the long-e sound.

[24]Green is often associated with new life, spring, and new love; Schubert's "Die liebe Farbe" and "Die böse Farbe" from *Schöne Müllerin* provide two different—even contradictory—perspectives on green as an emblem of love. Otto W. Johnston, "Chromatic Symbolism in Gottfried Keller's *Romeo un Juliet auf dem Dorfe*" in *Themes and Structures: Studies in German Literature from Goethe to the Present*, edited by Alexander Stephan (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997) reports that Pierre Paul Frédéric de Portal's *Des couleurs symboliques dans l'antiquité, le moyen-age et les temps modernes* (Paris: Treuttel and Würtz, 1837) states that green symbolizes hope, joy, and youth, as well as their opposites, moral degradation and folly.

the poem unfolds within a conventional strophic form. In "Spleen" the poet suffers the

fatigue of boredom and of the perpetual dread of loss; here, fragmentation of the poetic

form mirrors the undercurrent of disintegration in the poet's mind.

Debussy's settings of "Green" and "Spleen," the final songs (of six) in his

Ariettes oubliées, reflect the fragmentation present in the texts. They are not sketches

or unfinished works—Debussy published them in 1888. But they are incomplete at their

beginnings, each opening with an auxiliary cadence progression, and they are both

disrupted within by such fragmenting compositional devices as harmonic digressions or

discontinuities and quotation

"Green"

Verlaine's poem "Green" opens in the middle of an ongoing story.[25]

Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches
Et puis voici mon coeur qui ne bat que pour vous.
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches
Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux l'humble présent soit doux.

J'arrive tout couvert encore de rosée
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front.
Souffrez que ma fatigue à vos pieds reposée
Rêve des chers instants qui la délasseront.

Sur votre jeune sein laissez rouler ma tête
Toute sonore encor de vos derniers baisers;
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête,
Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.

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[25]French text: Verlaine, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes,* edited by Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 205. English trans. Rita Benton, ed. and trans., *Claude Debussy: Songs 1880-1904.* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), 166-67. I have made some changes. Influences on "Green" include Ophelia's song from Hamlet and "Roses de Saadi" by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore. Antoine Adam, *The Art of Paul Verlaine* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 96.

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[Here are fruits, flowers, leaves, and branches
And then here is my heart that beats only for you.
Don't tear it to pieces with your two white hands
And to your eyes, so beautiful, may this humble present be sweet.

I arrive all covered still with dew,
That the morning wind ices over on my brow.
Let my fatigue, resting at your feet,
Dream of the cherished moments that will refresh it.

On your young breast let my head roll
Still ringing from your last kisses;
Let it be calm after the good tempest,
And I may sleep a little since you are resting.]

Verlaine's tiny narrative--the story of a poet/lover who is tired after his journey to bring

gifts to the beloved--begins with the presentation of those gifts; the account of the

journey and his fatigue doesn't occur until the second stanza. Debussy's setting also

begins in the middle--of a common chord progression. As Fig. 2.1 indicates, the

incomplete progression ii-V-I lacks its initial tonic; the Gb major key signature can be

confirmed only in retrospect. Both Verlaine and Debussy solved the problem of

knowing where to begin by acknowledging, through the structure of their works, that

they enter into a situation already under way.

Given Verlaine's reputation for formal innovation, "Green" is remarkably

conventional: three stanzas of four alexandrines each,[26] couplets that correspond to

complete phrases or sentences, *abab* rhyme scheme, and alternating feminine and

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[26] The alexandrine--the line of twelve syllables excluding final mute e--has been the
basic line length of French poetry since the sixteenth century.

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Stanzas: topic	I gifts plea gifts		II journey plea/rest rest		III rest plea rest
Line #s	1 2 3 4		5 6 7 8		9 10 11 12
Musical form	A	transition	B retransition		A'
Harmonic model: ii-V-I	G♭:ii ii-----V----I interrupt ii------V---I (V/V)	I	V V	ii	ii--------V----I interrupt ii--V--I
Measures	1-4 5--8 9--12 13---16 17--------20	20-----23	24-27 28-31 32---35-- 36---38--39	40-41 42---45 46--49 50-53 54----58	

Fig. 2.1. Chart showing formal structures of the poetry and music of "Green."

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masculine line endings.[27] Debussy's setting reflects this regularity: Fig. 2.1 shows how

the ABA' musical form preserves the poetic strophic division, with the sections clearly

delineated by cadence and change of key; phrase structure preserves the integrity of the

alexandrine and the couplet; the text setting is syllabic. Yet within this formal

regularity, Verlaine's poem "Green" is made all of fragments, its images and its internal

structure pulling at its conventional outer form, and Debussy's setting reflects this

fragmentation.

For the following disucssion, the reader may refer to the poem, to Fig. 2.1, to

Fig. 2.2 which contains mm. 1-20 of the song, and to Fig. 2.3 which contains mm.

48-58 of the song. As the poem opens, the protagonist is eager but uncertain: he has

brought gifts for his beloved, but desire has made him unable to discriminate what is

valuable from what is not, what is appropriate from what is not. He presents a string of

fragments, bits and pieces, anything he can find, everything he has: fruits and flowers,

but even leaves and branches,[28] and a heart—his heart—offered almost in the same

breath with a few sticks and twigs.[29] All are of equal value, having no value except that

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[27]Only three of the twenty-three poems in *Romances sans paroles* use the alexandrine throughout; this percentage should not be thought to apply to Verlaine's total output, however, since he uses the alexandrine more often, and *impair* (the poetic line of odd-numbered syllables) less frequently, than discussions of his poetic innovations and selections in anthologies might indicate. See Bishop, 250.

[28]Wenk reads the first line as the compression of the natural order of growth—branch, leaf, flower, fruit—into a single instant. Most deciduous trees flower before they leaf, so the order isn't absolutely accurate. It could as easily represent time broken into fragments, since the items are listed separately and separated by the *des*.

[29]Borel describes "a banishment of the self" in "a world where man is no more than an object, scarcely different from the houses and the roofs, the leaves and the flowers that surround him." Jacques Borel, Notes, in Verlaine, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, 184.

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Fig. 2.2. Mm. 1-20 of "Green."

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Fig. 2.3. Mm. 48-58 of "Green."

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of the beloved's approval. Debussy's opening is equally eager--the score indicates

joyeusement animé--but in spite of the buoyancy of the rhythm and the insistent

harmonic and melodic repetition of the opening Ab minor chord, there are also hints of

uncertainty: minor harmony is not usually the first choice for expressing joy; the

accompaniment stutters, repeating itself every two measures, each repetition giving the

impression that it leaves a rising inner line (Eb-Fb-F) suspended, though the line does

resolve back onto itself only to begin its ascent again; the vocal line enters in m. 5 over

the same material that began as an introduction but now continues as accompaniment;

and of course Ab minor is not the key indicated by the key signature. Only in mm. 9-12

does a V-I cadence (Db-Gb, stated twice) confirm the tonic of the key signature and

identify the opening Ab minor as ii; but even at this point the tonic chord is

compromised by the presence of an unresolved Fb in an inner voice and by the vocal

line that maintains its Ab minor outline, resolving to the tonic chord member Bb but

continuing to Ab (see m. 12).

In the third line, the poet's tone changes: he interrupts the presentation of the

gifts, and the forward progression of the narrative, with a desperate plea and a violent

image--one that turns the traditional metaphorical gift of the heart to gory reality:

"don't tear it to pieces with your two white hands ."[30] The heart, an organ torn from

the body, is torn into even smaller fragments, not just with the hands as a unit, but two

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[30]Wenk points out this reversal of metaphor and reality, noting the metaphorical gift of
the heart in the literature of courtly love. There is, however, in this literature of courtly
love, the tradition of the eaten heart--the heart of the lover fed to the unfaithful lady by
the jealous husband. Gregory Stone, *The Death of the Troubadour* (Philadelphia:
University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), Chapter 9, 101-8.

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white hands, fragments. The green watercolor wash—as David Scott labels the

pervasive effect of Verlaine's title[31]—is now stained with the implied red of the heart and

interrupted by the white of the hands. This change of tone tears not only at the poet's

heart, but also at the structure of the stanza, fragmenting the quatrain into couplets, as

Verlaine exaggerates the natural tendency of the alternating rhyme scheme (*abab*) to

separate at the midpoint into two units.[32] Debussy parallels the poetic interruption with

a thematic and harmonic interruption: the root progression by fifths A♭-D♭-G♭ (ii-V-I)

is broken by the insertion of an A dominant seventh (perhaps B♭♭ dominant

seventh)—distant from G♭ (its closest harmonic explanation would be ♭III) and a tritone

away from the following E♭, root of a dominant seventh; the initial rising stepwise

diatonic gesture (A♭, B♭, C♭) that began the first phrase of the vocal line, is now

deformed, rising by whole tones to encompass a G-C♯ tritone, to begin the third vocal

phrase. (See mm. 13-16). These measures interrupt the tonal motion and the shape of

the vocal line and effectively separate the first statement of the ii-V-I tonal model from

the statement that closes this section. (See mm. 17-20 in both Fig. 2.1 and Fig. 2.2.)

The force of interruption here is either a parenthetical episode (an insertion that

provides thematic diversion without destroying the unfolding tonality) or an

interpolation (an insertion that does create discontinuities in the tonal motion).

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[31]David Scott, *Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 105.

[32]Clive Scott, *French Verse-art: A Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1980), 133-35, discusses this tendency in the *abab* rhyme scheme.

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The fourth line of the poem pulls the stanza back together. As Clive Scott points out, the alternating rhyme scheme is a scheme of change, but also of recurrence.[33] Line 4 opens by repeating the *et* that began line 2; it retains the poet's plea—though in gentler form—and returns to the expression of hope—though less unbridled—presented in the first and second lines; it also offers the first hint that the beloved is beautiful (she has beautiful eyes) and that she might actually find the poet's strange conglomeration of gifts pleasing. Debussy sets this line with a clear, uncompromised V/V (substituting for ii)-V-I (mm. 17-20). The introductory material now appears in the tonic, as it should have appeared at the beginning; the section ends as it should have begun.

Verlaine continues his strategy of fragmentation in the second and third strophes: the poet speaks of himself and the beloved primarily in terms of body parts—brow, head, feet, breast; strophes 2 and 3 are also interrupted at the third line, though with decreasing differentiation and intensity. Debussy's setting of the second stanza (B section), in the key of D♭ major, differs from the outer sections: increased rhythmic motion in the setting of the first two poetic lines reflects the journey; slower tempo and decreased rhythmic activity reflect the change from motion to rest in lines 3 and 4; the tritone root relationship reappears—this time G to D♭—at the opening of line 4, not line 3 as before. It does not function as a reflection of poetic disjunction as it did in the first stanza.

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[33]Clive Scott, 134.

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Except for its slower tempo, Debussy's reprise begins as a literal repetition of the opening. The change of tempo is crucial for the ABA form to reflect the motion of the poem: Verlaine's "Green"—for all that it does consist of three strophes—clearly does not present statement-contrast-restatement, but rather a progression toward repose and the alleviation of anxiety. Debussy further emphasizes the motion to repose in several ways. The first statement of the tonic in the reprise is less compromised than in the opening: at m. 49 (corresponding to m. 12), the F♭ still compromises the G♭ chord but the A♭ is absent since the vocal line remains solidly on G♭. Also, Debussy replaces the interruption from the A section with one of a different character, compressed in length, and used for a different purpose. As can be seen in Fig. 2.3, mm. 50-52 parallel the first-section insert in mm. 14-16, but the A Major chord—(B♭♭ as tritone substitute for V of E♭—in m. 14 has been replaced by the true dominant, B♭; all the tension of the tritone root movement is absent. The B♭, decorated by its upper neighbor, C♭, initiates the fifth progression descent to the final tonic; the rocking motion of the alternating C♭ to B♭ chords, the static vocal line, the slower tempo, the bland parallel fifths in the lower voices, and the absence of the tritone root motion between chords, all serve to decrease—rather than heighten—tension, and to reflect the movement of the poem toward that state of repose, of motionlessness, that the poet desires.

In his detailed analysis of "Green," Arthur Wenk points out many of these same gestures that I have mentioned, but without attaching any significance to their

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incompletion or fragmented quality.[34] The following section is my response to his

analysis. Wenk describes the opening of "Green" as an elaboration of the ii-V-I

cadential formula, though without discussing auxiliary cadence structures. He also

notes the interruption in root movement in mm. 13-16, but does not claim an

interruption in the harmonic progression, explaining it as Ger6-V-V/V-I

(A7-E♭7-D♭7-G♭), nor does he emphasize the violence of the poetic interruption at this

point—claiming the image of the torn heart merely expresses "the *diffidence* the poet

feels in presenting his heart [my emphasis]." As a result, Wenk sees one poetic and

harmonic movement directed toward an emphasis on the word *doux*, supported by the

clear tonic arrival: ". . . everything previous . . . is only leading up to this point. The

presentation of fruit, flowers, leaves, and branches is only the preparation for the gift of

the heart, which itself stands for the true desire of the lover, 'qu'à vos yeux si beaux

l'humble présent soit doux'.[35]

Wenk misses several important parallels between the poetry and the music.

First, he does not read any significance into the off-tonic beginning, other than the

direction to the final cadence. In fact, Debussy manipulates the auxiliary cadence

opening to create a sense of tonal uncertainty that mimics the uncertainty of the poet in

his new love. The off-tonic beginning gives the listener a false sense of key center,

which is strengthened by the extended emphasis on the opening ii chord through

harmonic repetition and melodic outline in the vocal part; as noted above, the first

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[34]Arthur Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets* (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1976), 50-58.

[35]Wenk, *Debussy and the Poets*, 55-56.

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arrival on the tonic (m. 12) is compromised—robbed of a sense of finality and robbed of a clear opportunity to place the preceding material in its proper context. Second, the harmonic and poetic interruption in line 3 is much more intrusive than Wenk acknowledges: the poet's change in tone divides the quatrain into couplets and the harmonic interruption clearly differentiates two statements of the ii-V-I progression. It is not simply the presence of the ii-V-I progression that is important, but its statement, interruption, and restatement. Third, the clearest harmonic motion to the tonic—an unencumbered V/V-V-I (V/V replaces ii) emphasizes not just the word *doux*, as Wenk states, but the last line of the strophe, the line that reconciles the opening and the interruption—"And to your eyes, so beautiful, may this humble present be pleasing." It is the first indication of any tenderness and beauty associated with the beloved. The poetic strophe and its musical setting move from uncertainty to certainty, from doubt to at least a momentary faith in beauty and love.

"Spleen"

In "Spleen" the poet's state of mind has changed dramatically.[36]

> Les roses étaient toutes rouges,
> Et les lierres étaient tout noirs.
>
> Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges
> Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.
>
> Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre,
> La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux;

---

[36]French text: Verlaine, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, edited by Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 205. English trans. Rita Benton, ed. and trans., *Claude Debussy: Songs 1880-1904*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), 167. I have made some changes.

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Je crains toujours,— ce qu'est d'attendre!—
Quelque fuite atroce de vous!

Du hous à la feuille vernie,
Et du luisant buis je suis las,

Et de la campagne infinie,
Et de tout, fors de vous, hélas!

[The roses were all red,
And the ivies were all black.

Dear, every little move you make,
reawakens all my despair.

The sky was too blue, too tender,
The sea too green and the air too mild.

I fear always,—it is expected—!
Some agonizing flight of yours!

Of the holly with the varnished leaf,
And of the shiny boxwood I am weary

And of the endless countryside,
And of everything, except of you, alas!]

"Green" has become too green, the gifts of nature now seem wearisome, even artificial

(varnished); joy has turned to boredom, anticipation to dread; and in Debussy's setting

the G♭ tonic of "Green" is reinterpreted as ♭II of F Minor—another off-tonic beginning

and a symbol of the transformation of the poet's state of mind.

