Conjugal Fidelity: Constructions of Gender in Liszt's Arrangements for Solo Piano

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Declaration of Originality

This is to certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

Franz Liszt was one of the 19th century's most famous musicians, widely seen as a cultural icon and even a sex symbol. Little research has engaged with these aspects of Liszt's persona from a perspective informed by contemporary thinking on gender. Central to his compositional activities was the arrangement of music for solo piano, an activity bound up in the 19th century in gendered discourses of textual fidelity, genre, and performance. My dissertation proceeds from Liszt's intriguing comment that transcription requires a degree of 'conjugal fidelity' to succeed, in order to situate Liszt's processes of arrangement within a broader gendered context. I then consider gendered meanings in works from Liszt's *Glanzzeit;* first, his transcriptions of 3 Schubert lieder, *Gretchen am Spinnrade, Erlkönig,* and *Ständchen*. I will then read the virtuosic *Réminiscences de Don Juan* in relation to the opera on which it is based, as well as Liszt's own comments about performing the work, to understand how gender and music interacted for Liszt in the performance of his virtuoso arrangements. The dissertation is informed by, and reflected in, a lecture recital involving some of these pieces, as well as others inspired by the same theme. This research will offer new perspectives on Liszt, and what it means for performers to interpret his works today.

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List of Musical Examples

Acknowledgements

I'd like to firstly acknowledge the assistance of David Larkin and Stephanie McCallum, my two supervisors, without whom my project would not have been completed. I deeply valued the energy and effort that David brought to supervisions and manuscript revisions. Early on in our time together, I was astounded not only by how he thought about music, but how he approached the challenge of writing convincingly about music; in our two years together, I feel that I have barely scratched the surface of his knowledge. I also greatly valued his generous advice pertaining to other matters to do with my time at the Conservatorium. I am grateful, too, for Stephanie McCallum's generosity with time and assistance with my project. Her unimaginably vast playing experience and enormous conception of repertoire was equal parts inspiring and humbling. I have garnered things in my time with her that will stay with me, and my playing, forever.

I'd like to also thank Amanda Harris, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Helen Mitchell for their assistance. Amanda Harris and Neal Peres Da Costa made important contributions to my research into gender studies, and numerous conversations with Helen Mitchell helped to clarify my thinking around the final structure of the project. Finally, I'd like to thank my parents, and Sara, for their patience. I love you all, and I can never be grateful enough.

Introduction

Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt was, within his lifetime, one of the 19th century's most prolific and influential musicians. His body of work spanned six decades, and he met both Beethoven and Debussy.[1] Central to Liszt's compositional process was the art of transcription; more than half of his output consisted of works based on music of other composers and arranged for the piano.[2] In his lifetime, Liszt was famous not only as a musician, but as a prototypical romantic male artist, with an international reputation for physical attractiveness and romantic encounters with women. Whether or not he actually had the vast number of affairs attributed to him is unimportant; it is significant because it is *believed* to be true, a belief that is a phenomenon 'without parallel in the annals of musical biography'.[3] What are the links, then, between this constructed persona of Liszt and his music, and how does transcription, central to his process of creating music, relate to this image? What are the processes through which the Lisztian image of a hyper-masculine seducer is constructed, and (how) can it be traced in his music? Can this image be traced not only in 'the works themselves', but in their performed realisations? Although some early biographies engaged with this image of Liszt, the little research that has been done utilising a perspective informed by contemporary gender studies has not considered his transcriptions in depth.[4] The process of transcription yields a rich opportunity to discuss gender, as it is bound up in gendered discourses of the relationship between the composer and the transcriber. Liszt's comment that transcription requires a degree of 'conjugal fidelity' is a paradigmatic example of how Liszt gendered the composer/transcriber relationship. Transcriptions for solo piano, especially Liszt's, also engage in a dialogic relationship with the source work, and with other genres more broadly, such as lieder and opera; the intertextuality of transcription opens another 'hermeneutic window' through which to consider the construction of gender.[5]

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[1] If the 'kiss of consecration' he reportedly received as a child from Beethoven is to be believed; see Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol. 1 (London: Faber, 1983), 80–85.

[2] Jonathan Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

[3] Walker, *Franz Liszt*, 1, 23.

[4] An intersectional approach to gender, that considers Liszt's ethnicity as well as the implications of his chosen profession/social class, has not been chosen due to the limited scope of the thesis.

[5] Term borrowed from Lawrence Kramer, see *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 102.

In the 1980s/1990s, there was an explosion of academic research into gender issues in music, a trend which can be linked more broadly to the so-called New Musicology movement. Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* of 1991 is a central text in this field, one which made a significant contribution to the possibility of reading gendered subtext even into music deemed abstract or absolute. Although McClary's work has been subsequently criticised for a tendency toward essentialism, I have found McClary's broad identification of primary and secondary theme groups in 19th-century sonata forms with constructs of masculinity and femininity respectively to be a helpful starting point for deeper analysis.[6] The work of Lawrence Kramer, another key figure in the turn towards critical musicology, has also been important to my project; Kramer has written directly on Liszt in a variety of articles, and I draw on his work frequently.[7]

From around the same period in the 1990s, Katherine Kolb-Reeve has considered the gendered meanings ascribed to performers in the 19th century.[8] She found that performance can simultaneously make a male performer in the 19th century seem more masculine, but also threaten to emasculate him; I draw heavily on her research in my discussion of the performing Liszt as a gendered figure. Katharine Ellis has considered female pianists and their male critics in 19th-century Paris, offering a valuable perspective on a performing culture that hosted a plethora of female pianists as well as figures like Liszt and Thalberg. Both of these articles deal with meanings ascribed to Liszt in performance, but are not specifically concerned with those arising in transcription, or the performance of transcriptions.[9]

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[6] See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Susan McClary, "Narrative Agendas in "Absolute" Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 326–44. Hepokoski has complicated and problematised this notion further, see James Hepokoski, "Masculine, Feminine. Are Current Readings of Sonata Form in Terms of a 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' Dichotomy Exaggerated," *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1818 (1994): 494–99. For a more detailed analysis of McClary's work, see Elizabeth Sayrs, "Deconstructing McClary: Narrative, Feminine Sexuality, and Feminism in Susan McClary's Feminine Endings," *College Music Symposium* 33/34 (1993): 41–55.

[7] See Lawrence Kramer, "Franz Liszt and the Virtuoso Public Sphere: Sight and Sound in the Rise of Mass Entertainment," in *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 68–99; Lawrence Kramer, "Liszt, Goethe, and the Discourse of Gender," in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 102–35.

[8] Katherine Kolb Reeve, "Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz," *19th-Century Music* 18, no. 3 (1995): 211–35.

[9] A few other useful texts tangentially related to my topic include Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Peter Bloom, "Berlioz and Liszt 'In the Locker Room'," *Studia Musicologica* 54, no. 1 (2013): 75–85.

Much research in gender studies has focussed on women and construction(s) of femininity; the essay collection *Masculinity and Modern Musical Practice* is a more recent work that considers and problematises men in gender studies of music, both as writers and subjects. Biddle and Gibson pointed out that in the 15–20 years before the appearance of their volume in 2009, there was a 'ubiquitous feeling that music studies [was] overrun with gender-interested scholarship'.[10] However, fewer studies dedicated *solely* to music and gender had been produced in the more recent past, as 'gender-interested scholarship has again been doubly dispersed into other fields within the discipline of music itself… [resulting in] a thorough and irreversible embedding of scholarly sensitivity to gender into the very fabric of music studies… [but also] a decline of gender-interested scholarship'.[11]

I have found this to be the case—it is harder to find studies dedicated *solely* to issues of gender in 19th-century music from the within the last 20 years. Instead, studies dedicated to broader trends in 19th-century music usually involve a consideration of gender at some point. James Parakilas's *Piano Roles,* discussing the piano broadly from its invention into the 21st century, features useful observations on the relationship between its subject and gender throughout, as does Thomas Christensen's excellent article on keyboard transcription in the 19th-century.[12] In Liszt research, Dana Gooley's excellent study *The Virtuoso Liszt,* while not a gender-focussed work per se, advances an intelligent thesis regarding the Lisztomania episodes, and is a significant landmark in Liszt research that utilises a perspective informed by contemporary gender studies.[13] The more recent work *Liszt in Context* similarly features a chapter titled 'Liszt and the Women', discussing aspects of Liszt's personal relationship(s) with the women that he knew.[14] All these studies are not solely focussed on gender, but still consider such issues within a broader scope.

Liszt's transcriptions have also been receiving an increasing amount of scholarly attention in recent times after a period of almost total neglect in the middle of the twentieth century.

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[10] Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, "Introduction," in *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice,* ed. Ian Biddle and Kirtsen Gibson (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 3.
[11] Biddle and Gibson, "Introduction", 6.
[12] Thomas Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 2 (1999): 255–98; James Parakilas, *Piano Roles: a New History of the Piano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
[13] See Dana A. Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[14] Ulrike Müller, "Liszt, Women and Salon Culture," in *Liszt in Context*, ed. Joanne Cormac (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 114–24.

Kenneth Hamilton's 1989 dissertation is a comprehensive treatment of the Liszt operatic fantasies, quite remarkable in its detail.[15] Hamilton's purpose is to shed light upon these works, then considerably less highly esteemed than Liszt's original compositions, and critically evaluate them as pieces of music. In contrast, Jonathan Kregor's 2007 study, *Liszt as Transcriber*, attempts to situate the complex meaning(s) of Liszt's transcriptions within a broader cultural field.[16] Alan Walker's *Reflections on Liszt* is another useful resource that deals with the Liszt transcriptions.[17] I treat these texts as essential, and refer to them frequently in my research. It is also worth noting here an excellent article that incorporates both transcription studies and studies of gender/sexuality: Ivan Raykoff's "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge".[18] This article advances the case for understanding transcription as an activity with a potential to destabilise hetero-normativity; Raykoff's ideas were hugely important in developing my argument[s] about transcription. Also invaluable in my research have been the classic Liszt biographical and documentary studies, such as Alan Walker's extraordinarily detailed life-and-works trilogy, and *Portrait of Liszt*, the outstanding collection of documentation from Liszt's own time edited by Adrian Williams.[19] These works helped to situate my theoretical arguments within the context of Liszt's life.

All of the above are excellent studies of their selected areas, and my study uses them to delve further into the gendered meaning(s) of Liszt's transcriptions and arrangements. My first chapter is a detailed consideration of the gendered implications of transcription, proceeding from Liszt's own comment that transcription usually required 'a degree of conjugal fidelity' to its source material. I draw on Kregor's work on the Liszt/Beethoven symphonies to explore this concept of 'conjugal fidelity' in Liszt's relationship to Beethoven, a composer considered a paragon of masculinity in the early 19th century. In contrast to this, I consider the relevance of the conjugal fidelity metaphor in Liszt's musical interactions with Schubert, a composer famously construed as feminine by Robert Schumann. I also develop Raykoff's distinction

[15] Kenneth Hamilton, "The Opera Fantasias and Transcriptions of Franz Liszt: a Critical Study," (D.Phil Thesis, Oxford: 1989).
[16] Jonathan Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[17] Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[18] Ivan Raykoff, "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 150–76.
[19] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol. 1 (London: Faber, 1983); Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol. 2 (London: Faber, 1989); Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol. 3 (London: Faber, 1996); Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt: by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

between faithful and unfaithful transcription, whereby a 'faithful transcription' (and the transcriber) plays a feminine role in relation to the composer, but an 'unfaithful transcription' can play a masculine role in relation to the source work. Christensen's observation that transcription alters gendered meaning through destabilising the grounds of production and reception, as well as the gendered nature of keyboard instruments more generally, further complicates how we might gender the process of transcription in the 19th century. Finally, it would be impossible to meaningfully consider the gendered implications of Liszt's music without considering the gendered implications of *performing* music—I build on the arguments of Katherine Kolb-Reeve and Katharine Ellis to consider how Liszt's performing style, particularly of his transcriptions, was regarded in the 19th century.

