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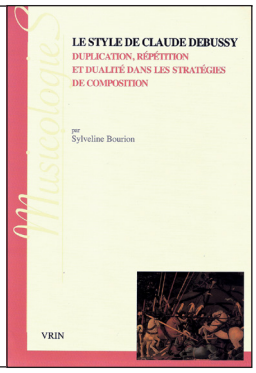


The topic of duplication in the works of Debussy, one first identified by André Schaeffner[1] and initially investigated by Nicolas Ruwet,[2] is explored in detail in a recent monograph by Sylveline Bourion. Bourion's study reveals that the simple formula $[A_1] + [A_2]$ (*dupliqué* and *dupliquant* in the author's terminology), when pursued to its logical end, provides detailed insight into the question of how Debussy used this seemingly simple procedure so frequently in works from the beginning to near the end of his career.[3] The preceding formula for duplication differs from that of simple repetition ($[A_1] + [A_1]$) in that there is a slight difference between dupliquant and dupliqué. It is this process of change that Debussy uses to transform repetition into duplication to produce some of the most complex works of the early 20th century; it also masks the near-repetitive process, as if the composer is erasing his tracks behind him.

This process of the composer altering his material in specific ways to avoid simple repetition, and the ungainly mathematics needed to represent the 18 different ways Debussy accomplishes this task, prompts the author to adopt a military strategy to describe each of Debussy's compositional strategies for duplication. The author acknowledges the shock readers may have in describing the music of Debussy in militaristic terms, and her response is disarming:

> Si nous l'avons fait […] c'est parce que nous souhaitions que le détail de notre exploration poïétique soit illustré par un jeu de manœuvres qui convainque le lecteur que Debussy […] met en jeu, pour déjouer les attentes de ses auditeurs, des tactiques compositionnelles parfaitement stratégiques, et dont la récurrence est telle qu'il devient évident qu'elles résultent d'une action consciente, de décisions volontaires et déterminées: en bref, que Debussy agit avec les notes et leurs silences pleins de sens, avec les textures et les structures, de la même façon qu'un général d'infanterie le ferait avec ses troupes […] et qui a dit, du reste, que la recherche ne pouvait pas être ludique? (pp. 18-19).

While the pairing of military tactic and compositional strategy may be novel, it raises a question that may nag at certain readers. The military tactic introduced at the beginning of each chapter is not simply described and set aside, but is referenced continuously throughout the discussion of examples so that Debussy is cast in the role of general as much as he is composer. This approach, derived from the stated idea that Debussy was consciously aware of using duplication,[4] can blur the line between memorable description and compositional intent. This perceived problem may break along the line of tradition—Francophone or Anglophone—in which the individual reader was trained, a topic to which we will return below.

Bourion's study is divided into four large sections, each devoted to the study of duplication progressing from the most immediate level in the opening section to the largest scale in the final one. This question of time scale was identified as problematic by Ruwet, and it is typical of Bourion to explore her topic from every conceivable angle. It becomes obvious early on that the strategies introduced by the author are not self-contained, but can rather be combined; in certain examples, the author enumerates the list of strategies contained within it, revealing the level of complexity possible with such hybrid forms of duplication.

The opening section ("The Topical Tactics") introduces the first seven pairings of composition strategy and military technique: camouflage, bombardment, diplomacy, the placement of formations, the attack of reserve troops, partial retreat, and supporting troops. These chapters rely on relatively detailed analysis to identify these compositional strategies, and the author excels at this type of writing. Interspersed with the simple identification of the various strategic pairings are analyses of greater depth. It is often in these passages that the author introduces musico-poetic analysis, and the results are always interesting.