In his study of French Symbolism, Houston notes Verlaine's reputation for the

chanson gris, for "faint colors and insubstantial outlines"; as he puts it, "All the imagery

of *bercement*, *fadeur*, *langueur*, *pâleur*, and *monotonie* in Verlaine is an attempt to

conjure away violent emotions with their unwanted consequences."[37] In "Spleen"

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Verlaine acknowledges and expresses those violent emotions; this poem is not a "conjuring away" of emotion, but rather a longing for stasis that the poet has not yet achieved. If "Green" is a poem of new love, of innocence, "Spleen" is a poem of the degradation of that love, and a poem of decadence. These are primary characteristics of the decadent persona: he is jaded yet overly sensitive; he prefers the artificial to the natural and the world of the inner mind to outer reality; he is ill in mind and body, and proud of it; he seeks to vivify the inanimate and to petrify the animate. In decadent writing, as Weir notes, description serves to present attributes of character rather than to set a realistic background;[37] the artificiality of the description in "Spleen"--all red, too blue, too tender, too green, varnished--presents the poet's reaction to nature, or to an unnatural world of his own creation.[39] In either case, existence has become unbearable; he longs for relief from both boredom and dread that can be bought only at the expense of the freedom of the beloved. Reversing Pygmalion and Galatea, the beloved must become motionless, inanimate, a statue; the longed-for repose of "Green" is now an obsession with control. He fears and expects the beloved to leave (see couplet 4.)

Where the poetic form of "Green" was conventional, that of "Spleen" is not. In "Green" the fear that the poet's heart will be torn apart has now become the reality of

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[37]John Porter Houston, *French Symbolism and the Modernist Movement: A Study of Poetic Structures* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 182.

[38]David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 106.

[39]Note Des Esseintes's artificial environment in Huysmans's *A rebours*.

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the poem torn apart: "Spleen" is presented on the page as six separate couplets, but they are not typical, rhyming couplets (*aa bb cc dd*, etc.); they rhyme *ab ab cd cd ef ef* As Wenk has pointed out, they are the halves of three four-line quatrains, rhyming *abab*, that have been separated, split apart, at the midpoint.[40] In content, the fragmentation is more severe. Again, as Wenk points out, couplets 1 and 3 are both descriptions in the imperfect tense; couplets 2 and 4 are present tense addresses to the beloved describing the anxiety of the poet; couplets 5 and 6 form a unit that combines both the descriptive elements and the anxiety; however, Verlaine's destruction of the quatrain is more severe than Wenk indicates: by content and by verb tense (though not by rhyme) couplets 1 and 3 form a unit, as do couplets 2 and 4.

"Spleen" is a variant of Schlegel's digressive arabesque, a tiny example of the device Daverio labels interleaving. Such narratives alternate sections of different stories; Daverio's example is Hoffmann's famous *Kater Murr*, a bizarre alternation of segments of the biography of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler with segments of his cat's autobiography, written—by the cat—on the backs of the pages of Kreisler's original. The published form of the manuscript treats the pages as one work, printing the recto and verso of each page sequentially. As a result, no segment is complete; many begin and end midsentence.[41] In "Spleen" Verlaine interleaves conflicting emotions in the poet's mind: boredom on the one hand, fear and anxiety on the other. "Spleen" is a structural representation, not just a telling, of the poet's emotional state

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[40]References to Wenk's analysis in this paragraph are from Wenk, *Debussy and the Poets*, 116-20.

[41]Daverio, 61.

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Debussy's setting of "Spleen" is more fragmented than that of "Green." As Wenk and Howat have noted, the auxiliary cadence progression that controls "Spleen"—bII-V-I—does not resolve to a clear, functional tonic until the final cadence; thus the tonic is recognized, as in "Green," only in retrospect, in "Spleen" only as the song ends.[42] As mentioned above, Schenker gives Chopin's Prelude in A Minor as an example of such a technique: the dominant is prolonged throughout that work, resolving to the tonic only as the piece closes.[43] In "Spleen," the incomplete progression—bII-V—is not just prolonged, but repeated distinctly four times (stanzas 1, 2, 4, 6); as Fig. 2.4 shows, each repetition coincides with a statement of the main theme at the pitch of its initial occurrence. This theme, perhaps an ironic borrowing from the wedding song in Chabrier's opera *Gwendoline* (Fig. 2.5), always occurs in the accompaniment, but is never aligned with the text of the respective couplets in the same manner; moreover, it is fragmented in stanza 3 and transposed in stanza 5.[44] Through these tactics—an almost insistent repetition of harmonic and melodic material in an irregular and unpredictable manner, the constant beginning anew without real

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[42]Wenk, 119 and Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 34-36.

[43]Schenker, 88 (par. 245) and Fig. 110/a3.

[44] The quotation of the "Benissez-nous" from the "Épithalame" in Chabrier's opera raises questions of extra-musical meaning. Perhaps Debussy saw a certain irony (or sarcasm) in underlying the dread and boredom of "Spleen"—the relationship gone sour—with wedding music, as the blessings Gwendolyn requests have, for the poet of "Spleen," become curses. Léon Vallas, *Claude Debussy: His Life and Works*, trans. Maire and Grace O'Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); reprint (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), 66.

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Couplets & rhyme scheme	1 (ab)	2 (ab)	3 (cd)	4 (cd)	5 (ef)	6 (ef)
Alternating emotions	fatigue	fear	fatigue	fear	fatigue	fatigue/fear
Motivic statements	a	a'	extension	a"	a " transposed—	extension—a""
Musical form: 2 views —1. through-composed —2. two parts	A			A'		
Harmonic model	f: ♭II-V	♭II-V	♭II ————	♭II-V—	———————	—————————♭II——V-I
Harmony	f ; ♭II-V	♭II-V	—extension ♭II— B: II—V——♭VII	♭II-V	IV# ——V6/4	I+————————♭II——V-I
Measures	1—8	9—13	14————17	18—21	22———25	26————28—34

Fig. 2.4. Chart showing formal structures of the poetry and music of "Spleen."

"Épithalame"
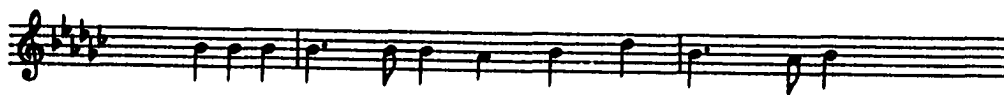
"Spleen"

Fig. 2.5. Comparison of measures 41-43 of the Épithalame" from *Gwendoline* with measures 1-4 of "Spleen."

resolution,[45] and a sustained harmonic tension created by the avoidance of the tonic—Debussy is able to maintain both the anxiety and boredom expressed by the poet, though using a very different strategy from Verlaine's alternating emotional states.

Debussy's use of motivic repetition and tonic avoidance in "Spleen" does not take place within a conventional formal structure that is as clearly defined as the ABA' form of "Green." Analyses that rely too heavily on motivic repetition seem unsatisfactory at the level of overall form and stretch the meaning of standard terminology. Howat, relying on Golden Section proportion for his own formal explanation of "Spleen," acknowledges the motivic and harmonic repetition, but admits that "to describe the form, truthfully enough, as a tonally free rondo does nothing to explain what is crucial to its expression";[46] nor, I would say, does Parks's description of the form of other works of Debussy that, like "Spleen," consistently repeat and extend motives as "a synthesis of strophic variations with . . . continuous development interrupted by reprise."[47] Even the appearance of the main motive at m. 18, the midpoint of the song (and of the poem), unharmonized as at the opening, does little to suggest a two-part form (see Fig. 2.4). Since there is no strong resolution to any key area before the final tonic (though note the weak resolution to the tonic in mm. 25-6, see Fig. 2.4), and since the principal motivic repetition is irregular, it is perhaps best simply to read the song as through composed.

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[45]Recalling the opening strategy of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, mentioned above.

[46]Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 34.

[47]Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 224-5.

Beginnings: Conclusion

"Green" and "Spleen" are fragments; they exist within a tonal harmonic framework, but for them, that frame has been broken. It has not dissolved: its recognition as the supplier of the whole from which they are derived is crucial to understanding their structures. "Green" and "Spleen" are each modeled on an incomplete chord progression—"Green" on ii-V-I and "Spleen" on bII-V-I—just as other works are modeled on complete chord progressions that begin and end on a tonic. They are fragments, incomplete at their beginnings though closed at their endings, and they are further fragmented by the internal repetition of those progressions, or portions of them—ii-V-I for "Green" and bII-V for "Spleen"—that govern their overall form. Those incomplete progressions and their repetitions allow Debussy to fragment the surfaces of the works and to build long-range tension, but these fragments do not yet exist in the world of the collage or of Warhol's multiple, multi-colored Marilyns—a world where the meaning of the part no longer depends on its relation to a larger, overriding whole. It is in the nature of the fragment not to *be* ambiguous, but to *appear* ambiguous until enough information is revealed, or discovered, to make an identification. In both "Green" and "Spleen" the use of the auxiliary cadence creates a certain level of ambiguity, but in both cases strong final cadences—in section or work—reveal the information necessary to place the preceding material in its proper context. Debussy creates a sense of uncertainty and expectancy by tearing at convention while ultimately maintaining, even depending on, that convention.

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Endings: "Canope"

In a photograph taken in 1910 in Debussy's home in the Bois de Boulogne,

Debussy and Satie lean against a mantel; from the mantel, just above Satie's hand, a

small Egyptian face stares out into a world completely alien to its origins.[48] It is one of

a pair of lids to canopic urns, funerary urns intended to hold certain internal organs in

the Egyptian mummification process, artifacts reduced to the status of decorative

objects. Presumably these urn lids are the source of the title of Debussy's tenth prelude

from Book II, "Canope," just as other family possessions are thought to have provided

titles for Debussy's works: the "Poissons d'or" from *Images*, Book II, swim on a

Japanese-lacquer wooden panel, the "Puerta del vino" from the second book of

Preludes appears on a postcard of the Alhambra reportedly sent to Debussy by De

Falla, and Jimbo and the Golliwog are only two of the *Children's Corner* and the *Boite*

à joujoux characters that populated his daughter's toy box.

The canopic urn lids are fragments in two senses: they are remnants of the

original urns—lost, perhaps broken—and they are archeological artifacts, reminders of a

distant and exotic culture. In his classification of literary fragments, Roger Shattuck

describes his category labeled the *linked fragment* in terms of the archeological artifact:

from the pottery shard, the archaeologist reconstructs the original vessel; from the

realization of that vessel, with other reconstructed artifacts, he recreates an entire

civilization—its history, beliefs, daily life, ultimate fate. This is the transcendental

fragment of romantic and Symbolist literature, of Swedenborg, Novalis, Nerval,

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[48]This photograph is reproduced in François Lesure, *Debussy: Iconographie musicale* (Paris: Editions Minkoff & Lattès, 1980), 134.

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Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and even Yeats and Stevens. The identity of the literary

fragment relies on the very convention it has broken, reaches back to that convention,

just as the identity of the artifact relies on its origins in the past. From this perspective,

as Shattuck claims, "nothing stands alone, and the tiniest fragment of the universe

breathes forth its secret connections to everything else."[49]

It is from this perspective of the archeological fragment that many writers on

Debussy's prelude "Canope" view the referent of the title--both as inspiration for

Debussy and as interpretative guide for the listener. They weave around the urns a web

of connections, or associations, centered on man's ongoing fascination with ruins and

the past, regardless of the approach they will ultimately take in their analyses. Robert

Schmitz writes in his study of Debussy's piano music, "He [Debussy] reaches far back

to archaic ceremonials, to the magnificent [city of] Canope, of which there remain only

the ruins of temples and palaces."[50] Speaking of the effect on the listener, James

Baker, in an article on post-tonal voice-leading, claims, "Little wonder, then, that the

piece has an air of mystery, its subdued harmonies redolent of ancient ruins."[51] David

Lewin, writing on parallel voice-leading in Debussy's music, sums up this attitude:

"Debussy, to the extent he had the urn in mind, used the word canope as a metonym for

the city, the temple, the associated rites, the dead civilization itself". Reflecting the

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[49]Roger Shattuck, "The Alphabet and the Junkyard," in Kritzman, 36.

[50]E. Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966; originally published Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 182.

[51]James M. Baker, "Post-Tonal Voice-Leading," in *Early Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Jonathan Dunsby (London: Blackwell, 1993), 30.

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significance for personal inspiration that the artifact and the ruin have had since

Petrarch's time, Lewin adds:

> I am similarly beset by fantasies about the person buried in the
> beautiful Egyptian urn, the potter who cast that compelling
> art-work . . . [52]

The Prelude "Canope" is a tiny piece, only 33 measures long. ("Canope" is

given in its entirety in Fig. 2.6; motives labeled U-Z are indicated on the score in large,

bold type and circled.) A key signature of one flat is in effect throughout; the chordal

opening clearly emphasizes D minor, as do all motives except X (m. 14) and Z (m. 17).

The D chord at m. 7, now with F#, tonicizes G; this initiates a string of descending

fifths that lead, ultimately, to the dominant harmony at m. 18 and its whole-tone

extension. At m. 25, a break is followed by a reprise of the opening material, and this

is followed by a repetition of motive W in mm. 30-33, but the final statement is

incomplete: the final melodic notes, Eb-D, are not played, though the D is already

sounding in the final chord.

The D tonal center is weakened by the following: in m. 3, the descending fifth,

G-C; in mm. 14-15, the prominent C major chords; and in the final measures, the C

chord in root position, even given the added ninth. Chromatic alterations in mm. 4, 13,

23, and 28 also add to the uncertainty.

In their numerous attempts to explain the organization and structure of this

work, analysts have covered topics ranging from the harmonics of the Javanese

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[52]David Lewin, "Parallel Voice-Leading in Debussy" in *Music at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Joseph Kerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 64-65.

Fig. 2.6. "Canope."

(fig. cont.)

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gamelan and the rules of medieval *musica ficta* to set theory.[53] Tonal analyses of one

sort or another all acknowledge a conflict between D minor (or D dorian) and C major

(or C mixolydian), but are divided in their opinions on the ultimate tonality of the piece.

Analyses by Arthur Wenk, Robert Schmitz, Serge Gut,[54] and Amy Dommel-Diény[55] all

conclude D minor tonality; those by David Lewin and James Baker settle on C major,

while Thomas Warburton claims bitonality but sees C gaining prominence as the work

progresses.

Obviously, given the final C major chord and the incomplete statement of

motive C in the final measures, those who claim D minor tonality must stress the

inconclusiveness of the ending, the acceptance of an open-ended fragment; however,

neither Wenk nor Schmitz attempts an explanation. Schmitz writes, "The final chord

does not assuage our thirst for a final cadence. We are left with a choice of three tonal

centers and yet none."[56] By three tonal centers, he means the C, G, and D of the last

chord, since he can't reconcile one to the others.

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[53]Roberts explains the ending by its relation to the sonority of the gamelan. Paul Roberts, *Image: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press),164-5. Lewin, 68, explains the half-step alterations in the parallel chords in mm. 4 and 28-30 by referring to the rules of medieval *musica ficta*. Parks uses set theory, 148-50.

[54]Serge Gut, "'Canope' de Debussy, analyse formelle et structure fondamental" *Revue musicale de la Suisse romande*, 33/2 (May 1980), 60-65.

[55]A. Dommel-Diény, *L'analyse harmonique en examples de J. S. Bach à Debussy* (Neuchatel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1967), 57-63.

[56]Schmitz, 183.

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Serge Gut claims D is the central axis on which the piece turns: the final chord should not be analyzed as a triad with added ninth, but as a summary of the fifths Debussy uses through the piece.[57] Dommel-Diény claims D is "an immutable tonic" throughout and provides support through a detailed account of voice-leading,[58] but her harmonic plan is insufficient and the description of the final chord as an appoggiatura to an imaginary D minor chord (that she supplies in her graph) assigns a level of certainty to the conclusion that is unwarranted and certainly not in character with the romantic or symbolist fragment. The ending should not be so easy to see in its details, though its essence must be present; her immediate resolution is too abrupt for Debussy's compositional style in this type of piece. No one among those who stress the D minor tonality and the incompleteness of the ending provides a satisfactory analysis or even explanation of an adequate compositional strategy.

Those who regard the piece as being in C major (or C mixolydian) must stress a progression toward closure, and all do so with more modern approaches to harmonic analysis. Baker writes, "There is a rightness—even an inevitability—to the final cadence."[59] Lewin says of the ending, "The priority of D as a melodic final [has] receded into a vague and fragrant memory of things past."[60] Though they do not discuss it directly, Lewin and Baker imply that the piece is a fragment, but open at the

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[57]Gut, 60-65.

[58]Dommel-Diény, 57-63.

[59]Baker, 35.

[60]Lewin, 70.

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beginning. Even Warburton's bitonal analysis notes that "the tone C gains in prominence" through the piece,[61] though his analysis weakens the notion of the fragment by having the two tonal areas function separately.

