

TRANSCULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF
CIRCASSIAN MUSIC IN MILY BALAKIREV'S
ISLAMEY: ORIENTAL FANTASY (1869)

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the context in which the Russian composer, M. Balakirev, used folk idioms to create a representation of Circassian musical culture in *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy*. It was composed for piano in 1869 after Balakirev's trip to the Caucasus during its colonization by the Russian Empire and it is an interesting example of a musical representation of the "Oriental."

Based on Edward Said's theory of the Orientalism, this thesis examines the construction of Circassian stereotype as Russia's "Other". It presents the complex historical relations between Russians and Circassians and discusses evidence for treating *Islamey* as an example of an Orientalist Other, taken from several authors, including Balakirev himself. Ultimately, this thesis describes Balakirev's representation of Circassian culture and proposes reasons for his appropriation of folk music. It concludes by outlining the benefits of cultural exchanges between the Russian and Circassian nations that took place over the last century.

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Over the course of my life I have been truly fortunate to have many people around me that helped to shape and combine my interests of classical music, history and culture. Living with my grandparents in Novosibirsk, Russia for the first thirteen years of my life, I have been immersed in numerous aspects of Russian culture at an early age. Studying the poetry of Alexander Pushkin and Sergei Yesenin, reading works by Mikhail Bulgakov and Anton Chekhov, playing piano music by Sergei Rachmaninov and Sergei Prokofiev and admiring pianistic virtuosos such as Sviatoslav Richter and Vladimir Horowitz were all part of my daily activities. However, after hearing my grandfather's memories from his life during the World War II and his friendships with Ossetians, and other North Caucasians, I became profoundly interested in the historical and cultural legacy of North Caucasian nations. Their traditions and customs create a very rich, and multi-faceted fabric of the present day culture of the Russian Federation.

As I continued to research, I have met many wonderful people that helped shape my musicological interests. Firstly, I would like to extend a special thank you to Jada Watson for sharing her time and knowledge in our discussions on Russian art music, for giving me her numerous journals and books on Soviet music, for providing priceless advices, and helping me shape my ideas. I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to Ruslan Kuchiev and all his family for their highly informative website on Ossetian culture, for answering all my questions in the early stages of my research, and for their kindness and hospitality.

Although there are currently no Russian music scholars at the University of Ottawa, all professors been encouraging and supportive of my interests. In particular, I am indebted to the

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I shall discuss the representation of Circassian musical culture in Mily Alexeevich Balakirev's *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy*, op. 18, one of the composer's most known and celebrated pieces. It was composed for piano in 1869 after Balakirev's trip to the Caucasus during its colonization by the Russian Empire. Balakirev, an accomplished pianist, one of the most influential Russian composers of the late nineteenth century and the leader of the "Mighty Five," was known for taking inspiration from the folk songs of cultures inside and outside of the Russian Empire.

Subtitled as *Oriental Fantasy* by the composer (*Fantaisie Orientale* in the original publication of 1869)¹, this piece represents an interesting example of an Oriental work. In spite of its Circassian title *Islamey*, upon closer examination of the melodies and evidence of Orientalism, it becomes obvious that Balakirev constructed a misrepresentation of Circassian culture. I would like to clarify that for my evidence, I am relying largely on the available research and the scholarly accounts of several authors regarding the origins of the melodies used by Balakirev. I have not done any ethnomusicological fieldwork, and I have not consulted ethnomusicological resources.

Although largely based on Edward Said's theory of Orientalism as postcolonial critique, the broadest goal of this thesis will not be to focus only on the power relations between Russian Empire and Circassia and to condemn the imperialist oppressor. Instead, its goal will be to avoid a straightforward rhetoric of blame and to show this particular musical work as part of the

¹ Miliĭ Alekseevich Balakirev, *Islamey: fantaisie orientale pour piano* (Hambourg: D. Rahter) 1869.

relationship between culture and empire. This is why I shall focus on Said's theory of the Orient as a European construct and I shall examine this construction of the Russian's "Other" in *Islamey*.

In addition to Said's work, I shall also draw upon the work of Nicholas Harrison, a professor of Postcolonial Studies at the King's College in London. He emphasizes that creative works do not have to be fully accurate and have no obligation to present a source of true and accurate knowledge, contributing to the creative work's inherent non-accurate representative nature. Instead of accuracy, creative works are there to provide aesthetic experience, enjoyment and escape, and their main value lies in their ability to capture something new and important about the world.

The idea of music's ability to capture something new about the world-its "worldliness"- is of great interest to me, and it will be the underlying theme throughout this thesis. While music may be valuable for people in a number of different ways, Said viewed every musical masterpiece as a conception of the world.² One of his closest friends, Daniel Barenboim, elaborated this thought even more when he said that "the study of music is one of the best ways to learn about human nature...music provides the possibility, on the one hand, to escape from life and, on the other hand, to understand it much better than in many other disciplines."³

While there are scholarly sources available regarding Balakirev's *Islamey*, there is no significant secondary literature that specifically addresses the question of Circassian "Otherness" in this piece. Moreover, there are no studies that discuss this piece in the Orientalist context and

² Daniel Barenboim, "In Memoriam: Edward Said (1936-2003) in *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc., 2002), x.

³ Daniel Barenboim and Edward W. Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (New York: A Division of Random House Inc., 2002), 24-26.

my aim is to gather and present the pertinent evidence of attribution of Orientalism to *Islamey*. Having undertaken this study, I have a new appreciation of the value of the sociohistorical context when discussing musical works with Oriental features. Ultimately, my main goal is to offer a new way of understanding this work, by presenting the complex sociohistorical relations between Russians and Circassians, revealing Balakirev's representation of Circassian culture and discussing that the reasons and the importance of the extensive use of folk material.

I would like to emphasize again that my approach is not strictly and purely postcolonial, but it is specifically based on Said's nuanced understanding of Orientalism in the arts, who saw most things in life as interdependent and that all cultures are involved in one another. As Said stated himself, "no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions."⁴ This is why my thesis will then conclude with the discussion of the benefits of the cultural exchanges between Circassians and Russians.

Chapter outline:

Chapter 1, "Said's theory: Orientalism as a European construct and the image of Circassians as constructed by the Russian Empire", will introduce the concept of Orientalism, according to *Orientalism*, a work by Edward Said. After providing descriptions and definitions of its main features, it will outline some ways in which his theory has been applied to the fields of literature and history, including Said's limitations in his own work in regards to Orientalism. It will conclude by discussing the most significant feature of Orientalism — the notion of Orient as a European construction — in the context of Russian Imperialism. It will discuss the stereotypical image of the Circassians as "savages" that was constructed by the Russians during the process of

⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf), 52.

colonization, as well as the pertinent details of the sociohistorical context that served as basis for such an image.

Chapter 2, “Saidian Orientalism in music and the relevance of postcolonial approach in the analysis of *Islamey*” will be divided into two main parts. It will begin by presenting existing ideas about musical Orientalism. The first half of the chapter will examine Orientalism as a type of musical exoticism and its limitations, mainly based on the arguments by Derek Scott and will include Ralph Locke’s “All the Music in Full Context” paradigm. Next, it will discuss Orientalism as a facet of postcolonial criticism along with its limitations, drawing mainly upon the scholarly work of Jonathan Bellman. The second half of the chapter will be dedicated to the further examination of both approaches and the evidence showing why the postcolonial approach is more suitable for the analysis of *Islamey*.

Chapter 3, “Circassian music and *Islamey*: a complex example of representation and imaginative geography” will discuss the representation of the Circassian culture in Mily Alexeevich Balakirev’s *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy*. Firstly, it will examine the false representation of Circassians and the issue of imaginative geography in the portrayal of Circassia in the Russian Romantic literature, as discussed by Susan Layton. Secondly, it will discuss available evidence from several authors who described *Islamey* as “Circassian” or gave it some other “Oriental” ascription and will reveal that the actual material Balakirev drew upon for the piece does not belong specifically to the Circassian culture. Lastly, it will discuss Balakirev’s compositional practice of appropriating folk music of various cultures for his compositional process and the significant role of the folk idiom in the establishment of Russian musical identity and art music.

CHAPTER 1

SAID’S THEORY: ORIENTALISM AS A EUROPEAN CONSTRUCT AND THE IMAGE OF CIRCASSIANS AS CONSTRUCTED BY THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

This chapter introduces the concept of Orientalism, as my main theoretical framework. Although an accurate capsule definition of Orientalism is problematic, I shall firstly highlight some of its main features, according to *Orientalism*, a work by Edward Said. Said was an influential Palestinian-American literary theorist and public intellectual, whose work has continuously been sparking numerous debates in various academic fields for more than 30 years after its publication. Secondly, I shall examine some ways in which his theory has been applied to the fields of literature and history. I shall also briefly comment on Said’s limitations in his own work in regards to Orientalism. Thirdly, I shall explore the main feature of Orientalism according to Said — the notion of Orient as a European construction that often leads to the creation of stereotypes — in the context of Russian Imperialism. Since Balakirev’s *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy* is believed to be musically connected to the Circassian culture, I shall examine the stereotypical image of the Circassians as “savages” that was constructed by the Russians during the process of colonization, as well as the details of the sociohistorical context that served as basis for such an image.

Edward Said and *Orientalism*

The foundation of empire is art and science.
Remove them or degrade them, and the
empire is no more. Empire follows art and
not vice versa, as English men suppose.¹

William Blake (1757-1827)

Up to this day, Edward Said is one of the most widely known, influential, as well as controversial intellectuals in the world. As an exiled Palestinian intellectual and American citizen with a truly unique identity and an author of numerous books and articles pertaining to various fields (ranging from English literature, to politics or even music), his biggest contribution was arguably to the world of postcolonial studies, mainly through his book *Orientalism*.

In its most fundamental form, Orientalism (according to Said) is “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience.”² In other words, it was a certain way of defining and ‘locating’ Europe’s Others. During nineteenth century imperialism, Orient was a place of Europe’s oldest colonies and the largest source of its most recurring representations of the Other. By the term “Other” (which is highly based on the distinctiveness), Said meant anyone who was non-European or, more precisely, non-Western. One of Said’s most important observations was that orientalism primarily concerned:

Europe itself, and hinged on arguments that circulated around the issue of national *distinctiveness*, and racial and linguistic origins, thus the examinations of Oriental

¹ Edward Said, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 65.

² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 1.

languages, histories and cultures were carried out in a context in which the supremacy and importance of European civilization was unquestioned.³

According to Said, the term “Other” was a tool for European *self-identification* and it defined the European (Western) identity through the Orient’s contrasting image, idea and experience. It was a certain type of construct, specifically based on the differences between cultures and through the comparison with the West. The opposition and the emphasis on the difference, the sense that these people over there (i.e. in the Middle or Far East, in Africa, etc.) were not like “us” and did not appreciate “our” values is the most fundamental principle underlying the Orientalist dogma.⁴

In his own work, Said focused on the Orient as a European *textual* construct (when the representation of the Orient and Orientals was constructed through various literary texts) that exists to define the European and thus, creates a division between East and West. This way, Orientalism becomes a way of thinking “based upon an ontological and epistemological *distinction* made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident.’ ”⁵ It is this basic distinction that historically became the starting point for the novels, poems, social and political descriptions for numerous Western writers, poets, novelists, philosophers and political theorists. According to Said’s scholarly work, literary representation of the experience of writers, travellers, soldiers, and statesmen then become “the lenses through which the Orient is experienced and they shape the language, perception and form of the encounter between East and West.”⁶

³ Edward W. Said, Moustafa Bayoumi, and Andrew Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 50-51.

⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, xx.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

To show how much of Orient is a representation, Said consistently compared it to a theatre, to a situation where the Orient is “the stage on which the whole East is confined.”⁷ He observed that the existing danger of texts that seek to invoke the juxtaposition between the Europe and the Orient, “can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe”,⁸ giving this kind of knowledge the ability to dominate the Orient. In other words, it is a text that creates and describes the reality of the Orient, thus dominating it by implying that non-Europeans themselves are either unable or prohibited from speaking.

Another problem that arises from this, is that the Orient is being treated as object that can be studied and understood. In fact, the main issue lies in the term “Orient” itself, because it is applied to a large geographical area with diverse populations but at the same time it assumes that this geographical area lacks diversity and may be used as a simple subject of study.⁹ As one of the numerous examples, Said mentions Flaubert’s description of the encounter with an Egyptian courtesan which produced a stereotypical model of the Oriental woman. In his work, she never spoke, never explained her emotions or history. However, he was a foreign and wealthy male and those were the attributes that historically gave him the rights for domination to represent her, to speak for her and to describe her as “typically Oriental.”¹⁰ Possessing such rights, the dominating cultures (British, French, Russian, German and others) then created numerous textual misrepresentations and stereotypes of the colonized people who were assumed to be influenced

⁷ Scott Appelrouth, Laura Desfor Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Text and Readings* (New York: Sage Publications, 2011), 831. Quoted in Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

⁹ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 64.

¹⁰Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

by “disorder”, “irrationality” and “primitivism” - most common parameters of the various Orientalist disciplines.¹¹

When Orient becomes known and understood through such textual representation, it “thus becomes a form of ‘radical realism’ by which an aspect of the Orient is fixed with a word or phrase”¹² (or in some cases-a whole array of stereotypically “Oriental” ideas, such as Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality, etc.). Typically those texts are produced by the more superior imperial power, causing these representations to eventually become accepted as the truth, despite their stereotypical and exaggerated nature.¹³ Although such texts may be appreciated for their creation of certain knowledge, the constant focus on the differences may dangerously lead to the creation of misrepresentation or stereotypes, often linked to xenophobia. As Said stated, eventually “culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates ‘us’ from ‘them’, almost always with some degree of xenophobia.”¹⁴ Because of such aggressive focus on the differences, Orientalism gradually became “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient — dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it...a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., 50.

¹² Ibid., 94.

¹³ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 56.

¹⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf), xiii.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

Being deeply influenced by Foucault, Said's theory of Orientalism is often viewed in Foucaultian terms as a discourse¹⁶— a relation between power and knowledge.¹⁷ This means that in the colonialist context, “knowledge” of any kind is always linked to representation, and this representation becomes a way of giving very concrete form to ideological concepts that may not be neutral. In spite of being distinct from the power of political force, for example, the power held by these representations cannot be separated from that of politics because it is less obvious, more subtle and more effective.¹⁸

In colonial context, the knowledge of the Orient created by the West then aids to construct a representation or a depiction of the Orient as something one judges, something one studies, or something one illustrates,¹⁹ all of which present various types of domination. In fact, due to the history of imperialism, “the relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, [and] of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.”²⁰ The terms such as “hegemony” and the “subaltern” thus become inevitable parts of Orientalism. As Said explained, hegemony initially referred to “the dominance of one state within a confederation, but it is now generally understood to mean ‘dominance by consent.’”²¹ ”²²

¹⁶ According to Said, without examining orientalism as a discourse, it is impossible to understand “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.”(Quoted in Said, *Orientalism*, 3.) However, he continuously insists that a line between the Orient and the Occident is unnatural and is produced by the empires whose power is connected intimately with the construction of knowledge about the Orient. In his analysis of Said's work, Ashcroft explains that to think that “the idea that academic knowledge is ‘tinged’, ‘impressed with’, or ‘violated by’ political and military force...is to suggest that the apparently morally neutral pursuit of knowledge is, in the colonialist context, deeply inflected with the ideological assumptions of imperialism.”(Quoted in Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 65).

¹⁷ I am relying on Said's exposition of Foucault. Space forbids a lengthy examination of Foucault's works.

¹⁸ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

²¹ I am relying on Said's exposition of Antonio Gramsci when discussing hegemony. Space forbids a lengthy examination of Gramsci's works.

²² Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 44.

According to him, what made European culture hegemonic both inside and outside Europe, was the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European people, the image of the European superiority over Oriental backwardness.²³

In addition, subaltern peoples are some of the most powerless people who live within the colonial parameters where “hegemony arises from the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that its interests are the interests of all.”²⁴ This way, domination is not forceful or persuasive. It is much more subtle and pervasive by nature since its power lies in the distribution of knowledge over the economy, education, the media, and the cultural practices, where the interest of the ruling society is presented as common interest. Orientalism thus depends on the West’s *positional* superiority that came as the result of the European remarkable cultural ascendance from the late Renaissance — the period when the scholars, scientists, etc. had an opportunity to travel there and to think about it without any resistance from the Orient.²⁵

Exploring how European creation of knowledge was able to maintain power and such strong dominance over its colonies within the discourse of Orientalism, “has allowed Said to elaborate it as one of the most profound examples of the machinery of cultural domination.”²⁶ Ashcroft and Ahluwalia explain the importance of culture as an imperial tool for domination by stating that, “Culture is both a function of and a source of identity...Imperial culture can be the most powerful agent of imperial hegemony in the colonised world.”²⁷ Hegemony, closely tied to the dichotomy of knowledge and power, is essential for imperialism and thus to Orientalism. It

²³ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

²⁴ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 44.

²⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

²⁶ Said, Bayoumi, Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

has an enormous ability to subtly influence the thought of the colonised and to make the management (and therefore the domination) of the Orientals easier and more profitable.²⁸

Generally speaking, imperialism “refers to the formation of an empire, and as such has been an aspect of all periods of history in which one nation has extended its domination over one or several neighbouring nations.”²⁹ It is closely tied to binary oppositions, such as the oppressor and the oppressed, and the self and the other, which often “imply that any national culture is unitary, homogenous, and defined by “fixity” or an essential core.”³⁰ For Said, imperialism is linked to high culture as it is “the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory,”³¹ different from colonialism, which is more broadly, “the implanting of settlements on a distant territory.”³² The most important difference between those two is that nowadays, the age of direct colonialism has practically ended, whereas imperialism relies on culture and “lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices.”³³

Because of the interdependence of culture and imperialism, which acts as a powerful tool for domination, one of Said’s biggest aims in both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, is to expose the link between these two elements. Unlike some scholars such as Raymond Williams, who broadly described culture³⁴ as “a whole way of life,”³⁵ Said always seems to link

²⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 36.

²⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 139.

³⁰ Vincent B. Leitch, “Homi Bhabha,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc.), 2001. I am relying largely on Homi Bhabha’s exposition of imperialism in postcolonial studies. Space forbids a lengthy examination of Bhabha’s works.

³¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴ I am relying on Said’s exposition of Williams. Space forbids a lengthy examination of Williams’s works.

³⁵ Said, Bayoumi and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 89.

his definition with the high culture of the literature and arts as it is “most deserving of attention, for its deep links to political ideology are invariably obscured by its assertion of transcendence and its appeal to a ‘universal’ humanity.”³⁶ According to him, culture consists of “all those practices, like the arts of description, communication and representation, which have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms, and which often exist in aesthetic form, one of whose principal aims is pleasure.”³⁷ Based on this definition, culture includes literature, visual arts, dance forms, and of course, music. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, being a literary critic, Said analyses novels “as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society,”³⁸ without which imperialism would not be so powerful at dominating and influencing the ideas of the subaltern cultures.

As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia state in *Edward Said Reader*, “the role of culture in keeping imperialism intact cannot be overestimated, because it is through culture that the assumption of the ‘divine right’ of imperial powers to rule is vigorously and authoritatively supported.”³⁹ They also emphasize that according to Said,

modern European empires are systematic enterprises, constantly reinvested. They do not move into a country, loot it and leave. What keeps them there is not simple greed, but massively reinforced notions of the *civilising mission*. This is the notion that imperial nations have, not only the right but the obligation to rule those nations “lost in barbarism.”⁴⁰

One example of such notion is an English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who supported British presence in India because he believed that “India requires us, that these are

³⁶ Ibid., 89.

³⁷ Ibid., xii.

³⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 84.

³⁹ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin. *The Edward Said Reader*, 85.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 86.

territories and people who beseech domination from us and that...without the English, India would fall into ruin.”⁴¹ Said himself admitted on numerous occasions he was profoundly influenced by Joseph Conrad, who captured two very different but related aspects of imperialism:

the idea that the power and opportunity to take over territory, of itself, gives you the right to dominance; and the practice that obscures this idea by developing ‘a justificatory regime of self-aggrandizing, self-originating authority interposed between the victim of imperialism and its perpetrator.’⁴²

This kind of self-aggrandizing authority of nineteenth-century Europe was achieved through culture. With all its numerous philosophers, intellectuals, composers ranging from Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, and the writers ranging from Dickens to Conrad, “by the late nineteenth century Europe had erected an edifice of culture so hugely confident, authoritative...that its imperial assumptions, its centralising of European life and its complicity in the civilising mission simply could not be questioned.”⁴³

In conclusion, while Said seems to have been aware that the issue of representation is essential to the discourse, he also recognized that it is questionable whether a true representation is ever possible altogether.⁴⁴ This is why his humanistic answer is to be “sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in the socio-political role of intellectuals, in the great value of skeptical critical consciousness.”⁴⁵ Moreover, being a scholar with a complex identity himself, Said continuously encouraged people to have and to adopt multiple identities

⁴¹ Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 66.

⁴² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 82.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 272.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 327.

and to travel across the boundaries of racial or national characteristics by “discovering a world not constructed out of warring essences.”⁴⁶

Application of Said’s theory to the fields of literature and history and Said’s limitations in his own work on orientalism

“Western” representations of the Orient in the literary studies

In his work *Orientalism*, Edward Said is most remembered for his linking of the literary, social, and historical fields of research. This is why, decades later, scholars from various academic disciplines have been attracted to his work and applied various aspects of his theory to their own research.

In literary and postcolonial studies, scholars often consider *Orientalism* to be a deeply influential text but do not agree with all of Said’s propositions. For example, Nicholas Harrison in his article “A Roomy Place Full of Possibility: Said’s *Orientalism* and the Literary” examines the binary of representation and misrepresentation that is so crucial in Orientalist texts that are discussed by Said and other critics. Firstly, Harrison starts by pointing out that Said implies in his book that “‘Western’ representations of the Orient are both powerfully dominant and are *inevitably* misrepresentations, which limits his understanding of historical change, and of the very possibility of historical change in attitudes and relationships.”⁴⁷ Similarly, he insists that for Said, “Orientalist representations *are* representations, not ‘natural’ depictions of the

⁴⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 277.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Harrison, “‘A Roomy Place Full of Possibility’: Said’s *Orientalism* and the Literary,” in *Edward Said and the Literary, Social, and Political World*, ed. Ranjan Ghosh. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought; 63 (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

Orient.”⁴⁸ While Harrison agrees with Said’s opinion that readers have adopted a ‘textual attitude’ toward the Orient (meaning that they formed their opinions solely based on reading Orientalist texts, instead of by physically travelling to a particular country or by examining objects), he reminds everyone that literary texts are generally artistic and imaginative. This does not mean that such texts may not create misrepresentations that may lead to further misleading and prejudice, but it is important to remember that in such works “the things to look for are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original.”⁴⁹

Secondly, according to Harrison, Said’s theory is problematic for the analysis of literary works as it is full of contradictions and inconsistencies. On one hand, the focus on misrepresentation of the Orient in the literary works perfectly fits the definition of Orientalism as a way of dominating and appropriating those cultures through art. On the other hand, however, even Said makes exceptions in the cases of creative writers, such as Nerval and Flaubert by stating that:

[t]heir Orient was not so much grasped, appropriated, reduced, or codified as lived in, exploited aesthetically and imaginatively as a roomy place full of possibility. What mattered to them was the structure of their work as an *independent, aesthetic*, and personal fact, and not the ways by which, if one wanted to, one could effectively dominate or set down the Orient graphically.⁵⁰

Keeping such contradictions in mind, perhaps it is safest to continue to view creative works as imaginative ways that have the ability to capture something important and valuable

⁴⁸ Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader*, 5.

⁴⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 20-21.

⁵⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 181. Quoted in Harrison, “A Roomy Place Full of Possibility,” 7.

about the world, without making it a source of knowledge and without condemning it for the lack of truth and accuracy in such representations. Harrison believes that:

allowing texts this freedom need not abandoning ethical or political questions, or sociohistorical questions about the circulation of texts, or questions of reference, worldliness and ‘correctness’. But unlike works of history, philology or anthropology, those texts have no unequivocal obligation to strive for correctness, to do for us the work of distinguishing fiction from fact, or to look for answers to the questions they raise.⁵¹

In other words, literary works (or any creative works, for that matter) have a special literary value that is not based solely on political agenda because they are capable of providing aesthetic experience, enjoyment, escape and “small narratives of liberation.”⁵² Even Said supports this idea by stating:

I myself cannot do without the category of the aesthetic as, in the final analysis, providing resistance not only to my own efforts to understand and clarify and elucidate as reader, but also as escaping the levelling pressures of everyday experience from which, however, art paradoxically derives.⁵³

Lastly, Harrison also encourages us to remember that with those “small narratives of liberation” that exist in the works of literature, art and music, “there is no way of pinpointing analytically, in rational discourse, what ‘narratives’ may be articulated.”⁵⁴

Showing the contradictions in Said’s work and thought, Harrison emphasizes that the theory of Orientalism and Said’s fundamental arguments must be firstly acknowledged as part of their sociohistorical context. However, they may not be used in their purest form when analyzing works of literature, or any other artistic and creative works. Furthermore, he

⁵¹ Harrison, “A Roomy Place Full of Possibility,” 10.

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 63.

⁵⁴ Harrison, “A Roomy Place Full of Possibility,” 11.

underlines the value of the numerous interpretations in the reading of literary texts as opposed to focusing on one single interpretation supporting some form of political orientation. Even Said once stated in an interview that “I never taught political ideas in a classroom. I believe that what I’m there to teach is the interpretation and reading [of many] of literary texts.”⁵⁵ When his interviewer responded that interpretation might indeed be political, Said answered that “it is a politics against the reading of literature which would denude it and emasculate what in the literature is profoundly contested.” Once again, he is emphasizing the aesthetic, liberating and perhaps humanistic values that are present in literature and other arts.

Reconsideration of Europe’s textual representation of the foreign lands as part of the colonial history

Edward Said’s work on Orientalism and his application of his thought to colonial history has encouraged numerous scholars to reread and reconsider Europe’s textual representation of foreign lands and cultures. Scholars wanted to explore the way in which colonial writers were able to impose or create their representations of the mysterious “Other” that they perceived in other lands. According to Austin Jersild, one scholar went so far in his adaptation of Said’s thought, that he “has even extended this discussion [of the representation of the mysterious “Other”] to Western Europe’s ‘invention’ of Eastern Europe.”⁵⁶ However, not every historian wanted to focus solely on the representation of the colonized in their work. Instead, they chose to examine aspects such as the integrating the colonized land into the empire, rethinking history

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁶ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). Quoted in Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 5.

from the position of the “Other”, and even applying Saidian theory of Orientalism to the lands that have never been colonized in a traditional sense.

Firstly, Austin Jersild, in his work *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917*, adopted Said’s “attention to the significance of Europe’s interest in the sacred antiquity of the East as a contrast to the degenerate present”⁵⁷ in the context of eighteenth century Imperial Russia. He explores the Russian colonisation of the Orient which,

needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races, and cultures in order to posit them-beyond the modern Orient’s ken-as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient.⁵⁸

In his book, Jersild examines the efforts and specific nuances of the Russian imperial integration and incorporation. He achieves this by discussing social aspects such as religion, ethnicity, archaeology, transcription of languages, customary law, and others to illustrate the work of empire-builders and the emerging imperial imagination. Drawing on both Russian and Caucasian materials, he shows how shared cultural concerns between Russians and Caucasians were essential for imperialism.

Secondly, Gyan Prakash in “Orientalism Now,” adopts the transgression of boundaries between various disciplines of knowledge, achieved by Said through his *Orientalism* and goes a step further by rethinking the history of the modern West from the position of the “Other”.⁵⁹ Although in many cases the history is presented in positive terms by the scholars of the empire,

⁵⁷ Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 5.

⁵⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 92.

⁵⁹ Gyan Prakash, “Orientalism Now,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (October 1995): 201.

Prakash believes that without this fundamental work by Said, writing back from the point of view of the colonised would be impossible.

Lastly, Said's theory of Orientalism may be applied even to the territories that were never colonized in the traditional political and economic sense. In his "Immigrants as the Enemy: Psychoanalysis and the Balkans' Self-Orientalization." Dusan I. Bjelic adopts Said's connection between the colonial space and the colonial identity, in which he finds the liberating aspect of the existence of "critical awareness of self-orientalization as a product of discursive colonialism." In spite of the Balkans never having a historical colonizer, he nevertheless attempts to prove the presence of the colonial politics of representation and colonial psychology. In his article, he examines the work of two Balkan psychoanalysts-Julia Kristeva (Bulgarian) and Slavoj Zizek (Slovene) and interprets it in relationship to Todorova's *balkanism*. Similarly to Said's Orientalism as a textual creation, Bjelic discusses balkanism as "a representational scheme originating in travelogues, literature and Western journalism."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Dusan I. Bjelic, "Immigrants as the Enemy: Psychoanalysis and the Balkans' Self-Orientalization," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (July 2009): 489.

Orientalism and Gender: Said's blind spot in his own discussion of Orientalism

Although Said's discussion of Orientalism encompassed various fields in his own scholarly work, he never made any contribution to the field of Orientalism and gender studies. According to Elleke Boehmer, the issue of gender and sexual identity was Said's "outstanding blind spot."⁶¹ However, this kind of oversight inspired scholars to examine in greater detail the subject of how femininity and masculinity are constitutive of colonial relations, which led to new acknowledgements of the relationship between postcolonialism and gender. For example, in Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, published in 2003, a postcolonialist gendered male, encouraged by his feminist colleagues, acknowledged "the constitutive link between a postcolonial perspective and gender"⁶² for the first time.

Another scholar, such as Elleke Boehmer took a different approach and decided to focus on the criticism of Said's omission of gender in his work, thus generating discussion about Said's gender-blindness. Instead of finding the link or the overlap between gender and postcolonialism, she attempts to "observe, record and analyze how his [Said's] gender-blindness has been expressed and reiterated."⁶³ She finds it crucial to the study of postcolonialism because Said's "gender omissions offer some explanation of the marginalisation of postcolonial feminist and woman-centered arguments and scholarship among male postcolonial theorists."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Elleke Boehmer, "Edward Said and (the Postcolonial Occlusion of) Gender," in *Edward Said and the Literary, Social, and Political World*, ed. Ranjan Ghosh. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought; 63. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 124.

⁶² Boehmer, "Edward Said and (the Postcolonial Occlusion of) Gender," 125.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

Women such as Lisa Lowe, Laura Donaldson, Jenny Sharpe, and Meyda Yegenoglu have contributed to the expansion of Said's theories by focusing on constructions of the colonial woman, while trying to stay away from "[reducing] the overdetermined contradictions of colonialism to its patriarchal structures alone."⁶⁵ Other scholars such as Derrida, further contributed to the exploration of the relationship between Orientalism and sexual identity, but with a specific focus on the ways in which "the Oriental man is persistently feminised,"⁶⁶ as opposed to the fantastical image of the Oriental woman.

⁶⁵ Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 11.

⁶⁶ Rooney, "Derrida and Said: Ships that Pass in the Night," in *Edward Said and the Literary, Social, and Political World*, ed. Ranjan Ghosh. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought; 63. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41.

Circassian stereotype as a “Savage” and its construction: sociohistorical context of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus

Completely mute, the Circassian warriors are indeed made knowable primarily through violent action... While uttering no culturally authentic word of their own, these Caucasian “natives” none the less reward investigation as Russian surrogates who disrupted imperialist ideology about a “European” mission to civilize Muslim “savages.”⁶⁷

Susan Layton in her analysis of A. Pushkin’s poem “The Prisoner of the Caucasus”

Modern Caucasus is comprised of numerous ethnicities and is currently divided into various republics that are all part of the Russian Federation. The nineteenth century conquest of the Caucasus and its incorporation into the Russian Empire provided a way for the Russians to establish their cultural identity through literature, since Russia perceived the Caucasus as their “own” Orient. In her book *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, Susan Layton centers her discussion on Russian writing, involving three main areas of the Caucasus-Circassia, Chechnia and Dagestan. She carefully explores the tensions between the Russian ideology to civilize the mountaineers, and the romantic perceptions of those peoples in spite of the tsarist relentless war against the “savage” Muslim tribes.

When discussing the authors who produced the “literary Caucasus,” Layton relies heavily on the works of Aleksandr Pushkin, Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Mikhail Lermontov. Each of these romantic authors seems to depict and valorize the North Caucasian man as a warrior, but

⁶⁷ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 91.

a noble one — a fighter for freedom and justice. The most dominant image of the North Caucasian man created in the Russian Romantic literature is one of a “noble Savage.” Characteristics, such as bravery, love of freedom and other martial values were incorporated into such image.

One of Layton’s main examples of the North Caucasian man depicted as a “noble Savage” in Russian Romantic literature, is Pushkin’s poem “The Prisoner of the Caucasus.” It is about a little Circassian village in the middle of the mountains. Pushkin’s consistent use of the term Circassian “narod” (meaning “people” in Russian) seems to imply that Circassians are perceived as peasants, peoples with agricultural base and not simply as bandits. However, there are also hints of the ferocity, and bestiality of the conquest that may be observed.