Chapter 2 will consider some of these issues in greater detail with reference to 3 transcriptions of Schubert lieder: *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Ständchen*, and the massively popular *Erlkönig*. *Gretchen* gives Liszt a special opportunity to not only consider a female perspective, but to speak *from* the female perspective; *Erlkönig,* similarly, involves the embodiment of characters with putatively different genders through idiomatic pianistic techniques. Liszt's modifications to *Ständchen* are also particularly concerned with gender; this piece doubles as Liszt's performance repertoire and as music written for an amateur, mostly female market of pianists, a 'doubling' reflected in the modifications that Liszt makes in his two different versions of the lied.

In Chapter 3 I draw on concepts about the gendered nature of performance in the 19th century from the first chapter in order to explore the virtuosic *Réminiscences de Don Juan,* situating its gendered meaning for Liszt in the broader field of gendered discourse about the opera *Don Giovanni.*

Chapter 1: Gendering Liszt's Transcriptions

In his memoirs, French dramatist Ernest Legouvé remembers an unusual figure of the Parisian early 19th century; Chrétien Urhan, a composer and eccentric who would later greatly influence the young Liszt when they met around 1828.[20] According to Legouvé, Urhan was walking in the Bois de Boulogne, and heard a voice sing a tune to him, along with the injunction to 'write this'. Urhan promptly did so, and requested that Legouvé publish it, however Urhan insisted it not be published under his name, and that it be called instead simply 'transcription'.[21]

This anecdote illustrates the quasi-spiritual meaning that transcription could take on in the 19th century. For Liszt, the notion that transcription could be a kind of dictation from a God took on great importance when transcribing the works of musical quasi-deities such as Beethoven and Schubert. As the century wore on, performers both male and female begun to claim themselves as prophets and prophetesses, ascribing gendered meanings to the relationship between performer and composer; transcription, too, became enveloped in a complicated process of gender construction.[22] The gendered meanings of Liszt's approach to transcription are reflected in his comment that transcription required a degree of 'conjugal fidelity' to succeed.

Before continuing, I would like to note that I will use the term 'arrangement' as an umbrella term that covers both 'transcription' (more literal/exact in the approach to its source material) and 'paraphrase' (freer in its interpretation of the source material). In other contexts, the term arrangement can be used broadly referring to rescoring a piece for different groups of instruments, but for my purposes and unless otherwise specified, the term 'arrangement' refers to a work originally written for larger forces and reduced for solo piano. Both kinds of arrangement, transcription and paraphrase, require the existence of a preceding work, and therefore involve a creative dyad of (original) composer and arranger.[23]

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[20] Liszt became a Schubert devotee after meeting Urhan; see Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 30.

[21] Ernest M. Legouvé, *Sixty Years of Recollections*, trans. Albert D. Vandam, 2 vols. (London: Eden, Remington and Co., 1893), 2: 219.

[22] For more on the gendering of performers in the 19th century, see Katharine Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 2–3 (1997): 353–85.

[23] I'm not including in my definition of arrangement a work where the original composer is unacknowledged (e.g. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, based on anonymous Hungarian folk tunes).

It's worth noting here that drawing sharp distinctions between composer and arranger is somewhat foreign to 19th-century practices; Liszt and many other performers would have improvised/modified pieces in performance.[24] Liszt had, however, argued for a meaningful separation between composing and arranging activities since at least his transcription(s) of the Beethoven symphonies.[25] I at least *begin* my analysis here, even if the opposition between composer and arranger eventually collapses upon closer inspection. A similar comment can be made about the binary between masculine and feminine; I take this binary as a starting point for analysis, however I am never attempting to assert the existence of musical characteristics that are 'by their nature' masculine or feminine. Binaries are reductive, but one must start somewhere.

Liszt's comment that transcription required a practice of 'conjugal fidelity' comes from an 1880 letter written to Count Géza Zichy.[26] This metaphor testifies not only to the importance of faithfulness to the source work in transcription, but hints at a conception of a romantic coupling between the composer/transcriber dyad. This colouration of the relationship between the two has persisted in musicology; Alan Walker relied on a similar cliché to describe Liszt's arrangements of Beethoven symphonies, arguing that they evince a 'loving care, meticulous attention to details, and single-minded devotion'.[27] An asymmetry inheres in these metaphors: we can assume that the composer owes no such parallel fidelity to the transcriber. They therefore rely on how marital relations between the sexes were understood in the 19th century; the conjugal fidelity espoused by Liszt the transcriber toward the composer is that of a wife toward a husband, not the other way around. Mutual fidelity in a conjugal partnership did not seem to be something with which Liszt concerned himself in practice, as opposed to in metaphor; his alleged infidelities during his long-term relationships with Marie d'Agoult and Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein could attest to this.[28] Liszt's valorisation of conjugal

[24] See Gianmario Borio and Angela Carone, *Musical Improvisation and Open Forms in the Age of Beethoven* (Milton: Routledge, 2018).
[25] See Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 16.
[26] Adrian Williams, *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 854. This quote comes from later in Liszt's life than many of the works under consideration here, however, the reverence that Liszt had for the art of transcription can also be discerned in his earlier note that accompanied the Beethoven symphonic transcriptions; see previous footnote.
[27] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 13.
[28] On the topic of Liszt's infidelities, see Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 518–19. It should be noted that Liszt married neither Carolyne nor Marie, however, due to the length and nature of these relationships they could still be described as conjugal.

fidelity in transcription relies on a concept of gendered difference in intimate heterosexual relationships. For Ivan Raykoff, the virtue of 'faithful' transcription in the 19th century (as opposed to paraphrase) is that it 'is seen to preserve the hierarchy and sanctity of the creative musical union of composer and arranger-performer… [it] mirrors the traditional social expectations of fidelity within marriage and the family'.[29]

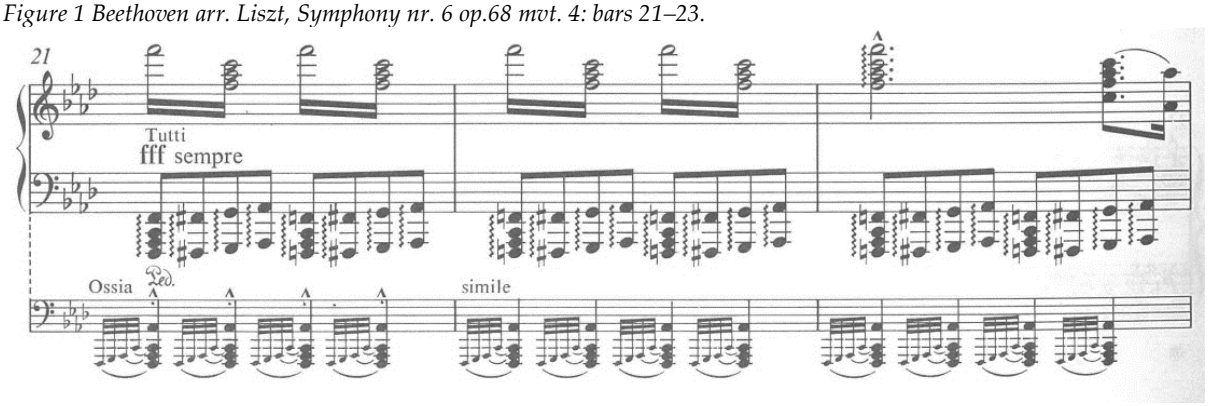
Liszt's practice of 'conjugal fidelity' could be seen in his approach to Beethoven, who was widely considered in the early 19th century not only the greatest composer in recent memory but a paragon of manhood and masculinity.[30] Faithfulness to the score is a master value in Liszt's arrangements of the Beethoven symphonies for solo piano—by his own admission, Liszt is attempting to '[carry] out the task of the intelligent engraver, the conscientious translator, who precisely grasps the spirit of a work and thereby contributes to the circulation of the masters and the sense of the beautiful'.[31] Conjugal fidelity, conscientious translator, intelligent engraver; Liszt conceives of himself as a secondary counterpart to Beethoven, who is a 'master' of the 'beautiful'. Liszt's stated role in the relationship is only to replicate Beethoven's ideas as accurately as possible. Such a relationship was, of course, beneficial for Liszt; many composers in the 19th century attempted to position themselves as the next Beethoven or the composer best suited to continue Beethoven's legacy.[32]

The art of transcription, of course, involved a compromise between replicating Beethoven's notes as exactly as possible, and replicating Beethoven's intended musical effect, which sometimes meant changing the notes. Liszt faces this challenge frequently in the transcriptions of the symphonies; a literal note-for-note translation may miss out on a particular effect, or lack the requisite drama. For instance, in his transcription of the sixth symphony, Liszt adds an F#, in the bass, to 'muddy up' the texture and give a more powerful 'storm' effect. A closer

[29] Raykoff, "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge," 160. I am aware that Liszt's comments are on transcription, not the other, freer kind of arrangement he favoured—paraphrase. It is also worth noting the strong homosocial element present between composers in the 19th century—there was a closeness in male friendships that probably gave Liszt licence to describe his friendship with such a marital metaphor.
[30] Sanna Pederson, "Beethoven and Masculinity", in *Beethoven and His World* ed. Michael P. Steinberg and Scott Burnham (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 314.
[31] Liszt's stated goal, to circulate the works of Beethoven, may have worked in a way he didn't expect; Kregor notes that Liszt's arrangement of the Beethoven symphonies are 'fantastically difficult', but that they 'succeeded in meeting with general public approval precisely *because* [of their difficulty], that he approached Beethoven's music as a sacrosanct object.' Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 131.
[32] Kregor has considered this in further depth; see Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 131.

approximation of the original is given in the ossia (figure 1). Or, in the fifth symphony, Liszt gives two alternatives for a dramatic moment in the transition section of the opening movement; the non-ossia version on the lower line features a more 'literal' note-for-note translation, whereas the ossia features one that is pianistically better suited to a powerful forte effect (figure 2).

Figure 1 Beethoven arr. Liszt, Symphony nr. 6 op.68 mvt. 4: bars 21–23.



These choices nuance Liszt's 'conjugal fidelity' approach, an approach reflected in an aphorism he favoured; that 'in matters of translation, there are exactitudes which are the equivalent of infidelities'.[33] Using the ossia allows Liszt to negotiate this tension between fidelity to notes and fidelity to concept, as can be seen in the above examples. With an ossia, Liszt's commitment to the ideal of 'conjugal fidelity' is taken to an extreme, paradoxically resulting in multiple versions of the same passage to allow for maximum fidelity.

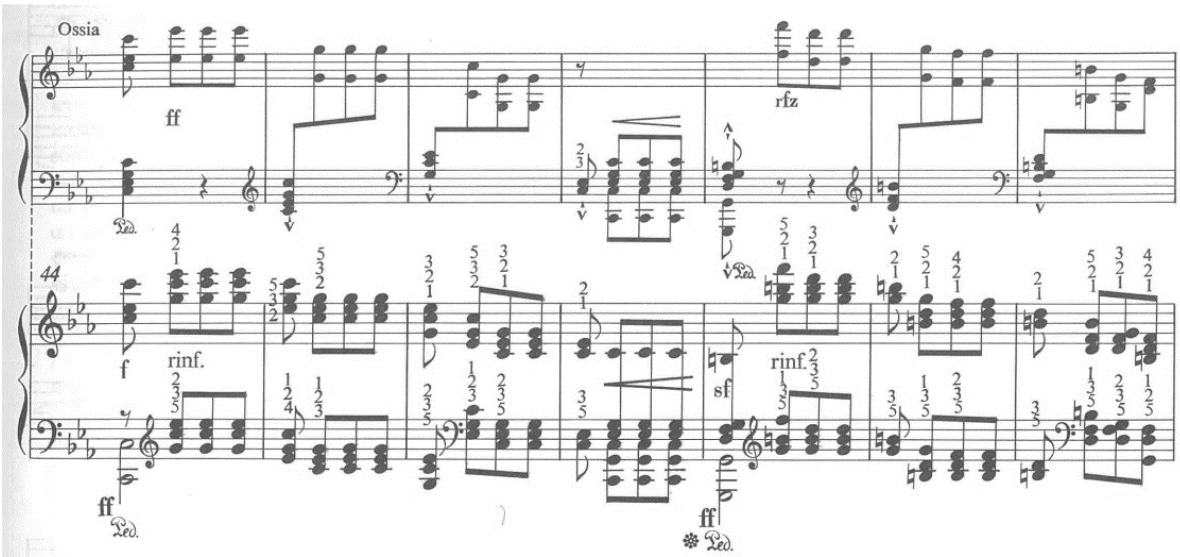


Figure 2 Beethoven arr. Liszt, Symphony nr. 5 op. 67 mvt. 1: bars 44–50.