Many pieces by Debussy do begin away from the tonic, but end rather more decisively on it, clarifying the preceding material; this is clearly not the case with "Canope." If a beginning implies an ending, as Said stresses,[62] then "Canope" at its beginning implies a D ending. It is not tentative. Throughout the piece, D continues to be stressed. Rather than clarifying what has been heard before, this ending obscures what preceded it. The "rightness" and "inevitability" Baker assigns to the final cadence seem to me to be compromised by the strength of the D throughout—and that "rightness" and "inevitability" point to a certainty about the afterlife that seems out of character with the subject, and out of character with the type of romantic fragment that I believe this prelude evokes. At the very core of romanticism, the fragment's broken state is seen as a parallel to the incomplete art work: the unfinished is a reflection of the ongoing process of creation just as the broken is a product of the ongoing process of destruction; the Symbolist fragment is only a refinement of that aesthetic doctrine: the whole, the ideal become less attainable, the degree of incompletion more pronounced, the role of the audience more involved in the process of recreation.

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[61]Warburton, 11.

[62]Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 41.

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Elizabeth Harries notes that writers respond to fragments of the past when they develop their own techniques and strategies of fragmentation.[63] There are models, precursors, for the fragment ending of "Canope" in the music of Chopin and Schumann. Berthold Hoeckner explains the ending of Schumann's *Papillons* as an example of the depiction of romantic distance in music—sound gradually fading, dying away on the dominant seventh chord whose notes vanish one by one, the final tonic touched only briefly. In relation to this, he discusses the definition of romanticism given by Novalis in these phrases, "distant mountains, distant people, distant events," as well as by Jean Paul, whose novel *Flegeljahre* inspired Schumann, and who connects fading away with the infinite, transformed through the imagination to the ideal.[64]

Among a number of musical fragments, Charles Rosen includes Chopin's Prelude in F Major. He describes the accented E♭ added to the final F-major sonority as an unresolved detail that can compromise the conventions of the form without ever quite destroying them. Also connecting the romantic fragment to the infinite, Rosen notes that in this context the E♭ does not weaken the final cadence, but makes it more mysterious, and prolongs the final chord beyond the confines of the form.[65]

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[63]Harries, 13.

[64]Berthold Hoeckner, "Schumann and Romantic Distance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50 (1997): 55-132.

[65]Rosen, 96-97.

Rosen also mentions the romantic form of Chopin's Mazurka op. 17, #4, ending

with a broken fragment of its melody, completed in the correct register but the wrong

voice, as a part of the accompaniment rather than in the melodic line.   As Rosen notes,

> The last bars, which return to the opening phrase, shake the
> firm plagal cadence in A minor but not the sense of tonality.
> They turn the piece into an ideal romantic fragment: complete
> and provocative, well-rounded and yet open.[66]

"Canope" seems to recall precisely these techniques.[67] The extended dying

away of sound at endings is not unusual in Debussy; at least once he himself links it to

the romantic notion of distance: the score of "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans

l'air du soir" from Book I of the Preludes has the following indication at the fourth

measure from the end: "like the distant sound of horns" and the last two measures

"further off, and slower." Similarly, the fading final chord of "Canope" reflects this

aesthetic of distance inherited from romanticism—the distant civilization, the distance of

exoticism, and the distance of death—become more pronounced as the Symbolists

inherit from Baudelaire a heightened sense of alienation from society.

Fig. 2.7 presents a graph that shows how the D minor tonality is maintained

with a fragmented ending. The complete progression in D minor from mm. 1-26

supports a series of nested scales descending a fifth; this descent includes both the

natural and flat second degrees of the scale. The descending pattern is repeated in the

final measures, but not completed. The flat second scale degree introduces the

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[66]Rosen, 419.

[67]Recall Debussy's familiarity with Chopin's music (see note 7 above, especially
Chopin's influence on Debussy's music documented by Howat).

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chromaticism that colors much of the work. Note in Fig. 2.6 that motives W, X, and Y are all derived from this descent. Fig. 2.6 also shows that motives Y, and Z are related to the descending fifth introduced in motive U. In this graph the prelude is rounded tonally ("complete" and "well-rounded," to quote Rosen, above), but open at its end (again in Rosen's words, "provocative," and yet "open").[68]

Fig. 2.7: Counterpoint graph of "Canope"
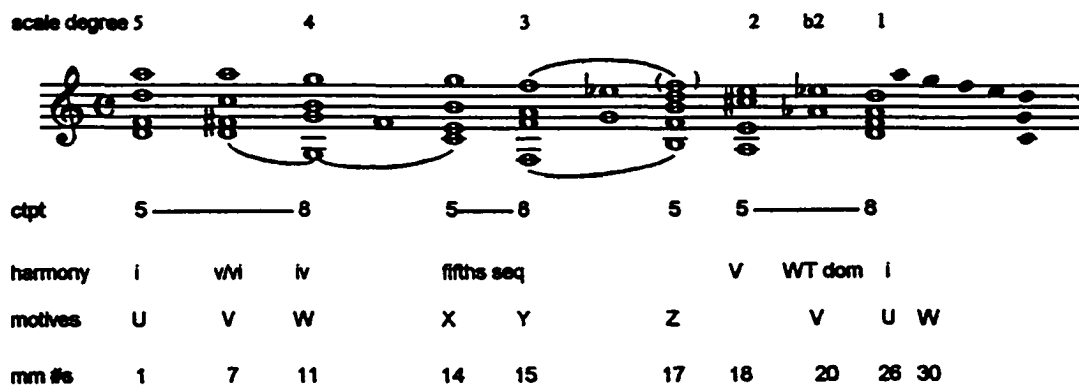
Commenting on a Novalis fragment from *Pollen Dust*, Rosen has written:

This fragment itself is not only provisional, tentative, but glories in its refusal to reach the definitive; and it is given to us with a premonition of its own death, imminent or deferred, with the prospect of its ruin.[69]

Rosen's words surely fit "Canope" as well.

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[68]Rosen, 418-19.

[69]Rosen, 94.

CHAPTER 3. ARCADIAS AND ARABESQUES

The legacy of Classical Greece and Rome, left to us in ruins and fragments and

transmitted through the composite creatures that people myth and legend, has been a

recurring source of inspiration for Western makers of fragments since Petrarch

pondered the ruins of Rome. The nineteenth century was no exception, despite the

myriad influences and interests that competed for the attention of artists: nationalism,

naturalism, exoticism, among many others. In France, the intermingled and

interdependent groups labeled Parnassians, Decadents, and Symbolists used aspects of

the Classical tradition for their own purposes. Gilbert Highet, in his extended

discussion of this reappropriation and reinterpretation of Classical ideals, highlights

several areas: the Parnassian appeal to the universality of emotional restraint and

formal control, visible most certainly in the poetry of Leconte de Lisle and the paintings

of Puvis de Chavannes, but also in aspects of the works of Mallarmé and the

Symbolists; the exaggerated notion of personal freedom and sexual license in the

ancient world (contrasted with the repressive control of Christianity) seen in the works

of Pierre Louÿs and Gustave Moreau, among others (writers and painters often labeled

Decadents); and the Symbolist trove of mythological figures, laden with centuries of

meaning, capable of functioning as either subject or frame, center or decoration.[1] The

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[1] Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 437-65 and 501-10.

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ancient world made a perfect destination for escapist literature--more concrete than the lands of pure imagination, recalling more from communal knowledge and expectation, but at the same time still shrouded in the mist of the past, hiding in uncertainty, opening doors to many interpretations and misinterpretations.[2] The nineteenth century made many of its fragments on this rich base. Debussy's interaction with these makers of new classical fragments is represented in this chapter by his tone poem based on Mallarmé's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and his settings of Pierre Louÿs's *Chansons de Bilitis.*

Faune and Arabesque

If Debussy had never composed his Prelude to Mallarmé's *L'Apres-midi d'un faune*, Boulez might still have claimed them both as his (sorely needed French) forefathers. He might still have claimed that modern music began with *Prélude à "L'Apres-midi d'un faune"* and the world might still have followed suit, securely linking Mallarmé and Debussy in a macabre dance that projected them further and further into modernism and away from the influences of their own time. While few would question modernism's debt to both artists, a study of these works in light of the romantic fragment which they inherited and used to their own artistic ends. rather than in light of the modern fragment which they preceded, shows that neither work seems so much a first breath of modernism as a last gasp of romanticism. As the noted Mallarmé scholar Robert Greer Cohn writes, "Yet look what richness late romanticism (Symbolism's substance) has brought to the French tradition!"

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[2]For more on classical themes in the escapist literature of decadence, Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), 225-35.

L'Après-midi d'un faune, subtitled "eclogue" after Virgil's designation for

pastoral poems, is Mallarmé's most famous homage to antique myth and its continued

power to inspire.[3] The faun is a grotesque, a creature made of fragments, part man,

part goat; Isidore would have described him as a human transformed in part, and would

have placed him in the same class as the dog-headed man or the Minotaur. Another

variant of Schlegel's digressive arabesque, labeled interleaving by Daverio (mentioned

above in relation to Green), supplies the formal structure for Mallarmé's Symbolist

retelling of an ancient myth. Mallarmé has taken the technique of Hoffmann's

rambunctious *Kater Murr*—who so boldly crossed the line between the animal world

and the human—and with subtlety and delicacy has transformed it into the inner

monologue of the timid faun, his vacillation between sleep and wakefulness, dream and

reality, on a sultry afternoon in an Arcadia that never existed except in imagination and

dream.

The first line of the faun's monologue begins *in medias res* (with a reference to

something that has happened in the past and about which the reader is ignorant) and

ends with a sentence fragment.

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[3]Robert Greer Cohn, *Toward the Poems of Mallarmé* (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 1965), 13. The following analysis draws on the work of Cohn as well
as the following: Rosaline Crowley, "Toward the Poetics of Juxtaposition:
L'Après-midi d'un faune," *Yale French Studies* 54 (1977), 33-44; Houston, 56-58; Guy
Michaud, *Mallarmé* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 37-38 and 89-92;
Roger Pearson, *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Art* (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1996), 108-43; Maurice Z. Shroder, "The Satyr and the Faun: A
Definition of Romanticism," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Foreign
Literature* 23 (fall-winter 1969), 346-53.

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Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer.
                                    Si clair,

[Those nymphs, I would like to perpetuate them. / So clear,]

By placing the cesura at points where it is not expected, Mallarmé fragments the alexandrine, as in this first line. Here the twelve syllables are broken, both by syntax and by placement on the page, into groups of three, seven, and two syllables rather than the accepted groups of six, or even four. The rest of the poem proceeds through sentence fragments indicated by dots of ellipsis, dashes, blank space,[4] and other signs of omission and interruption—physical signs earlier used by Rabelais, Cervantes, Sterne, and others who depicted incomplete manuscripts in their texts.[5] The faun tells his story: he saw some nymphs, or maybe swans; he captured two of them; they escaped before he could make love to them. The story is told as a factual account, told as if it had happened in the past. It is printed in three separate sections that are indented, marked with quotation marks, and printed in italic type. In Mallarmé's letters to his editor, Edmond Deman, he described the use of italics as the printed equivalent of handwriting, indicating, according to Graham Robb, a draft, a fiction, rather than reality.[6] The first of these sections is introduced by the word "contez" in capital letters; the second by the word "souvenirs," again in capital letters: "tell" and "memories."

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[4] In the original edition of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* the intervals of blank space on the page take almost as much space as the sections that are italicized. Crowley, 43.

[5] Bowie claims many of Mallarmé's poems could be profitably studied for their gaps, elisions, and discrepancies. Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5-6.

[6] Graham Robb, *Unlocking Mallarmé* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 213.

Like Petrarch and Montaigne centuries earlier, the faun questions telling and memory, for telling is always reconstructed from memory, and memory is imperfect. Surrounding this narrative is the faun's gloss--his musings, his emotions, his questions--told in the fictional present. These sections frame the narrative as the grotesque frames the center portrait it surrounds. Embedded in the final section of the gloss is a tiny *mise en abyme*, a fragment story that sums up the faun's experience. In this short dream, he holds (or rapes?) Venus, but waking is his punishment as the dream trails off in dots of ellipsis. The line continues, after a break on the page, with the word "no." This was a dream; perhaps the nymphs were also a dream. There is no resolution of any section of the poem, or of the poem itself, but, in fact, it hardly matters. As the last line reminds us, "Couple, adieu; je vais voir l'ombre que tu devins" [Couple, goodby; I go to see the shadow that you will become]; whether real or dream, everything becomes memory.

Many of the techniques Mallarmé has used are typical of the arabesque structure; they are the same techniques used by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fragment novelists, though when transferred to shorter poetry, they seem perhaps even more disruptive than in prose. When Debussy wrote to Mallarmé, inviting him to attend the first performance of his *Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune,"* he called his work an arabesque,[7] a decoration perhaps, of the poem that inspired him. Debussy also uses arabesque structures comparable to those in literature in his orchestral work. Matthew Brown has identified four compositional techniques that Debussy uses in

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[7]*Debussy Letters*, 75.

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Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune" as well as in the *Nocturnes, La mer*, and the *Images* for orchestra. They are: incomplete progressions, parenthetical episodes, motivic compression, and tonal modeling. Of these, two in particular—incomplete progressions and parenthetical episodes—relate directly to the romantic arabesque form and the open beginnings and endings common in nineteenth-century literature.[8]

As Brown shows in his analysis, *Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune"* opens with an incomplete progression: vii⁷/V-V9-I in E. Thus Debussy begins *in medias res*, in the middle of a chord progression, just as Mallarmé began the faun's tale in the middle of his musings. In addition to this auxiliary cadence opening, Brown also identifies asides or parentheses, sections that do not advance the tonal motion in progress but rather delay it, much as Mallarmé delays the faun's narrative with his gloss. One such interpolation is found in mm. 30-39, where whole-tone material extends the V chord, as Brown shows in a graph. A passage from Schenker's *Free Composition* describes such delays in the harmony:

> In the art of music, as in life, motion toward the goal encounters
> obstacles, reverses, disappointments, and involves great
> distances, detours, expansions, interpolations, and, in short,
> retardations of all kinds. Therein lies the source of all artistic
> delaying, from which the creative mind can derive content that
> is ever new.[9]

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[8]Matthew Brown, "Tonality and Form in Debussy's Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune," *Music Theory Spectrum* 15 (1993): 127-43.

[9]Brown, "Tonality and Form," 136, quoting Schenker, 5 (sec. 3).

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The faun's story and his fragmented telling of it echo Schenker's thoughts. The reverses, disappointments, detours, interpolations describe not only the structure of the poem, with its alternations of story and gloss, interrupting each other, delaying each other, but also the faun's struggle with his sexuality. His experience—his existence—has become so delayed that pondering it, rather than living it, becomes the source of his creativity. Debussy's compositional strategies reflect this aspect of the poem. The arabesque is not merely the shape of the melodic line—here the flute line—as many writers hasten to conclude, but also the structure of his work: the digressive narrative, Schlegel's arabesque, filtered through its embodiment in the music of Schumann and Chopin (structures Rosen and Daverio have isolated), redefined and reshaped by Symbolist thought. Mallarmé wrote of the arabesque:

> To create is to conceive an object in its fleeting moment, in its absence.
> To do this, we simply compare its facets and dwell lightly, negligently upon their multiplicity. We conjure up a scene of lovely, evanescent, intersecting forms. We recognize the entire and binding arabesque thus formed as it leaps dizzily in terror play disquieting chords; or, through a sudden digression (by no means disconcerting), we are warned of its likeness unto itself even as it hides.[10]

Chansons de Bilitis: Louÿs and the Tradition of the Hoax Poem

The past speaks with the voice of authority and confers a legitimacy on its ruins and relics that contemporary works must earn. A false claim to this authority, coupled with contemporary tolerance of direct descriptions of sexuality based on the notion that pre-Christian morality permitted greater sexual freedom, allowed Pierre Louÿs's great

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[10]Robb, 27.

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literary forgery, the *Chansons de Bilitis*, to enjoy great success both before and after his hoax was revealed. Louÿs's alleged translations of the fake poems of an imaginary Greek poetess, and Debussy's responses to them, are of particular interest for several reasons: the prose poems are related directly to the great eighteenth-century literary hoaxes, an important element in the climate that allowed the romantic fragment to develop; they are examples of a reinterpretation of the themes of classical mythology and a representation of views of life in the ancient world written by a Symbolist/Decadent poet who was also Debussy's close friend; specifically, the text of "Le tombeau des naïades," the third and last of Debussy's settings of prose poems from this collection, illustrates another of his musical interpretations of the theme of fragmentation.