It is possible to find a great duality of treatment and of the war from which various values may be extracted depending on the context. Over time, literary images of the mountaineers changed from “the noble Savage” to ferocious, bestial Muslims.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Layton observes that all Romantic writers represent these wars as morally disturbing events, viewing the Russian conquest of the Caucasus as “a harmful, useless escapade of ambitious generals.”⁶⁹

According to the historical research, already by the early 1200s, Circassians became known to the people outside the region by the term “Cherkess.” Walter Richmond explains that one of the meanings for this term has a Turkic origin and carries a signification of “one who cuts off a path,”⁷⁰ possibly alluding to the Circassians’ unstable geographical position caused by constant migration and “their tenacious military tendencies.”⁷¹ Another theory shows this word being

⁶⁸ “Literature and Empire: Scholar Susan Layton Discusses Russia’s ‘Literary Caucasus,’” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Present, past, future* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 37.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

derived from Iranian, meaning “cutthroat”, in which case it has no lesser violent connotation.⁷²

All of these terms, however, contain a negative and violent association with the Russian construction of Circassian image as “savage”, “primitive” people.

The complex history of Russia and the Caucasus, thus, requires clarifying the sociohistorical context behind the Russian perception of the mountaineers as the “savages”. As someone who strongly believed that knowledge is one of the keys to finding coexistence, Said stated that “on the whole it is better to explore history rather than to repress or deny it.”⁷³ This is why in order to find out how the image of Circassian peoples was constructed by the Russians at the time, it is important to know some historical facts of the complex relationship between Russia and Circassia. Furthermore, in order to learn about the origins of this constructed stereotype and the violence associated with the meaning of the term “Cherkess” [Russian for “a Circassian”], it will be essential to examine the details of the sociohistorical context that served as basis for such an image.

In spite of this stereotypical label of Circassians as “savage” and “primitive”, they constituted a highly organized and complex culture. Based on the historical data, they were the cultural and ethnic “Other”. To better show how they became perceived as violent “savages” by Russians, I shall discuss the *differences* in their cultural and societal norms, their wars with Crimean Khanate and Ottoman Empire and alliance with Russia, as well as their resilience and resistance against the Russian Imperialism during the nineteenth century conquest of the Caucasus.

⁷² Ibid., 37.

⁷³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, xxvi.

Circassian society and lifestyle

Circassian social way of life differed from the Russian lifestyle mainly through the highly structured societal hierarchy and activities that supported their livelihood. Firstly, unlike the Russian society which consisted mainly of aristocracy and peasantry, Circassian society had a complex hierarchy in its democratic and feudal tribes. When aristocracy weakened in the Abadzekh, Natukhai and Shapsegh tribes, a period of “democratic” rule began. Briefly speaking, each tribe was divided into political units called *psukho*, which consisted of many *auls* (villages) located in the same valley or along the same river.⁷⁴ These political units were then further subdivided into smaller units called *kuadj*, which generally represented one *aul*. Each *kuadj* would then elect a number of representatives that would assemble whenever necessary to discuss any issues concerning the tribe at a meeting.⁷⁵ An important thing to note is that this “democratic” order was highly structured, but the rank was not important at those meetings. Instead, the force of one’s argument and eloquence had the most influence on the outcome regardless of wealth and social status.⁷⁶

Feudal tribes, (which were mostly comprised of Kabardians) could be compared to medieval European fiefdoms. The prince was the person with extensive but not absolute power over his land, as decisions made at the meetings could limit it.⁷⁷ Furthermore, according to Askhad Chirg, “after the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, the princes were compelled to pledge their allegiance to the Russian crown, further reducing their influence among the lower

⁷⁴ Sh. A. Gapurov. “Iz Istorii Razvitiia Vzaimootnoshenii Narodov Dagestana, Kabardy I Chechni v XVII-XIX Vekha,” in O.M. Dadudov, Ed. *Istoriko-Kulturnye I Ekonomicheskie Sviazi Narodov Kavkaza: Proshloe, Nastoiashchee, Budushchee*. (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii Nauchnyi Tsentr RAN, 2004), 64. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 22.

⁷⁵ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 22.

⁷⁶ Chirg, *Razvitie Obshchestvenno-Politicheskogo Stroia Adygov Severo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza: Konets XVIII-60-eg. XIX v.*, 64-70. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 22.

⁷⁷ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 24.

classes.”⁷⁸ This only worsened and intensified class warfare and weakened their resistance to the threat of Russian colonization and conquest. It is also important to note that out of the few main feudal tribes, Kabardians were the only tribe that later chose to ally themselves politically with Russia, as opposed to others, such the Beslenei tribe, who chose ties with the Crimean Khanate.⁷⁹

Secondly, the Circassian economy is useful when looking at image of the Circassian as a “savage” since it greatly supported their livelihood. Farming and cultivation of land was their primary activity and led to a migratory life.⁸⁰ International trade of manufactured goods with Ottoman Empire and other North Caucasian cultures (Ossetians, the Karachai-Balkars and peoples of Daghestan) was also highly developed. Circassians were well known for breeding the famous white Circassian horses, who were highly respected by the Russian military.⁸¹ However, two other more common occupations for the Circassians (and for the most of the Northeast Caucasians), were raiding and kidnapping. Members of aristocratic families would raid villages and kidnap children who would then be sold into slavery. Interestingly, according to the available historical research, “the Circassians considered it a necessary means of survival” as well as “a benefit to the families from whom they kidnapped children.”⁸² Raiding was also viewed as a normal part of everyday life, as a common tradition in the Caucasus.⁸³

⁷⁸ Chirg, *Razvitie Obshchestvenno-Politicheskogo Stroia Adygov Severo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza: Konets XVIII-60-eg. XIX v.*, 73-76. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 24.

⁷⁹ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸¹ Chirg, *Razvitie Obshchestvenno-Politicheskogo Stroia Adygov Severo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza: Konets XVIII-60-eg. XIX v.*, 30. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 25.

⁸² Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 26.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 26.

Circassian wars with Crimean Khanate and Ottoman Empire and an eventual alliance with the Russian Empire

Although Circassians had attempts to establish an independent society in the fourteenth century, all of them failed mainly due to the constant and devastating raids by the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire. Other tribes, such as the Abazas and Karachai-Balkars were barely capable of supporting themselves and were dependent upon the Kabardians who exploited them as well. Kabardians themselves had the most power to resist threats from the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, but “remained fragmented and weakened by class animosity.”⁸⁴ Around the 1300s, Western Circassians found themselves in the power of Crimea and the Ottomans and could not count on the help from the Russians since they were located so far away and could not help them liberate themselves from the Crimeans. In the case of Kabardians, which presented greater difficulties for the Turks to reach, they were able to establish stronger alliance with the Russians, though they could do little to protect them at this time.⁸⁵ Throughout the next couple of hundreds of years, there were a lot of invasions and resistance between the Circassians, Crimean Khanate, the Ottomans and the Kabardians.

While there were times when Circassians and Kabardians were victorious, they were still forced to accept Crimean suzerainty in 1519.⁸⁶ At that point, their reputation as skilled warriors was firmly established as the Khanate regularly sent their young men to Circassia to learn the art of war. By the eighteenth century Circassians even established a military school where Tatars

⁸⁴ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁶ Aleksandr Nekrasov, *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia I Narody Severnogo Kavkaza: Posledniaia Chetvert' XV-Pervaia Polovina XVI v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 87. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 39.

could freely train.⁸⁷ However, with continuous raids by the Ottomans who wanted to incorporate Circassia into their Empire for strategic purposes and with the slavery and poverty created by the rule of the Khanate, Circassians saw no hope of successful resistance. This is when they turned to Muscovite Russia as an ally, who could perhaps allow them some form of autonomy while defending them from Ottoman raids.⁸⁸

For Russians, just like for Circassians, Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire presented a serious threat. For Circassians, Russians were the best allies as they had successfully completely destroyed Kazan Khanate and gradually subdued Astrakhan Khanate.⁸⁹ In November 1552, Circassian princes Alkych Ezboluko and Tanashuk came to Moscow where the agreement was reached and Muscovite army joined Circassian forces to repel a Crimean invasion.⁹⁰ By 1560, Russian and Circassian troops were working together to conduct regular operations against the Khanate, eventually destroying the Khazan Khanate and capturing Astrakhan. Gradually, the Russians seemed to have succeeded in establishing a firm alliance with the Kabardians and most of the western Circassians.

Due to this alliance, contacts between peoples increased over the next 150 years.⁹¹ Different historical reports show that one member of Abaza tribe entered Russian service and was baptized as Vasily Kardanukovich Cherkassky. Similar reports also mention other

⁸⁷ Kazbolat Dzamikhov, *Adygi v Politike Rossii na Kavkaze: 1550-e-Nachalo 1770-x gg.* (Nalchik: Izdatel'skii Tsentr "El'-FA," 2001), 258. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 39.

⁸⁸ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 40.

⁸⁹ M. N. Tikhomirov, ed. *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei.* Vol. 13. (Leningrad: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1980), 67-174, 184-191, 471-489. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 40.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 228. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 41.

⁹¹ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 41.

Circassian princes who entered Russian service, but originally represented the peoples of Abaza who reaffirmed Abaza's allegiance to Moscow.⁹²

By the mid-1500s, Kabarda became the most powerful Circassian tribe and gained a lot of power in the North Caucasus over others Circassian tribes and even the Ossetians.⁹³ This was the time when the most significant military and political alliances between Kabarda and Russia were made. After 1557, when the first Russo-Kabardian treaty was formalized, the Russo-Kabardian ties were strengthened. Kabardian Prince Temriuk Indarko even sent his son to Moscow, who adopted Christianity (as a sign of loyalty to the Russians), and later became a powerful boyar.⁹⁴ Three years later, Ivan IV married Temriuk's daughter, which further improved relations between those two nations. In order to unify Circassian lands, Temriuk tried to create a full military alliance between Kabarda and Russia against the Crimean Khanate. His work and skill on the battlefield was greatly valued by Ivan IV.⁹⁵ Both sides seemed to have gained numerous benefits by their alliance. Temriuk allowed Moscow to found the settlement of Tersk in 1567, which could not have been more strategically located. It allowed Kabarda to defend itself in case of an attack, to control the Khanate's trade routes to Turkey and Central Asia and gave Kabardians an opportunity to expand their trading networks to Astrakhan and Moscow.⁹⁶ Most importantly, this Russo-Kabardian alliance proved to be the reason for the successful defense of the North Caucasus.

⁹² Ekaterina Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza I Ikh Sviazi s Rossiei Vtoraia Polovina XVI-30-e Gody XVII Veka*. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963), 156, 157. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 41.

⁹³ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 42.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹⁵ Dzamikhov, *Adygi v Politike Rossii na Kavkaze: 1550-e-Nachalo 1770-x gg.*, 83-93. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 42.

⁹⁶ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza I Ikh Sviazi s Rossiei Vtoraia Polovina XVI-30-e Gody XVII Veka*, 106-108. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 43.

In 1588, Mamstriuk, one of Temriuk's sons concluded a treaty with Moscow that "represented a new form of interstate relationship not only in Russian but European history."⁹⁷ Instead of conquest by force followed by unconditional submission and payment of tribute, according to Kasbolat Dzamikhov, Kabarda became a "client" who only had military obligations in return for Russian protection without any mention of tribute.⁹⁸ It is important to understand this phenomenon, because according to Dzamikhov's opinion, the treaty represents a singularly progressive concept of international relations in Russian history.

In the mid-1600s, however, Russia used its relationship with Kabarda to gradually begin its conquest of the North Caucasus and Kabardian and Circassian societies were in the beginning of civil war because of the class conflicts and peasant uprisings.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, most of the Kabardian aristocracy, highly valued for their sword manufacturing, courage and expertise, remained loyal to Moscow and fought alongside Russian troops in wars to Khanate as well as in the Russo-Polish War of the 1660s.¹⁰⁰

The political success of the Kabardians with Russians (a Kabardian princess even became a wife of Ivan the Terrible) enhanced prestige of their princes. Unfortunately, Russia proved to be an ally of vacillating commitment. When Persia began to assert herself in the region, Moscow's reaction was generally conciliatory at the expense of the local peoples. When Sweden went to war with Russia, the Circassians were left all alone with no protection or support to the mercy of the Ottomans. The flight of serfs from the heartland of Russia to her margins in the Northwest

⁹⁷ Kasbolat Fitsevich Dzamikhov, "Istoricheskii Opyt Politiko-pravovoi reglamentatsii Russko-Adygskikh Otnoshenii: Analiz Dokumentov XVI-XVIII vv.," in A. Kh. Borov, ed. *RES PUBLICA: Al'manakh Sotsial'no-Politicheskikh I Pravovykh Issledovaniy*. Vol. 2. (Nalchik: Institut Gumanitarnykh Issledovaniy Pravitel'stva KBR I KBNTs RAN, 2001), 15-16. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 43.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 43.

⁹⁹ Yakov Gordin, *Kavkaz: Zemlia I Krov': Rossiia v Kavkazskoi Voine XIX Veka*. (St. Petersburg: Zvezda, 2000), 260. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Dzamikhov, *Adygi v Politike Rossii*, 271-272. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 45.

Caucasus created the various groups of Cossacks. These settlers, usually admixed with locals, eventually played a crucial role in the hostilities of the eighteenth century. This was the start of shifting alliances, distrust, and ethnic rivalry that lead to the irreversible tragedy of the Russo-Caucasian War of the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹

Russian Imperialism and the conquest of the Caucasus

Due to Russia's gradual interest in the colonization of the Caucasus, and the increased conflict with the Ottomans and Crimeans, the Russian government stopped viewing Kabardians and other North Caucasus peoples as allies and began treating them as imperial subjects and targets for colonization. With the ascent of Peter The Great to the throne, Russia became the greatest enemy that the North Caucasus ever knew.¹⁰² While he made many promises and concluded a few more treaties with Kabardian princes, he often failed to honor them. New civilian communities and villages arose along the line from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov as the result of the needs for military forces and expeditions into the mountains.¹⁰³ Marc Raeff's observation of the gradual colonization by the Russians shows that,

The establishment of fortresses and harbors [in the North Caucasus] and the organization and maintenance of garrisons to protect the area went hand in hand with colonization and the foundation of towns that would promote economic activity. As the distances over the newly acquired lands were great and the means of transportation scant, the military establishment had to procure the necessities of life on the spot. This increased the demands on agriculture and the need for settling an economically active populations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*. Foreword by John Colarusso, ix.

¹⁰² Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 45.

¹⁰³ Gordin, *Kavkaz: Zemlia I Krov': Rossiia v Kavkazskoi Voine XIX Veka*, 261. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 47.

¹⁰⁴ Marc Raeff, "In the Imperial Manner," in *Catherine The Great: A Profile*, ed. Marc Raeff (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 202. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 48.

In other words, the creation of these new communities was linked to Russian ambitions and was the evidence of Russians treating Kabarda as a future Imperial possession, not interested in any mutual benefits. In fact, when Circassian tribes such as The Abadzekhs, Bzedukhs, Shapseghs, Temirgois, and Ubykh asked St. Petersburg for military assistance and pledged allegiance to Empress Elizabeth, Russian government declined, fearing an attack from the Ottomans that they would not be able to repel.¹⁰⁵ However, the Russians did not realize the full power of the small Circassian nation. As the General Grigory Filipson discussed in his memoirs on the Caucasus War,

In Petersburg they did not even suspect that we were dealing with a one and a half million valiant, militaristic mountain dwellers who had never recognized any authority over them, and who possessed powerful natural fortresses at every step in their forest-covered mountain thickets. Back there [Petersburg] they even thought that the Circassians were nothing more than rebellious Russian subjects, ceded to Russia by their legal sovereign the Sultan in the Treaty of Adrianople!¹⁰⁶

In spite of Russian way of colonization being different than that of England or France (since it was originally based on a specific alliance), it nonetheless consisted of increasingly violent tactics. As Richmond explains in his book,

The Russians viewed Circassian resistance as rebellion against a recognized sovereign, when in fact the Circassians considered themselves an independent entity and their conflict with Russia a war of national survival. For their part, the Russians not only viewed the Circassians as rebellious subjects but also believed in their own role as “civilizers” of primitive peoples who would abandon their former ways once they saw the superiority of Russian culture. They had no idea of the difficulty they would be involved in subduing the Circassians, and as the War progressed they resorted to increasingly violent and inhumane tactics, culminating in the mass expulsion of the Abazas, Circassians, and Ubykhs to Turkey and the complete destruction of their civilizations.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Dзамикхов, *Adygi v Politike Rossii*, 135-136. Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 49.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Quoted in Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 51.