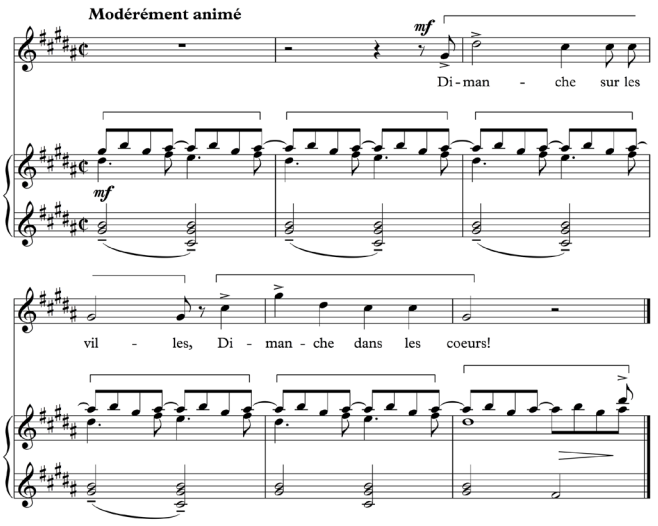
One such passage focuses on "La grotte" (*Trois chansons de France*) as an example of "placement of troops," in which duplication does not coincide with the barlines, thereby undermining the written meter. The opening measures represent a previously introduced tactic, that of bombardment:[5] here, the opening gesture is repeated at one-beat intervals for the first two measures of the song. The "placement of troops" begins in bar three, with duplicated

[1] André Schaeffner, "Debussy et ses rapports avec la musique russe" in *Musique russe*, vol. 1, ed. by Pierre Souvtchinsky, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1953, pp. 95-138.
[2] Nicolas Ruwet, "Notes sur la duplication dans l'œuvre de Claude Debussy," *Revue belge de musicologie*, no. 16, 1962, pp. 57-70.
[3] This study does discuss passages from the two books of *Études*, although not from the three sonatas.
[4] "Les chiffres de cette prépondérance statistique parlent d'eux-mêmes: selon les périodes et les œuvres, c'est entre 70 % et 100 % du matériau en présence qui est soumis à l'emploi de la duplication! Cette extrême importance du phénomène donne à penser que Debussy a bien dû mettre au point un faisceau de stratégies, conscientes, volontaires, afin d'en réguler le marché." (pp. 19-20).
[5] Bombardment, i.e. dupliqué, dupliquant, tripliquant, quadrupliquant, etc.

units two beats long, thus creating six measures perceived in 2/4 rather than the notated four measures of 3/4.[6] Triple meter is reestablished by the beginning of the second strophe and lasts through the opening of the third strophe. With the return of the placement of troops on the last beat of bar 18, Bourion makes an interesting observation. This return of this corresponding material brings about the establishment of binary meter as before, but also maintains the chordal texture that characterizes the second strophe (rather than the contrapuntal texture used in mm. 3-6). It is due to these contradictory characteristics in these final measures that the author posits a new formal organization, one based on the location of passages using the "placement of troops" rather than the ternary form created simply by the three strophes of the poem. With so much of Bourion's study devoted to the introduction of her 18 tactics, it is in analytic passages such as this that the true potential for analysis incorporating the idea of duplication is truly seen.

While much of Bourion's analysis can be revelatory, there are passages that are problematic due to the forced identification of duplication within them. One such example occurs in the final chapter of the section, which introduces the tactic of supporting troops (the addition of instruments with or without adding a new musical line, or the movement of a musical idea from one instrument to another). In her analysis of "De soir" (*Proses lyriques*), Bourion notes that the vocal line in Debussy's *mélodies* rarely takes part in the process of duplication. On the other hand, Ruwet had previously introduced the idea of the voice's absence in the opening measures of a *mélodie* as representing a concealed, albeit delayed, relation with the opening measures.[7] Bourion pursues this point in her analysis of "De soir," identifying the opening one-measure units in the piano and the two-measure units introduced by the voice. It is difficult, however, to hear the vocal line as representing duplication in this passage. The author admits "il y a donc, en propre, introduction de nouveau matériau dans la duplication tardive de la voix" (p. 176). Nevertheless, the term duplication is used throughout; in fact, Bourion takes pain to note the similarity between the two two-measure ideas, including the three common pitches they share, the opening ascending fifth leap, and the identical three pitches used to conclude each[8] (example 1).[9] While this passage may represent the most ideologically driven analysis in this study, it is not alone.

Example 1: Claude Debussy, *Proses lyriques*: "De soir," mm. 1-6.



Most unfortunately, the placement of similar passages are often found as the opening example of a chapter or section.

The second section ("The Tactic of the Unfolding of Operations") contains the observation that the piano work *Lindaraja* is exceptional in Debussy's output since it contains duplication throughout (p. 204). The author provides a formula to quantify the amount of duplication that typically appears in Debussy's works, which is between five or six repetitions of sections made up of blocks containing duplication and non-duplication (with an optional opening block of non-duplication and an optional closing block of duplication).[10]

This is the hierarchical level discussed in this section, that of blocks of material devoted to duplication, and the author makes this point clearly with a graph of "Nous n'irons plus au bois" (*Images oubliées*) in its entirety, one that reveals this pattern of juxtaposed blocks devoted to duplication and non-duplication.