The eighteenth century was mad for ruins; two of the more bizarre manifestations of that mania were sham ruins and hoax poems. Neither of these phenomena was new—the earliest report of a fake ruin occurs in the sixteenth century[11] and the literary forgery was certainly older[12]—but the eighteenth century experienced a frenzy in this construction of decay. The creators of architectural and literary fakes worked with skill, care, and great seriousness, as witnessed by Joseph Heely's description of a Gothic castle built in 1747-48:

> And to keep the whole design in its purity—to wipe away any
> suspicion of its being any otherwise than a real ruin, the large
> and mossy stones, which have seemingly tumbled from the

[11]Harries, 62.

[12]Roger A. Pack, "Two Classical Forgeries," *American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989): 479-80.

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tottering and ruinous walls, are suffered to lie about the different parts of the building, in utmost confusion. This greatly preserves its intention, and confirms the common opinion of every stranger, of its early date; while, to throw a deeper solemnity over it, and to make it carry a stronger face of antiquity, ivy is encouraged to climb about the walls and turrets.[13]

The great literary forgers were no less intent on maintaining this deception. Many hoax poems were presented in a fragmented condition to ape the genuine found manuscript;[14] hoax authors, including the greatest of the eighteenth century, Macpherson (the Ossian poet) and Chatterton (the Rowley poet), included prefaces that detailed the circumstances around the recovery of the manuscripts they claimed to have found and translated, as well as biographical data that situated the supposed original authors in time and place. Rabelais and Cervantes provided similar (though not so complete) descriptions for the imaginary found manuscripts they used as props for their fictions, but these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forgeries were not props: they were presented to the public as literary works themselves.

Once these hoaxes were uncovered, they presented critical problems that placed them in a category quite different from both the legitimate literary fragments of the ancients (known most often through published translations in such popular collections as the *Greek Anthology*) and the planned fragments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Fragments of ancient Greek and Latin poems provided the reader in the

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[13]Harries, 65-66, quoting Joseph Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and the Leasowes, with Critical Remarks and Observations on the Modern Taste in Gardening*, 2 vols. (London: R. Baldwin, 1777), 175-76.

[14]Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 34.

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eighteenth century with a form whose incompletion was a mark of its antiquity, comparable to the missing nose on an antique bust, and interpreted only as the result of the ruin of time, not as the result of artistic intent. Such fragmentation did not need to be questioned, since it was not part of the initial artistic plan.[15] Many fragments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (those of Bacon, Hamann, Diderot, and Sterne among many others—see Chapter 1) were quite deliberate: the fragmentary nature was inherent in the structure of the aphoristic format; it reflected the incomplete nature of knowledge and this connection was frequently explained by the author.[16] The hoaxes, on the other hand, once discovered, created interpretative and critical problems, particularly if the works had previously been judged excellent as translations. Legitimate translation admits a level of imperfection: the impossibility of knowing the past—ancient languages, customs—and the mutilated state of the original text all contribute to shortcomings in the translation, to holes the translator could not be expected to fill. In a modern work, such as these uncovered hoaxes, such problems—such holes—were less easily forgiven. Either their imperfections, including a certain lack of originality, had to be attributed to shortcomings on the part of the writer, or had to be justified as integral to the form of the work. The legitimate translation asked the reader to accept incompletion on the basis of unavailability; the

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[15]Levinson, 20-21. As sources of translations of such fragments, Levinson notes in particular the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of *The Greek Anthology* and *The Palatine Anthology* as well as collections of writings by individual authors.

[16]Harries, 34-55, and Kenshur, 39-54; especially 40, quoting Bacon: "Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to enquire farther; whereas methods [i.e., systematic exposition], carrying the show of a total, do secure men, as if they were at furthest."

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hoax writer asked the reader to accept incompletion as necessary to the telling of his tale, necessary to his plan. At the same time, questions of creation and origin relevant to the meaning of the true antique had no meaning for the hoax; background information supplied by the hoax author, normally accepted at face value, had to be interpreted along with the main text. According to Levinson, this confrontation prepared general audiences and critics for the many nineteenth-century fragments whose incompletion was an integral part of both the work itself and the aesthetic behind it, the aesthetic of longing and incompletion. As Levinson observed, "Without the hoax poems, the fragment might have remained the province of the antiquarian, the metaphysician, and the connoisseur of sensation and sensibility."[17]

In the tradition of the Ossian and Rowley poets, Pierre Louÿs contributed his own manuscript hoax to a world in part still too naive, or still too anxious to uncover fragments of the past, to recognize immediately the joke he played. The *Chansons de Bilitis* were supposedly translations of the works of Bilitis, a sixth century B. C. E. Greek-Phoenician poetess and contemporary of Sappho, who documented her life through her poetry. She records three stages: her childhood and sexual initiation in Pamphylia in Asia Minor, her lesbian life in Mytilene in the company of Sappho, and her later life as a courtesan on Cyprus. Louÿs published the *Chansons de Bilitis* in 1895, with all the accoutrements needed to give them the authority and legitimacy of the ruin.[18] As a younger man, impressed by Leconte de Lisle's translations of the *Iliad*

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[17]Levinson, 35. Complete discussion, 34-48.

[18]The first edition is dated 1895, but the actual publication date was 12 December 1894. See H. P. Clive, *Pierre Louÿs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 110.

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and the *Odyssey*, he had taught himself Greek. Before he wrote the *Chansons de Bilitis*, he published the first French translations of the epigrams of the Syrian-Greek poet Meleager[19] and Lucian's *Courtesans' Conversations*.[20] The complete title of the Bilitis poems, *Chansons de Bilitis traduites du grec pour la première fois par P. L.*, ostensibly presented the reader with a translation made by a reputable translator.[21]

Macpherson recorded his hoax epic in rhythmical but nonrhyming prose.[22] Louÿs made his fake translations French prose poems, each paragraph a verse unit of the supposed original Greek,[23] and as Macpherson and Chatterton had also done, provided a preface that summarized the life of Bilitis and explained how he had come to find and translate her poems. He added legitimacy to Bilitis and her work by claiming that her tomb had been discovered by a German, Professor G. Heim, who was also the first editor of her poems (*Bilitis' saemmtliche Lieder zum ersten Male herausgegeben und mit einem Woerterbuche versehen, von G. Heim*—Leipzig, 1894); Louÿs described the

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[19]In 1893, Louÿs published first a collection of ten epigrams with a life of Meleager in the *Mercure de France*, followed by the larger *Les Poésies de Méléagre*, published by the *Librairie de l'art indépendent*. Highet, 458, and Clive, 98. Many of Meleager's epigrams were found in the *Greek Anthology*. They were also imitated by French Renaissance poets, especially Ronsard, whom Louÿs admired. Clive, 69.

[20]Highet, 457-58.

[21]Louÿs at one point intended to publish scholarly notes for his fake translation. He imitated some authentic ancient Greek poems, and quoted from others, in order to claim that Bilitis was the original author and that others of her time and after had copied her. Lawrence Venuti, "The Scandal of Translation," *French Literature Series* 22 (1995): 26-28.

[22]Robert Folkenflik, "Macpherson, Chatterton, Blake and the Great Age of Literary Forgery," *The Centennial Review* 18 (1974): 380-81.

[23]Pack, 482.

circumstances of the preservation and discovery of the tomb and the poems written on its walls, here functioning as his found manuscript ploy. They are not described as crumbling, defaced, or in any way marred, but Louÿs, perhaps as a gesture to the condition of ruin, lists several poems in the index as untranslated. He gives the impression either that he provided an incomplete work or that those poems were, for some reason, untranslatable. This also gave him the opportunity to publish more Bilitis poems at a later time, which, in fact, he did.

Why Louÿs chose to perpetrate this hoax is unclear. Macpherson's and Chatterton's motivations to forgery may have arisen as a direct response to the value the eighteenth century placed on genius and originality. The works of the great masters of the past presented standards impossible to meet, much less surpass; the eighteenth-century writer had to ask—whether consciously or unconsciously—how to become a great poet in his own age. Macpherson's answer, and subsequently Chatterton's, was an appeal to the ready-made authority of the past—an authority that relieved the greatest burden, the burden of originality, and allowed flaws to be attributed to the physical condition of the original and to difficulties of translation.[24] The nineteenth century saw no decline in the problems facing the eighteenth century poet. Issues of originality and genius were certainly no less important, and the specter of the past loomed perhaps even larger. Whether Louÿs wrote the *Chansons de Bilitis* to tease the professors, whether he intended it to be uncovered, believing the publicity of a literary scandal was worth any negative response, or whether he approached his

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[24]Folkenflik, 378-82.

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hoax as a legitimate response to the same problems Macpherson and Chatterton had

faced, his strategy is remarkably similar to theirs.[25]

In addition to the hoax format, Louÿs builds on other fragment forms and

traditions. He created a lyric cycle: even his prose poem paragraphs are separated by

blank space on the page like stanzas of poetry—in the form of Hellenistic epigrams, one

of Louÿs's critics wrote.[26] The sequence of isolated lyric moments bound loosely

together, separated from a narrative they only hint at, opens the door—as it has since

Petrarch defined the genre by omitting the prose narrative from his *Rime sparse*—to

multiple interpretations, to active imaginative participation on the part of the reader.

Louÿs is not as subtle as Petrarch or others who write in this genre: he is torn between

the inherent uncertainty of the genre and the need to justify Bilitis in order to maintain

his hoax. As a result, his prefatory *Vie de Bilitis* must answer questions his prose

poems leave unanswered.

Louÿs's work, like Isidore's monsters, inhabits the margins, the edges, the barely

acceptable: the hoax uncovered remains a hybrid, always appearing to be something it

is not; prose poems and lyric cycles made of prose poems are hybrids; Bilitis's sexual

exploits are presentable only in the context of their fake origin; Louÿs writes to his

brother that the work is a souvenir of Algeria,[27] a country both foreign and exotic, like

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[25]Folkenflik, 378-82 and Pack, 483 for more information on this point. As Clive, 110, reports, Louÿs himself later pointed out that G. Heim in German becomes *geheim* which translates as "mysterious." Perhaps "secret" is a better English translation.

[26]Venuti, 32.

[27]Venuti, 31.

Meriem ben Atala, the North African woman who served in part as a model for Bilitis.[28] The hoax itself, not so cleverly concealed and soon revealed, caused great controversy, not only because it inhabited the land of the unclassifiable, and not only because any forgery questions the distinctions between translation, authorship, and scholarship (as Venuti notes), but also because Louÿs, whether advertently or inadvertently, triggered nationalistic and political responses. Louÿs promoted Sappho's homosexuality--harshly denied in some circles, especially German, but more acceptable in France--when he depicted Bilitis in Sappho's company, and he promoted and accepted Jewish culture when he gave Bilitis the Syrian name for Aphrodite. On both accounts he was taken to task by defenders of Sappho and by antisemites.[29]

Debussy and *Bilitis*

Debussy responded three times to the *Chansons de Bilitis*. He first set three of the poems, on his own initiative, in 1897-98: "La flûte de Pan" (#20 in the first edition), "La chevelure" (not included in the original edition but sent to Debussy and later published in *Mercure de France* in August of 1897), and "Le tombeau des naïades" (#31 in the original). Debussy's setting of "La chevelure" was first published in *L'image* under the title "Chanson de Bilitis," with decoration by Kees van Dongen.[30]

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[28]Venuti, 30, and Clive 104-6. Louÿs dedicated the first edition to Gide, with reference to Meriem ben Atala by initials only. She was romantically involved with both men.

[29]Venuti, 34-35, gives more information. The poems were first published before the height of the Dreyfus Affair. Dreyfus was arrested in 1894 but Zola's article "J'accuse" was not published until 1898; afterwards, Louÿs sided with the anti-Dreyfus camp. See Nichols, *The Life of Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 92.

[30]Information on the publication of the poems and songs comes from Clive, 100-12, 141-42, and 170-71, and Wenk, 171-96.

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The songs were published as a set in 1899 and first performed as a group in 1900 by

Blanche Marot.[31]

Debussy's second response to Bilitis took the form of incidental music for a

1901 private reading of eleven of the prose poems accompanying *tableaux vivantes* and

mime. None of the three Debussy had previously set were included. This incidental

music, scored for two harps, two flutes, and celesta is delicate and atmospheric, as

Orledge says, and obvious in its exoticism, stressing modal and whole tone lines.[32]

Debussy's music blurs any supposed musical reference to ancient Greece into the

typical romantic formula for the exotic, no more authentic than Louÿs's attribution of

oriental sexual practices and North African landscapes to ancient Greece[33]--the elusive

Other, so easy to bring to mind, so difficult to differentiate and define. In a final

response to Bilitis, Debussy reworked and expanded the incidental music as the

Épigraphes antiques for piano duet.[34]

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[31]Regardless of her status at the time of Debussy's famous interrogation of Blanche
Marot's mother concerning the state of the young woman's sexual awareness, by the
time of the first performance, Blanche Marot was the mistress of Debussy's benefactor
Georges Hartmann, a fact Debussy knew. Nichols, *The Life of Debussy*, 96. Debussy's
supposed conversation with the mother is evidently reported first by Blanche Marot
herself in Charles Oulmont, *Noces d'or avec mon passé* (Paris, 1964), 70. Roger
Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1992), 59. Jeanne
Raunay refused to perform the songs for moral reasons. Lesure, 228.

[32]Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1982), 245-49.

[33]Venuti, 33-35 and Highet, 458.

[34]Orledge, 245-49, gives more information on this expansion.

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Louÿs and Debussy were such close friends during this time that it seems likely Debussy would have been one of those who knew about the hoax even before publication, though this is not made clear in the letters. Debussy's cycle presents only the early life of Bilitis. It is less direct than Louÿs's original, not simply because of the limited number of poems he set, but because of his choice. Debussy omits poems in which Bilitis speaks directly of emotion or action: her tactics to evade her mother in order to visit Lykas, the undesirable shepherd she loves, or the account of her rape, or her child. The first two settings are texts of sensuality and desire, without narrative detail; the final poem appears, on the surface, to be a statement of unexplained, but presumably inevitable, disillusionment, but in the following discussion, I advance a less desolate interpretation, one that suggests a new response to fragmentation as a source of renewal and creativity.

"Le tombeau des naïades"[35]

Le long du bois couvert de givre, je marchais; mes cheveux
devant ma bouche se fleurissaient de petits glaçons, et mes
sandales étaient lourdes de neige fangeuse et tassée.

Il me dit: "Que cherches-tu!" — "Je suis la trace du satyre. Ses
petits pas fourchus alternent comme des trous dans un manteau
blanc." Il me dit: "Les satyres sont morts.

"Les satyres et les nymphes aussi. Depuis trente ans il n'a pas
fait un hiver aussi terrible. La trace que tu vois est celle d'un
bouc. Mais restons ici, où est leur tombeau."

Et avec le fer de sa houe il cassa la glace de la source où jadis
riaient les Naïades. Il prenait de grands morceaux froids, et les
soulevant vers le ciel pâle, il regardait au travers.

[35]French text: Pierre Louÿs, *Les chansons de Bilitis* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1965), 76;
English: Debussy, *Songs*, trans. Benton, 174.

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[Along the wood covered with frost, I walked; my hair in front
of my mouth was decorated with little icicles, and my sandals
were heavy with muddy, packed snow.

He said to me: "What are you seeking?" I am following the
trail of the satyr. His little cloven hoofs alternate like holes in a
white mantle." He said to me: "The satyrs are dead.

"The satyrs and the nymphs also. For thirty years there has not
been a winter so terrible. The trail that you see is that of a
buck. But let us remain here, where their tomb is."

And with the iron of his hoe he broke the ice of the spring
where once the naiads laughed. He took large cold pieces and,
raising them toward the pale sky, he looked through them.]

In "Le tombeau des naïades," Bilitis searches a winter landscape for the elusive nymphs

and satyrs she has previously pursued through the sunny meadows and deep forests of

her youth. She follows false tracks, perhaps as false as the other near-sightings

mentioned in her earlier poems, but these tracks finally lead to her goal—too late. An

unidentified man tells her that the nymphs and satyrs have all perished in the cold; he

shows her the tomb of the naiads. The poem is, of course, a not very subtle marker of

the end of youth and youthful dreams: after this, Bilitis leaves her home and writes no

more of her childhood, her first love, or her infant.