On 21 May 1864, the Russians finally defeated the Circassians, and their allies the Abazas and Ubykhs, in one of the bloodiest struggles in the history of the Russian Empire. Over the next several years, over 90 percent of the Circassians, along with the majority of Abazas and the entire Ubykh nation, were forced from their homeland to the shores of the Black Sea, where those who did not die of disease and starvation were loaded onto ships and were deported to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁸

It is obvious that the government of the Russian Empire created a lot of ways of assimilating Kabardians and Circassians (as part of the colonization process) by indoctrinating Kabardian elites into the Russian aristocracy, recruiting influential Kabardians into service in Moscow in effort to deepen ties between the two peoples, and marrying key aristocratic Kabardian and Russian families. However, later on, Russians only viewed Kabardians as imperial subjects and not as an independent nation. During the remainder of the Tsarist period and throughout the Soviet era, Russian governance took the form of prejudicial and repressive treatment. The war in the Northwest Caucasus, however, even in its post-conquest condition, could never come to a complete conclusion. Unfortunately the conflicts could not completely resolve neither under Tsarist ruling inspired by the culture of imperialism nor under the brutal measures dictated by the communist ideology of the Soviets.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*. Foreword by John Colarusso, x.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the theory of Orientalism as a European construction of the “Other” for self-identification. Firstly, I examined this postcolonial theory by highlighting and defining some of its main components, according to *Orientalism*, arguably the most famous and most influential work by Edward Said. Secondly, I also examined some ways in which his theory has been applied to the fields of literature and history by scholars such as Nicholas Harrison, Austin Jersild, Gyan Prakash and Dusan Bjelic. According to Elleke Boehmer, Said’s outstanding blind spot in his own scholarly work, has been the issue of gender in relationship to orientalism. I discussed how this gap has been filled by the research contributed by Robert Young, Lisa Lowe, Laura Donaldson, Jenny Sharpe, Meyda Yegenoglu and even Jacques Derrida. Thirdly, I explored the notion of Orient as a European construction in the context of Russian Imperialism by examining the stereotypical image of the Circassians as “savages” which was constructed by the Russians during the process of colonization. In my next chapter, I shall focus specifically on current ideas of musical Orientalism and the existing research of how Saidian theory of Orientalism has been applied to various musical works.

CHAPTER 2

SAIDIAN ORIENTALISM IN MUSIC AND THE RELEVANCE OF POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH IN THE ANALYSIS OF *ISLAMEY*

One very important aspect of our contemporary musical culture—some might say the supremely important aspect—is its extension in the historical and geographical sense to a degree unknown in the past. . . . The geographical extension means, of course, that the total musical culture of Planet Earth is “coming together,” as it were. An American or European composer, for example, now has access to the music of various Asia, African, and South American culture. . . . Unquestionably our contemporary world of music is far richer, in a sense, than earlier periods, due to the historical and geographical extensions of culture to which I have referred.¹

George Crumb

Said’s theoretical framework of Orientalism as criticism has been incorporated in various academic fields ranging from literary studies to gender studies, political sciences, and others. In musicology, there were numerous scholars who have touched upon it in their own discussions of musical Orientalism. The work of Derek Scott, Jonathan Bellman and Ralph Locke will be the primary focus in this chapter.

For Said, Orientalism consists of documenting and meditating on the ways in which “the study of languages, literatures, and cultures of the eastern world could amount to the

¹ George Crumb, “Music: Does It Have a Future?” *The Kenyon Review*, Summer 1980, The Official George Crumb Home Page, <http://www.georgecrumb.net/future.html> (accessed 30 November 2009). Quoted in “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology” by Jonathan D. Bellman, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (Fall 2011): 424, 425.

appropriation, control, and ultimately marginalization and trivialization of those cultures and peoples.”² However, as Jonathan Bellman insists in his article “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology”, not everyone agrees upon the meaning of this term. He says:

there is no consistent and definitive usage establishing whether ‘orientalism in music’ is (1) simply, a specific variety of musical exoticism, or (2) more broadly, a productive critical tool for investigating the wide variety of ways in which music is embedded in and reflects, converses with, or perhaps comments upon its wider culture, or (3) a more limited facet of postcolonial criticism, relevant only as long as the criticism stays on topic and deals with a small segment of the repertoire, whether cultivated, vernacular, or in between.³

What Bellman suggests, then, is that the term Orientalism, when applied to music, has at least three possible definitions.

In my overview of how Saidian Orientalism has been applied to the repertoire in the past (and the problems that arise from trying to do so), my chapter will be divided into two main parts. In the first part, I shall discuss existing ideas about musical Orientalism. I shall begin by examining Orientalism as a type of musical exoticism and its limitations, mainly based on the arguments by Derek Scott and Ralph Locke. This kind of Orientalism is about the *process* by which exotic places and cultures are evoked and it includes Ralph Locke’s “All the Music in Full Context” paradigm, which is especially relevant for the discussion of musico-dramatic works. Next, I shall present Orientalism as a facet of postcolonial criticism and I shall discuss the relevance and the limitations of such approach, drawing mainly upon the scholarly work of Jonathan Bellman. The second half of the chapter will be dedicated to the further discussion of

² Jonathan Bellman, “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (Fall 2011): 417.

³ *Ibid.*, 420.

Orientalism as process of evocation and Orientalism as postcolonial criticism. Aspects of both approaches will be examined according to their relevance to the discussion of *Islamey*.

Musical Orientalism as exoticism

Main aims of exoticism

Before diving straight into the discussion of musical exoticism, it is important to note that there exists a long standing tradition of music acting as *representation* of another culture. Mozart's *alla turca* style, (which later found its way in the works of Beethoven as well) and the *style hongrois* are two of the most well-known examples.

Orientalism as musical exoticism arises from this tradition of musical representation. In his article "Orientalism and Musical Style", Derek Scott makes numerous references to Said's framework of Orientalism as a representation. In regards to the issue of accuracy and authenticity, he explains that the representation of the Orient cannot be (and is not trying to be) accurate. He quotes Said, who says:

we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate. What it is trying to do...is at one and the same time to characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe, and only for Europe.⁴

⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 71-72 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Quoted in Scott's "Orientalism and Musical Style," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 310.

As Said suggests, the representation of Orient cannot possibly be accurate. Instead, the depiction created by Europeans serves the need of Europeans—to characterize the Orient as alien and as Europe’s contrasting “Other”.

Later in his article, when analyzing operas such as Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes* (1735), where Persians are musically indistinguishable from Peruvians, Scott is mainly concerned with the musical exoticism as the product of the European imagination and as a way of representing our thoughts about the Other. Those two types of musical exoticism will be examined in more detail in the following sections.

The first type of musical exoticism is the product of the European imagination. As an example, Scott describes Turkish style (*alla turca*), which would typically be a march (in 2/4 time) “with a bass of reiterated quavers (often asserting tonic pedal); a melody decorated with grace notes and insisting on the notes of the tonic triad, but with an occasional raised fourth; and “crude” harmony, such as root-position triads and octave doubling of melody.”⁵

For a while, this *alla turca* style (*style turc*) was considered to have “evolved from a sort of battle music played by Turkish military bands outside the walls of Vienna during the siege of that city in 1683.”⁶ However, Jonathan Bellman notes that a few had heard this music and almost no one remembered it, so “what became understood as Turkish Style was thus almost entirely the product of the European imagination.”⁷

⁵ For complete discussion, see Miriam Karpilow Whaples, “Exoticism in Dramatic Music, 1600-1800” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1958); Thomas Bauman, *W. A. Mozart: Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 33-42. Quoted in Scott’s “Orientalism and Musical Style,” 312.

⁶ Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 13-14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

In accordance with Said's framework, this construction of the Turkish Style, with its errors, gave Europeans a sense of cultural superiority over the Turks. After comparing the Chorus of Janissaries from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and the Egypt of *Die Zauberflöte*, Scott is astonished by the similarity of the musical representation of both cultures. As a result, he comes to the conclusion that "musical Orientalism has never been overly concerned with establishing distinctions between Eastern cultures, and that an interchangeability of exotic signifiers proved to be commonplace rather than astonishing."⁸

As his second example, Scott describes the *style hongrois*, which arrived after the *style turc*. When discussing the origins of this style, Bellman states that it "derived from the exotic-sounding music played by Gypsy bands (not actual Magyars) in Hungary and westward to Vienna,"⁹ but in the middle of eighteenth century, there was no clear line between this style and the Turkish style.

In the nineteenth century, this style was characterised further and "Gypsy scale" was theorized by Liszt, who emphasized the importance of the special exotic signifiers, such as the raised fourth degree and the presence of the augmented second. However, in spite of its exotic and unusual sound quality, it is not a true representation of a distinct ethnicity, and Scott concludes that "what we have is a spiced-up major-minor tonality rather than music based on a different ethnic scale pattern."¹⁰

⁸ Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 312.

⁹ Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 14.

¹⁰ Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 312.

In this discourse of Orientalist music as representation through special exotic signifiers, Scott makes a very important and valuable observation. He insists that Orientalism involves misrecognition, which comes as a result of inaccurate representation. He says:

Oriental music is not a poor imitation of another cultural practice: its purpose is not to imitate but to represent...there is not one Orientalist style; therefore, a chain of signifiers may be assembled to represent a more defined Other culture. ...Even then, there may be no distinction made between Spain, Mexico, and South American countries...but this is about as far as Orientalism can go, because representations rely upon culturally learned recognition.¹¹

Scott acknowledges that along with giving rise to misrecognition, Orientalism “has little to do with the objective conditions of non-Western musical practices-rather it brings something new into being.”¹² He then concludes by providing a list of typical Orientalist exotic musical devices, invented to evoke different cultures: modes (aeolian, dorian, whole tones, the Phrygian), arabesques and ornaments, trills and dissonant grace notes, melodic juxtapositions, rhythms (ostinato, complex or irregular rhythms, use of triplets in duple time), intervals (parallel movement in fourths, fifths, and octaves, bare fifths); special chords (“magic” or “mystic” chords-possessing uncertainty of duration and/or harmonic direction), harp arpeggios and glissandi, instruments with special timbre and register (oboe, cor Anglais, percussion-tambourine, triangle, cymbals, gong and tom-toms).¹³ Through the list of these specialised markers, musical Orientalism becomes a system of knowledge about the Orient, where “the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references.”¹⁴ The authenticity of these devices and processes in any ethnic Eastern cultural practices becomes almost irrelevant.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., 326, 327.

¹² Ibid., 327.

¹³ Ibid., 327.

¹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 177. Quoted in Scott’s “Orientalism and Musical Style,” 327.

¹⁵ Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style,” 327.

The second type of musical exoticism as representation in music occurs “when Orientalism appropriates music from another culture it is not used simply to represent the Other; it is used to represent our own thoughts *about* the Other.”¹⁶ In Scott’s discussion of Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*, he mentions Ralph Locke’s suggestion that although the *Bacchanale* of Act 3 is based on the Arabic *hijaz* mode containing a lower tetrachord with an augmented second (which Saint-Saëns transposed and used for the upper tetrachord as well), Saint-Saëns was not concerned with the accuracy of this Arabic mode.¹⁷ Locke believes that it is more likely that Saint-Saëns employed it as a way to show the cultural difference. He says:

Saint-Saëns repeated insistence on the augmented second in the *Bacchanale* can be seen as an instance of the standard Orientalist practice (described by anthropologist Francis Affergan) of emphasizing the ‘[sedimentary] residues...of what differs most’ from Western practice; such an emphasis ‘reifies’ the Easterner’s ‘difference,’ thereby heightening rather than bridging the dichotomous gap between Self and Other.¹⁸

In other words, according to Locke, the case of the *Bacchanale* presents an example of Orientalism as exoticism in music. Specific musical markers are meant to evoke exotic and mysterious places and cultures associated with the Orient as a place very different from the Occident, both culturally and musically. Whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, parallel fourths, augmented seconds, use of specific instruments, such as castanets, and numerous other tools were used by Western composers in order to depict countries varying from Spain to Egypt to many other cultures in Asia, North Africa and Middle East as part of this Orientalist practice.

¹⁶ Ibid., 314.

¹⁷ Ibid., 314.

¹⁸Ralph P. Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3 (1991): 267. Quoted in Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 313-314.

Limitations of musical exoticism

According to Bellman, one of the limitations of exoticism deals with “the choice of musical materials.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, actual musical materials of a particular geographical locations are not relevant and composers (perhaps often willingly) wanted the country to remain vague. This kind of “one-size-fits-all exoticism”²⁰ is often seen as orientalist’s musical reduction of the Other to a childish, simplistic music and reflects a disrespect for the culture that is being evoked. However, the opposite approach may be equally criticized. Bellman says that “compositional attempts at ethnographic exactitude, or at least some effort to approximate or draw upon the sound of the Other, can easily be interpreted as composers’ appropriations of subaltern discourse for their own colonializing projects.”²¹

The same way as special visual designs, shapes or colours may evoke middle-or far-eastern art, architecture and decoration, certain standard musical effects may suggest the same distant places or cultures. Unfortunately, often local colour is used inappropriately, without musically distinguishing cultures, and also “automatically implies cheapness, ephemerality, and compositional weakness.”²²

¹⁹ Jonathan Bellman, “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology,” 423.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 424.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 424.

²² *Ibid.*, 420.

Ralph Locke and “All the Music in Full Context” Paradigm

Ralph P. Locke has analyzed and examined elements of musical exoticism in operas, in a way that differs from Saidian or postcolonial perspective. According to Locke, the aim of exoticism is not to condemn or judge the Other, nor is it to exercise authority over the Other in its analysis. While the typical definition of musical exoticism is narrow and is seen solely as the presence of foreign or strange-sounding elements, Locke focuses on exoticism as “the process by which exotic places and peoples are represented in musical works.”²³

For the analysis of the exotic works, he combines the “Exotic Style Only” Paradigm (which is based on the list of musical exotic signifiers) with his own newly proposed approach “All the Music in Full Context” Paradigm. This means that he does not reject or dismiss the “Exotic Style Only” paradigm. In fact, he recognizes how immensely valuable it is for many instrumental works, but it is not so effective when dealing with many dramatic works of exoticist intent. More precisely, it may not be applied to the analysis of a work that portrays an exotic people, and locale but contains some passages that do not exhibit any characteristics of exotic-sounding music.

Unlike “Exotic Style Only”, Locke’s “All the Music in Full Context” paradigm, allows one to explore works that are often neglected in the literature on musical exoticism because although they portray an exotic people, individual, or situation, they do not contain exotic-sounding music.²⁴ This paradigm is mostly suitable for dramatic works, as it makes it possible to further explore and adequately assess the “context” and factors that exist outside the notes.

²³ Ralph P. Locke, “A Broader View of Musical Exoticism.” *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall 2007): 478.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 479.

The aim of Locke paradigm is to include musical passages (that may not differ from the musical language of the day) in the overall contribution to portrayal of an exotic Other. His “All the Music in Full Context” Paradigm incorporates that “Exotic Style Only” Paradigm but does not rely only on the borrowing or imitating of local style. It includes all possible verbal, visual and choreographic resources and attempts to free the work from stylistic musical constraints by accepting “that an exoticist work need not display stylistic oddity at all.”²⁵ Locke explains this idea further in his more comprehensive definition,

Musical exoticism is the process of evoking in or through music-whether the latter is “exotic-sounding” or not-a place, people, or social milieu that is not entirely imaginary and that differs profoundly from the “home” country or culture in attitudes, customs, and morals. More precisely, it is the process of evoking a place (people, social milieu) that is perceived as different from home by the people making and receiving the exoticist cultural product.²⁶

As an example, Locke provides Rimsky-Korsakov’s symphonic suite *Schéhérézade*, which employs stylistic exotic devices, but also reveals passages that are not musically “Middle Eastern”. Nonetheless, those are the passages that still help to describe certain Arab legends and create special exotic scenes. Sinbad’s ship in the sea, an episode between a young prince and princess and even the recurring theme that opens the piece and represents Sultan Shahriar (all of which are not notably exotic in their musical style) allow the listener to *perceive* these scenes as parts of an exotic narrative. As Locke explains, the listeners are able to hear those scenes and passages as a part of an exotic narrative, “because they hear it *in the context of* the composer’s plot summary, the colorful titles of the four movements, and the many sections of the work that do sound “Middle Eastern.”²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 483.

²⁶ Ibid., 483-484.

²⁷ Ibid., 487.