[33] Franz Liszt, quoted in Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 23.

There are further gendered dimensions to the reduction of a Beethoven symphony to a version playable by a single person at the piano, strengthening the notion that Liszt plays a 'feminine' role to the 'masculine' Beethoven. In 1873, Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein commented that Liszt needed many women in his life, just as he needs varied tone colours in his orchestra.[34] In doing so, she drew on a familiar musical trope—that tone colour is a parameter of composition gendered feminine.[35] When reducing symphonic scores for the piano, Liszt can therefore remove the 'feminine' excess(es) of orchestral colour, to reveal the 'masculine' elements of harmony and melody, a point also made by Christensen, for whom 'transcribing Beethoven's symphonies for piano… [can disrobe] the work of its sensuous, effeminising orchestral garments to expose its sinuous, muscular tone structure.'[36] When Liszt reduces a Beethoven symphony for solo piano, is he a foil to Beethovenian masculine prowess? Is this an aspect of Liszt's role of 'intelligent engraver', inviting us to further imagine Liszt as feminine in relation to Beethoven?

It is not so easy to answer this question affirmatively, as piano reduction does not always accentuate so-called 'masculine' characteristics. If orchestral colour is a 'feminine' compositional parameter, orchestral 'power' is often conceived of as a 'masculine' compositional parameter, and a reduction for solo piano stands to lose some of the original's orchestral weight. This was an obvious problem for Liszt in his arrangement of Beethoven's symphonies, especially the ninth, which he would not have completed were it not for his publisher's insistence.[37] When the symphonies were published in 1839, they appeared with the following defense:

> the range achieved by the pianoforte in recent years as a result of progress both in playing technique and in terms of mechanical improvements enables more and better things to be achieved than was previously possible. Through the immense development of its harmonic power the piano is trying increasingly to adopt all orchestral compositions. In the compass of its seven octaves it is able, with only a few exceptions, to reproduce all the characteristics, all the combinations, all the forms of

[34] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 499.
[35] See Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription," 291.
[36] Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription," 291.
[37] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 24.

> the deepest and most profound works of music. It was with this intention that I embark on the work which I now present to the world.[38]

Liszt attributes the possibility of the successful Beethoven symphonic transcription to the piano's recent expansion in range, playing technique and mechanical improvements. Could it be that earlier conceptions of the piano from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, associating piano and keyboard instruments with femininity and the home, as a 'piece of furniture… at the center of a domestic realm to which women were bound', hamstrung Liszt's attempts to transcribe these works, and it is only with the piano's 'immense development of harmonic power' that a truly faithful transcription of the works of the masculine Beethoven becomes a possibility?[39] Liszt's hesitation to transcribe the symphonies may have been in some way related to an anxiety that attempting to render it on a 'feminine' instrument, not yet able (in Liszt's estimation) to encompass the 'fullness of the deepest and most profound works', would *emasculate* the symphony's grandeur. Such a fear seems to have persisted into more contemporary times; Walker contrasts Liszt's version of the ninth with Kalkbrenner's earlier transcription, concluding that Kalkbrenner 'emasculates' dissonances whereas Liszt 'transcribes glorious grinding dissonances in full'.[40] The general trend throughout the 19th century toward masculinization of the piano was what made Liszt's transcription possible; it was only once the piano became the 'masculine' instrument *par excellence* that Beethoven's complete symphonies could be transcribed.[41]

I have touched on a complicated conceptual issue here; how was the piano *itself* gendered, and how did this affect arrangements produced for that instrument? As noted above, the piano itself was often gendered as feminine in the late 18th and early 19th century. Liszt's famous comment that 'my piano is to me what a ship is to the sailor, what a steed is to the Arab' draws on a common masculine/feminine pairing (ships are almost always gendered feminine) to describe his relationship to it. In a similar way that the feminine transcriber can act as a foil to the masculine composer, conceptualising the piano as feminine allows Liszt the

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[38] Quoted in Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 131.

[39] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 78. *Piano Roles* offers a deeper consideration of the gendering of keyboard instruments throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

[40] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 25.

[41] For more on the masculinisation of the piano throughout the 19th century, see Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg, "From Carl Czerny's Miss Cecilia to the Cecilian: Engineering, Aesthetics, and Gendered Piano Instruction," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 40, no. 2 (2019): 125–42.

pianist to become its masculine counterpart; 19th-century reviews that valorised Liszt's tendency to 'attack the piano, then caress it like a lover' rely on such a construction.[42] Piano performance did not only discursively 'masculinise' the ideal male pianist, however; James Parakilas has argued that Czerny's *Letters to a Young Girl* (1837) articulates a social problem of piano education in the 19th century, that boys who learnt piano are trespassing into a realm understood as feminine, and therefore have their gendered identity threatened.[43] Was Liszt, who had been a student of Czerny's from a young age, also threatened by this potential for emasculation that learning piano entailed? Could a work like Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes,* dedicated to Czerny, be read as a kind of attempt at hyper-masculine 'mastery' over a feminine instrument? The discursive complexity of the gendering of piano complicates our assessment of Liszt's work in transcription, but it is not the only complicated question that can be asked of Liszt's Beethoven transcriptions.

The kind of 'conjugal fidelity' Liszt employed in his transcription of the Beethoven symphonies is not present in his arrangement of Beethoven's lied *Adelaide.* The original piano part is modified through a significant 'thickening' of the piano texture (compare figure 3 and 4), and a 4-page cadenza is added between the 3rd and 4th stanzas. The final quotation of the name 'Adelaide' is also extended into a Lisztian flourish (compare figures 5 and 6).

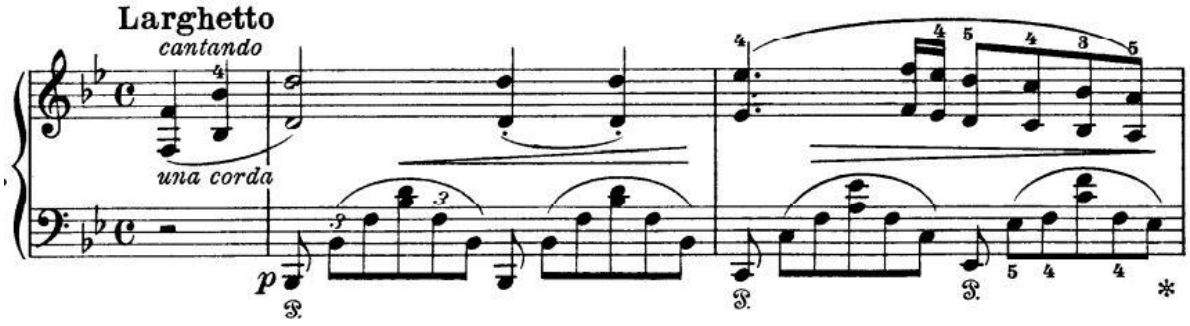

Figure 3 Beethoven arr. Liszt, Adelaide op. 46: bars 1–2.

[42] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 221.
[43] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 119.

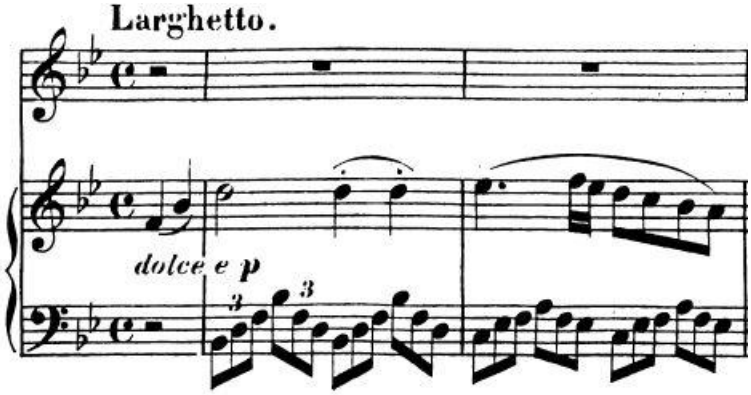

Figure 4 Beethoven, Adelaide op. 46: bars 1–2.

Liszt's approach to arranging *Adelaide* contrasts with his approach to arranging the Beethoven symphonies; whereas he arranged the symphonies with painstaking accuracy and care to 'precisely grasp the [work's] spirit', the lied was arranged with significant extensions, additions, and alterations.

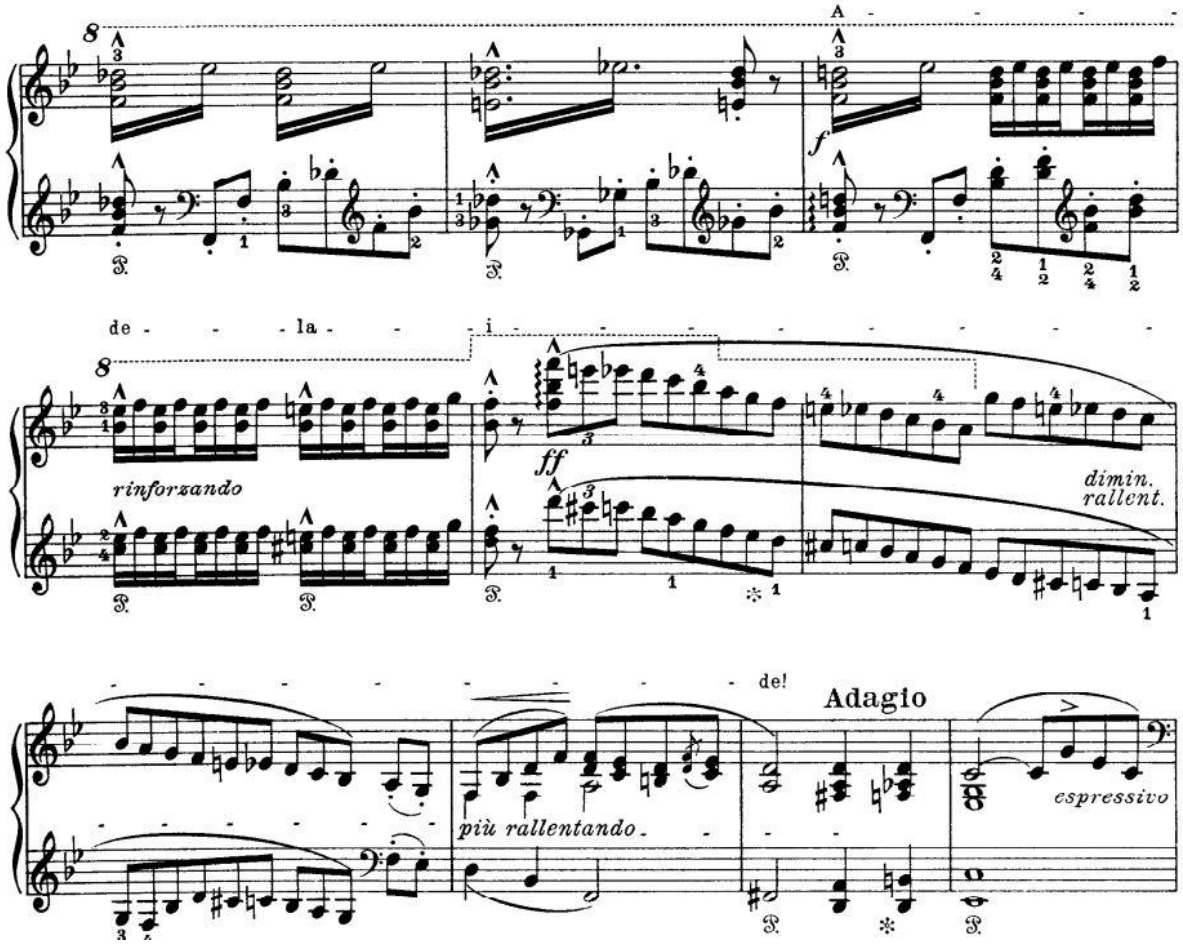

Figure 5 Beethoven arr. Liszt, Adelaide op. 46: bars 230–239.