One of the greatest surprises found in this study is the tactic of deception, one which involves the transposition of material with some melodic or rhythmic characteristic altered. The puzzling aspect is that strict transposition in not considered duplication by the author, even in passages that seemingly feature duplication. One passage from "Dans le mouvement d'une sarabande" (*Images oubliées*) serves as an excellent example (example 2). The brackets

[6] The brackets in this example correspond to the duplication of the main music idea in the piano. See below for more on the relationship between the vocal line and the piano in terms of duplication.

[7] Nicolas Ruwet, *Langage, musique, poésie*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, pp. 88-90.

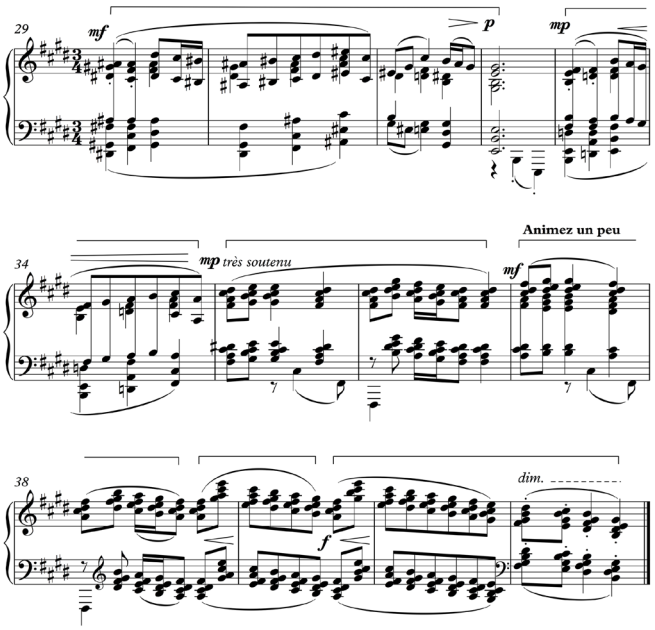
[8] Just before moving on, the author belatedly writes "cette seconde duplication (ou cette poursuite de la première, selon l'angle que l'on choisit)" (p. 177).

[9] It should be noted that the clef of the piano's left hand in example 83 is treble, rather than the bass clef that appears in this study.

[10] More precisely, the author writes that the number of repeated blocks made up of duplication and non-duplication is between one and sixteen, *Lindaraja* lying at the latter extreme. There is a mistake in the notation of Tableau 28, in that the square symbol is defined as representing a block of non-duplication when it actually represents the opposite.

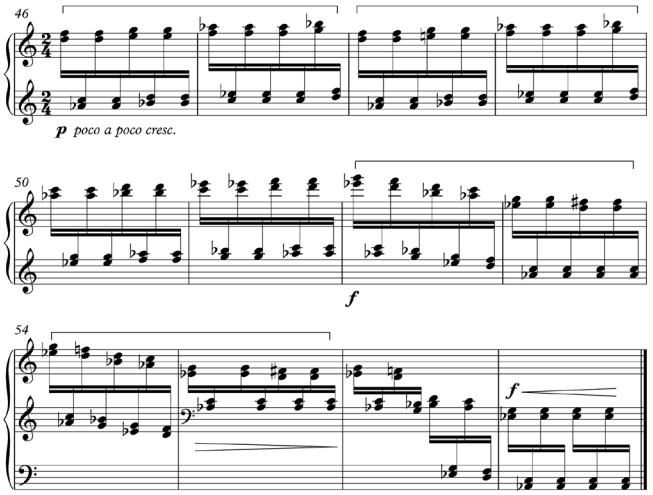
found in measures 29-34 actually do show duplication, but not due to the tactic of deception (mm. 33-34 are simply a transposition down by major third of mm. 29-30), but rather due to the tactic of partial retreat of troops (mm. 31-32 of the dupliqué are not found in the dupliquant). The same is true for measures 35-38: here, measures 37-38 repeat measures 35-36, and duplication only takes place due to the rhythmic shortening of the final beat of the dupliquant. Duplication following the tactic of deception, according to the author, only appears in the final measures of this passage.