In musico-dramatic works specifically, context-dependent depiction of the unfamiliar and exotic locations may be portrayed as “a place of barbarity.” That is why, according to Ralph Locke, “one and the same melismatic passage may tell as vengeful in one context and as desirous or determined in another.”²⁸ This way, his paradigm of “All the Music in Full Context” aids to enrich our understanding of how diversely exoticism can function in musical works that contain dramatic representation. This approach perhaps is currently the most successful way to recognise just how extensively music has participated in the “representation” of the non-Western world “by engaging all of music’s possible tools, such as state-of-the-art harmonic language and imaginative manipulation of phrase structure-and by allying itself with other arts: sung words (or movement titles in certain instrumental pieces), dramatic action, dance, and so on.”²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., 493.

²⁹ Ibid., 520.

Musical Orientalism as postcolonial criticism

Importance of stereotypes

In its postcolonial criticism, as a result of European's misrepresentations, Orient has often been associated with numerous stereotypical images. By the stereotypes such as "mysterious" to "primitive" to "violent" to "seductive" or the associations with decadence and monstrous appetite or effeminacy, "the whole of the East is distilled into one plot."³⁰ As an example presented by Mary Hunter in her article "The Alla Turca Style", the violent and irrational aspects of the largely invented *alla turca* style represent the primitivity and symbolize the (perceived) violent and uncontrollable behaviours of Turkey's inhabitants.³¹ This symbolic representation creates the basis for the stereotype and musically reduces the Turkish culture to a very negative and unrealistic image.

In the musical critiques, many of Said's followers often focused on the oppositional relationship and uneven power differentials. In such criticism, it seems there is simply no room and no possibility for the discussion of the "different kind of relationships between humans and human cultures, including overlap, sharing, and transformation as much as conquest and appropriation."³²

To the postcolonial critics then, the value of music exhibiting characteristics of another culture is not in its compositional craft, artistic strategies or quality of material and the use of any types of musical exoticisms to represent another culture is in itself problematic and ideologically

³⁰ Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 325.

³¹ Hunter, "The Alla Turca Style," 50–52. Quoted in Locke, "A Broader View of Musical Exoticism," 491.

³² Bellman, "Musical Voyages and Their Baggage," 423.

suspect.³³ Most crucially, this particular view of postcolonialist criticism does not recognize the value or worth of simple observation or the possibility of expanding the body of knowledge and learning something new. Even naming and categorizing become acts of appropriation and hegemony.

In his article “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology”, Jonathan Bellman gives an example of Matthew Head as a scholar who clearly puts forward his doctrinaire postcolonial interpretations, supported by his clear postcolonial position. Bellman also observes that Head’s view is full of ironic contradictions. Although he acknowledges that the concept of a Western culture is “a hugely problematic field saturated with assumptions of an enclosed, purified, homogenous, and developmentally as well as historically autonomous realm,”³⁴ he also states that “music’s affiliation with Orientalism is made poignant by Western culture’s habit of Othering its own musical practices.”³⁵

However, later Bellman states “that Head seems to have become quite the colonialist himself, Othering those with a different critical perspective and colonizing the entire landscape for his own project....for those not on board with him is the most obvious example of Othering via stereotype.”³⁶ This came as a reaction to Head’s de-legitimizing of Susan McClary’s feminist criticism of Bizet’s *Carmen*, showing her to be an orientalist, “then appropriating the entire area of gender studies, especially her feminist concerns, by subsuming it under the postcolonialist project.”³⁷ Bellman critiques Head’s approach by commenting on the confusion

³³ Ibid., 426.

³⁴ Matthew Head, “Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory,” *Music Analysis* 22, nos. 1 – 2 (2003): 216.

³⁵ Ibid., 227.

³⁶ Bellman, “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage,” 431.

³⁷ Ibid., 431.

in his critical perspective, which should offer ideas and interpretations for general enlightenment and further reflections. However, it should not offer hard facts that must be acknowledged and accepted as the universal truth. In Bellman's own words, "no critical perspective should contain a self-centered approach and the right to hold an exceptional status in which the critic feels the right to completely dismiss other scholars and their work as unscholarly."³⁸

Transcultural music

Thankfully, a more recent and broader term, such as *transcultural music* is becoming used more often when describing any music that encompasses or combines elements of more than one culture. This term helps to find balance in the Oriental discourse by preserving the culture or ethnicity-bridging aspects of a mixed musical style while deemphasizing the power relation aspects.

Most importantly, Bellman acknowledges that transcultural music and its content may not be limited by saying:

common sense dictates that it is impossible to proscribe, limit, or in any way regulate the cultural conversations that transcultural musics by definition embody and provide; attempts to do so reduce criticism, postcolonial, or any other kind, to ideological gate-keeping, which is neither its proper function nor its right.³⁹

It is crucial to remember that the process of creating music is interdependent and is often interwoven with numerous musical elements that may be invented or borrowed. Those elements, if used in criticism, could diminish the musical value of the compositional craft and the piece itself.

³⁸ Bellman, "Musical Voyages and Their Baggage," 432.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 427.

It is essential to never forget that musical experiences have always been shared between various cultures, making them transcultural. This is why in his analysis of music, Bellman encourages to “encompass cultural confluences, cross-currents, juxtapositions, and so forth.”⁴⁰ He insists that “what and how and why are at the heart of what we need to be addressing addressing the multiplicity of identities and cultural conversations in transcultural music is a scholarly and critical necessity.”⁴¹ Most importantly, the musical critique must not subvert all discussion of certain repertoire to fit only one critical agenda, as this approach produces only propaganda. True scholarship in this case must include various interpretations in order to maintain its scholarly integrity.

Limitations of postcolonial perspective

Firstly, the biggest problem with postcolonial perspective is that it may not be applicable to all “Oriental” repertoire, or repertoire that has some markers of musical “Othering.” It is most useful only when there is a focus on unequal power relations, hegemonies (physical and cultural), and colonization/imperialism. In transcultural music, such as Chopin’s use of Italian operatic *bel canto* or Liszt’s evocations of Italian songs, there is no real possibility of making a case that these composers were “reducing or essentializing Italians via the stylistic markers of their music.”⁴² As a result, scholars continue to ignore discussing these works. This way, although postcolonial criticism has a lot to offer when the relationship between the cultures being musically juxtaposed has exploitative nature, it is absolutely powerless for the analysis of the majority of transcultural music.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., 432.

⁴¹ Ibid., 432.

⁴² Ibid., 433.

⁴³ Ibid., 433.

Secondly, Glenn Watkins suggested that the “old Orientalism question”- “Who is colonizing who?”-is almost losing its relevance if one acknowledges the “omnidirectional globalism of musical dissemination.”⁴⁴ Transcultural music criticism seems to offer so much more if one considers concepts of cultural transfer, borrowing, and other types of musical exchanges. Examples of such musical exchanges are Asian orchestras who consistently study and perform western classical repertoire, composers who use the sonorities and different musical ideas for their compositions and a variety of other projects that try to unite east with the west (West-Eastern Divan Orchestra founded by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said would be one example of such a project). Such project and exchanges are made possible simply by curiosity, and desire to connect with other cultures without any goals of appropriation or colonization.

In spite of its obvious limitations, Bellman acknowledges the importance of music criticism based on Orientalist currents. However, he continuously insists that it is essential “to fashion some critical approaches and vocabularies that do not disfigure their musical-cultural subjects by engaging them only in the context of a particular non-musical agenda.”⁴⁵

Being a humanist, Said once said that “the basic humanistic mission today, has to do with the preservation of difference without, at the same time, sinking into desire to dominate.”⁴⁶ Perhaps it is exactly this thought-*to try to preserve the difference, without the desire to dominate*-that should become a good source of inspiration for the creation of the critical approaches and vocabularies, as described by Bellman. Such approaches would have to acknowledge the presence of hegemonic power relations between certain cultures, if such exists in the historical

⁴⁴ Glenn Watkins, “Beyond Orientalism?,” in *On Bunker’s Hill: Essays in Honor of J. Bunker Clark*, ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2007), 299 – 308.

⁴⁵ Bellman, “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage,” 435.

⁴⁶Barenboim, Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, 154.

context. They would also take into account the universality of the musical phenomenon through its interdependence, its ability to blur cultural and geographical barriers and the value of the inevitable cultural transfer in order to provide an array of possible interpretations.

Exoticism, Ralph Locke's paradigm and the relevance of postcolonial approach to the analysis of Balakirev's *Islamey*

There are no doubts that this piece exhibits inherent exoticism since it evokes Circassian culture, a certain "Other", as opposition to the Russian culture. However, although exoticism may be extremely useful in the analysis of some instrumental and dramatic works, it is not fully suitable for the discussion of *Islamey*. I shall begin by acknowledging the usefulness of exoticism as an analytical approach, but using it for the analysis of *Islamey* is problematic because of Balakirev's use of folk melodies. Then, I shall outline the reasons why postcolonial critique will be more relevant when discussing Balakirev's *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy*.

Exoticism almost never has any connection with the actual non-Western musical practices incorporated into art music, which is why it relies on exotic-sounding interchangeable musical elements. It allows the freedom for the musical language to be not authentic since it is only an evocation, and it is (assumably) based on the composer's experience. In other words, authenticity of the folk songs or some other kind of borrowed cultural material becomes irrelevant.

In the case of *Islamey*, it is not possible to fully examine this work relying solely on the concept of exoticism. It is the use of the interesting rhythmic and melodic elements from the folk-tunes of other cultures that makes this piece so rich in musical content.

In his description of Balakirev's composition, M. D. Calvocoressi stated in his article "A Note on Folk-Song in Modern Music" that "the rhythmic and melodic material of *Islamey* is provided by three folk-tunes, the first two of which are Caucasian (Ex. 2.1 and Ex. 2.2) and the third one is Armenian (Ex. 2.3)."⁴⁷



Ex. 2.1



Ex. 2.2



Ex. 2.3

⁴⁷ M.D. Calvocoressi, "A Note on Folk-Song in Modern Music," *Music & Letters*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1931): 68.

Each of these folk-tunes has a specific function within the piece. For example, although the actual pitches of the first two folk-tunes are embedded in the texture of the piece (Ex 2. 4 and Ex. 2.5 show the first appearances of these tunes), their primary function is to create a specific rhythmic structure that contribute to this piece's unity.

The third folk tune contains various intervals and is used for its melodic content. Since it contains much more variation in pitches and rhythm, it creates a beautiful contrast to the first two tunes in the second half of the piece (Ex. 2.6).

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and slurs. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth notes and chords, also featuring slurs and accents.

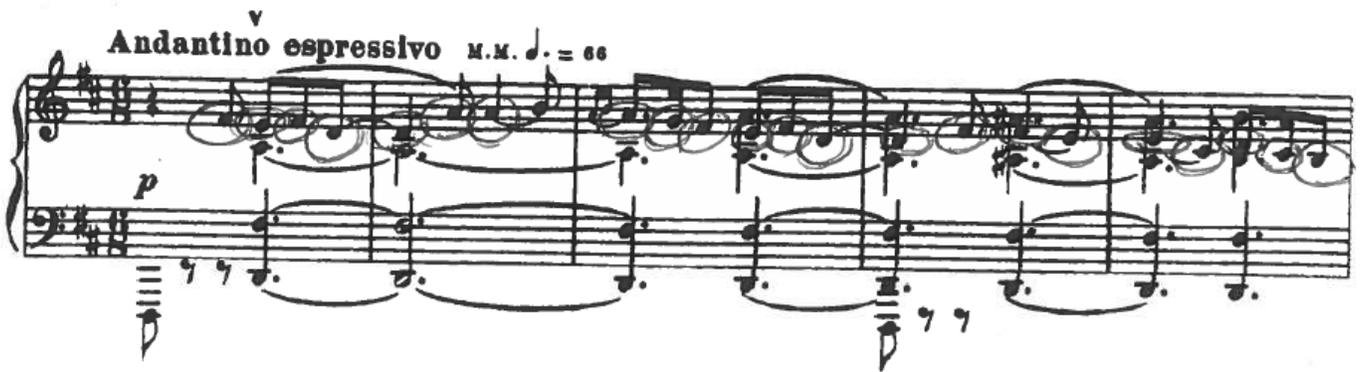
The second system of musical notation continues the piece. The upper staff features more complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents. The lower staff continues with a steady bass line, including some chordal textures.

The third system of musical notation concludes the excerpt. The upper staff has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) at the beginning. The lower staff continues with a bass line that includes some sustained chords and slurs.

Ex. 2.4. mm. 9-16



Ex. 2.5. mm. 17-20



Ex. 2.6. mm. 93-97

As research shows, Balakirev neither explicitly invented any style, nor used some interchangeable signifiers to represent Circassians. Using exoticism to discuss this work becomes problematic because the composer created this piece of music using authentic folk melodies. Unfortunately, the exact origins of these melodies are obscure. Although there are numerous accounts of their origins (which will be discussed in more details in the next chapter),

most of them relate these melodies to the general area of the highly multi-ethnic Caucasus, without precisely specifying the region.

Locke's framework of "All the Music in Full Context" is undoubtedly a valuable and useful concept for a large corpus of Western repertoire. Its main value lies in providing a way to classify a greater number of musical works as "exotic." Instead of searching for exotic musical codes only within the music itself; this paradigm relies on extramusical clues, such as texts, staging, moods, titles, and instrumentation. Unfortunately, this framework is not applicable to the discourse of Orientalism in *Islamey*. Being an instrumental work, it does not contain a variety of extramusical clues that are essential to Locke's paradigm. However, it would be more useful to apply this framework if *Islamey* was a musico-dramatic work or a lied.

Firstly, if *Islamey* was a mini opera based on one of the legend of the Narts,⁴⁸ the music could be interpreted in relationship to the text of the legend itself or to the staging nuances. The folk tunes that are present in this piece could be used as leitmotives for certain exotic characters and the changes that these themes undergo throughout the piece could be interpreted as changes in these characters. Another possible subject matter for an opera could be based on history and could involve various time periods, ranging from Circassian early history, to the pre-war period with the Russian Empire. This way, the presence of various folk tunes along with the Russian style of composition could be interpreted as a representation of intricately intertwined histories of Russians, Circassians and other cultures that were affected by the age of Russian Imperialism.

Secondly, Locke's paradigm could be applied easier if music of *Islamey* was set to a poem. The subject matter could range from historical legacy, to the legends of the Narts, or even

⁴⁸ The corpus of the Nart Sagas is one of the most essential ingredients of Circassian culture. The most comprehensive book on the Narts in the English language is John Colarusso's *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus* (Princeton University Press, 2002). See also A. Jaimoukha's *The Cycles of the Nart Epic of the Circassians* (Sanjalay Press, 2009), and Zaina Saeed's *The Narts* (Bennett & Bloom, 2010).

poetry written about the Caucasus by Russian poets (such as Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus*). This way, music could be interpreted in relationship to certain words. Repetitive motives could then be associated with important words and could lead to deeper significance and meaning.

Thus, although Locke's paradigm has an enormous value, it may not be directly applied to *Islamey* as this instrumental piece does not contain enough extramusical signs that would allow us to interpret this music as exotic in nature. As a result, the framework of exoticism is less applicable to the analysis of this particular piece of music.

Postcolonial approach is applicable to the discussion of *Islamey*, and in Chapter 3, I shall pursue this at length. As was discussed earlier, the postcolonial approach puts a huge emphasis on stereotypes and misrepresentation of the colonized culture, while acknowledging the sociohistorical context. Unlike exoticism, it has the most value when the relationship between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonised has an exploitative nature.

The Russian Empire was in the process of colonizing various areas of the Caucasus for more than a century. 140 years after the end of the war, President of Adygeia (one of Circassian modern republics), Khazret Sovmen addressed the particular significance that this war had for Circassians since they were its primary victims. He stated:

The struggle for survival in their native land was the most tragic page in the century-old history of the Adyghe (Circassian) people, who lived through that century in a state of war... The degree of this national catastrophe is comparable to the fate of other peoples who have survived genocide, but the mass exodus of Adyghe, the vast majority of whom live outside the borders of their historical homeland, has no true analogue in world history.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Present, past, future* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

Since *Islamey* was composed in 1869, five years after Circassians were defeated by the Russians, it is reasonable to say that it became a cultural artifact of such exploitative history. This is why this war and other nuances of Russo-Circassian social and historical relationship need to be taken into consideration when discussing this piece of music.