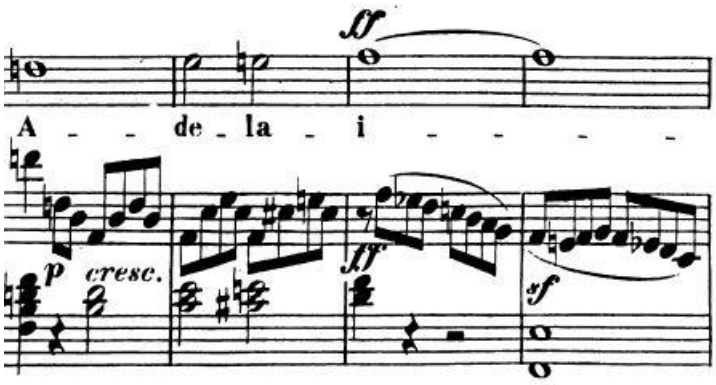

Figure 6 Beethoven, Adelaide op. 46: bars 168–171

But, of course, it is the same Beethoven whose symphonic works Liszt desired to 'carefully reproduce'. Why, then, did Liszt consider that for a lied, interference was acceptable? This may have to do with notions of the lied as a coded feminine genre. The first page (figure 7) of Liszt's 1839 arrangement is telling; it strongly emphasizes the dedication to a Madame la Marquise Martellini, centralizing the link between this genre and love and intimacy through the kind of gentlemanly tribute to a woman that these works often involved.[44]

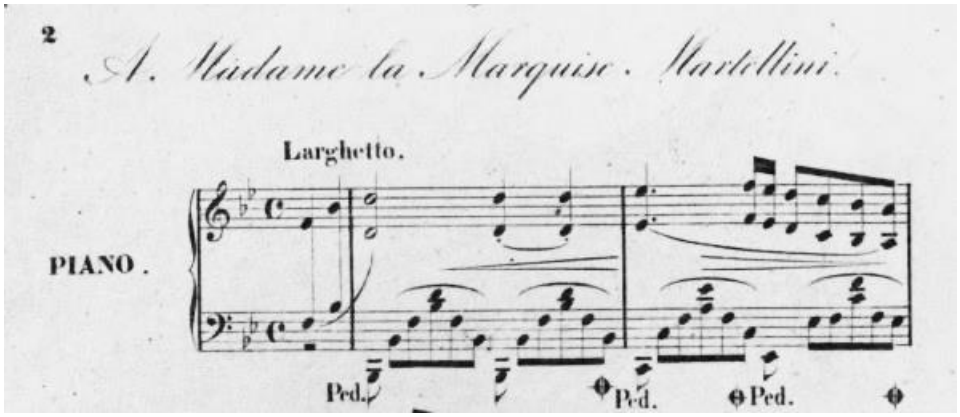

Figure 7 Beethoven arr. Liszt, Adelaide op. 46: bars 1–2, first edition.

There is another important conceptual difference between Liszt's arrangement of *Adelaide* and his transcription of the Beethoven symphonies. The transcriptions were published in tandem with a rising interest in consecrations, festivals, and statues to Beethoven's memory, and Liszt commented that they were an attempt to 'furnish the piano-playing world with as faithful an illustration as possible of Beethoven's genius'.[45] Liszt conceptualizes the symphonic transcriptions as 'illustrations of Beethoven's genius', in the same way that a Beethoven bust might illustrate his intelligence—as arrangements, they 'point toward' the composer himself. However, Liszt's *Adelaide* was a standalone publication, 'pointing toward' Beethoven's *work*,

[44] For more on the notion of the lied as a genre coded feminine, see Aisling Kenny and Susan Wollenberg, eds., *Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015).
[45] Quoted in Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 17.

not the composer. When Liszt transcribes the symphonies, he is attempting to transcribe a work that is seen to embody the essence of Beethoven *himself*, and needs to employ 'conjugal fidelity', playing a 'feminine' role to the 'masculine' composer. However, when he is transcribing a more peripheral (albeit more popular) work of Beethoven's such as a lied, Beethoven's masculinity is less threatened by alterations, so Liszt can make adjustments freely.

Freer arrangements such as this were regarded with suspicion in certain quarters, eliciting a rich font of disapproving imagery. In 1908, Wanda Landowska complained about 'the small virtuosos… who go tooth and nail at tampering, mutilating, and disfiguring our sublime works… what would sculptors say if some plasterer took it upon himself to shave off some marble from the Venus de Milo to give her a wasp waist or if somebody twisted Apollo's nose to give him more character?'[46] Although not a gendered metaphor, Raykoff notes that this criticism involves the artwork's *physical body* being 'twisted or mutilated', rather than the original creator themself being in some way mutilated**.** Kregor has similarly identified a tension between Liszt's aspirations to conjugal fidelity in transcription and his 'understanding that transcription was an act of violation of—even violence toward—the original'.[47] A similar image lurks behind Ernest Newman's ironic comment that when an arranger has taken 'liberties with' a piece of music, the implication is that a 'piece of music is never safe when a fast man is about'.[48] In contrast to the 'feminine' transcriber, all these metaphors colour the image of a 'free' paraphraser's approach to a work with clichés that are coded masculine.[49]

Considering the paraphraser Liszt as masculine in his relationship to the source work is an effective paradigm in relation to his transcriptions of Schubert's lieder. Liszt's success with transcribing Schubert's works is well known—his early transcriptions of Schubert lieder were

[46] Landowska, Wanda, quoted in Raykoff, "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge," 157.
[47] Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 4.
[48] Quoted in Raykoff, "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge," 156.
[49] Katharine Ellis has discussed a similar gendered division between a composer and a performer who acts as a 'vessel' for the composers' intentions; see Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," 371. It is interesting to note in contrast to this, describing the process of writing Fidelio, Beethoven said he was in great 'birthing pains' for a long time to create this work, gendering himself as female. This may relate to the changing notions of inspiration and creative work in Germany between the 18th and 19th centuries; see Matthew Head, *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

wildly popular, both as sheet music and as his own performance repertoire.[50] Walker has identified these works as essentially 'faithful transcriptions', or, where changes are made, they are always made 'in keeping with the spirit of the music'.[51] However, Liszt makes many changes in his transcriptions of Schubert; in contradiction to Walker, Kregor has suggested that the Schubert/Liszt *Winterreise* was different enough from the original to be its own standalone composition.[52] Liszt's modifications may be made 'in keeping with the spirit of the music', but they are quite significant—Liszt adds an extra verse to *Ständchen* to transform it from a serenade into 'two lovers singing together in canon'.[53] It is unthinkable that Liszt would have made similar additions or modifications to a Beethoven symphony, whether in the spirit of the music or not. In 1841, he complained that Haslinger 'overwhelms me with Schubert… I have just sent him another twenty-four new Lieder (*Schwanengesang* and *Winterreise*), and for the moment I am rather tired of this drudgery.'[54] Given his massive touring schedule he can, of course, be forgiven for tiring of this kind of work, but we would be hard pressed to find him privately complaining of similarly having to arrange or perform works of Beethoven.

Liszt's arrangements of Schubert, therefore, may lean more toward 'free' paraphrase rather than 'faithful' transcription. But it is not only the genre or nature of the work in question that determines Liszt's approach—the freer style of arrangement utilised by Liszt may also relate to differences between Schubert and Beethoven, as Beethoven possessed far greater prestige as a composer than Schubert in the early 19th century. Presumably, the same care was not warranted in approaching Schubert, about whom Liszt wrote that although there was 'greatness of excellence in the magic of [his] spirit', he was too 'immoderately productive, wrote incessantly, mixed insignificant with important things, grand things with mediocre work, [and] paid no heed to criticism'.[55] That Schubert in Liszt's eyes was apparently inferior as a composer to Beethoven presumably gave Liszt greater authority to change Schubert's music in his arrangements.

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[50] See Michael Saffle, *Liszt in Germany 1840–1845: A Study in Sources, Documents, and the History of Reception* (New York: Pendragon, 1992), 187.
[51] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 37.
[52] Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 6.
[53] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 37.
[54] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 38.
[55] Christopher Howard Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig: Reception and Reworkings of a Schubert Lied" (PhD diss., Columbia, 1992), 216.

Furthermore, the notion that the transcriber plays a feminine role relative to the composer, and the paraphraser a masculine role in regard to the work, is complicated where the original composer is himself seen as feminine, as was the case with Schubert. At the same time as Liszt was beginning work on his Schubert transcriptions, Robert Schumann's comparison of Schubert and Beethoven yielded an explicitly gendered image: 'Schubert is a more feminine character compared to [Beethoven]; far more loquacious, softer, broader. To be sure, he brings in his powerful passages… [but] still he is more feminine than masculine, for he pleads and persuades where the man commands'.[56] Liszt as transcriber of Beethoven may have felt 'commanded' to transcribe the works in a more 'faithful' manner, as a 'conscientious translator'; transcribing a Schubert construed by Robert Schumann as 'pleading [and] persuading' would have been a process that afforded Liszt more freedom.[57] Gibbs has identified that Liszt's criticisms of Schubert—mixing the important with the insignificant, paying no attention to critics, and writing incessantly – apply equally well to Liszt himself as a composer.[58] This can open up the possibility that Liszt projected his own negative traits as a composer onto Schubert, who was construed by Liszt's contemporaries as 'feminine'.

I will digress briefly here to elucidate a concept that I am taking as axiomatic. Considering sixteenth and seventeenth-century English musical culture, Kirsten Gibson has observed that the masculine state of being was perceived as constantly in danger of being 'feminised' or 'emasculated', and thus needed to be vigilantly defended.[59] This seems to be a quasi-universal feature of discourse around what it means to be male; John MacInnes, in his study *The End of Masculinity*, comments that 'the briefest historical survey will show that masculinity has

[56] Quoted in Poundie Burstein, "Lyricism, Structure, and Gender in Schubert's G Major String Quartet," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (1997), 59.
[57] Robert Schumann wasn't alone in othering Franz Schubert; Maynard Solomon has considered a remark of one of Schubert's contemporaries, that there was a 'cleavage in his… souls… of which one pressed heavenward and the other bathed in slime.' Solomon identifies this as a euphemism for Schubert's homosexuality, and it's worth noting that these kinds of comments about Schubert's 'baser' instincts appeared well after his death, in the 1850s and 1860s. However, I wonder if already by the 1830s and 1840's, Schubert was perceived as a lesser, 'effeminate', or 'more earthly' composer—Robert Schumann's comments seem to suggest this. See Maynard Solomon, "Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini," *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 3 (1989): 193–206, here 194, and Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music", in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (Philadelphia: Routledge, 1994).
[58] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 216.
[59] Kirsten Gibson, "Music, Melancholy and Masculinity in Early Modern England", in *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice*, ed. Biddle and Gibson, 65.

always been in one crisis or another',[60] and Camille Paglia commented that in Western patriarchal culture, 'masculinity must fight off effeminacy day by day'.[61] Imagining Liszt as one of many male historical subjects caught within a crisis of masculinity, Liszt would not see Schubert's putative effeminacies as a chance to explore or commune with a more feminine self. Instead, in transcribing Schubert's works, Liszt is able to project his own negative, perhaps feminine, traits (the mixing of high and low, incessant productivity, etc.) onto that composer, 'correct' them through transcription, and thereby 'dispel' them from his projected self. That may be one reason why Liszt performed *Erlkönig* so frequently; it was a compulsion to repeat and re-enact a ritual of purification of the self and 'correction of feminine traits'.[62] For his part, Liszt probably did not see his relationship to Schubert in this way, however, he may have seen in the latter a composer who was brilliant but uneven, and attempted to shore up these qualities of 'unevenness' in transcription. Schubert's inferiority, at least in comparison to Beethoven, was linked more widely to putatively feminine qualities (including the inclination toward 'base impulses' alluded to by Solomon), and Liszt's arrangements functioned within that context—Schubert as a 'feminine' composer becomes a chance for Liszt to prove or establish compositional superiority and masculine prowess in comparison.