The poem is a fragment, beginning in the middle of a journey, or simply a trek

through the snow; the text offers no explanation, nor do the previous poems. Only

Louÿs's preface informs us that Bilitis's love affair ended and that she abandoned her

child at the end of the first stage of her life, marked by this poem. Stephen Rumph's

interpretation draws on parallels between "Le tombeau des naïades" and the opening of

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Pelléas et Mélisande: the young woman, seated by a spring, discovered in the forest by an older man, questioned by him.[36] Rumph reads into this poem, and Debussy's setting, a very negative masculine/feminine conflict: the unidentified man is ultimately responsible for usurping Bilitis's poetic voice, responsible for her loss of self and the death of her creativity. When he breaks the ice covering the spring of the naïads, he reenacts the rape of Bilitis reported in a previous poem.[37] There is much room for interpretation in this poem,[38] and while recalling *Pelléas et Mélisande* is logical—Debussy had finished the bulk of the opera before he started these songs—any study that considers similarities in character and situation should perhaps also consider similarities in the music.

In his interpretation of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Richard Langham Smith discusses Debussy's symbolic use of tonality: he claims that C major (more accurately, C as the dominant of F major) accompanies darkness; that F# major and its dominant accompany both the appearance of light and the striving for the ideal, which in the opera, according to Langham Smith, is Mélisande herself. In Act II/iii, Gb/F# major

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[36]Stephen Rumph, "Debussy's *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*: Song, Opera, and the Death of the Subject," *The Journal of Musicology* 12 (1994): 477-83.

[37]Interestingly enough, Rumph fails to point out the hoe as an instrument used in agriculture, especially during growing season. It is unusual in the winter scene, and evocative when seen as an instrument associated with fertility that the man uses to break the ice/hymen.

[38]Rumph's interpretation is based on several assumptions that I would hesitate to present as fact: we do not know that the man is older: we know only that he is male, that he carries a hoe, and that he knows that they are near the tomb of the naïads. Anyone could have known it was the coldest winter in thirty years; he could be Lykas or a stranger; they could have come upon each other in the forest or they could have been walking together.

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tonality accompanies the moonlight flooding the entrance of the grotto and Pelléas's line, "voici la clarté"; also, Mélisande's "Je t'aime" in Act IV/iv is followed by a move to F# major and includes a reference to ice breaking: Pelléas sings "On a brisé la glace avec des fers rougis!"[39] [The ice has been broken with red-hot irons.]

Does "Le tombeau des naïades" reflect some of the same tonal significance? Debussy's setting is a fragment, beginning with a key signature of three sharps on a G# half diminished seventh chord (possible only as ii7 or vii7 in functional harmony) but ending quite emphatically and undeniably, after the appropriate key signature change in m. 25, in and on F# major (with a dominant-seventh to tonic resolution.) The only real indication of a tonic key area before m. 25 occurs in m. 9, where an F# minor chord is arpeggiated, but the inflection is modal, with no leading tone, and is unconvincing. In addition, Debussy continues the negative association of C major by arpeggiating a C major chord in mm. 11-14, negating the C# and G# with accidental. Here, Bilitis explains her quest; a root position C major chord accompanies the man's response, "Les satyres sont morts." (In the inner voices, the notes C and E are decorated with upper neighbors D and F#). Only through the final clarity of the F# major section does the initial key signature seem relevant. Both the repeated motion of the inner voices and the weak chord progressions leading to the final section in F# major may reflect Bilitis's wandering, her unfruitful search for the nymphs and satyrs; the final section in F# major begins at the climax of the piece—the highest pitch in the voice and the loudest dynamic

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[39] Richard Langham Smith, "Tonalities of Darkness and Light," in *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande*, Cambridge Opera Guides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 107-39. My translation

marking--just as the man breaks the ice and raises pieces to the sky, to light, to the ideal, as Wenk notes.[40] If some vestige of Langham Smith's tonalities of darkness and light remains in this song, I question Rumph's negative reading. If F# minor represents the search for the old myths, the search of the poet for inspiration (just as Louÿs was inspired by ancient myth and legend), the F# major represents the light, the source of that inspiration. F# major, accompanying the breaking of the ice and raising of the pieces to the light of the sky, represents both the freeing of the old myths and their reinterpretation in a new poetry, not their deaths and the loss of their ability to inspire. The poem then ends with the triumph of both the old symbols and Bilitis's ability to use them in a new way as she grows from a child into a mature poet.

Symbolist poets and writers use ice and glass as symbols of sterility as well as the gateway toward the ideal. Since both Debussy and Louÿs were part of the Symbolist milieu and were well acquainted with Mallarmé's works,[41] two of his poems may serve as illustrations. In "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" the swan/poet/sign (cygne/signe) is trapped from the neck down in the ice of a frozen lake; he cannot break the ice, cannot free himself to reach the sky, the creative act.[42] In "Les fenêtres," an old man, dying in a white hospital room, looks out the window at sunset. He sees/hallucinates beautiful images, infinity, through the glass; then the transparent

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[40]Wenk, 193-94. Cohn points out the similarity here to *L'après-midi d'un faune*, when the faun raises the grape skins to the sky and looks through them.

[41]Louÿs started attending the *mardis* in 1891 according to Wallace Fowlie, *Mallarmé* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 16.

[42]Fowlie, 96-101.

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glass becomes translucent, his own face is reflected in the glass, and he sees himself as an angel. He wants to break the glass, to escape, but again, he, as poet/swan, cannot.[43]

Bilitis walks through the cold snow, unable to find the mythological creatures she has sought all her life, unable to find happiness with the man she loved or the child she abandoned. All her hopes are now frozen under the ice/window pane. The man, agent of action for Louÿs's (in modern terms) sexist view, frees the old symbols and points Bilitis toward the ideal—new symbols drawn from fragments of old myth, or, if we accept John Porter Houston's reading of the frozen lake in "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" as a state of mind, haunted by memories of what never happened, then the ice breaking could free Bilitis from the myths that never were real (she had never been able to see the nymphs or satyrs).[44] Perhaps the man does reenact the rape that occurs earlier in the cycle, but to Louÿs, it was the rape that freed the woman to move forward, that freed Bilitis to leave her unhappy situation and to become a poet. In his novel *Aphrodite*, the heroine—having just left her homeland and having no mother's wrath to fear—rides into Tyre proudly showing on her legs the blood that proves she is no longer a virgin. Perhaps, rather than taking away Bilitis's voice, as Rumph suggests, the man offers her another chance to find it—in Louÿs's rather unfortunate sexist view. Debussy's F# major setting of this section, tonally so clear compared to the rest of the piece, surely presents the end of the poem in a positive light. Perhaps the tonal clarity, now able to incorporate the continuous ostinato patterns into a tonally stable

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[43]Fowlie, 31-32.

[44]Houston, 114-15.

environment, is itself a fragment of the old system, resolving the tonal inconclusiveness

of the rest of the song, providing the key to the puzzle just as the myths, in bits and

pieces, offer their key to so many poets in this age of indirection.

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CHAPTER 4. THE SKETCH

The white-hot flash of inspiration frozen before intellect and craft overlay genius; a glimpse, perhaps voyeuristic, into the realization of the idea; or the face-to-face encounter with failure, with the artist's inability to merge idea with form--whatever we choose to see in the sketch, it always fascinates. We ponder it, analyze it, frame it to exhibit in museums, and, as with any fragment, are compelled, at some level, to complete it. The very word "sketch" in the title of a work, even one the artist himself presents for exhibition, is enough to stimulate imagination and to cause critical awareness to assess such a work differently from a supposedly complete composition.

As the fragment tradition of the eighteenth century fed romanticism, the sketch--mirror image of ruin--achieved a level of acceptance and appeal that challenged the status of the finished work, that questioned how "finished" could even be determined or defined. Debussy's direct response to the sketch, and to the role of the sketch in his milieu, is the subject of this chapter. I will concentrate on two compositions: *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, a piano work that, by title, involves itself in this tradition, and *Morceau de concours*, a piece that Debussy created by literally patching together two short, unaltered sections from the only known sketches for his unfinished opera *Le diable dans le beffroi*.

The sketch and the ruin: both are incomplete, both have the power to provoke a sense of sadness or nostalgia, both inspire the imagination of the observer. Pliny the Elder's observations echo sentiments familiar today:

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> Another most curious fact and worthy of record is that the latest works
> of artists and the pictures left unfinished at their death are valued more
> than any of their finished paintings. . . . The reason is that in these we
> see traces of the design and the original conception of the artists, while
> sorrow for the hand that perished at its work beguiles us into the
> bestowal of praise.[1]

The Renaissance recognized the aesthetic value of the incomplete in both the sketch

and the ruin, but made a distinction between the two: though related by surface

resemblance—by lack of detail and finish—only the sketch possessed the inherent sense

of spontaneity and immediacy that offered a glimpse into the moment of artistic

inspiration.[2] The sketch, however, was still the preliminary step. The Renaissance

recognized, but did not purposefully make, fragments. The rough, broken surfaces of

the mutilated Belvedere torso might resemble the rough, uncut stone of

Michaelangelo's unfinished *Slaves*, but the *Slaves* were never meant to be exhibited in

their incomplete state, and they found their first home not in a public place or even on

display in the gallery or home of a wealthy patron, but rather in a grotto. There, among

the collected artifacts, shells, stones, and other bits and pieces so often decorating these

underground fantasies—fantasies not unlike the fake ruins—the *Slaves* joined the collage

that so resembles a three-dimensional grotesque.[3]

The eighteenth century continued to parallel the sketch with the ruin, but did

not limit the effect of spontaneity to the sketch. Wind illustrates this change in attitude

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[1]Kritzman, 22, citing Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 35.145.

[2]David Rosand, "Composition/Decomposition/Recomposition: Notes on the Fragmentary and Artistic Process," in Kritzman, 20-22.

[3]A photograph of the grotto with the *Slaves* is reproduced in Naomi Miller, *Heavenly Caves: Reflections on the Garden Grotto* (New York: Beorge Braziller, 1982), 8.

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by summarizing a section of Reverend William Gilpin's *Essay on Picturesque Beauty*:

"Works of art decomposed by Nature resemble those left unfinished by the hand of man: in both cases irregular and accidental shapes convey a sense of spontaneity."[4]

Further, the literary sketch was equated with the visual sketch, as seen in Samuel Johnson's remarks on the unfinished manuscripts of the poet Edmond Smith:

> . . . if some of them were to come abroad, they might be as highly
> valued as the sketches of Julio and Titian are by the painters; though
> there is nothing in them but a few outlines, as to the design and
> proportion.[5]

Diderot offers a summary of many eighteenth-century associations with the sketch:

> Movement, action, passion itself are indicated by a few characteristic
> lines, and my imagination does the rest. I am inspired by the divine
> breath of the artist. . . . In the violent throes of passion, one suppresses
> connections, begins a phrase without finishing it, lets a word escape,
> cries out and falls silent; and yet I have understood everything; it is the
> sketch of a discourse. Passion creates only sketches. What then does a
> poet do who finishes everything? He turns his back on nature.[6]

These are the attitudes toward the sketch that the nineteenth century inherited: the sketch stimulates the viewer's imagination and allows the viewer to identify with the creative process; it communicates as much as or more than the finished work; it finds its form in language as well as the visual arts; and it allies its maker with the ongoing process of creation in nature.

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[4]Edgar Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1985), 40.

[5]Harries, 58.

[6]Harries, 107.

The meaning and description of finish in a work changed from period to period. "Unfinished" can only be defined as less than the acceptable level of "finished," and artists frequently incorporated into their works some element of what was, in their time, considered an unfinished texture.[7] An appreciation for the unfinished increased in the eighteenth century, but the majority of works labeled sketches were still truly preliminary, meant to serve the creation of a finished work, whether or not that work was ever brought to completion. Sketches were a private matter: they retained the most personal elements of the artist's working method—his preliminary gestures, unrefined compositional design, rough brush strokes; they resided most properly in the artist's sketchbooks and in his studio, viewed by only a select few friends and connoisseurs, and were not intended for the general public.

Sketching was also the working method of the trained professional. In France, sketches were part of the training of artists in the Academy. They were considered necessary preliminary steps, classified and labeled according to their phase in the sequence toward the properly finished work: *esquisse*, *esquisse peinte*, *étude*, *ébauche* among others.[8] The Academy was concerned with both appropriateness of subject matter and the finish that erased rough edges, broken lines, brush strokes—all evidence

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[7]Rosand, 21, lists Leonardo, Bosch, Giorgione, and the Housebook Master as Renaissance examples.

[8]Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 74.

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of the sketch. Finish guaranteed the amount and quality of work that had gone into the painting.[9]

In the nineteenth century, as the romantic ideal of the incomplete spread, the sketch moved from these private spaces to the public arena. Measured against the Academy's officially defined finish, artists began to present to the public works that could only be defined as sketches, not just in the area of surface finish but also composition (balance, proportion) and subject matter. Constable and others of his time began making sketches that were not intended for any particular finished work, but were ends in themselves. Sketches were bought and sold, moved from the studio to the walls of homes, and eventually to the walls of galleries.[10] Once the training tool of the Academy, they became a protest against its rigor and its control over the success of artists in Paris, and also a protest against the bourgeois demand for this Academy-defined precision in finish as proof of value for the dollar.[11]

The process of sketching itself moved from the domain of the trained artist to that of the well-to-do amateur. Rather than buying paintings to document their travels, the wealthy now sketched a record—a predecessor of the photo album; their sketches were visible evidence that they had enough money and leisure not only to travel but also to learn to draw. The tool of the professional became the pastime of the wealthy.

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[9]Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (New York: Viking, 1984), 226-7.

[10]Wendelin Guentner, "The Inscription of the Sketch in the 19th-Century French Journal," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 27 (1999): 281-83.

[11]Rosen and Zerner, 226-72.

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Sketches by professionals were also in demand, but not those preliminary sketches valued for the glimpse of creativity and genius they were thought to offer; instead, the buying public wanted the same quick studies of scenes that they were themselves attempting—the "found" sketch rather than the sketch "made" by the inspiration and imagination of the artist.[12] This type of sketch became a commodity, and its dependence on the taste of the public lowered its prestige. It was never judged by the same criteria as the completed work because it was never placed in the same category. Partly as a result of this shift, the sketch-artist, especially the sketch-artist trying to make a living while establishing himself as a reputable serious artist, began to present himself as a sort of dilettante, a *flaneur*, strolling about wherever chance happened to lead him, sketching whatever sight happened to please him, selling it to whomever it happened to please. His sketches were works that he tossed off; they were not examples of what he could do if he painted as a professional. They showed his skill, but not his imagination and genius. His sketches were fragmentary, and they were not judged by the same standards as the complete work.[13]

As journals and magazines grew in popularity and sales, writers (again, especially those attempting to build a reputation) were often forced to write short articles for publication in these venues in order to make a living. They relied on the

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[12]Shiff treats the theories of "making" and "finding," and explains the distinction between two types of sketch identified by the Academy: the *esquisse* was a compositional sketch, showing the arrangement of the forms, and grew out of inspiration and imagination; the *étude* was quick study that grew directly from nature, was more passive, less consciously creative. Chapter 7, especially 74-75.

[13]Alison Byerly, "Effortless Art: The Sketch in Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature," in *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 41 (1999), 350-52.

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interest of the buying public just like the sketch-artists.[14] Writers (Irving, Dickens, Thackeray are examples given by Alison Byerly) often labeled such pieces "sketches," and often included many of the techniques used by earlier fragment writers: the mutilated document as a prop, the midsentence ending, dots of ellipsis, and parenthetical expressions. Also like the sketch-artists, these writers masked a reliance on the taste of the public behind the impression of a work tossed off, the situation happened upon and reported, the "found" rather than the planned. The title "sketch" alleviated the burden of being judged by the same standards as the finished work; it excused an informal style and a lack of what would have been considered professional quality and finish.[15]

Debussy's Sketches

Debussy left important sketches for some major completed works (*Ibéria, La mer, Pelléas et Mélisande*), for works he planned but never finished (*Le diable dans le beffroi, La chute de la maison Usher, Rodrigue et Chimène*), as well as other bits and pieces in assorted sketchbooks. For the most part, he was very old-fashioned where his sketches were concerned; they remained in his studio or among his private circle of friends and supporters, just as had the sketches of artists from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century. Sometimes, at small gatherings, he would improvise (a practice often equated with sketching) or play a work in progress. He also gave autographs (Gabrielle Dupont, his first long-term mistress, received the autograph of *Prélude à*

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[14]The sketch entered the public world again as lithographs began to be published in newspapers and books. Guentner, 283.