Admitting the importance of historical facts when studying the rapid rise of musical Orientalism in the West in the nineteenth century, Scott stated that it is essential to examine changes in the historical, political and economic situations. Therefore, development of Orientalism in music “must be located in its sociohistorical context.”⁵⁰ Without it, there is a danger of oversimplifying this complex construction, creating even more confusion. Bellman agrees with this idea by encouraging scholars to “encompass cultural confluences, cross-currents, juxtapositions, and so forth”⁵¹ in the analysis of the repertoire, whenever possible. He insists that “what and how and why are at the heart of what we need to be addressing . . . addressing the multiplicity of identities and cultural conversations in transcultural music is a scholarly and critical necessity.”⁵²

However, although the postcolonial approach seems to be the most relevant, my perspective in this thesis is not purely postcolonial and demands a much more nuanced view of the Other. This is because often, as Bellman observed, postcolonialist criticism “recognizes no neutral observation of inquiry or even the possibility of learning about something unfamiliar; even naming and categorizing are acts of appropriation and hegemony.”⁵³ Unlike postcolonial

⁵⁰ Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style,” 328.

⁵¹ Bellman, “Musical Voyages and Their Baggage,” 432.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 432.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 428.

critics and many of Said's followers, I shall not focus solely on the oppositional relationships and uneven power differentials during the Conquest of the Caucasus. Instead, I shall put more emphasis on the discussion of Balakirev's musical representation of Circassian culture and the possible reasons for such representation.

In conclusion, musical works have long been transcultural. Even Said pointed out in his chapter on music in *Culture and Imperialism*, that postcolonialist critique is not fully applicable to music "because human beings and cultures at their most narrow cannot come close to the zero-dimensional identities necessary for a second-wave postcolonialist argument."⁵⁴

Thus, the universality of the musical phenomenon lies in its interdependence, its ability to blur cultural barriers, and the value of the inevitable cultural transfer and its capacity to provide an array of interpretations. All of these must all be taken into account when creating a discourse about the musical works, such as *Islamey*.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed currently existing ideas about musical Orientalism. After presenting three main definition of Orientalism in music, I examined Orientalism as a type of musical exoticism and its limitations, mainly based on the arguments by Derek Scott and Ralph Locke. Next, I presented Orientalism as a facet of postcolonial criticism, along with its limitations, drawing mainly upon the scholarly work of Jonathan Bellman. Then I examined aspects of both approaches according to their relevance to the discussion of *Islamey*, showing that postcolonial approach is more suitable for this piece of music because Balakirev misrepresented Circassian culture.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 432.

In the next chapter, I shall start my discussion of the misrepresentation of the Circassian culture in *Islamey* by firstly examining the false representation of Caucasians (specifically Circassians) in the Russian literature. Then I will present available sources (written by Balakirev and his close friends) about the origins of the folk melodies that make up the main musical material for this piece. I shall conclude by discussing Balakirev's compositional practice of appropriating folk music of various cultures for his compositional process and the significant role of the folk idiom in the establishment of Russian musical identity and art music.

CHAPTER 3

CIRCASSIAN MUSIC AND *ISLAMEY*: A COMPLEX EXAMPLE OF REPRESENTATION AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHY

The aim of this chapter will be to discuss the representation of the Circassian culture in Mily Alexeevich Balakirev's *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy*. Firstly, I shall look at the false representation of Caucasians (specifically Circassians) and the issue of imaginative geography in the portrayal of Circassia in the Russian literature, as discussed by Susan Layton. Secondly, I shall list several authors, starting with Balakirev himself, who described *Islamey* as "Circassian" or gave it some other "Oriental" ascription. In spite of this piece's Circassian title, after close examination of the evidence observed in the score and scholarly sources, I shall reveal that the origins of the actual material Balakirev drew upon for the piece are obscure and do not belong to the Circassian culture. In the concluding part of this chapter, I shall examine Balakirev's possible reasons for creating this kind of representation and appropriating Caucasian folk music for his art by discussing his compositional technique and the role of the folk idiom in the Russian art music.

North Caucasus as Russia's "Other": false representation of Circassia and the issue of imaginative geography in the Russian literature

The conquest of the Caucasus by the Russian Empire was the inspiration for a large body of literature and the establishment of Russian cultural identity, since Russia perceived the Caucasus as their "own" Orient. In her book *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, Susan Layton analyzes the Russian writing about three main areas of the Caucasus -- Circassia, Chechnia and Dagestan. Her main goals are to carefully explore the tensions between the Russian ideology to civilize the mountaineers, and the romantic perceptions of those peoples in spite of the tsarist relentless war against the "savage" Muslim tribes.

It does not come as a surprise that Russian literature of the time is intimately bound up with the conquest of the Caucasus, and the names of Pushkin, Lermontov, Griboedev, Bestazhev-Marlinskii, and Polonskii, are inseparable from the region that inspired so many of their works. Leo Tolstoy set two of his earliest tales in the Caucasus, returned to the Caucasian theme numerous times, and dedicated to it his last work. However, the existing body of literature about the Caucasus and the reputations of their authors underwent dramatic changes in Russia in the last century. In 1934, Nikolai Svirin viewed Pushkin's Caucasian poems as "Russian colonial literature," while S. Veltman's *Literature and the Orient* also accused Pushkin and Lermontov for taking part in "reactionary" tendencies of "colonial literature," as seen by their "false representation of our Orient."¹

¹ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

Susan Layton's book *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* provides a synthesizing study of Russian writing about the Caucasus during the nineteenth century-age of colonization and imperialism. In her re-examination of the literary Caucasus in relation to imperialism, Susan Layton largely relies on Said's methodology presented in *Orientalism* that was based on the distinctiveness between cultures and the comparison between "us" and "them". She states that:

Russian writing about the Caucasus engaged in ideologically significant discursive practices which transmitted and reproduced themselves from one epoch to another in various genres...these practices included rhetorical postures, symbolic diction and tropes, specific concepts and a whole mental tendency to compare "us" to "them."²

When discussing the significant role that Western Europe and the Caucasus played in the establishment of the Russian national and imperial consciousness, Layton explains that,

Russian national consciousness began developing in the 18th century, on contact with foreign non-national entities. From the time of Peter the Great, Western Europe played the central role as a clarifier of "Russian-ness." But the Asian borderlands of the Russian Empire also contributed to this formation of Russian national, as well as imperial consciousness. As of the 18th century, ethnographic expeditions to the Caucasus, Crimea, Siberia, and so on produced huge compilations of data that had limited readerships but all the same exemplified a growing imperial consciousness. The Russian elite was beginning to form a mental map of the multinational empire, as this vast and colorful conglomerate of many peoples, cultures, types of terrain. And on this Russian mental map the Caucasus came to assume a special prominence as a version of "the Orient."³

She then states that the period of Russian conquest of the Caucasus coincided with the rise of Russian Romanticism, a cultural phenomenon that imitated West European fascination

² Ibid., 8-9.

³ "Literature and Empire: Scholar Susan Layton Discusses Russia's 'Literary Caucasus,'" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 13, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/literature_empire_scholar_susan_layton_discusses_russia_literary_caucasus/24389678.html (accessed February 20, 2015).

with the Islamic East. This processes of empire-building also brought more Russians into the Caucasus, who came as civil servants, travelers, exiles, soldiers. At that time, Russians were well aware of the Western Orientalism and the European Imperialism, so the Caucasus became their own point of reference against which their own national identity could be firmly established.

When comparing and creating parallels between the Russian and the European experiences of identity-building, Layton claims that Russians needed the Caucasus to establish their identity as a European culture. However, she observes that they could not easily isolate the Orient as its “other” because Asia has been a part of Russian history and identity for a long time. To explain it further, she states:

By imagining the Caucasus as an “Orient,” Russians, no doubt, were bolstering their claim to be European. But, at the same time, Russia could not isolate the Orient as its “other” as easily as the Western Europeans could do. Because Asia, after all, comprised an organic part of Russian space and history. Asia was both “self” and “other” for Russia. It's Russian status as this multinational, continental Empire that makes a huge difference. Russia has this hybrid, semi-Asian identity. And this found expression in the romanticizing of the North Caucasus peoples, on the part of [Aleksandr] Pushkin, [Aleksandr] Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, [Mikhail] Lermontov. Russia's cultural heterogeneity predisposed romantics to enhancing Asia some way or another, instead of identifying exclusively and consistently with the Western civilization -- to which, they knew, their country did not wholly belong.⁴

It is also relevant to note that there exists a whole tradition of “orientalising” Russians by the Western Europe. Fyodor Dostoevsky, one of the Russian most famous writers captured it perfectly in a famous statement related to the conquest of Central Asia. He said, that “In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we enter as masters.”⁵ This statement confirms Russia's project of building an empire in Asia as a way to create and clarify their identity as

⁴ “Literature and Empire: Scholar Susan Layton Discusses Russia's ‘Literary Caucasus,’” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*.

⁵ Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Dostoevsky: his life and art* (New Jersey: S. G. Phillips, 1957), 395.

“Europeans.” It is also central to their understanding of the “East” as well as their relationship with the “West.”

As part of her analysis of the “literary Caucasus,” Layton discusses Pushkin’s “Prisoner of the Caucasus,” published in 1820. In this work, she concentrates on the pertinent issue of the *imaginative geography*. Originally quoted by Said in *Orientalism*, European *imaginative geography* consists of “a[n imaginary] line [that] is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant.”⁶ In the case of Pushkin’s poem, this imaginative geography creates a false representation of the Circassian lands.

According to Layton, Pushkin’s poem depicted a landscape of the Alps and “expressed a romantic preoccupation with wilderness disjoined from its local population.”⁷ Instead of showing the reality of this particular region and the brutality of the war, this literary work “constructed the Russian encounter with nature as restorative tourism focused on the self: as a site of inspiration and rejuvenation, the land acquired meaning primarily in terms of its impact on the poet and his hero who falls captive and escapes.”⁸

Layton dedicates the rest of her chapter to the analysis of how this poem produced a captivating and poetic version of alpine experience, instead of depicting the real dangers of the conquest of the Caucasus. She insists that Pushkin invented (rather than recorded) Caucasian landscape using special language devices and “made the Caucasus poetic by situating it squarely within long-standing traditions of European writing about the Alps.”⁹ In fact, she says that along

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 56.

⁷ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

with the borrowings from his contemporaries, “Pushkin employed Byronic formulas to integrate Caucasian *paysage* into a compelling traveler’s tale.”¹⁰

By constructing Circassian village as the Alps of the homeland, Pushkin created a world of the sublime, which could inspire travellers and add artistic inspiration and spiritual uplift. His work focused on the encounter with beautiful nature with few references to the actual tribes, or to the unrest and the destruction of the war that was taking place at that time.

Because of this imaginative depiction, Pushkin attracted a lot of attention to Russia’s southern borderland and inspired other Russian poets of the 1820s to invoke Kabarda and other highly diversified areas of the Caucasus (such as Abkhazia and Dagestan) while representing them as generic mountainous territory, which later acquired a label of the “Caucasian Alps.”¹¹

As Layton concludes her observation about Pushkin’s poem, she says that “the incoherence of the Russian quest for rejuvenative alpine experience in an oriental combat zone would haunt Caucasian travel literature, especially in Pushkin’s time.”¹²

Until now, I examined the Russian “literary Caucasus”— a body of literature about Caucasus during colonization — that helped Russians establish their own identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Based on Said’s theory of Orientalism, which was built upon the distinctiveness between cultures and the perpetual comparison between “us” and “them”, the Caucasian image represented in the literature was used to confirm Russian identity as European. As an example, Susan Layton discussed the issue of false representation and the imaginative geography, often associated with Orientalism. She showed that Pushkin’s Romantic work

¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹¹ Ibid., 47.

¹² Ibid., 53.

“Prisoner of the Caucasus” constructed the image of the colonized lands as beautiful, filled with inspired and rejuvenative experience, ignoring the realities and the brutalities of the war.

Balakirev’s *Islamey* (with its seemingly Circassian origins) was composed shortly after his visit to the Caucasus in 1862, in the middle of the Russo-Circassian war, and two years before the mass deportation of Circassians to Turkey in 1864. Like Pushkin, who described Circassian lands similarly to the beauty of the European Alps, Balakirev also found “sources of inspiration in both the splendid scenery and the Eastern music which he was ever hearing around him... He loved that admirable region and revisited it more than once. Three masterpieces, *the Song of Georgia*, *Tamara* and *Islamey*, reflect his impressions of its character and atmosphere.¹³

However, in spite of its beautiful Circassian title, it is possible that it has no substantial musical connection to this culture. There is a certain mystery involving the musical material of this piece. In the next section, I shall present available evidence of attribution of Orientalism to *Islamey* extracted from the writing of M. Balakirev, M. D. Calvocoressi, P. Tchaikovsky and E. Garden. To conclude, I shall discuss the reasons for Balakirev’s use of folk material in his compositions and explain how it was used as a compositional device.

¹³ M.D. Calvocoressi, “Music in the Foreign Press,” *The Musical Times*, Vol. 79, No. 1147 (Sep., 1938): 121.

Evidence of Attribution of Orientalism to *Islamey*: Oriental, Circassian, Caucasian, Armenian, Georgian, Tartar

1) M. Balakirev: “Circassian”, “Tartar” and “Oriental”

Firstly, although Balakirev was known for his use of other cultural musics, he often specified the origins of such music in the title of the piece. Overture on a Spanish March Theme, *Sérénade Espagnole* and Symphonic Poem on Czech Themes are some of his well-known examples.

The origins of *Islamey*'s musical material, however, are much more obscure. On one hand, in his letter to Eduard Reiss written in 1892, Balakirev describes his impressions of the Caucasus and states that *Islamey*'s main themes have Circassian and Tartar origins. He says:

The majestic beauty of luxuriant nature there and the beauty of the inhabitants that harmonises with it – all these things together made a deep impression on me... Since I interested myself in the vocal music there, I made the acquaintance of a Circassian prince, who frequently came to me and played folk tunes on his instrument that was something like a violin. One of them, called *Islamey*¹, a dance-tune, pleased me extraordinarily and with a view to the work I had in mind on *Tamara*, I began to arrange it for the piano. The second theme was communicated to me in Moscow by an Armenian actor, who came from the Crimea and is, as he assured me, well known among the Crimean Tartars.²

¹ Circassian historian and scholar Amjad Jaimoukha, described *Islamey* as a kind of Circassian dance. According to Jaimoukha, “*Yislihemey (Islamey)* is an energetic dance that was either introduced recently or adapted from an ancient dance form. ... Its meter is similar to that of *qafe* [a stately slow dance, performed with pride touching on aloofness and with a great pleasure of self-control. It is a very noble dance form that was also adopted and adapted by Balkars and Ossetians], 6/8 for old versions and 2/4 for new. On its catchy melody and old meter, the Russian composer Mily Alexeyevich Balakirev (1837-1910) based his ‘*Islamey-Oriental Fantasy for piano*’, which he finished in five weeks on September 13, 1869. Balakirev’s fascination with North Caucasian music goes back to 1863 when he visited the Caucasus. He fell in love with Circassian music and he wrote a number of musical pieces based on Kabardian folk songs.” Quoted in Amjad Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, cuisine, Festivals and Music* (London: Bennett & Bloom, 2010), 309-310.

² E.L. Frid, “Dva pis'ma M. Balakireva k Èduardu Reysu” [Two letters from Balakirev to Eduard Reiss], *Sovetskaya Muzika*, no. 5 (1960): 69.

On the other hand, Balakirev subtitled *Islamey*, as “Oriental Fantasy,” a term that is often aligned with exotic qualities. By giving this piece such subtitle, he omitted all possible reference to a specific culture, simply presenting it as music of seemingly homogenous “Orient”.

For Said, the term “Orient” is applied to a large geographical area with diverse populations but at the same time it assumes that this geographical area lacks diversity and may be used as a simple subject of study.³ Based on Balakirev’s correspondence with Calvocoressi and Tchaikovsky, the term “Orient” also represented one geographically homogenous exotic area that lacked distinctiveness and diversity for him.

In one of his letters to Calvocoressi in April 1910, Balakirev said, “I hasten to let you know that I have been able to get locally Bourgault-Ducoudray's thirty folksongs of Greece and the Orient, so you need not trouble to send them.”⁴ This statement makes the matters even more complex. It leaves the reader wondering what kind of cultures Balakirev was referencing and whether or not the multiculturalism of the Caucasus was represented in those folksongs.

On another occasion, when discussing Tchaikovsky’s cantata “Night,” Balakirev was comparing the compositional situations where the music of the Orient would be more appropriate than that of Russia and said:

Let the cantata be preceded by a short orchestral prelude. Throughout the whole work the atmosphere of fantasy must be maintained; if you should think fit to add a Russian or an Oriental character, this would add to its charm; the Oriental type with its grace and delicacy is more especially suited to fantasy than the Russian...A Russian character can

³ Edward W. Said, Moustafa Bayoumi, and Andrew Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 64.