How arrangement for piano was gendered in the 19th century is a complex issue that cannot be simply summarized. Attempting to assert a binary between masculine and feminine inevitably fails; it could be for this reason that Raykoff views paraphrase as a process of 'queer reproduction'.[63] Christensen notes that 'however the repertory is gendered, piano transcriptions can destabilize received categories and relations by altering the grounds of production and reception'.[64] For Raykoff, it was paraphrase that had queer potential; could the interrogation of categories and relations inherent in piano transcription also mark it as a

[60] John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: the Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), 6.
[61] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 28. Susan McClary has discussed the impotence that the male subject might have felt in the 19th century in the case of Brahms, see McClary, "Narrative Agendas in 'Absolute' Music," 343.
[62] In 1885, Liszt was offered two million marks to go on a tour of America, sharing the stage with other artists and performing one item per concert. Liszt replied to this offer with humour, asking '…am I supposed to play *Erlkönig* three hundred times in America?' One wonders if at this point in his life, the compulsion to correct feminine traits had receded, and he sensed the absurdity of continuing to project the masculine image of his youth. See Walker, *Franz Liszt*, 3, 10.
[63] Raykoff, "Transcription, Transgression, and the Procreative Urge," 161.
[64] Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription," 285.

kind of queer activity? Christensen's comment invites us to turn away from the nature of the specific arrangement *itself* in a consideration of gendered meaning, but how and where the arrangement in question is heard, performed, and experienced, and by whom. This relates deeply to performance, an activity which carried, for Liszt, further gendered dimensions.

Gender and Performance

In 1861, Liszt characterised music as the 'minx [that] drives [him] dreadfully to excess'.[65] Liszt's comment draws on a long tradition in the western world of gendering music as feminine, and himself as a male figure powerless to resist it.[66] He harboured a similar belief about his relationship to women; in an 1874 letter to his partner Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, Liszt wrote;

> … [Next Friday] is the anniversary of the death of my father. On his deathbed, at Boulogne-sur-Mer, he told me that I had a kind heart and did not lack intelligence—but that he feared my life would be troubled, and I dominated, by women.[67]

Sayn-Wittgenstein, for her part, agreed that Liszt was 'weak' and couldn't resist being 'taken possession of' by a woman.[68] It is remarkable that Liszt, who was known as one of Europe's most prolific musicians and womanisers, understood himself as ultimately powerless before both music and women, metaphorically combined in his mind in the image of a minx that drives him to excess.

Liszt's relationships with the women that he knew bears further examination to investigate this link. In 1869, Liszt was visited by Judith Gautier, who wrote that he was often surrounded by a group of fanatically devoted women. The usual clichés about Liszt's female fans follow in her account: that their worship of him amounts to idolatry or fetishism, that they fight over discarded cigars, et cetera. Gautier notes that Liszt 'would be very unhappy without this atmosphere of adoration… and to keep it he distributes his favours'. His followers allegedly did not feel envy of one another, however: 'he succeeds in keeping the peace among his votaries, and even makes them accept and respect a favourite… [Regarding this] self-denial

[65] Quoted in David Larkin, "Dancing to the Devil's Tune: Liszt's Mephisto Waltz and the Encounter with Virtuosity," *19th Century Music* 38, no. 3 (2015): 214.
[66] For a general study of this phenomenon, see Stephen C. Downes, *The Muse as Eros: Music, Erotic Fantasy and Male Creativity in the Romantic and Modern Imagination* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006).
[67] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 508.
[68] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 518.

so unusual among women, his reply is: 'In me, they love themselves'.[69] It's tempting to evaluate this in terms of the Lisztian image that we know, that of an egotistical virtuoso. Egotism, however, usually masks insecurity, and it does not seem that insecurity lurks behind Liszt's comment; it could perhaps evoke instead Rousseau's concept of *amour propre,* that Liszt could act as a kind of stepping-stone for some women toward greater self-actualisation. Liszt probably also simply enjoyed receiving the love and adoration of these women, but may not have wanted to admit that to himself, as it was not in keeping with his deeply held Catholic values or the requirements of his minor clerical office.

Liszt's relationship to women yields a paradigm for understanding his relationship to the 'minx' of music. For Lawrence Kramer, the virtuoso performance is a kind of 'gift' given by the star performer, a gift that is not 'not so much disseminated *by* the star as it is a symbolic dissemination *of* the star, through whose body and appendages each spectator sees and loves himself'.[70] There is a striking similarity between Kramer's concept of virtuosity and Liszt's concept of his female fans. Common to both is an element of self-sacrifice on the part of Liszt/the star: a genuine belief that his female fans were bettered mirrors the martyrdom of Kramer's self-sacrificing virtuoso. Deeper than that, however, it may be that in Liszt's incarnation as a virtuoso, he is playing a masculine role in relation to his audience, who play the feminine counterpart; whether his audience *is* female or male is beside the point.[71] In this way, both the audience *and* the 'minx of music' are performing a double role as feminine foils to Liszt's masculine performer.

Returning to arrangement, it could be that the mere act of Liszt *performing* an arranged work consolidates Liszt the performer as the central masculine figure, pushing the composer aside. The paradigmatic example of Liszt's centralisation of the performer can be found in his 1839 letter to Cristiana Belgiojoso, describing a private concert he had played recently in Rome. Liszt paraphrased Louis XIV's comment 'l'état, c'est moi' to say, 'the concert is me', conceiving

[69] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 442.
[70] Lawrence Kramer, "The Virtuoso Body; or, the Two Births of Musical Performance", in *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott* ed. Stan Hawkins (London: Routledge, 2016), 241.
[71] Dana Gooley has discussed the Lisztomania episodes in Berlin, and the possibility that male audience members projected their feelings about Liszt onto female audience members, see Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 211-212.

of the piano recital as a celebration, or performance, of himself.[72] This concert consisted of the following items:

1. The overture to [Rossini's] *William Tell*, performed by M.L. (Monsieur Liszt)
2. Reminiscences of the *Puritani.* composed and performed by the above-mentioned!
3. Etudes and fragments by the same to the same!
4. Improvisation on themes given, still by the same.

Liszt intended to draw attention to the fact that in this event, it was not the music, nor even his compositions, but Liszt *himself* that was the focus. However, it is noteworthy that his programme consists almost entirely of transcriptions or works inspired by other composers. Liszt's insistence upon himself as the concert may even come off as somewhat arrogant in this letter, a quality not often found in Liszt's correspondence as mentioned, that may belie an insecurity on Liszt's part. This insecurity attests to a tension between Liszt's ideal of the 'conjugal fidelity' required of the arranger, and Liszt's concept of the concertising virtuoso at the centre of the event.

This tension relates to the challenges facing the publicly performing male pianist in the 19th century, who was also a figure vulnerable to emasculation. Katharine Ellis has considered the gendered implications of 19th-century debates about whether the performer should aspire to be a so-called 'empty vessel for the composers intentions', or whether they could play a more central role.[73] Such concerns were relevant to Liszt—in 1837, Liszt was described in a review as a 'pythoness' (a woman who practices divination), who during performance 'tosses back his long hair, lips quivering, nostrils palpitating'.[74] The implicit and explicit gendering of Liszt as female in this review alludes to the feminine role that the performer plays when they become a 'vessel' for the composer's intentions. Berlioz imagined Liszt asking himself the following question: 'should the poet-artist let himself be carried away by his feverish inspiration during the creation of his work, quiver with the passionate excitement he intends to excite in others? Or should he remain constantly above them both, mastering, taming, shutting them off in the deepest recesses of his heart, and reigning over them like Aeolus over the winds; free as he is to release them on rare occasions and let them cavort madly about for

[72] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 110.
[73] See footnote 45.
[74] Ludim R. Pedroza, "Music as Communitas: Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and the Musical Work," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 29, no. 4 (2010): 309.

a moment—until the genius, like Neptune, lays down the law, pulls in the reins, and calm the storm he has just stirred up?'[75] For Katherine Kolb-Reeve, 'these oppositions line up in familiar couples… to be "carried away", to "tremble"; to be the "slave", the "thing moved"… these are negative, passive, subordinate, "feminine" positions.'[76] Performance can threaten the (male) performer, as it can cause them to lose control over their public self. This was an anxiety for not only male pianists; Clara Schumann also commented that she sometimes loses herself when performing the pieces she loves, but that an artist 'should always master his feelings and remain as collected and calm as a person in ordinary life'.[77] Clara's use of the masculine pronoun to describe an artist who has mastered 'his' feelings indicates the gendered element present in the ideal construct of a 'masculine' performer who does not 'lose himself' in the act of performance. It could be in this sense that the 'minx' of music can 'drive [Liszt] to excess' and threaten to overcome or emasculate him in performance. The gendered ambivalences that inhere in performance of music must be kept in mind when considering how arrangement is gendered.

The intersections between Liszt's process of arrangement and gender are difficult to summarise succinctly. Arrangement, like all other musical processes, can become a screen onto which various gendered identities and concepts are projected. I have compared Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven to his transcriptions of Schubert, composers who were construed as masculine and feminine respectively, in the hope of discovering a gendered difference in Liszt's approach that valorised conjugal fidelity. The differences that do exist reflect 'genera'; not only gender, but genre, and differences of musical 'value' ascribed to the composer in question. A meaningful consideration of Liszt's arrangements would be incomplete without imagining how these works are realised in performance, a dimension that adds further layers of gendered complexity. Most relevant here is the gendered dichotomy between the notion of a performer as feminine vessel for the composer's intention and performer as masculine artist at the centre of a musical event, as it provides a paradigm for understanding how the relationship between arranger and composer was similarly gendered.

[75] Quoted in Reeve, "Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz," 230.
[76] Reeve, "Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz," 230.
[77] Quoted in Martin Kreisig, "Einige Briefe Clara Schumanns," *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 41 (1920), 36.

Chapter 2: The Feminine Beethoven: Liszt and Schubert

In 1869, Hanslick summarised Liszt's arrangements of Schubert lieder in the following way; 'Liszt… through these paraphrases, did a great deal for the dissemination of Schubert lieder… the power of virtuosity proves itself once again and this time served a good cause'.[78] Hanslick's description of Liszt's virtuosity testifies to a perceived opposition between the composers, on the one hand the 'good cause' of Schubert's simplicity and lyricism, and the other hand Liszt's duplicitous 'power of virtuosity', usually not put to a good cause.[79] I have been tempted in my research to rely on a similar opposition, between the power of Lisztian masculine virtuosity and how it affects Schubert's music, a composer considered at the time the 'feminine Beethoven' as noted in the previous chapter. Upon closer examination, the opposition collapses; Schubert's lieder form a site of both construction of, and challenge to, the gendered identity of the performing Liszt.