[15]Alison Byerly, 352-53.

"L'apres-midi d'un faune"), but his sketches are, for the most part, still very much a private matter.

The word "sketch," *esquisse*, appears in the titles of two of Debussy's published compositions: *D'un cahier d'esquisses* and *La mer: trois esquisses symphoniques.*[16] Debussy may have borrowed the subtitle for *La Mer* from Paul Gilson, who wrote an earlier symphony also titled *La mer* and subtitled "symphonic sketches."[17] Even so, it seems likely—on the part of both composers—that a reference to the sketch in the context of large works such as these finds a parallel in the large canvases of the Impressionist painters, whose works were built on the traditional spontaneous outdoor sketch, the landscape *étude*. Though they retained their sketch-like quality, they were intended to be treated on a par with finished works, and competed with the finished Academy-approved paintings. A study of *La Mer* in connection with the sketch is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the title *D'un cahiers d'esquisses*, its publication history, and the profusion of self-quotes it contains call to mind certain connections to the changing role of the sketch in nineteenth century.

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[16]Debussy's tiny piano work *Page d'album* could refer to a sketch book, but "album" more often means a book used to collect autographs and other memorabilia. Artists and musicians would add a drawing or a composition to the album of a friend or someone who was wealthy and influential. Though many such entries are sketches, some are complete works. Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831), Polish pianist and composer, owned several albums containing sketches, short writings, and compositions of many artists of her time. *Album Musical: Maria Szymanowska*, trans. Renata Suchowiejko (Krakow: Musica Iagellonica, 1999).

[17]Simon Trezise, *Debussy: "La mer"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 33-35.

D'un cahiers d'esquisses

In 1904 Debussy published the piano piece *D'un cahier d'esquisses* in *Paris illustré*. That same year, Roland-Manuel quoted Ricardo Viñes during a conversation stimulated by Viñes's having either played, or listened to Debussy play, *D'un cahier d'esquisses*:

> Debussy had declared his dream of composing music whose form was so free as to seem improvised; to produce works that sounded as if torn from the pages of a sketchbook [*arrachées aux pages d'un cahier d'esquisses*].[18]

The circumstances and details of the conversation are questionable. As Howat has shown, dates and entries in the Viñes diaries offer no corroboration and, in fact, indicate that the comment, if it was made, might have been made about another work.[19] Still, both the comment itself and Debussy's title echo the nineteenth-century fascination with the fragment in the form of the unfinished sketch. Debussy, speaking through M. Croche, does make one documented statement about the musical sketch that indicates he did associate the sketch with freedom from traditional formal structures, with imagination, and with rapid changes of idea:

> Certainly Chopin's nervous disposition let him down when it came to the endurance required in composing a sonata. But he did make some finely wrought 'sketches,' and it is at least agreed that he invented his own way of handling the form, not to mention the marvelous music he achieved in doing so. He was a man with abundant imagination, and would flit from one

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[18]Roy Howat, "En route for *L'îsle joyeuse*: The Restoration of a Triptych," *Cahiers Debussy* 19 (1995): 42. Howat quotes Roland-Manuel, *À la gloire de Ravel* (Paris, 1938), 65.

[19]Howat, "En route," 42.

idea to another without demanding a one hundred percent commission on the transaction—which is what some of our more celebrated masters do.[20]

Howat believes that this work was originally written as the second of a set of three piano works titled "Masques," "Deuxième sarabande," and "L'île joyeuse"[21] intended to be published as *Suite bergamasque*. This suite never appeared: "Masques" and "L'isle joyeuse" were each published separately, the "Deuxième sarabande" disappeared, and Debussy used the title *Suite bergamasque* for a four-piece set for piano composed in 1890 and published in 1905.

Although Debussy's use of self-quotation and borrowing is well documented, *D'un cahier d'esquisses* is perhaps the most extreme example. It was written during 1903-4, when Debussy was also working on major works such as *Estampes*, *La mer*, the *Images* for piano (first series), and the unfinished *Le diable dans le beffroi*, as well as "Masques" and "L'isle joyeuse."[22] As Howat has shown, *D'un cahier d'esquisses* borrows heavily from many of these pieces. Fig. 4.1 below lists the quotations identified by Howat, with two additions. Fig. 4.2 places those themes in the formal structure of the work. Almost every measure of the piece contains borrowed material of one sort or another. Howat uses these borrowings as evidence that *D'un cahier d'esquisses* is the missing middle work between "Masques" and "L'isle joyeuse."

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[20]*Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer*, collected by François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 47.

[21]Howat writes *L'île* [sic] *joyeuse*, but notes later that Debussy changed the spelling to *L'isle*, alluding to his stay on the English island with Emma. Howat, "En route," 38.

[22]Howat, "En route," 48, notes a reference to a now lost autograph dated January 1904.

a = Masques
b = La mer, mvt. 1
c = L'isle joyeuse
d = La mer, mvt. 3
e = L'isle joyeuse
f = Reflets dans l'eau
g = Reflets dans l'eau
h = L'isle joyeuse
i = Masques

Fig. 4.1. Borowings in D'un cahiers d'esquisses. Location of motives may be seen in Fig. 4.2.

Sections measures	I 1-10		II 11-28.			III 29-44			IV 45-53		
Form Howat Alternate	Intro A		A B			A' B'			Coda A		(coda)
Themes measures	a 1	b 6	c 11	d/e 13	f-trans-g-------- 20	c+ 29	d+ 38	e-cad 43	a/h 45	i 48	e 50
Harmony	ii	Ger6	I	ii vi-----vi/wtV---------wtV		I	ii vi Ger6----		ii I	V I	IV I

Fig. 4.2. Chart comparing possible formal structures of *D'un cahier d'esquisses*. Themes are identified in Fig. 4.1.

Certainly this is a provocative idea, though Debussy's handling of motives in these three pieces is not typical of that found in his other cyclic works and Howat offers no explanation for the separate publication of the three pieces.

Another explanation is that the piece was, as its title suggests, literally lifted from the pages of a sketchbook. Roland-Manuel's account (given above) would support this view, as would the make-up of a well-known sketchbook from the years just after 1903-4 that contains a conglomeration of jottings from many contemporary pieces. This so-called *Images* sketchbook[23] from 1906-9 includes sketches for *Gigues*, *Rondes de printemps*, and all three movements of *Ibéria*; "Voiles," "La cathédrale engloutie," and "La fille aux cheveux de lin" from Book I of the Preludes; an entry marked "Angelus" and one marked "Bouddha"; as well as many unidentified scribbles. With its collection of shared material, *D'un cahiers d'esquisses* suggests a parallel, fictional (so far as we know) sketchbook, and its title is an accurate description of the content of the work.

Debussy's title raises issues that should be of interest to analysts. By referring to the sketchbook, to a common source for ideas found in more than one work, Debussy acknowledged the conscious use of his technique of borrowing and reworking. This is a clear indication that his reuse of material in other instances is deliberate and has musical and extramusical implications that should not be ignored in any study of his work. In *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, Debussy's use of fragments that appear in so many of his other pieces suggests the sketchbook of the professional artist.

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[23]US-NYpm, Lehman Deposit (c. 1906-9).

At least since the Renaissance, these sketchbooks contained much more than a series of scenes; they included reproductions of famous works, bodies drawn in different poses, objects drawn from different angles, composition sketches, drawing exercises--perhaps ears, or hands, or feet--as well as the results of sudden inspiration or the quick study of the beautiful scene that was "happened upon."

Accepting *D'un cahier d'esquisses* as a piece made from the fragments of a sketchbook may also offer a clue to the unusual circumstances of its publication. According to Howat, in the eight years prior, Debussy had published only two pieces in magazines: two versions of his Sarabande, both meant to advertise the forthcoming publication of the suites for which they formed the middle movements.[24] Howat believes the publication of *D'un cahier d'esquisses* had a similar purpose, even though no advertisement appeared with the piece. He suggests that Debussy was playing a little joke on his followers by publishing the piece mysteriously; perhaps its appearance under these circumstances would give the message that he had a "work in progress" or that readers should "watch this space," as Howat puts it. The fact remains that no advertisement accompanied *D'un cahier d'esquisses* and the piece never appeared as part of any larger work--an unusual occurrence for Debussy's piano works of this time.[25] Perhaps Debussy's choice of title was related to his decision to publish the work separately in a periodical, but not as an advertisement for a set that would include it. Perhaps he chose this title for the same reasons that the sketch-artists and journalists

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[24]The first suite for piano, titled "Images" never appeared. It was published in 1977 by Presser as *Images (oubliées)*. The second was *Pour le piano*. Howat, "En route," 49.

[25]Howat, "En route," especially 49.

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used the word "sketch" in their titles: to present it as something tossed off, to excuse it from being judged by the same standards as the other works in sets, to justify its solo position by presenting it as a "found" and not a planned work.

If Roland-Manueland Viñes reported Debussy's quotation ("music whose form was so free as to seem improvised") correctly, and if it can be assumed to refer to this piece, then clearly Debussy wanted to capture that sense of spontaneity that links the sketch and the improvisation.[26] Yet Debussy's title suggests not an improvisation, for it implies that the bits and pieces had been jotted down in a sketchbook beforehand, but a grotesque, a creature made of parts that either do not necessarily belong together, or do not appear in their correct relationship to each other.

The grotesque has always been closely linked to the sketch, to the work that arises from imagination and inspiration--from the working of the mind without interference of convention or reality. Montaigne compared his *Essais* to the grotesque (see Chapter 1), those fanciful decorative borders where vegetation merges with human and animal parts to create composite creatures from the world of the imagination--creatures made of fragments. The sixteenth century allied the grotesque with imagination divorced from reason. Dürer stated: "If a person wants to create the

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[26]Jeffrey Kallberg offers this quotation from Eugène Delacroix's diary: "We spoke of Chopin. He told me that his improvisations were much bolder than his finished compositions. It is the same, no doubt, with a sketch for a painting compared to a finished painting." Eugène Delacroix, *Journal 1822-1863*, ed. André Joubin (Paris, 1931-32; rev. ed. 1980), 330; translation adapted from Michele Hannoosh, *Painting and the "Journal" of Eugène Delacroix* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 72; Jeffrey Kallberg, "Chopin and the Aesthetic of the Sketch: A New Prelude in E flat Minor?" paper given at annual meeting of American Musicological Society, Toronto, November, 2000.

stuff that dreams are made of, let him freely mix all sorts of creatures."[27] Here Debussy has freely mixed all sorts of parts, all sorts of creatures; they are recognizable to anyone familiar with his music. Rosen says the quotation is the memory made public; these quotes are both Debussy's memories and the listeners' memories, and they constantly pull us out of *D'un cahiers d'esquisses* and into the memory of those quoted works. Its very fabric, the quotations, function as the parts of the grotesque, never allowing it to coalesce into a perfect whole.

The formal structure of *D'un cahier d'esquisses* also creates a grotesque. This freedom to accept formal distortion and genre mix, to confuse the essential with the decorative, the center with the frame, creates the formal grotesque or arabesque. In *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, the concept of the grotesque again sheds light on Debussy's compositional practice. Fig. 4.2 shows the piece divided into four main sections: mm. 1-10, 11-28, 29-44, and 45-63. According to Howat these sections can be labeled as introduction, A, A1, and coda. Under this scheme the main motive of the piece (m. 11) is taken from *L'isle joyeuse*. The opening motive from *"Masques"* is given a subordinate role. My alternative reading suggests that the situation is not quite so clear cut. First, Howat's introduction and coda together make up more than half as much material (18 measures) as the main part of the piece (32 measures) and comprise almost 35 percent of the entire work. Second, Howat's designation coda seems to devalue the formal function of the opening motive and its return near the end. Third, although the tonic harmony appears at the beginning of the last section (m. 45), the decisive cadence

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[27]Quoted by Kayser, 22.

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in Db, with its leading tone resolution, does not occur until m. 49. Fourth, the final allusion to *L'isle joyeuse* and the strong movement to the subdominant in m. 50 are perhaps classic signs for the start of a coda.

What this alternate reading underscores is that the formal function of the four sections is anything but obvious. As we might expect from a grotesque, Debussy seems to blur the distinction between the essential and the decorative aspects of a composition. It is simply not obvious whether Howat's introduction and coda frame the movement or whether they are an integral part of it, as in my alternative. The elaborate network of tonal and thematic cross-references between the sections only serves to blur their functions even more.

D'un cahier d'esquisses satisfies two essential criteria of the grotesque: its form clearly distorts expectations of formal structure; and thematically, rhythmically, and even harmonically it is a creature made of parts. Whether they were torn from an existing, now lost, sketchbook remains a mystery, but for the listener familiar with Debussy's music today, *D'un cahier d'esquisses* must bring to mind all those pieces it either quotes or that grew from common material. If this grotesque is subtle, then, as Hugo says of the grotesques of the primitives and ancients, some were "barely deformed."[28]

Morceau de concours

In January of 1905, Debussy allowed another work to be published in a magazine: the Paris periodical *Musica* included a very short work for solo piano, now

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[28]Hugo, *Cromwell*, 71.

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titled *Morceau de concours*, as one of six anonymous pieces, given without title or other information that might reveal any of the six composers' identities, used in a "name that composer" competition.[29] As many other Debussy scholars have noted, mm. 1-7 and 19-22 of that work duplicate two segments of the only known surviving sketch for Debussy's unfinished opera *Le diable dans le beffroi* (based on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Devil in the Belfry") dated on the first page of the sketch book as August, 1903.[30] A comparison of *Morceau de concours* with the sketch for "Le diable dans le beffroi" shows that Debussy copied two passages from the sketchbook exactly and in sequence, the last fact obscured by Lockspeiser's publication of the pages out of order.[31] Separating these two sections are ten measures that consist of a single bass line and two snippets of the opening theme (suggesting a repeat and expansion of the opening) followed by a sequence consisting of parallel major triads moving by semitones, tones, and augmented seconds. For publication, Debussy replaced this passage with a new sequence constructed of newly-composed materials drawn first

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[29]The composition pieces were published in the January 1905 issue, #28. The winner and statistics were published in the April, 1905 issue, #31. The six composers whose works were included were: Gaston Serpette, Camille Saint-Saens, Cécile Chaminade, Jules Massenet, Rudolphe Berger, and Claude Debussy. There were 530 entrants in the competition. 158 did not correctly identify the composer of any work; 194 identified one composer; 103 identified 2, 57 identified 3, 9 identified 4. Only Madame Maillard, professor of piano and solfège (48, boulevard Rochechouart, Paris) identified all six correctly. She won a piano. Massenet received 304 correct identifications, Debussy 218, Chaminade 150, Saint-Saens 146, Berger 80, and Serpette 6. See *Musica*, no. 31 (April 1905): 63.

[30]The sketchbook, B.n. MS 20634, contains Debussy's score and scenario.

[31]Between the two, there is one minor difference in m. 2, but the sketch is difficult to read.

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from one, then from the other whole-tone scale, and added a coda. The sketch and *Morceau de concours* are compared in Fig. 4.3; identical passages are highlighted in grey.

Morceau de concours then consists simply of two sections of *Le diable dans le beffroi* extracted separately and reattached via a whole-tone sequence. Unlike the identifiable fragments of the decorative grotesque that become part of a fabric made of many parts, or the fragment that intrudes on a work in process, these fragments neither interrupt nor become absorbed into another texture. Rather, the fragments themselves become the subject of the work. The compositional process is like that used to create the single grotesque creature, one of Isidore's rather more deformed monsters.[32]

Given the subject matter of "The Devil in the Belfry," some connection to the grotesque, both as compositional technique and subject matter, is not unwarranted. Debussy's description in the scenario he prepared for the opera, also contained in the sketchbook with the music, describes the devil: "Il est vétu d'un strict habit noir et ne rassemble au Diable que par l'éclat de son regards et par la structure des mains." [He is dressed in a severe black suit of clothes and he resembles the devil only through the flash of his eyes and the structure of his hands.] He begins his disruption of the daily routine of a well-ordered Dutch village by first making the clock strike thirteen at noon.

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[32]Although the effect would be lost to listeners, since the music of the sketch would be unknown to them, the process is reminiscent of one of Géricault's studies of severed limbs. In some of these, Géricault arranged mutilated body parts with great care into a balanced composition, painted slightly larger than life on a large canvas, with careful attention given to lighting and surface finish. With the exception of subject matter, they meet the requirements of the the finished work. Rosen and Zerner refer to them as gruesome puns on the idea of the still life. See Rosen and Zerner, Plate 4.1 for a reproduction, and 46-48 for more information on Géricault.