⁴ M. Montagu-Nathan, “Balakirev's Letters to Calvocoressi.” *Music & Letters*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1954): 352.

be useful where an element of strength is required—for instance in the chorus of wood sprites.⁵

This statement, in accordance with Said’s theory of Orientalism, supports the view of this general “Oriental type” that is generally associated with grace, delicacy and other charming and pleasing to the ear qualities. Unfortunately, this “Oriental type” does not possess any distinct cultural features, reducing all the multicultural diversity into only one musical image.

2) M.D. Calvocoressi: “Caucasian”, “Armenian” and “Georgian”

In M. D. Calvocoressi’s “A Note on Folk-Song in Modern Music,” the author stated that “the whole material of *Islamey* is provided by three folk-tunes, the first two of which are Caucasian and the third one is Armenian.”⁶ The two Caucasian melodies that Calvocoressi references, are presented in the Ex. 3. 1. and Ex. 3. 2. The third melody is shown in the Ex. 3. 3. However, the Caucasus is the homeland to numerous distinct ethnicities and this term does not have any connection with any specific culture.





Ex. 3. 2.



Ex. 3. 3.

However, in his other article called “Music in the Foreign Press,” written seven years later, Calvocoressi is more specific and says that the melodies come from Georgian music. He states that “In the March issue V. Berkov analyses Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla* Overture, and I. Nestiev [analyzes] Balakirev's *Islamey*, showing its close relation to Georgian music, whose style Balakirev skilfully adapted to his purpose.”⁷

Also mentioned by Calvocoressi in 1862,

Balakirev took a holiday in the Caucasus, finding sources of inspiration in both the splendid scenery and the Eastern music which he was ever hearing around him. He loved that admirable region and revisited it more than once. Three masterpieces, *the Song of Georgia*, *Tamara* and *Islamey*, reflect his impressions of its character and atmosphere.⁸

In accordance with the existing scholarship, both *the Song of Georgia* and *Tamara* are known for their Georgian based melodies. *Islamey* may not be so easily identifiable but it seems logical to conclude that since all of these pieces were written during the same period of time,

⁷ M.D. Calvocoressi, “Music in the Foreign Press,” 677.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

there is a possibility that the musical material used for these compositions came from the same region.

3) P. I. Tchaikovsky: “Armenian-Georgian-Jerichonian”

The mentioning of *Islamey*'s relationship to Georgian music appears more as we look at the reception of this piece. For example, in October of 1869, Tchaikovsky wrote to Balakirev of the reception Moscow accorded the composer's newly completed *Islamey*:

Your Armenian-Georgian-Jerichonian⁹ Fantasy has been received and Rubinstein is already playing it daily at the Conservatoire. If you want to know what sort of impression it has made, then I'll tell you that those who have heard it can be divided into three categories. It throws some into a wild ecstasy (here Albrecht in particular should be mentioned; this German flies into a kind of passion when he hears it); others react to your work as to some curious marvel (e.g. Laub and Dupont, the Italian Kapellmeister); lastly, the third group don't like it at all. In fairness it must be said that there are very few of these.¹⁰

On one hand, Tchaikovsky does not simply call the melodies “Caucasian” but he clearly specifies the cultural origins. On the other hand, he does not describe in detail which melodies are Armenian and which are Georgian.

⁹ N. Borozdin, a friend of Balakirev, had given Moscow the nickname of 'Jericho'. Tchaikovsky uses the adjective here because 'Islamey' was dedicated to Nicholas Rubinstein who was a Muscovite. Quoted in David Brown, “Balakirev, Tchaikovsky and Nationalism,” *Music & Letters*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul., 1961): 230.

¹⁰ David, Brown, “Balakirev, Tchaikovsky and Nationalism,” *Music & Letters*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul., 1961): 230.

4) Edward Garden: “Tartar”

Furthermore, all clarity is once again lost if one considers the quote from Edward Garden, who (unlike Calvocoressi who described the third melody as Armenian), states that the middle section of *Islamey* is based on Tartar folk tune (Ex. 3.3.). He says:

A very good contemporary example from Balakirev's own music is his harmonization of the Tartar folk- melody in the slow middle section of his Oriental Fantasy *Islamey*. It was in Tchaikovsky's room [in the Conservatoire] that Balakirev had heard an Armenian actor sing this melody, and what is more as he composed *Islamey*, he played it through on the piano with Tchaikovsky, to whom the bass part was allotted.¹¹

This addition of Tartar musical culture seems to be surprising and unexpected for what originally seemed to be a Circassian-inspired piece of music. In addition, unlike the possibility of an Armenian or Georgian musical connection, the presence of the Tartar musical connection seems the least fitting, since it has no geographical relationship to the Caucasus at all.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves of the historical context. According to numerous sources, Balakirev’s visit to the Caucasus took place in 1862, in the middle of the Russo-Circassian war, and two years before the mass deportation of Circassians to Turkey in 1864. It is possible that he had heard Circassian folk tunes in the Caucasian areas outside Circassia. However, it is impossible to believe that he would travel to such a dangerous region for artistic inspiration in the middle of the war, where [as described later by the former president of Adygeia Republic Khazret Sovmen, who highlighted the particular significance of this war for Circassians] “the degree of this national catastrophe is comparable to the fate of other peoples

¹¹ Edward Garden, “The Influence of Balakirev on Tchaikovsky,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 107 (1980 - 1981): 90.

who have survived genocide, but the mass exodus of Circassians, the vast majority of whom live outside the borders of their historical homeland, has no true analogue in world history.”¹

¹ Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Present, past, future*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

Why did Balakirev represent *Islamey* as a Circassian/Oriental work of music?

Few people pause to consider *Islamey* seriously. Its extreme brilliance and technical difficulty have led to its being hailed as a mere “show piece,” not as the wonderful poem of Eastern sunshine and shimmer and languor and turmoil, stamped throughout with the personality of a highly *imaginative* and sensitive artist, that it really is.¹

As we have seen by the means of this list, *Islamey: Oriental Fantasy* presents a complex case of musical representation of Circassian culture. There is very little evidence of any relationship to the Circassian culture, other than its title. Balakirev created a sense of imaginative geography by combining folk melodies of geographically and musically distinct cultures, obscuring their origins, then, giving his composition a purely Circassian title, creating a musical misrepresentation of Circassia.

In this last part of the chapter, I shall examine the reasons behind Balakirev’s extensive use of folk songs in his own compositions and the decision he faced of how to reconcile Western musical style based on modern tonality with folk styles. It is my thesis that Balakirev did not use the folk tunes in his compositions in order to willfully misrepresent Circassians. Instead, the practice of using folk music was a part of his compositional technique and it was a way for Russian composers to have a distinct musical voice.

I shall begin by describing Balakirev’s compositional practice. Balakirev, influenced by the rise of nationalism in Russia and Western Europe, consistently used folk material of other

¹ M. D. Calvocoressi, “Mily Balakirev, on the Centenary of His Birth,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Jan., 1937): 54.

cultures as a way to express that culture's national character. Folk music was also an accessible source of inspiration and of creative ideas, since no one was guarding their musical heritage and composers often shared folk tunes with each other. I shall conclude by discussing the importance of using the folk idiom along with the Western concepts of tonality for the Russian composers. After all, it seemed to be the only way that would allow Russian composers to have their own musical voice that would be both interesting, pleasant for the audience and distinct from the music of Western Europe.

Mily Alexeevich Balakirev is celebrated as one of the most influential and most important composers in the Russian history and the leader of the legendary "Mighty Handful" or "the great Russian five." In his article, Liapunov stated "The importance of the part he [Balakirev] played in the evolution of Russian music is so great as to preclude all possibilities of comparison and entitles him to the first place in the history of Russian music after Glinka."² Unfortunately, his compositional output was not as large as that of some other Russian composers and the greater part of it is neglected up to this day.

However, Calvocoressi, a music critic and Balakirev's close personal friend, considered him to be very influential and important composer. He said:

A tribute is ungrudgingly paid to the loving labour he [Balakirev] devoted to fighting the battle of Russian music, to training and guiding the young composers who, instinctively and inevitably, had mustered around him, and to propagating not only the music of his contemporaries, but musical culture in general."³

Balakirev was born in 1837 in Nizhny-Novgorod, which was an old Russian city that was a stronghold against Tartar invaders and aboriginal Mordivinians. Most inhabitants were factory

² M. D. Calvocoressi and A. Gerald, *Masters of Russian Music* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1944), 97.

³ *Ibid.*, 98.

workers and there was no real cultural life, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, it attracted representatives of Slavonic and Eastern races, whose native music must have left some kind of unconscious impression on the mind of the future author of *Islamey* and *Tamara*.

Through his teachers and acquaintances such as Karl Eiserich, and Alexander Ulybyshef (who was a music lover/writer on music and owned a good musical library), Balakirev was able to gain a lot of knowledge and practical experience, as well as learn the technique of composition by studying live examples and not theoretical treatises.⁴ In the 1850s, he traveled to different parts of Russia and met various pianists and composers, one of whom was Nicholas Rubinstein, who later became his true friend and one of the first people to perform *Islamey* in public.⁵

According to the available research, it is clear that Balakirev showed great interest in the music of other cultures and its incorporation in the compositional techniques early in his career. Mikhail Glinka, with whom Balakirev had a good professional relationship, gave him two Spanish themes noted down by him and Balakirev used one in his Overture on a Spanish March Theme (composed in 1857) and the other in a *Sérénade Espagnole* (composed in 1890).⁶

He was also deeply interested in his own cultural music. According to A. A. Olenin (a music connoisseur and Balakirev's pupil), "Mily Alekseevich valued Russian song so far as it could serve as material for musical development."⁷ In 1858, Balakirev wrote an Overture on three Russian Themes, which became the first example of his Russian "national" style.⁸ Second Overture on the Russian Themes followed soon after.

⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁵ Ibid., 103.

⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷ V. Belaiev, and S. W. Pring, "Olenin's Reminiscences of Balakirev," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1930): 75.

⁸ Calvocoressi, *Masters of Russian Music*, 109.

Balakirev also had affectionate feelings towards the Czech musical heritage. Influenced by the notions of nationalism and the Russian Empire's expansion in the nineteenth century, Balakirev strived create a piece that would successfully express Czech's national character which would be recognized even in the Western Europe. In his correspondence with Calvocoressi on March 15, 1906, Balakirev wrote:

You announce in the 'Guide musical' that I intend publishing my symphonic poem on Czech themes. I am hoping that it will be ready by the summer; it could then be performed either in the autumn or the winter. I hope with all my heart that this composition will prove successful in Paris. It would afford me much joy if the French on such occasion would testify to their enjoyment of Czech themes with their Slavonic character, and in this way increase their knowledge of the little Czech nation.⁹

Balakirev had special interest in Greek music as well. In another letter written on March 15, 1906 to Calvocoressi (whose cultural music Balakirev admired), composer writes:

You mention the beauty of your melodies, regretting that musicians of your country do not appear to have been inspired by them. If that be the case the duty devolves upon us to glorify such national treasures and so perpetuate the memory of that precious heritage bequeathed to us by your ancestors. Let me know the title of your treasury and include that of the splendid collection made by Bourgault-Ducoudray which I once possessed but which has somehow disappeared. ... We could then begin work on them. Several attempts of this kind have already been made by Russian musicians. There are, for example, two overtures by Glazunov on Greek themes extracted from Bourgault-Ducoudray's collection-composed in his first creative period. At my advanced age it is difficult to expect success in a region requiring a special aptitude. But Liapunov is still young and, being in his prime, he would doubtless be capable of providing the musical world with a symphonic work bearing the impress of the Greek national character.¹⁰

⁹ Quoted in M. Montagu-Nathan, "Balakirev's Letters to Calvocoressi," *Music & Letters*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1954): 351.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 350.

Although Balakirev never composed any work using Greek melodies, he happily suggests that Sergei Liapunov should be capable to compose a work that would reflect the Greek national character. As a result, because of his influence and his encouragement, other members of the “Mighty Handful” sought and found inspiration in the music elements derived from folk tunes, Russian or Eastern.¹¹

According to Anne Swartz in her article “Technological Muses: Piano Builders in Russia, 1810-1881,” just like Balakirev, in 1881, Rimsky-Korsakov, traveled to the Caucasus in 1881. In 1886 he visited the cities of Batum and Tiflis. In 1880, Central Asia served as a theme for the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Alexander's rule. In 1888 Rimsky-Korsakov completed his own oriental fantasy, *Shéhérazade*.¹²

Balakirev also influenced Tchaikovsky by his use of folksong in the compositional process, especially in the latter's first three symphonies, Manfred Symphony, *Romeo and Juliet* and in his opera *Vakula the Smith/Cherevichki*. Tchaikovsky's treatment of the folk song in his work *The Voyevoda*, reflects Balakirev's compositional methods. Edward Garden says that when examined closely, *The Voyevoda*,

not only shows Tchaikovsky's appreciation of the tonal ambiguity inherent in the song, but reveals too that he has thoroughly absorbed Balakirev's method of using harmonic pedals both in the bass and in an inner part, and of employing modal harmonies should the melody require it.¹³

Needless to say, Tchaikovsky adapted few other prominent characteristics of Balakirev's musical style when working with folk song in his compositions, such as changing time signature,

¹¹ Calvocoressi, *Masters of Russian Music*, 113.

¹² Swartz, “Technological Muses: Piano Builders in Russia, 1810-1881,” 132.

¹³ Edward Garden, “The Influence of Balakirev on Tchaikovsky,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 107 (1980 - 1981): 87.

repeated alternating chords over the pedal and sharpened dominant over a tonic pedal, all of which may be seen in the various sections of *Islamey*.¹⁴

Folk song as the basis for the development of the Russian musical style

The most important reason for Balakirev's use of the folk idiom in the art music comes from the roots of the development of Russian musical culture. As described by M. D. Calvocoressi,

Russia-an enormous country into which modern civilization penetrated late, a country peopled with many races, Slavonic, Finnish, Mongolian, and others, with strong Eastern currents permeating it- had long remained without any musical culture of its own. ... but they had their own native music, an enormous variety of folk-tunes, constituting a live, flourishing tradition, which throughout the centuries had a hold on the educated minority as well as on the masses. ...In Western Europe, the art of musical composition was born early and progressed gradually. Culture-music evolved apart from folk-music, pursuing a course of its own, which led up to the great art-forms and styles of the modern period. But of all this nothing affected Russia: and so, nineteenth-century Russian composers had to cope, on the one hand, with the desire for (and indeed, the necessity of) resorting to art-forms originating in a tradition, in the establishing and maintaining of which Russia had taken no part; and, on the other hand, with the long and strong tradition of the native music which surrounded them, which was, to them, a close and live reality, and which pointed in a different direction. The Russian composers, therefore, had to effect a reconciliation, an adjustment, between these two driving forces.¹⁵

Calvocoressi explains that Russian music evolved differently from the music of Western Europe. Unlike the West, where art music developed away from the folk music, Russia had a strong tradition of the native music that came from various cultures but remained without its distinct art music for a long time. This is why it was a difficult task for the composers of the

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ M. D. Calvocoressi, "Mily Balakirev, on the Centenary of His Birth," 46.

nineteenth century to successfully combine the native music influences with the Western art forms in order to create a Russian national style.

It is interesting to see Calvocoressi's following statement about the early Russian art music then, commenting on its "barbarity" and elegance. He says:

It is a remarkable fact that the earliest reference we have to the music of the country now known as Russia should emphasize the contrast, often exploited by critics of modern Russian music, between the barbarity of this music and the orderliness and elegance of the music of a civilized country.¹⁶

Ironically, another example that focus on this musical "barbarity" may be observed from Hugo Wolf's reaction to *Islamey* after Rubinstein recital in 1885, where he said "That wild Balakirev! What a cannibal! He does not rest content with murdering music; he must gloat over the corpse he has mutilated in his wild composing moods,"¹⁷ further emphasizing the seemingly "natural" violence for which Russian music has often been criticized.

Thus, the choice for the young Russian composers at the time consisted of conforming to Western compositional rules and striking a line of their own, which would correspond with their often unconscious but strong, instincts and aspirations.

Western music, in the course of a long evolution, had gradually progressed further away from church- and folk-music, and had abandoned the old modes in favor of the major-minor system, which was the foundation of all the great forms of musical art: whereas the modal tradition had remained alive in Russia for longer. Since Western theory almost excluded the modal scales and their potentialities, the technique of composition discouraged modal leanings.

¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

Russians, however, continued to compose pieces where they coordinated two keys at the same time.

Glinka, in his *Memoirs*, states that at the age of twenty-two, he composed a Cantata that was partly in C major and partly in B-flat major, and that “he did not succeed in co-ordinating these two keys quite satisfactorily.”¹⁸ Instead of writing the middle section in the dominant key, he chose two keys at an interval of a second because “in certain scales of Russian folk-music, the second degree plays a part similar to that of the dominant in the major and minor scales. The pull of that particular relation affected him powerfully, corresponded to an irresistible instinct, with which both current theory and practice were at cross-purposes.”¹⁹ This could be a possible reason for why *Islamey* is written in the key of D-flat major, followed by a short transition to its middle section, which is in D major, as may be seen in Ex. 3.7.