Example 2: Claude Debussy, *Images oubliées*: "Dans le mouvement d'une sarabande," mm. 29-41.



There are several problems with this interpretation. First, while measures 29-34 undeniably represent the tactic of the partial retreat of troops, it seems precious to deny the appearance of duplication via deception in measures 35-38 due to a missing eighth note in the final chord; this reading ignores the more salient aspect of the acceleration of the repetition of material that begins at this juncture. Second, measures 37-38 are not a transposition by ascending third of measures 35-36, as the author writes.[11] Finally, if measures 38-41 are considered duplication by trickery, why are measures 50-51 from "Les tierces alternées" (*Préludes*, book 2) not given the same analysis several pages later (example 3), but rather considered merely transposition? Both passages remain within their diatonic collection[12] and the motion in each is not by exact intervallic transposition, but rather by successive motion within the collection, i.e. chord planing. The author later introduces a section on the interaction between transposition and duplication, but does not retroactively alter her analyses of these passages. Certain readers may therefore be confused regarding the precise manner in which to apply the tactic of deception in their own analytic work.

Example 3: Claude Debussy, *Préludes*, book 2: "Les tierces alternées," mm. 46-57.



Section Three ("The Tactics of Troop Coordination") occurs at the same hierarchical level of structure as the preceding one, but here duplication appears simultaneously. This section is perhaps the strongest of the entire study, due to the complexity of the material and the strength of the examples used to demonstrate the three strategies contained therein. The first is the tactic of simultaneous offensives, in which two pairs of duplicated passages are juxtaposed, with an element of overlap shared between them since the second set begins before the first set ends. The tactic of encirclement involves duplication at multiple hierarchical levels, so that there is both a dupliqué and dupliquant within a larger duplicated pair. The imagery from the military tactic involves the element of small-scale non-duplication within the larger-scale dupliqué or dupliquant, which is surrounded by duplication at two hierarchical levels. Finally, division of the ranks reveals duplication appearing simultaneously in different musical lines, their rhythmic lengths sometimes identical or multiples of one another, sometimes not. These three tactics, and the examples Bourion uses to illustrate them, reveal the true depths of the topic of duplication in the hands of an author who clearly loves her topic.

The final section ("On the Tactics of the Sublimation of Combat Using Duplication to the Principal of Repetition"), moves into larger scale appearances of duplication, which, as the title suggests, become more difficult to describe using the term duplication. As noted earlier, the author is

[11] "Les mesures 35-38[2] offrent une second transposition, cette fois-ci à la tierce supérieure." (p. 262).
[12] The E flat is consistently employed from measure 49 onwards in the excerpt from "Les tierces alternées."

at her best in explicating detailed analytic passages of small- to medium-scale, and these chapters on large-scale repetition suffer as a result. This is especially true in chapter seventeen, which discusses the various appearances of a theme throughout a single work or movement.

This study is clearly written, thorough, and fascinating to read. The depth of the author's expertise is apparent on every page, and the breadth of her knowledge, in the form of quotations from figures from Sun Tzu and Napoléon to Lorenz, is breathtaking. This is undeniably the definitive study of duplication; I can't imagine even Ruwet would disagree with this statement. As such, Bourion's study will change the way scholars think about the analysis of Debussy's music henceforth. One may quibble with the author's reading of an example, or the interpretation of a tactic, but given the length and depth of this study, this is to be expected. This is one of the recent monographs on Debussy that every scholar should have on their bookshelves. As it is written, however, it is unlikely to find a wider audience outside its intended Francophone audience. This is not because of the language as much as it is due to the author's limited embrace of Anglophone theory: only the implication-realization model of analysis utilized by Leonard Meyer[13] seems to have made a concrete impact on this study. In her *prolégomène*, the author mentions two of the Debussy scholars whose work she finds most edifying (p. 14): Françoise Gervais[14] and Roy Howat.[15] In order to join the ranks of such scholars, both of whom incorporated elements from both traditions into their own work, Bourion would do well to do the same. Perhaps this is the direction that the author's future work will take. If so, this writer will not be alone in waiting impatiently for the results of this work.

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[13] Leonard Meyer, *Music, the Arts and Ideas*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
[14] Françoise Gervais, "Étude comparée des langages harmoniques de Fauré et de Debussy," *La Revue musicale*, no. 272 and 273, Paris, Richard-Masse Éditeurs, 1971.
[15] Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.