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Morceau	1-8 (8 duplicates 7)	9-10 new material based on opening motive	11-18: sequence statement	19-22: sequence repetition	23-27: coda
	I	V	I--WT	I	I
Diable p 1, last system	[1-7]	8-17: repetition of opening theme in bass clef with added accompaniment	18-25: sequence statement	26-29: sequence repetition	no more material
	I	subdom	I	I	

Fig. 4.3. Chart comparing measures in *Morceau de concours* with "Le Diable dans le befroi" sketch.

Debussy's scenario is a rather bizarre juxtaposition of two different scenes. The first scene takes place in Poe's controlled little Dutch village, Vondervattimitis, and it closes with the devil playing a violon poche, leading the inhabitants way in a "gigue fantastique" towards the canal—rather like a mix of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" and the *Totentanz*.[33] The second scene, however, has nothing to do with Poe's story. The curtain rises to a "décor . . . complètement changé"; the village by the canal in Holland now resembles a village on a river in Italy. Everyone dresses and behaves in a manner quite different from their former lives (the men wear their hats sideways and the women their blouses open). Debussy then manipulates an ending that complete disarms the perversity Poe's tale: through the power of prayer and true love, the devil is undone.

Though Debussy worked on his Poe operas for many years, it seems likely that he would not have spent undue time and effort on the project for *Musica*, and it seems quite sensible that he would have pulled out any sketch that could have been made ready for publication quickly.[34] Was his choice of material from the sketchbook, or his choice of the new sequence material added to glue these sketchbook sections together, influenced by any desire to hide or to reveal his identity through this music? Did Debussy create what Gérard Genette terms a self-pastiche, an intentional imitation of his own stye? Verlaine's own "À la manière de Paul Verlaine," imitates both his style

[33]Similarities to Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* are interesting. As mentioned above, the earliest sketches for *Le diable* date from 1903, well before Debussy met Stravinsky, but (see note 34 below) letters show that Debussy continued to work on both Poe projects well after he did know Stravinsky.

[34]Letter to Jacques Durand, 21 July 1916, "It's enough to drive one to suicide at the least. If I didn't have the desire as well as the duty to finish the two Poe operas, I'd have done it already." *Debussy Letters*, 316.

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and the themes that appear frequently in his work.[35] While it seems the perfect

opportunity for Debussy to have created a similar work, *Morceau de concours* does

not have the atmospheric, subtle quality Debussy may have been best known for. (The

work is more in the style of "Minstrels" from Preludes, Book I (which was published in

1910.) The opening measures certainly stress the tritone, perhaps identified with

Debussy's music, but the new sequence, added for the magazine publication, seems the

most obvious clue since it is made of whole-tone scale material.[36] Whatever Debussy's

intentions, 218 of the 530 entrants--considerably fewer than half--correctly identified

the composer of *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

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[35]Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa
Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 124.

[36]Was Debussy, contrary to the idea of self-pastiche, trying out what he considered a
new style, as a letter to André Messager from September 1903 indicates? "Those
people who are kind enough to expect me never to abandon the style of *Pelléas* are
well and truly sticking their finger in their eye. . . . Quite likely, the same people will
find it scandalous that I should have abandoned Mélisande's shadows for the Devil's
ironical pirouette . . ." *Debussy Letters*, 141.

CHAPTER 5. QUOTATION

The use of quotation and related procedures—citation, allusion, borrowing—is found in all art forms in all eras, even in the nineteenth century when theories of genius and originality moved to the forefront of criticism and artistic endeavor. The makers of fragments are often the most blatant users of quotation: Rabelais's quotations range from the learned texts of the ancients to street songs; Montaigne's *Essais* are filled with quotations used to lend credibility to a point he wishes to make or to demonstrate the incredible breadth of his knowledge; Petrarch quotes other poets (Arnaut Daniel, Cavalcanti, Dante, among others) as well as proverbs. From the voice of authority to the voice of the ridiculous, quotations are used for their power to create relationships between the work at hand and another. By using only a minimum of material, quotations can add levels of meaning derived from a forced comparison of the foreign work to the present work and can add tension that arises from the degree to which the of borrowed or quoted material can be assimilated.[1] In the hands of the artist and the mind of the audience, such outside reference can be a powerful tool. Quotation has the power to disintegrate, to pull the audience out of the work at hand and into the quoted work, and thus to make fragments of both the quoted and the quoting texts, for as with Isidore's hybrid or composite creatures, understanding depends on the identification of all the sources of parts.

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[1] Herman Meyer, *The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel*, trans. Theodore and Yetta Ziolkowski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 6, gives more information on the tension of assimilation.

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Debussy is a master of quotation and allusion. His letters and writings are full of quotations--from poems he has read or set, from the text of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, from his own previous writing. Laforgue and Baudelaire are among his favorites, but no one he has read or heard is safe from his pen as it quotes and purposely misquotes consistently across the pages and through the years. Debussy's music is no different. From some of the earliest studies to the latest, scholars have believed that the identification of borrowed tunes--even chords and chord progressions--is integral to understanding certain aspects of his compositional procedure.[2] There is no question that Debussy was a magpie, lining his nest with all the shiny objects that caught his eye or entertained his ear, using them to his own advantage, constructing for them new surroundings, new contexts, new functions.

Both Daverio and Rosen include the use of quotation in their discussions of music and the romantic fragment, particularly with regard to the compositions of Robert Schumann. This chapter will consist of a comparison of some of their observations with comparable situations in Debussy's music. Primary works discussed are "La sérénade interrompue" from Preludes, Book I, and its borrowing from "Le matin d'un jour de fête," the last movement of *Ibéria*; and "Nuages," the first of the orchestral *Nocturnes* with its connection to Act II/iii of *Pélleas* .

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[2]Vallas is an early writer who identifies many of Debussy's quotations and self-quotations. There are several studies claiming influence on Debussy's style based on the accumulated number of quotations or references from other composers, for example, Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1979).

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<center>*Ibéria* and "La sérénade interrompue"</center>

Schumann's quotation of a theme from *Papillons* in "Florestan" is an example of

a fragment, a brief quotation that in turn fragments its host—not simply by being

included, but by literally interrupting the piece in progress. *Papillons* interrupts

"Florestan" twice, introducing a new tempo and sonority (Daverio also notes a change

of key area, from G minor to Bb major) before it is absorbed into its new context. In

"La sérénade interrompue" from the first book of Preludes, Debussy also uses blatant

autoquotation to bind his serenade to one of his most famous Spanish works, *Ibéria*.[3]

The serenade begins on the dominant, *"comme en préludant,"* in the manner of

a guitarist warming up, certainly indicating that Debussy was familiar with the function

and typical gestures of the prelude as a genre: preludes are short, improvisatory, and

end in the key of the work that follows, though they do not necessarily begin in that

key.[4] Eventually a slow, plaintive melody begins, breaks off with a *piano* return to the

preluding, which is then suddenly and violently interrupted by a brief two-and-one-half

measures, *tres vif, forte*, with a different key signature (A minor). Soft preluding and

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[3] It seems impossible to know, at this point, which work Debussy began or finished first, the last two movements of Ibéria or the prelude, or how the composition history of the two entertwines. Both *Ibéria* and the first book of Preludes were first published in 1910. Briscoe reports a short score of the second and third movements of *Ibéria* dated 1908; In *Debussy Letters*, 172, a note dates the score 25 December 1908, though Debussy claimed in 1906 that it was nearly complete. (*Debussy Letters*, 171). See Brown, *Ibéria*, for complete sketch history. There is no specific completion date for "Le sérénade interrompue," though some of the autographs of individual Preludes are dated 1909 and 1910. See James R. Briscoe, *Debussy: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 32 and 74.

[4] Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 147-48.

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a continuation of the serenade dissolve in a melodic cadenza, when suddenly, softly, out of nowhere, *lointain*, the first measures of the third movement of Debussy's *Ibéria*, "Le matin d'un jour de fête," appear, marked "*Dans un rythme de Marche lointaine, alerte et joyeuse.*" See Fig. 5.1. The key of the interruption is D major, not the Eb of the original. The "guitar" then interrupts the *Ibéria* fragment twice, the second time leading back to the serenade.

Debussy, like Schumann, has interrupted himself, interrupted his own serenade with another of his own works. Unlike Schumann's *Papillons* reference, neither this interruption from *Ibéria* nor the earlier and more violent interruption (which does not seem to be a quotation) are actually incorporated into the texture of the serenade: they remain outside. Also unlike Schumann, who inserts the word "(Papillon?)" in his score at the second appearance of the quotation, Debussy does not sign his interruption. He would not be so blatant, but the connoisseur will know; the cultivated audience that Mallarmé desired, the audience that is willing to work with the artist to decipher his meaning, will discover this clue easily.

Most sources that point out the connection between "La sérénade interrompue" and *Ibéria* mention that the interruption in the serenade consists of the first measures of the third movement, "Le matin d'un jour de fête," but an added level of connection arises from the use of interruption in *Ibéria* itself. See Fig. 5.2. As the third movement opens, its first theme (the serenade interruption theme) is itself interrupted by material

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Fig. 5.1. Mm. 78-91 of *La sérénade interrompue*.

Ibéria, end of second movement.

Ibéria, beginning of first movement.

Fig. 5.2. Reduction of last measures of the second movement and first measures of the third movement of *Ibéria*.

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recalled from the end of the second movement, "Les parfums de la nuit." The *enchaînez* indication between the movements and the appearance of the second-movement theme intruding on the third movement at its beginning blurs the line between the two movements and makes it unclear to the listener which theme actually interrupted the other. With this subtle interweaving of themes, Debussy creates the effect of a march, heard at a distance, invading and interrupting the previous movement. In "La sérénade interrompue," Debussy not only recalls his own work, his own motive, but also the effect of interruption. In the serenade, unlike *Ibéria*, the theme from the third movement is foiled: it does not take over or even become absorbed; it simply disappears.

Nuages and *Pelléas*

"A quotation is, or course, a memory made public,"[5] Rosen writes. Memory makes connections between the past and the present, the near and the far, the similar and the different. When a composer quotes, he makes a connection through his memory and through the memory of the audience; and by making a connection, he juxtaposes two things, whether they are similar or different, near or far, past or present. But memory is not perfect, as Petrarch knew and Montaigne knew. Memories are often fragments, incomplete, inexact, brought to the forefront of thought in stages, first dimly then more clearly. Rosen stresses Schumann's ability to mimic the imperfect process of memory by introducing first a short fragment of the *Papillons* quotation that interrupts "Florestan," followed by a longer version that is still incomplete. Debussy

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[5] Rosen, 111.

uses a variation of this technique to lead the listener into some of his works—works that begin as a memory, at first only half-remembered, doubling back on itself before moving on. "Danseuses de Delphes" and "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir," both from Book I of the Preludes, are examples. In each case, the opening gesture is repeated before being extended.

The *Papillons* quotation in "Florestan" interrupts, fragments, before it is absorbed, but it also connects—not only two of Schumann's individual works, but two of his collections of miniatures: *Papillons* and *Carnaval*. Through quotation, Schumann creates what Daverio terms a web of allusions that is literary in purpose and character, much as some nineteenth-century writers create characters who appear as both major or minor figures in multiple works. Each work is complete within itself and yet not complete since each quotation, each reappearing character, leads outside the work itself.[6] Debussy's quotation of *Ibéria* in "La sérénade interrompue" serves that same purpose, and there are other examples.

Debussy reworked material from Act II/iii of *Pelléas et Mélisande* for the opening of *Nuages*.[7] Fig. 5.3 shows reductions of these excerpts. At the entrance of the grotto, Pelléas and Mélisande wait for the moon to come from behind a cloud. When it does, Pelleas declares, "Here is the light," and they then enter the grotto to the first statement of the fully-developed "Nuages" theme, which occurs only when the moon comes from

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[6]Daverio, 59-61.

[7]Matthew Brown and Linda Cummins, *"Pelléas et Mélisande, Nuages, Le Rossignol*: Critical Concepts and Cognitive Consequences," American Musicological Society, Southern Chapter, Spring 1995, give information on the dating of the composition of these works.

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Pelléas et Mélisande, Act II/iii

Nuages

Fig. 5.3. Comparison of Act II/ii of *Pelléas* and the opening of *Nuages*.

behind the clouds and fills the grotto with light; in fact, one of the few places in this scene where the motivic material completely disappears is on the word "clouds" earlier in the movement. There is no motivic association with clouds in the other scenes. If the theme does not indicate clouds in *Pelléas*, but rather just the night sky, does it really mean clouds in "*Nuages*"? Or to borrow from a program note that Vallas attributed to Debussy himself, does the opening theme of "*Nuages*" describe "the slow, solemn movement of clouds," or is it really the "immutable aspect of the sky,"[8] the background across which the clouds eventually pass? [9]

[8]Vallas, 274.

There are many analogies to the auto-quotation in music, to the artist who intrudes on his own work; it is a topic that has long fascinated those who study art and literature. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, artists placed themselves in paintings. These include not only the self portraits or examples of the "artist in his studio" genre that make the artist the focal point, or the numerous cases where the artist gives his face to a character in a painting, but especially works in which the artist inserts his presence *as an artist* into the painting as a way of stating his role in the act of its creation. Often this was achieved through the use of mirrors or other reflecting devices, as in the tradition that Jan Van Eyck followed when he painted *The Arnolfini Double Portrait*, and that Velázquez turned on its head in *Las Meninas* where the mirror reflects what is most likely the subject of the painting itself.[10] In other instances, the artist makes his presence as creator known by placing a copy of his own work in the painting. These paintings within paintings provide a close parallel to certain instances of auto-quotation in music used by Schumann and Debussy. Matisse's *Large Red Interior* includes his own *Pineapple* hanging on the wall over the table; Manet's portrait of Émile Zola clearly shows his *Olympia*, or a sketch for it, hanging in the upper right-hand corner.[11] These paintings within paintings serve to remind us, more clearly than any signature, that we are looking at something made by the artist. In

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[9]Stravinsky reworked the beginning of *Nuages* to open his own opera, *Le rossignol.*

[10]Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 192-95, 247-55.

[11]The Matisse paintings are reproduced in Yves-Alain Bois, *Matisse and Picasso* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 208-9. Manet's portrait of Zola is reproduced in Shiff, 31.

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music the recognition of a quotation from another of the composer's works can also make the listener aware that he is hearing something that has been created, crafted, by the composer.

Daverio compares Schumann's system of quotations to Jean-Paul's writing. Perhaps one of the most intriguing literary examples from Debussy's time is Jules Laforgue. Though Debussy did not set any Laforgue texts, he knew the poet's work well. His letters, especially later in his life, are full of references to Laforgue and to his work, and Debussy's own texts from the *Proses lyriques* include Laforguian images. Ann Holmes documents many of Laforgue's borrowings from his own works; in particular, he drew from an early, unpublished collection, *Des Fleurs de Bonne Volonté* (all written in 1886), when he began his last collection, *Derniers Vers* (still in progress when he died in 1887), titled and published posthumously. The poems in *Derniers Vers* are in free verse; those of *Des Fleurs de Bonne Volonté* are measured. "Bref, j'allais me donner" contains lines from several of *Des Fleurs de Bonne Volonté*. In Fig. 5.4, the left-hand column shows how these lines are used to create the poem in *Derniers Vers*. Anne Holmes describes the latter work as a "series of epigrammatic formulations, strung together like so many illuminating flashes, providing reminiscences and summings-up, aspirations and accusations."[12]

Daverio also stresses quotation of other music in Schumann's work, claiming that few composers have so systematically and successfully employed allusion in

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[12]See Anne Holmes, *Jules Laforgue and Poetic Innovation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Pres, 1993), 88-90, for a more complete discussion.

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music."[13] Among the various categories of quotation, Daverio includes examples that add a historicizing dimension: if the listener associates a quotation with a particular historical event or era, the juxtaposition of past and present increases the awareness of the distance between the two. Examples include the "Marseillaise" in *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* and Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade" in No. 2 of the Intermezzi. But Debussy's collection of quotations must surely compete with Schumann's. Daverio's list calls to mind Debussy's quotation of the "Marseillaise" at the end of "Feux d'artifice" and the subtle quotation of the alto line of the Brahms Waltz Op. 39, #15 in "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," both Book II Preludes. I would add the comic or sarcastic quotation of the famous Tristan chord in "Golliwog's Cakewalk" from *Children's Corner*. Debussy's "Cakewalk" is a double grotesque—a caricature of a caricature—since the cakewalk itself originated as an African-American parody of white dancers. The awkward juxtaposition of the Golliwog's dance in the outer sections, with the Tristan quotation as "music-hall ballad"[14] in the middle section, is accented by the abrupt cakewalk interruptions of the song. The piece is grotesque even before we know just how out of place *Tristan* is when paired with the Golliwog or in the new harmonic setting Debussy provided.