Gretchen am Spinnrade

I will begin my consideration of Schubert lieder with *Gretchen am Spinnrade.* In Liszt's arrangement, the melodic line and the 'spinning wheel' accompaniment are played in the same hand, and quite often on the same notes (figure 8). In order to separate them, Liszt

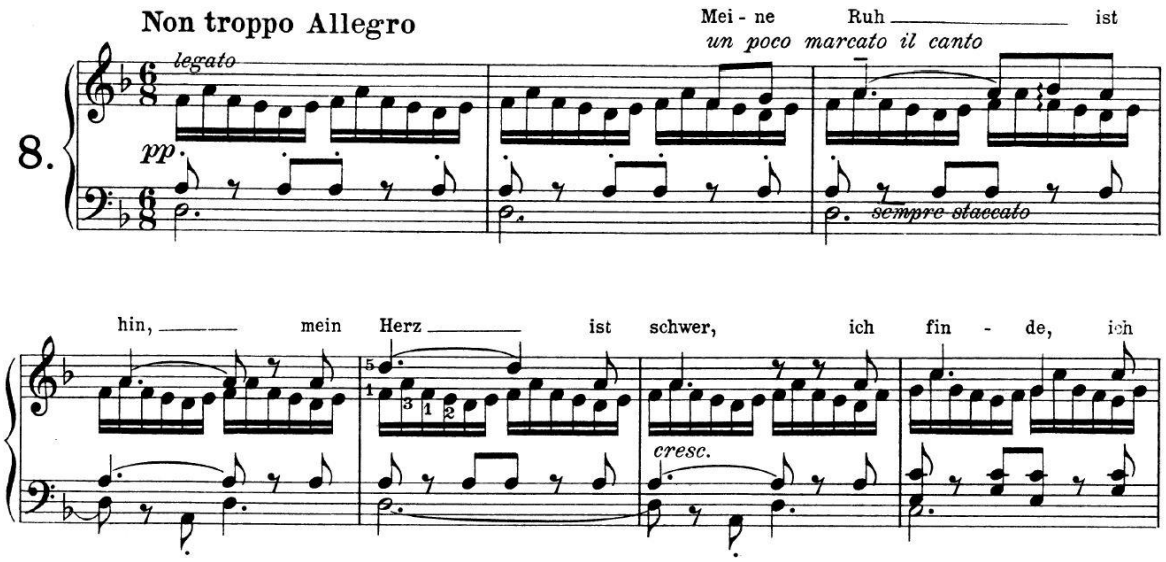

Figure 8 Schubert arr. Liszt, Gretchen am Spinnrade op. 2: bars 1–6.

[78] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 213.

[79] For more on the apparent differences and similarities between Liszt and Schubert, see Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 214–17.

chooses to delay the vocal line at points where it overlaps with the spinning wheel accompaniment (e.g at the start of bar 3). The only other pianistic solution that I can think of would be to change notes in the spinning wheel accompaniment (example given at figure 9).

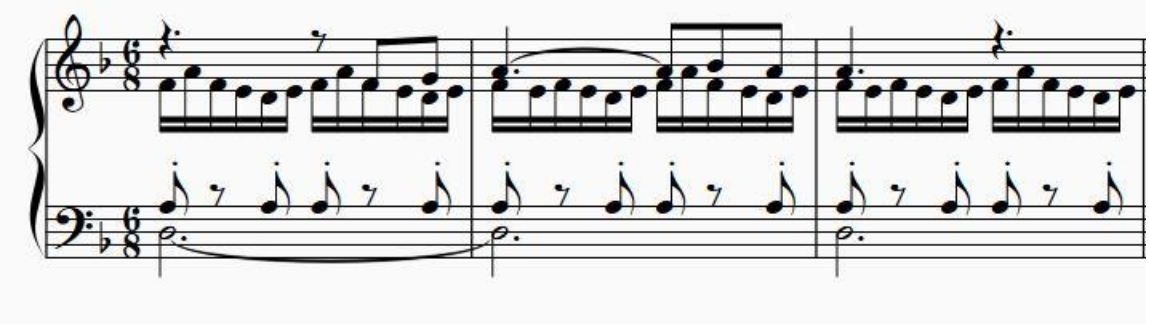

Figure 9 Hypothetical alternative to bars 2–4 of Liszt's arrangement

A subtle change like this one, though easier, would probably undermine the effect of a spinning wheel that perpetually executes the same motion, in contrast to a character whose song varies according to her emotions. The division between spinning wheel tune and Gretchen's melody is crucial to Liszt's conception of the work; Liszt seems to be at great pains to maintain the spinning wheel exactly as Schubert had it, even where doing so forces the melody notes to be early or late.

Liszt represented the Gretchen figure a few times throughout his oeuvre, in transcription and original composition. Zsuzsanna Domokos suggests that the Gretchen of Liszt's *Faust* symphony differs from the Gretchen of this transcription; Gretchen in the symphony is the 'eternal female', 'simple and peaceful through the whole movement'. She embodies a principle of femininity that is calm, naïve, loving, and has traditionally been read as the agent of Faust's salvation.[80] Schubert's conception of Gretchen differs, being much more conflicted, uncertain, and agitated. David Schroeder points out the influence of Schiller's works on Schubert, allowing him to imagine a strong identification with the feminine persona that results in works like *Gretchen am Spinnrade.* For Schroeder, one finds in Schiller the 'feminisation [of men], an abandonment of traditional notions of male dominance, and a recognition of dual sexual forces within the self … one sees these ideas infiltrating [Schubert's]

[80] Zsuzsanna Domokos, "Gretchen's Figure in Liszt's Musical Interpretation," *Studia Musicologica. Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica* 54, no. 4 (2013): 394. Note, however, Kramer's interpretation, which challenges this reading of Liszt's Gretchen as a static, unchanging portrait, see Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice,* 102–35.

earliest songs, most strikingly the laments in female voices'.[81] Schubert's Gretchen is one such lament that features a close identification with its central female character.

When Liszt transcribes Schubert's Gretchen, he consistently heightens every moment of Gretchen's despair using virtuosic piano techniques appropriate to the idiom, such as rhythmic displacement of the bass and virtuosic double leaps to either end of the keyboard. Liszt is attempting to do more than just 'depict' a young woman whose emotional world is in turmoil; he is also trying to express her voice as his own through idiomatic Lisztian piano techniques and make personal Gretchen's pain. As has been noted, he had a lifelong affinity for this work, but he also had a lifelong interest in the character of Gretchen herself. In an 1860 letter to Emilie Genast, Liszt writes of experiencing difficulties in his life, and quotes this poem to describe his own 'splitting head and broken soul'.[82]

There is another parallel to be drawn between Liszt and Gretchen. Certain similarities exist between using a spinning wheel and practising a piano: both involve hours of repetitive motion, fine fingerwork, and are most often done privately indoors. Walker characterised the virtuosity in this transcription as being of a 'private nature, whose finger-twisting solutions are known only to the pianist'.[83] I was struck by this link between Walker's characterisation of unshowy or unspectacular virtuosity as 'private', and the 'private' worlds that Gretchen and the domestic pianist inhabit. In this work, is Liszt employing 'private virtuosity' in an attempt to dramatize a female character's internal world?[84] The links between the private, domestic worlds of pianism, femininity, and the textile arts can be seen quite literally through the availability in the 19th century of instruments that were hybrids of piano and sewing table.[85] Indeed, Schubert's fine-fingered piano accompaniment has traditionally been read as a metaphor for the spinning wheel itself; Liszt's transcription so carefully preserves the spinning wheel accompaniment in order to make a link between the fine feminine work of

[81] David Schroeder, *Our Schubert: His Enduring Legacy* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 11.
[82] Liszt writes "…Während deren hin und Herbrausen in meinen zerstükten Kopf [Ich vergeße nicht, das Gretchen 'verükten Kopf' und 'zerstükten Sinn' sagt]" (While they roar back and forth in my broken head [I haven't forgotten what Gretchen said, broken head and broken mind]) see Klára Hamburger, "Franz Liszts Briefe an Emilie Merian-Genast aus den Beständen des Goethe- und Schiller-Archivs, Weimar Teil 1," *Studia Musicologica* 48, no. 3–4 (2007): 379.
[83] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 33.
[84] On the notion of 'interiority' in virtuosity, see Alexander Stefaniak, "Clara Schumann's Interiorities and the Cutting Edge of Popular Pianism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 3 (2017): 697–765.
[85] See Richard Leppert, "Sexual Identity, Death, and the Family Piano," *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 2 (1992): 114.

domestic spinning and the art of pianism. This link that Liszt establishes creates a strong level of identification between the performing Liszt and the imagined character of Gretchen. As the piano accompaniment becomes a metaphor for the spinning wheel, does Liszt himself become, in performance, linked metaphorically to the imagined character of Gretchen? Is Liszt even attempting to *embody* Gretchen at the piano?

Figure 10 Liszt, A Faust Symphony in 3 Character Portraits, arranged for Pianoforte: II. Gretchen (cover page)

There is another important conceptual difference between the Gretchen of Schubert's lied, and the Gretchen rendered in Liszt's own *Faust* symphony. I refer to the cover page of Liszt's transcription for solo piano of his own *Gretchen* work (figure 10); this publication is dominated by a view of Gretchen in church, evoking the scenes in *Faust* where Mephistopheles, Faust, and the reader 'spy on' Gretchen while she's at her domestic affairs. Liszt's *Faust* symphony is a similar attempt to 'sketch' the character Gretchen—this idea of 'observing' Gretchen is represented literally by its cover page. Liszt's Schubert transcription, meanwhile, attempts to *embody* the feminine figure that the music imagines, and this too can be seen in the cover page. Although the cover is more generic (figure 11), it does feature a small icon of Gretchen sitting at her spinning wheel and a male figure sitting near. We assume it is Faust, either his *imago* imagined by Gretchen or his literally sitting nearby. Either way, instead of featuring Gretchen as the object of the gaze, as in the *Faust* Symphony, both Faust *and* Gretchen are gazed at, suggesting an affinity between the pair. The 19th-century pianist playing this transcription is greeted with the image of Gretchen and Faust *together* as she sits at the spinning wheel, and is invited to imagine an affinity between the dualities; Faust/Gretchen, piano/spinning wheel, Liszt/Schubert, etc. In this way, Liszt's transcription of *Gretchen am Spinnrade* not only identifies with, but goes some way toward *embodying* the character Gretchen, through the application of 'private' virtuosity and a close identification with the imagined feminine person.

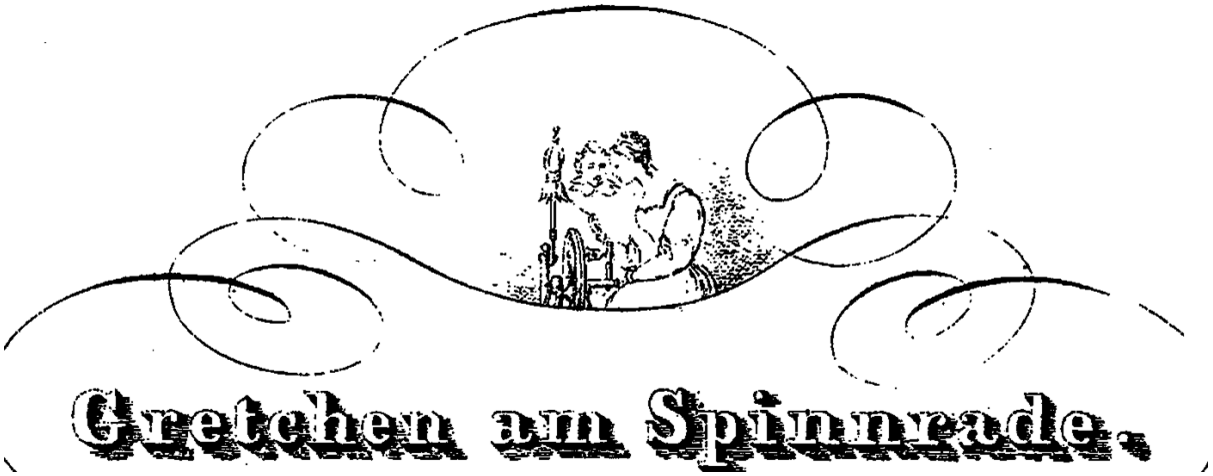

Figure 11 Schubert arr. Liszt, Gretchen am Spinnrade: cover page.

Ständchen

In contrast to the more character-focussed *Gretchen* is *Ständchen,* based on a poem by Ludwig Rellstab. In 1838, Tobias Haslinger published four Liszt transcriptions of Schubert lieder under the title *Homage aux Dames de Vienne,* following Liszt's successful series of concerts in Vienna.[86] *Ständchen* first appeared in this publication; this work seemed to double as easier repertoire to be sold for consumption by the domestic/amateur market, and as performance repertoire for Liszt, since he performed this work quite frequently in the 1840s.[87] The title of the collected works, an *homage* to the woman of Vienna, does double duty—it indicates on one level the suitability of the work for practice/performance by the domestic amateur (mostly female) market, but it also fits the 'serenade' theme of the work, being a kind of courtly tribute from a male to a woman.