There has been an ongoing debate about whether or not the use of cultural music in the art music compositions diminish the value of the compositional craft, making the piece less original. However, *Islamey* has always seemed to have been valued rather highly because of its musical content. This approving point of view may be seen in Calvocoressi’s article, “A Note on Folk-Song in Music,” where he firstly states,

An enormous proportion of the themes which their composers honestly believe to have invented will prove to be more or less derivative if adequately tested: subconscious memories, associations and methods of procedure account for this. Whether a composer acquires his schooling exclusively from the study of music written in the traditional major-minor order, with its minimum of changes of time- signatures, or whether he also turns his attention to folk-song and plain-song with their infinite variety of modes and metres, he can be equally original, or equally lacking in originality... that composers (in and through the very act of borrowing and using folk- tunes) many display thorough originality, achieve unique results in which a true creative personality asserts itself to the

¹⁸ Ibid., 49.

¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

full-results which nobody could have foretold even vaguely, and of which nobody could turn out even a moderately convincing imitation.²⁰

He then continues on by discussing *Islamey*, admiring its compositional craft:

In my opinion it [*Islamey*] is one of the most significant pieces ever written for the piano, a single instance of creative imagination achieving a worthy purpose. The whole material of *Islamey* is provided by three folk-tunes.... It will be noticed that the first two are mainly rhythmical (the second, indeed, is a mere rhythmical fragment). The third is an organised tune, characteristic enough but not particularly charged with significance; Balakiref uses it in its original form but for a while, after which he proceeds to derive from it materials for a further expansion of the wonderful pageantry of rioting sounds and vivid, ever-changing colours which he had started evolving from the first two themes only. There can be no doubt that he saw in these unassuming elements potentialities which nobody else could have seen-let alone bring into being. To ask whether he could or should have invented themes equal in value (potential or actual) to those he borrowed would be merely childish; none of the three is of outstanding intrinsic value, and none suggests any definite course of procedure-what happens to the third of them (the only one which might suggest a more or less conventional mode of 'treatment,' as distinct from 'use') is particularly unexpected. In short, *Islamey*, that extraordinarily telling evocation, in terms of pure music... is stamped throughout with Balakiref's personality-a strongly marked, most unusual personality, here displayed at its fullest and best.²¹

This kind of interest and appreciation of the folk-song use in art music may be seen in his article written eighteen years earlier as well. To him, the difference between folk-music and art-music lies not so much in the melodic patterns, rhythms, and other primary elements, but in the general formal, tonal and modulatory principles. At first, folk-tunes were primarily used as "ornaments or quotations: insets that lent a peculiar charm of picturesqueness to a given passage, or served for some particular, temporary expressive purpose, without in the least affecting the general texture of the works in which they appeared."²² Later on, however:

²⁰ M.D. Calvocoressi, "A Note on Folk-Song in Modern Music," *Music & Letters*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1931): 66-68.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²² M. D. Calvocoressi, "Folk-Song in Modern Music," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 54, No. 849 (Nov. 1, 1913): 716.

The tonal scheme-and, as a necessary consequence, the structural scheme, founded on the principle of stereotyped tonal harmony and corresponding modulations--began to evolve from the time when folk-tunes supplied the material not merely for decorative or picturesque episodes, but for the main fabric of a work. This constitutes the second stage of evolution of the use of folk-song.²³

This second stage, where the folk tunes are used as the main fabric of a work, leads to one of the principal features of *Islamey*. Although typical tonal structure is based on the relationship between the tonic and dominant, its principal motive has absolutely no place for a 'dominant' function, not even in a cadence. Thus, as stated by Calvocoressi, "Balakirev has been able to write the whole piece without once resorting to threadbare, irksome cadences, nor to the sequences from dominants to dominants characterizing the routine that endures in the conventional forms."²⁴

In conclusion, as observed by Calvocoressi, "These two masterpieces [*Tamara* and *Islamey*] suffice to show the greatness of Balakirev as a composer, but it is a pity that they alone should represent him in the current repertory."²⁵ It is not a random coincidence that *Islamey* became one of Balakirev's most famous and most-known composition. Because of its interesting musical content and compositional strategies, *Islamey* gained popularity and appreciation by the critics and by the performers.

In spite of some negative criticism (*Islamey* being considered a long, noisy and monotonous piano study by the critic Laroche), even Liszt himself greatly esteemed the work and insisted that all his pupils should study it.²⁶ In addition, starting with its dedication to a

²³ Ibid., 717.

²⁴ Ibid., 717.

²⁵ Calvocoressi, "A Note on Folk-Song in Modern Music," 54.

²⁶ Laroche's criticism was quoted in "Detractors of the New Russian Art," published by Stasov in "Izvestnik Evropi" in 1885. See more in M. Montagu-Nathan, "Balakirev's Letters to Calvocoressi." *Music & Letters*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1954): 348.

Russian concert pianist, Nikolai Rubinstein, it has appeared and is continuing to do so in the concert programmes of well-known pianists all over the world, such as Boris Berezovsky, Ivo Pogorelich, Emil Gilels, Vladimir Horowitz, Mikhail Pletnev, Valentina Lisitsa, Lang Lang and numerous others. Furthermore, there is a legendary recording of it performed by Shura Cherkassky, a great Circassian concert pianist. As Amjad Jamoukha proudly concludes his discussion of *Islamey* in his chapter on Circassian music and musicology, “Balakirev built this ‘oriental gem’, which is still performed today, around three themes...it was quite fitting that a great pianist, Shura Cherkassky, a descendant of the Russified Kabardian Cherkassy clan, performed on a recording of this work.”²⁷

²⁷ Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore*, 310.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed *Islamey* as a representation of Circassian culture. After examining the false representation of Caucasians (specifically Circassians) and the issue of imaginative geography in the portrayal of Circassia in the Russian literature, I focused on the musical misrepresentation of Circassia in *Islamey*. After close examination of the evidence observed in the score and scholarly sources, I revealed that the origins of the actual material Balakirev drew upon for the piece are obscure and do not belong to the Circassian culture. In conclusion, I explained that Balakirev extensively used folk material in his compositions to show the particular culture's national character and to eventually create a distinct Russian style of composition.

Conclusion

There is a profound element of irony in the Russian rule in the last few centuries that provided an opportunity for composers to travel and to create Oriental works such as *Islamey* and numerous others, which were composed in the Soviet era. As Walter Richmond explains in his book, “policies that, at their face value, are intended to protect ethnic identity and to insure inter-ethnic peace have in fact threatened such identities at the same time that they have exacerbated inter-ethnic conflict.”¹ Later in his book, he mentions the same ironic paradox, specifically in relation to the Northwest Caucasus. He states that Russian Federal government fails

“to recognize the force of history that weighs upon this region. ... Russian Imperial and Soviet policies had been directed for so long towards the assimilation of these peoples that the old economic, social, political, and legal structures in place there remain in full force, regardless of any decree coming from Moscow. ... In the case of the Northwest Caucasus, where no single ethnic group is large enough to constitute a majority, the result has been a reinforcement of old stereotypes, a culture of suspicion and ethnic confrontation, governmental impotence, and the most severe economic collapse in the Russian Federation.”²

However, in terms of arts and culture, one may not speak so harshly. Music’s cultural multivalence and “worldliness” may not be simply limited to the narrow polarities of self and other, east and west, colonizer and colonized. While it may be easy to take the clear postcolonial approach and to condemn composers like Balakirev who wrote pieces based on music of various Caucasian cultures (but obscured their exact origins) in order to forcefully try to fit music into a specific critical agenda, it is more beneficial to focus on the benefits of the cultural transfer. In this concluding part of my thesis, I will examine and discuss mutual benefits that resulted from

¹ Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus*, viii.

² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

keeping and maintaining cultural exchanges between the Russian and Circassian cultures in the repertoire and musical development dating from the Soviet times until the present day.

A century later, after Balakirev and the end of the conquest and colonization of the Caucasus by the Russian Empire, the interest in Circassian and Caucasian music did not diminish. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus only on the interest in the Circassian music.

According to M. F. Gnesin, a Russian Soviet composer, “The musical art of the Circassians is very versatile and lively. It gives the impression of being the whole legacy of a rather sublime culture.”³ However, it is the 19th century that saw the biggest production of classical musical pieces and works composed on Circassian subject matter. These works ranged from *La circassienne: Opera comique en trois actes* (1861) by Auber, to Stephen Glover’s ballad “The Circassian Dream (1869).⁴

However, in the 20th century, the number of music pieces composed on Circassian themes dropped significantly due to the consequences of the Circassian-Russian War and the Iron Curtain that cut off the remaining Circassians from the rest of the world. Available compositions from this period include Percy Elliot’s *Three Pieces for the Piano* [No. 3: The Circassian Dancer], Bryceson Treharne’s “Songs” [No. 3: The Fair Circassian] and John Powell’s “At the Fair: Sketches of American Fun for Pianoforte” [No. 2: Circassian Beauty].⁵

In spite of the declined interest in the West, the compositional output in the Soviet era shows the considerable influence of Circassian cultural music. Many Russian musicians drew

³ M. Gnesin, “Cherkesskie pesni [Circassian Songs]”, in *Narodnoe tvorchestvo* [Folk Arts], no. 12, 1937, 30. Quoted in Amjad Jaimoukha, “Circassian Music and Musicology” in *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*, 281.

⁴ For a more complete list of works, see Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*, 282.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

inspiration on the *Nart Epos*, the oldest surviving Circassian songs with themes that are often associated with heroic tales, such as truth, honesty, patriotism, bravery, and struggle against oppression.⁶ In the 1920s and 30s, Circassian songs were influenced by traditional Russian songs, as the drive for cultural unity propagated in the Soviet Union, began to take effect.”⁷

Cultural exchange that took place in the Soviet Union resulted in many positive changes and improvement in terms of music development and creation. Collaboration between Circassian poets and Soviet composers resulted in numerous classical pieces and some Circassian plays were set to music. In 1940, Abraamov composed *Aul Batir (Batir's Village)*, an overture for symphony orchestra based on Shorten's famous play.⁸

Moreover, during the Second World War, the Soviet government sent some of its most important and most influential musicians, (such as Sergei Prokofiev, Nikolay Ya. Myaskovsky, Vasily V. Nechaev and Anatoly N. Aleksandrov) from Moscow to Kabarda. According to Prokofiev, “Kabardian dances and songs are a goldmine of musical material.”⁹ In 1942, he composed String Quartet No. 2 in F Major Op. 92 (On Kabardian Themes), as well as a song ‘The Son of Kabarda’. Professor Alexander Goldenveyzer, the famous Soviet pianist, also composed Six Pieces for Piano on Kabardian and Balkar Themes. Anatoly N. Alexandrov wrote ‘Kabardian Song’ in 1942 and Nikolai Ya. Myaskovsky, one of the best Soviet composers of the time, wrote his Symphony No. 23 based on Kabardian and Balkar folk themes in the same period.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid., 284.

⁷ Ibid., 286.

⁸ Ibid., 302.

⁹ Quoted in Ibid., 302.

¹⁰ Ibid., 302-303.

The success of the cultural and musical exchanges were not witnessed only in the compositional output of the Soviet composers but also in the improved musical education in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Musical, opera and ballet theatres were built and chamber music groups, philharmonic, and orchestras were set up in Nalchik (capital of Kabardino-Balkaria). Music schools were opening in 1930s and in 1946, according to Jaimoukha, “the Soviet government decreed that a Kabardian opera school be set apart at the Leningrad Conservatoire. Singers, choirmasters, pianists, musicians, conductors, producers, and composers, studied at the school, and after graduation returned to Kabarda to partake in the budding music scene.”¹¹

Due to such developments, the Circassian composers, such as Hesén Y. Qarden, Vladimir Mole, Aslhen Dawir and Muhediyn F’. Bale¹² began to make their presence felt and Kabardino-Balkarian Branch of the Union of Composers of the USSR was established in 1959. The Union of Composers of the Republic of Adigea was established much later, in 1992.¹³ Although Russian and Armenian musicians continued the tradition of composing classical pieces based on Circassian musical lore,¹⁴ Hesén Qarden composed his first symphonic work in 1952, called ‘My Native Country’. Later, more vocal, choral works, as well as operas and ballets were created. It is well known that the first completely Circassian operas were *Daxenaghwe* and *Madiyne*, the first being composed by Vladimir Mole in 1969 and the other was created by Qarden and Bale in 1970. Staging of operettas as well as ballets, rise of Circassian composers, conductors, pianists,

¹¹ Ibid., 303.

¹² For an extended list of name and details about Circassian composers, see Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*, 300-302.

¹³ For additional information about the composers, see Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*, 296.

¹⁴ For the list of Russian and Armenian works in 1950s-1960s, see Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*, 297.

tenors and sopranos, as well as the overall development of classical musical education marked the golden era of Circassian classical music.

Currently, in the post-Soviet times, there is neither a rapid development in the musical education, nor a fruitful compositional output. However, the interest in the Circassian and Caucasian music and arts did not completely disappear. In the 1990s, a symphonic orchestra, a chamber musical theatre and a professional orchestra of folk musical instruments were established in Adigea. Operettas and ballets were consistently staged by the performers who were graduates of the State Theatre School, Maikop Art School, St. Petersburg, Rostov and Tbilisi conservatories. In 2000s, one of the most famous conductors, Yuri H. Temirkanov (a native Kabardian) became a Director of Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (position that ended in 2006) and is currently Conductor Laureate of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. There is also a famous Russian musicologist, Anna Sokolova who has written numerous articles in Russian and in English about the Circassians and their relationship to music, with one of her most important works being “Music as a Medicine for Adyghs”.¹⁵

Due to the current rise of nationalism, there has been an increased interest in promoting other cultural arts, especially various ethnic dance forms, accompanied by traditional, or arranged music. As may be observed from Sufian Zhemukhov’s and Charles King’s articles “Dancing the Nation in the North Caucasus”, published in the summer of 2013, dance became “one of the most visible areas in which cultural activists are increasingly analyzing their own pasts as a matrix of ‘civilizing process,’ the control and regulation of disorderly’ practices, and

¹⁵ For more articles by Sokolova, please consult the Bibliography section in Jaimoukha, *Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music*.

the profound reconfiguration of both local and European culture.”¹⁶ Their article is centered on the modern the rise and development of *adyge jegu* (literally translated as “Circassian festival” which emerged in 2005 in the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, which quickly became the subject of celebration and controversy. This festival “took the form of young men and women gathering in a small park, later in a prominent square, to listen to live accordion music and participate in a highly rule-bound dance form: a kind of iterated pas de deux involving one man and one woman surrounded by onlookers.”¹⁷

As a whole, *adyge jegu* grew to carry numerous meanings in the contemporary Circassian society. Zhemukhov explains its three main meanings when he says:

First, it became a gesture of rejection toward certain Soviet forms of performance art, those that combined proletarian ideology, mixed ethnic content, and ballet-inspired technique. ...Second, the movement is a product of the post-Soviet Circassian national revival that, at the same time, owes a great deal to the writings of Soviet era folklorists, ethnographers, and linguists...Dance became an easily accessible representation of national identity-far easier, in fact, than learning Circassian for students who had been reared in a Russian-dominant environment (or likewise, for ethnic Circassians living in the diaspora). Third, the organizers of the *adyge jegu* regarded it as an instrument for national renewal and pan-Circassian unity. It was to become one of the main vehicles-inherently communal, rule-governed, and fun-for uniting Circassians in the northwest Caucasus and their diasporic cousins, as well as a link between Circassians and Abkhaz south of the mountains.¹⁸

It is not easy to precisely predict the future of Circassian national and classical art music and culture. However, it is obvious that there is a consistently ongoing interest in the various music, dance, and other art forms which unites musicians, music scholars, historians, researchers

¹⁶ Susan A. Reed, “The Politics and Poetics of Dance,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 506. On dance “revival,” see Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (London, 2004). Quoted in Zhemukhov, “Dancing the Nation in the North Caucasus,” 288.

¹⁷ Zhemukhov, “Dancing the Nation in the North Caucasus,” 288. For a complete list of rules, instructions and music description of this kind of dance form, see Zhemukhov, page 296.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 304, 305.

and the general public of Russian, Circassian and other Caucasian backgrounds. Based on its history and richness, the Caucasian theme, will continue developing in the space between tradition and innovation, tangled in representations and misrepresentations, but it is unlikely to vanish as an important area of research in music and in other fields.

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