It is possible, though unverified, that the cover of *Children's Corner*, which Debussy designed, may be another double grotesque—a caricature of a grotesque. We know that Debussy knew and admired the work of Odilon Redon. The disembodied

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[13]Daverio, 59.

[14]Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 216.

"Bref, j'allais me donner" from *Derniers Vers*

Poems from *Des Fleurs de Bonne Volonté*

Bref, j'allais me donner d'un "Je vous aime"
Quand je m'avisai non sans peine
Que d'abord je ne me possédais pas bien
    moi-même.

(Comment lui dire: "Je vous aime"?

Je me connais si peu moi-même

        XVIII Dimanches

(Mon Moi, c'est Galathée aveuglant Pygmalion!
Impossible de modifier cette situation.)

Chez moi, c'est Galathée aveuglant Pygmalio
Ah! faudrait modifier cette situation...)
        XXX Dimanches

Ainsi donc, pauvre, pâle et piètre individu
Qui ne croit à son Moi qu'à ses moments perdus,
Je vis s'effacer ma fiancée
Emportée par le cours des choses,
Telle l'épine voit s'effeuiller,
Sous prétexte de soir sa meilleure rose.

Or, cette nuit anniversaire, toutes les Walkyries du vent
Sont revenues beugler par les fentes de ma porte:
Vae soli!

Mais, ah! qu'importe?
Il fallait m'en étourdir avant!
Trop tard! ma petite folie est morte!
Qu'importe *Vae soli!*
Je ne retrouverai plus ma petite folie.

Le grand vent bâillonné,
S'endimanche enfin le ciel du matin.
Et alors, eh! allez donc, carillonnez,
Toutes cloches des bons dimanches!
Et passez layettes et collerettes et robes
    blanches

Les nasillardes cloches des dimanches
Je regarde passer des tas de robes blanches.
        XXVIII Dimanches

Dans un frou-frou de lavande et de thym
Vers l'encens et les brioches!
Tout pour la famille, quoi! *Vae soli!* C'est certain.

La jeune demoiselle à l'ivoirin paroissien
Modestement rentre au logis.
On le voit, son petit corps bien reblanchi
Sait qu'il appartient
À un tout autre passé que le mien!

Le jeune fille au joli paroissien
Rentre au logis;
Son corps se sent l'âme fort reblanchie,
Et, raide, dit qu'il appartient
À une tout autre race que le mien!
        XXVIII Dimanches

Ah! que je te les tordrais avec plaisir,
Ce corps bijou, ce coeur à ténor,
Et te dirais leur fait, et puis encore
La manière de s'en servir,
De s'en servir à deux,
Si tu voulais seulement m'approfondir ensuite un peu!

Que je te les tordrais avec plaisir,
Ce coeur, ce corps!
Et te dirais leur fait! et puis encore
La manière de s'en servir!

Si tu voulais ensuite m'approfondir...

        XXVIII Dimanches

Fig. 5.4. Autocitation in Laforgue's "Bref, j'allais me donner" from *Derniers Vers*.

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Ah! que je te les tordrais avec plaisir,
Ce corps bijou, ce coeur à ténor,
Et te dirais leur fait, et puis encore
La manière de s'en servir,
De s'en servir à deux,
Si tu voulais seulement m'approfondir ensuite un peu!

Que je te les tordrais avec plaisir,
Ce coeur, ce corps!
Et te dirais leur fait! et puis encore
La manière de s'en servir!

Si tu voulais ensuite m'approfondir...

        XXVIII Dimanches

Non, non! C'est sucer la chair d'un coeur élu,
Adorer d'incurables organes,
S'entrevoir avant que les tissus se fanent
En monomanes, en reclus!

Sucer la chair d'un coeur élu
Adorer de souffrants organes,
Etre deux avant qu'on se fane!
Ne serai-je qu'un monomane
    Dissolu
        XX Dimanches

Et ce n'est pas sa chair qui me serait tout,
Et je ne serais pas qu'un grand coeur pour
   elle,
Mais quoi s'en aller faire les fous
Dans des histoires fraternelles!

Ah! c'est pas sa chair qui m'est tout,
Et suis pas qu'un grand coeur pour elle;

Non, c'est d'aller faire les fous
Dans des histoires fraternelles!

. . .

L'âme et la chair, la chair et l'âme,

C'est l'Esprit édénique et fier
D'être un peu l'Homme avec la Femme.

Oh! c'est pas seulement la chair,
Et c'est pas plus seulement l'âme
C'est l'Esprit édénique et fier
D'être un peu l'Homme avec la Femme.
        V Dimanches

En attendant, oh! garde-toi des coups de tête,
Oh! file ton rouet et prie et reste honnête.

Oh! file ton rouet, et prie et reste honnête
        XXIV Dimanches

--Allons, dernier des poètes,
Toujours enfermé tu te rendras malade!
Vois, il fait beau temps tout le monde est dehors;
Va donc acheter deux sous d'ellébore,
Ça te fera une petite promenade.

head of the Golliwog, drawn by Debussy as a balloon tethered by a string, floating over

Jimbo, resembles several of Redon's disembodied heads--drawings of flowers with

faces, many tied to the ground by a thin stem that seems incapable of supporting their

weight.[15]

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[15]Brown and Cummins, 1995; and Margaret Cobb, "Debussy and *Le Rosette*," *Cahiers*

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Add to the borrowing and quotation list Debussy's *La boîte à joujoux*. His

ballet for children is completely filled with quotations and references, from moments

that allude to Stravinsky to quotations from Debussy's own unpublished works such as

"Jimbo's Lullaby" and "The little Nigar." Hugo said of the grotesque, "It is

everywhere; on the one hand it creates the deformed and the horrible; on the other the

comic and the buffoon."

Debussy 22 (1998): 75-87. *A Flower with a Child's Face*, one example that is very
quite striking, is reproduced in Henri Dorra, ed., *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical
Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 50.

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CONCLUSION

Was Weissmann correct in his assessment of Debussy's music? Did Debussy, in fact, leave nothing incomplete? From this investigation, it appears that the cultivation of the "incomplete" plays a major role in the music of Debussy. His repertoire of fragmentary constructions is broad and diverse: the off-tonic beginnings, inconclusive endings, and digressions or interpolations; the aesthetic of the sketch, as opposed to the unambiguously "finished" product; quotation as memory. These resonate with the thought and practice of artists in his milieu who worked in other fields and, though more distantly, with the thought and practice of romantic composers, artists, and critics.

Beginning *in medias res*, ending inconclusively, fractured and fragmented by digression upon digression: these are the hallmarks of Schlegel's "digressive" narrative, which he labelled arabesque. Debussy used all of these in his compositions. Off-tonic beginnings mirror the *in medias res* openings of Verlaine's poems "Green" and "Spleen," of Mallarmé's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, and of Louÿs's "Le tombeau des naïades." They express, as had the writers in their texts, an awareness of the impossibility of finding an absolute beginning to anything. When does love begin; when does it begin to fade? Why is Bilitis wandering in the snow; where is she going? When did the faun begin his musings on his memories, and were the memories even real? These are questions that are impossible to answer; the texts and Debussy's settings, by

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avoiding the attempt to do so, capture the elusive quality of questions whose answers cannot be known, only approached; of those that cannot even be approached except in retrospect, revealing or creating an ever clearer context as they unfold toward a tonic. The auxiliary cadence becomes a part of Debussy's language due to its power to prolong tension, to blur boundaries, and to question meaning.

Similarly Schumann had used the off-tonic beginning and ending to question meaning, as in "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," whose opening and closing progressions in F# minor question the A major of the protagonist's (optimistic) recollections. The song ends inconclusively with a final half cadence, unresolved, a musical symbol of desire unsatisfied, one of the pervasive topoi of the German romantics. Such inconclusive endings are, of course, rare; another is found in Chopin's F major Prelude, where the final tonic triad is clouded by the addition of an E♭. Hoeckner reads such endings—unresolved or dissolving—as emblems of distance, the infinite, the elusive ideal—another romantic topos. The unresolved ending of Debussy's mysterious "Canope" may likewise call up the distance of the exotic, the distance of death; its lack of resolution casts the shadow of the unknowable on the harmonic interpretation of the whole piece, as the arguments of numerous theorists show.

Debussy's responses to the sketch reflect many of the attitudes prevalent in late nineteenth-century France. His own sketches and improvisations remained, for the most part, a private matter—a matter for his studio and for a small circle of friends. He published only one work that can truly be considered a sketch: *Morceau de concours* was made by gluing together two sections of his sketches for the uncompleted opera *Le*

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diable dans le beffroi; thus it is a grotesque. He also appreciated the sketch for the sense of spontaneity it can evoke and for the romantic fascination with the unfinished that it articulates. The subtitle of *La mer: trois esquisses symphoniques* indicates a response to the aesthetic of the unfinished; *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, both by its title and through Viñes's reported remarks, appears to be a response to the aesthetic of the fragment as well. The piece does indeed appear to be constructed of ideas jotted down in a sketchbook now lost—a little grotesque made of scraps of ideas whose full development comes in other works. But the title of this piece, originally published in a journal, recalls the practice of writers, forced to write for newspapers in order to make a living, of calling their works sketches to avoid having them judged by the same standards as finished works, or to excuse any shortcomings by pretending they were simply tossed off, not carefully worked out. Both conceptions of the sketch reflect the romantic ideal of the artwork that is in a state of becoming rather than finished, an ideal perhaps best expressed by Schlegel:

> Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being
> fully analysed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state
> of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should
> forever be becoming and never be perfected.

Musical quotation is also a feature in Debussy's compositional practice, as in "La sérénade interrompue," interrupted (seemingly at a distance) by a theme from Debussy's own *Ibéria*. Quotation does not necessarily involve interruption, as when Debussy, in his orchestral *Nocturne* "Nuages," develops a motive from *Pelléas et Mélisande* found at the point in Act II/iii where the moon comes from behind the

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clouds, and when he quotes the "Marseillaise" in "Feux d'artifice" or *Tristan* in "Golliwog's Cakewalk." In any case, quotation recalls one of the favorite techniques of some romantic composers, as Rosen and Daverio have shown.

Thus Debussy's employment of fragmentary structures helps show him to be the heir of the musical, artistic, and philosophical traditions of the nineteenth century, a conclusion that is in keeping with his association with Symbolist writers who had, in their turn, been influenced by the fragments of German romantic literature, by Hoffmann, Heine, Tieck, and Novalis. Symbolism was, as Henri Peyre states, "the continuator of romanticism,"[1] and the Symbolists had certain ideals in common with early German romanticism. Grounded in transcendental idealism, both placed the power of the imagination above analytical intellect, believed in the absolute worth of creative activity, and sought to renew the universe through the renewal of poetry. To that end, both had their manifestos, their programs for the future of literature: Schlegel's *Athenäum*, Novalis's *Blütenstaub*, Ghil's *Traité du verbe*, Moréas's *Manifeste du symbolism*.[2] While direct influence is difficult to calculate, Peyre summarizes their similarities: "It happens that a family of like minds finds itself thus, a hundred years and a thousand miles removed from one another." The following texts, the first from A. W. Schlegel and the second from Baudelaire, Symbolism's forefather, surely suggest like goals:

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[1] Peyre, 2.

[2] Peyre, 2 and Furst, 100-1.

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The arts should be brought together again, and bridges sought
from one to another. Perhaps columns shall come to life as
paintings, paintings become poems, poems become music.[3]

Nature is a temple whose living pillars
Sometimes emit confused words;
Man crosses it through forests of symbols
That observe him with familiar glances.

Like long echoes that mingle in the distance
In a profound tenebrous unity,
Vast as the night and vast as light,
Perfumes, sounds, and colors respond to one another.[4]

The question must be asked, as it was asked of other writers of fragments:

Why does Debussy fragment? Certainly his fragments are in response to texts that he

sets (such as "Green" and "Spleen"), texts that directly inspired him (such as *Faune*),

and texts that surrounded him (the novels of Louÿs, Conrad, Gautier, and many

others). And certainly he also fragments in response to models of fragmentation in

music--to the music of Schumann and Chopin--music that he played, studied in the

conservatory, and heard in concerts and recitals. These are the musical equivalents of

the German romantic literary fragments. There is no reason to suggest that Debussy

does not do this consciously. He writes of Chopin, discussing sonata form: " . . . il en

fit plutôt des 'esquisses' très poussées." [But he did make some finely wrought

"sketches."][5] Debussy's response to the fragment comes both second-hand through

literature, and first-hand through the music itself.

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[3]Quoted in Donald J. Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York:
Columbia University Press, 1965), 76.

[4]Baudelaire, "Correspondences," trans. Dorra, 11.

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Debussy also fragments to represent reality--the reality of the sounds and perfumes that swirl in the night air; the reality of the band heard at a distance, interrupting. Just as surely, Debussy fragments to represent failure. The German romantics belief in the ever-becoming work of art had in Symbolism become tinged with the bitterness of the failure of language. Symbolist poets lost faith in the power of words to communicate,[6] and so, perhaps, Debussy had lost faith in the old formulas to communicate. But just as the Symbolist poets--even Mallarmé--never abandoned the syntax of language, relying on its power to keep their fragments from becoming meaningless, so Debussy continued to rely on the remnants of the old forms and old expectations to hold his fragments together in an exquisite balance.

Isidore of Seville identified, described, and justified the imperfect, the monster, the fragment. In some small way I do the same, for while no one today calls Debussy's music monstrous, many overlook the ties of his fragments to the past, seeing them as completely new and original, without history, limbs severed from no known model. A desire to recognize Debussy's originality need not negate his fragments, nor must an acknowledgment of the historical antecedents of his fragments diminish his importance in the creation of the modern fragment. His role was to foretell the future--surprisingly, precisely the role of Isidore's monster.

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[5]Debussy, *Monsieur Croche Antidilettante* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1926), 17-18. Translation from *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer*, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 47.

[6]Laurence M. Porter, *Crisis of French Symbolism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), discusses this element of Symbolism. See especially the first chapter.

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APPENDIX

PERMISSION LETTER

Date Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2001 2:57 PM
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 Subject: Fwd:permission to use examples in doctoral dissertation
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Date: 05/23/2001 12:18 PM

I am writing to ask permission to use the following measures from Dover
scores
 as examples in my dissertation, titled "Debussy and the Fragment," which is
presented as partial fulfillment of the PhD at Louisiana State University.

1. Debussy, Songs, "Le tombeau des naiades," measures 1-4
2. Debussy, Pelléas et Mélisande, measures 449-450
3. Debussy, Nocturnes, Nuages, measures 1-2
4. Debussy, Iberia, two measures after rehearsal 52 through one measure
after rehearsal 53 (total of 8 measures)
5. Debussy, Preludes, "La sérénade interrompue," measures 78-91
6. Debussy, Songs, "Spleen," measures 1-2
7. Debussy, Songs, "Green," measures 1-20 and 48-58
8. Debussy, Preludes, "Canope," measures 1-33

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VITA

Linda Page Cummins received the Bachelor of Music degree in piano and

Master of Music degree in musicology at the University of Alabama. She entered the

doctoral program at LSU as a graduate school fellow. While writing her dissertation,

she held the Bourse Chateaubriand from the French government for a year's study in

Paris, a grant from the Camargo Foundation for a semester in residence at Cassis, and a

graduate school dissertation fellowship. She is now an assistant professor at the

University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT
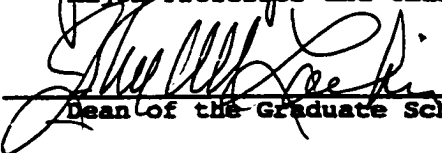
Candidate: Linda Page Cummins

Major Field: Music

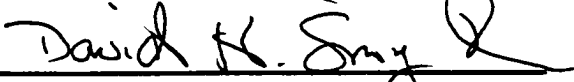**Title of Dissertation:**   Debussy and the Fragment

Approved:

_____
Major Professor and Chairman

_____
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

_____
Co-Chair

Adelaide M. Russo
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Date of Examination:

May 9, 2001
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