The 'double meaning' of this work is reinforced by the presence in the first edition of an *ossia piú facile,* that functions as an entire alternate version of the piece. This ossia simplifies the accompaniment by placing it in the left hand alone and the melody in the right hand, and modifies the bass notes by changing the octaves to single notes. This ossia is conceptually easier, as the melody and accompaniment are split between the hands, and the pianist is no longer required to perform the complex mental work of mixing articulations in one hand, as in the non-ossia version. The frequent registral movements down to the lower octave are also removed. The non-ossia version features a favoured hallmark of Liszt piano writing seen also in *Gretchen;* that of a singing line that emerges from its accompaniment. The contrast can be seen in figure 12, where the ossia is given below and the original above.

[86] The other 3 songs published were *Die Post, Lob der Tränen*, and *Die Rose*; see Christopher Howard Gibbs, "'Just Two Words. Enormous Success': Liszt's 1838 Vienna Concerts", in *Franz Liszt and his World*, ed. Christopher Howard Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 208.
[87] See Saffle, *Liszt in Germany 1840-1845*, 187.

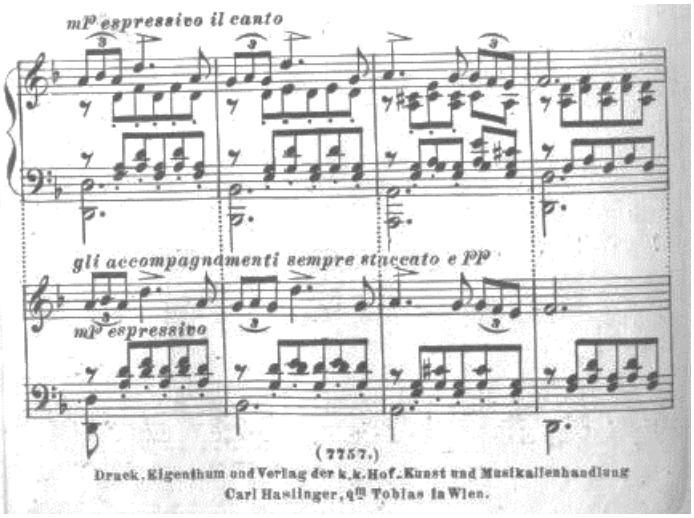

Figure 12 Schubert arr. Liszt, Ständchen (first edition): bars 5–8.

Walker has commented that these transcriptions reveal Liszt's command of the keyboard better than the transcendental etudes; one can quite clearly see the division between an advanced Lisztian style that integrates melody and accompaniment (figure 13, upper system), and a simpler style that divides them (figure 13, lower system).[88]

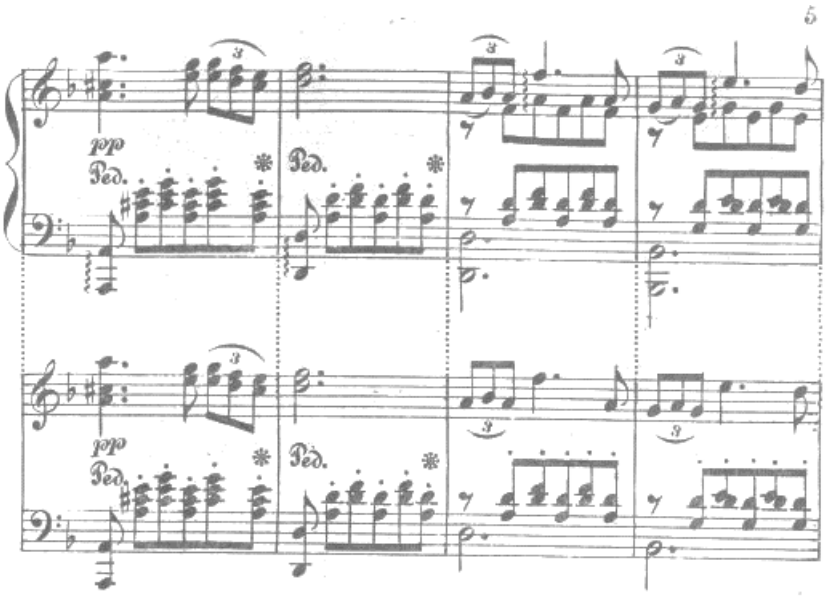

Figure 13 Schubert arr. Liszt, Ständchen (first edition): bars 9–12.

Most interestingly about the ossia and non-ossia versions, however, is that it is *unnecessary* to use this more advanced technique of writing. The two versions, at least in the first verse, sound basically the same. The non-ossia version is more difficult than it needs to be, as the ossia

[88] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 35.

concedes. The *ossia piú facile* allows Liszt to have his cake and eat it too, selling an arrangement that features both an easier version (for the ideal [female] amateur player—a *dames de Vienne* of the dedication?), and a harder version (for himself or a [male] public performer), that contains essentially little aural difference. A gendered distinction between pianists forms an artificial edifice upon which to construct an entire alternate version of a piece's first verse, that has little to no actual difference in sound.

The distinction between *ossia* and non-*ossia* breaks down a little in the second verse, where the accompaniment is shifted an octave, to allow for melody, accompaniment, and bass to be split between the hands differently. Here, neither version is particularly harder than the other; both have similar challenges. The most significant change between verses is that Liszt has moved the melody down an octave and marked it *quasi violoncello* (or *dolce cantando* in the ossia). This change has been identified as introducing a second, male 'character' in the piece.[89] Does the subject position here shift to a male voice, becoming a more traditional 'serenade' from a male to a female lover?

The ossia version ends before Liszt's third verse, where the melody is doubled in canon at 1 beat. For Walker, this represents the union of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' characters; they become 'two lovers brought together in canon'.[90] Walker's interpretation is problematic—the 'male' character's line in the tenor (as in verse 2) is not present. Instead, the soprano's line is followed by an 'echo' an octave higher; Liszt even marks 'echo', and frequently inserts reminders that the upper voice is *piano* or *pianissimo.* An echo, strictly speaking, does not represent two characters; an echo is one character hearing an imitation of their own voice. Rellstab's text references nightingales—the echoes may be the nightingales reflecting the song of the singer, but that wouldn't explain why Liszt shifted registers for the second verse.

In a sense, then, there is a 'problem' in interpreting Liszt's transcription. In Rellstab's text, and Schubert's setting, there is a sole singer 'serenading' a distant beloved, who makes no response. Does Liszt's third verse reinforce the imagined presence of multiple singers, an interpretation favoured by Walker? Or is it one singer singing in different registers, echoed by nightingales?[91] Rather than collapsing the ambiguous tension between ossia and non-ossia by

[89] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 37.
[90] Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 37.
[91] Or maybe a singer and an instrumentalist, following the 'quasi violoncello' designation.

presenting a 'single version', the third verse instead reinforces it—does Liszt in performance become the serenader, echoed only by the birds? Or, by 'joining the lovers in canon', does he become a kind of marital officiant, to extend Walker's metaphor? What of the amateur pianist playing this serenade, presented in a collection that is an homage to the women of Vienna: does Liszt's setting of the third verse invite this pianist into a contemplation of romantic love, or are they forbidden access to it due to its technical difficulty?

We don't need to demand from Liszt that his transcriptions offer entirely coherent metaphors; the 'echo' effect is also, of course, simply a lovely pianistic innovation that he decided to insert as a coda. What is clear is that transcription allows Liszt an opportunity to explore/alter gendered meanings, both through alteration of the context in which the work is presented but also through musical devices such as ossia and registral shifts.

Erlkönig

This process of reimagining gendered meaning is most clearly on display in Liszt's arrangement of Schubert's *Erlkönig*, a work often paired in Liszt's concert programs with *Ständchen* or *Gretchen am Spinnrade*.[92] The most significant transcriptional choices that Liszt make in this work relate to how the different characters are represented, which in turn allows for a close interpretation of gendered meaning.

In Liszt's arrangement, the father's vocal line is dropped down an octave, into the register of a tenor or bass (figure 14).[93] Doing so allows the father's vocal line to lend harmonic support to the right hand octaves, but also accentuates the father's 'masculinity' in relation to other characters, by occupying a tessitura usually sung by male singers.

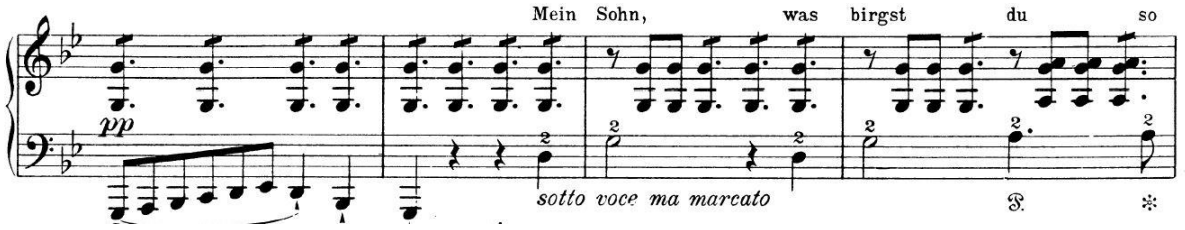

Figure 14 Schubert arr. Liszt, Erlkönig: bars 36–39.

[92] Saffle, *Liszt in Germany 1840–1845*, 227.

[93] Conversely, it's just in the pitch it would be sung by a male singer, with the other parts an octave higher; either way, it's an octave lower than the other parts in the lied.

The father's line is initially written to be executed with the second finger only, compelling the hand to make repeated up and down strokes in order to play it. Dana Gooley has pointed out that one of Liszt's pianistic innovations was the utilisation of a style of playing where the 'arms and wrists are constantly approaching the keyboard vertically… [offering a] spectacle of domination and violence that, in the special circumstances of… [Weber's] *Konzertstück*, displace to an image of heroic military valour.'[94] Liszt's repeated usage of the second finger evokes a similar image, linking this style of great vertical downward strokes to the father, the character in the text most clearly identified with masculinity/maleness.[95]

In contrast, in the Erlkönig's initial entry, his melodic line is transposed up an octave, which many commentators have observed produces an 'ethereal' effect (figure 15).[96] This change also necessitates frequent arpeggiation of the melodic line, however, arpeggiation indications are still given where the chords could fit into the hand. As the father was transposed down an octave, and played with vertical downward strokes, to draw attention to that character's 'masculinity', the opposite transformation has occurred in the Erlkönig—transposed *up* an octave and highly arpeggiated, producing visual horizontal sweeping motions.

[94] Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 99.

[95] In contrast to that of the Father and the Erlkönig, the son's music is left largely unchanged. This, too, might be a deliberate choice—the son may lack enough agency to warrant musical changes. Leaving his music alone when so much else has been exaggerated helps to characterise the son as vulnerable.

[96] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 243.

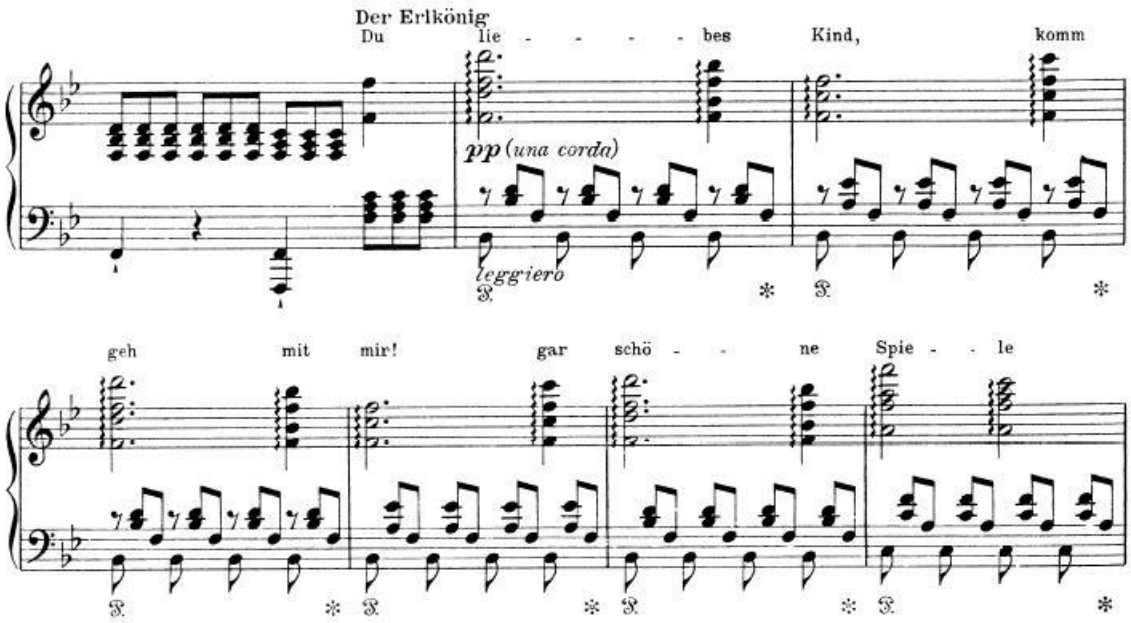

Figure 15 Schubert arr. Liszt, Erlkönig: bars 47–53.

This visual transformation is mirrored in the accompaniment as well—gone for the first time are the vertically attacked repeating octaves, to be replaced with an accompanying part that suits small circular motions of the elbow, akin to the 'horizontal' style of playing identified with the late 18th century 'brilliant' style.[97] Late 18th century repertories were gendered feminine in the 19th century, in contrast to the more 'modern' pianistic style(s) of Liszt and Thalberg.[98]

Ostensibly, Liszt's changes to Schubert's music are significant, but they are made in line with qualities present in the original work. Schubert sets for the father and son music that is angular, dramatic, and minor, whereas that for the Erlkönig is major and lyrical. A dramatic minor opening followed by a lyrical, *dolce* second theme in the relative major has been identified as a common sonata procedure of the early 19th century—for A. B. Marx, such a procedure would be indicative of the 'feminine to the proceeding masculine'.[99] Many commentators noted the 'seductive' nature of Schubert's Erlkönig—Max Friedlaender even observed that Schubert failed to set the poem appropriately, that he did not capture 'the bitter

[97] Robert Doran, "From the Brilliant Style to the Bravura Style: Reconceptualising Lisztian Virtuosity," in *Liszt and Virtuosity,* ed. Robert Doran (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), 267–308.
[98] Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," 363–64.
[99] See Hepokoski, "Masculine, Feminine," 494. Although A.B. Marx's comments are in regards to sonata form(s), similar contrastive (and therefore potentially gendered) theme pairs are found in other types of music in the same period.

simplicity of the poem, that [Schubert] made out of the alders of the German woods a fragrant orange grove, and… adorned… the northern phantom… with all the charms of seductive sensuality'.[100] Friedlaender was drawing on a similar line of criticism put forth earlier in the century by Johann Christian Lobe in 1844—that the Erlkönig's dangerously beautiful melodies lessened his effect, that they could 'kill female virtue' i.e. seduce a woman, but surely couldn't harm a child.[101]

Seductive, sensual, charming; these characteristics are by no means only associated with women in the 19th century (Lobe's fears that they could belong to a seductive male attempting to kill female virtue bears this out), but they are more closely associated with femininity as it was constructed in the 19th century. Liszt's transcription of the Erlkönig further elaborates this gendered othering; the use of higher registration where the melody would be sung by a soprano, as well as the highly horizontal, feminine style of playing (in contrast with the father's vertical, masculine style) accentuate the character's 'feminine' qualities.

It's worth noting that singers of soprano parts were often male castrati, and mezzo sopranos often sang both male and female roles.[102] I am not attempting to argue that music in the soprano register therefore implies femininity, and the opposite for music in the bass register. In this case, the depiction of the Erlkönig must be taken in conjunction with various other elements of his characterisation.

At the Erlkönig's subsequent entries in Liszt's transcription, the performer is asked to maintain the 'seductive' quality, with the music marked *amorosamente.* However, repeating

[100] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 171.
[101] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 176.
[102] Heather Hadlock has considered the *musico* tradition in relation to Rossini's *La Donna del Lago.* See Heather Hadlock, "Different Masculinities: Androgyny, Effeminacy, and Sentiment in Rossini's La Donna del Lago," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Bloechl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

dyads are beginning to seep into the music that accompanies him (figure 16).

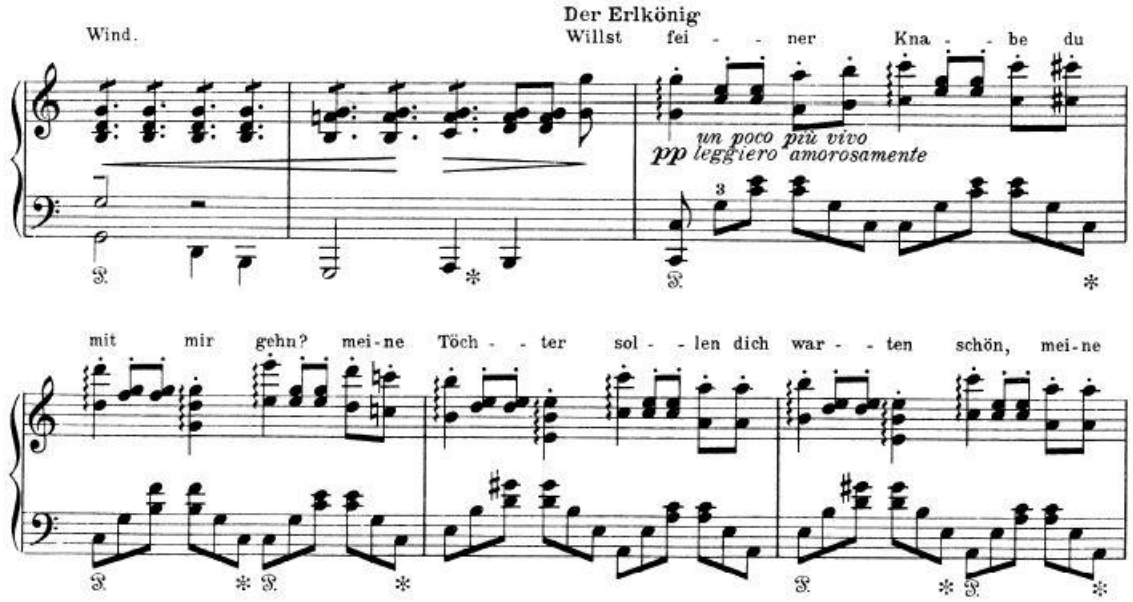

Figure 16 Schubert arr. Liszt, Erlkönig: bars 75–80.

This seems a deliberate choice on Liszt's part—the left hand especially could have been almost directly transcribed from the Schubert and would have been much easier to play (figure 17).

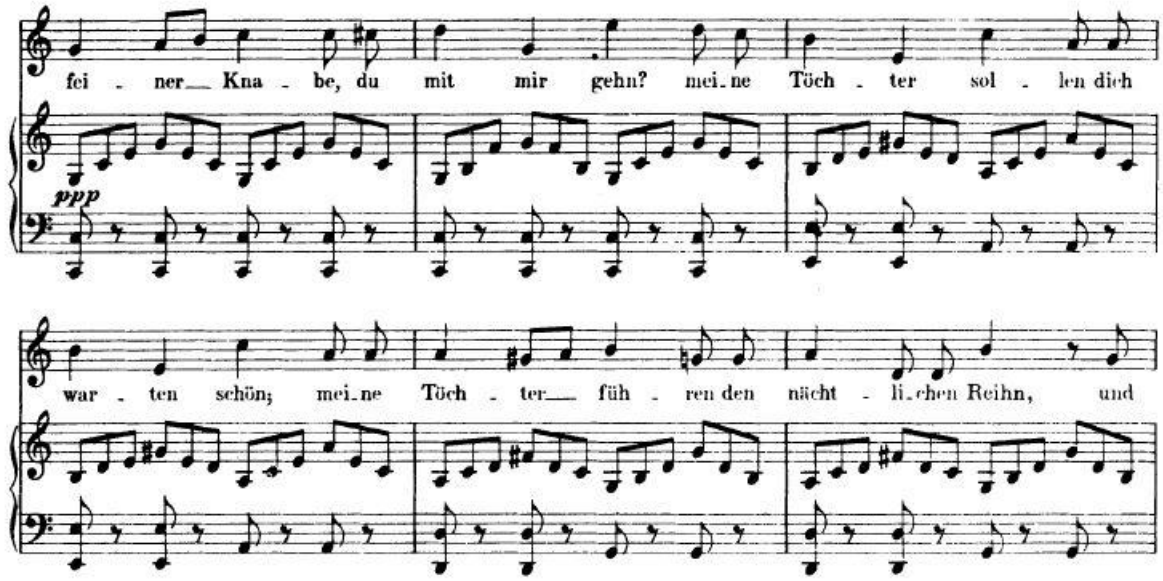

Figure 17 Schubert, Erlkönig: bars 77–82.

Liszt opts instead for a texture that features much more the repeating notes characteristic of the music of the father and son. This could represent the Erlkönig's drawing nearer and nearer to the world of the living, where he will ultimately harm the child, as at his third and final

entry there is very little difference in texture between his music and the music of the father/child. The idea that the Erlkönig is becoming less 'remote' is accentuated by Liszt removing the *una corda* for the second and third entries, and indicating that they should be played *un poco piu vivo* and *molto appassionato,* respectively (figure 18).

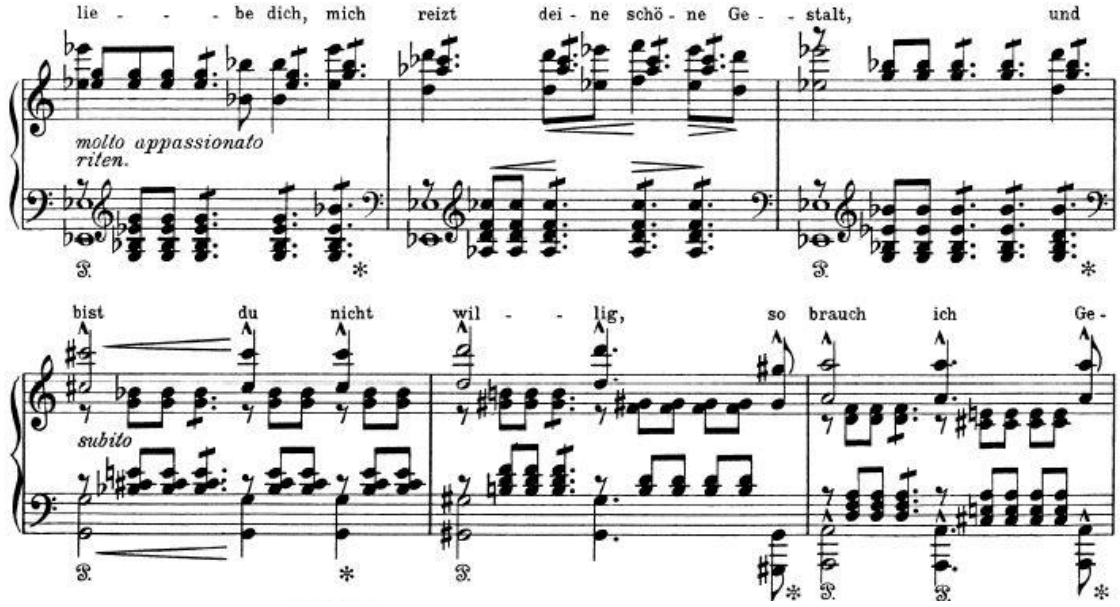

Figure 18 Schubert arr. Liszt, Erlkönig: bars 107–112.

As the Erlkönig approaches the world of the living, his music becomes less 'ethereal' and more akin to that of the father and child. He also loses some of his feminine aspect and becomes increasingly masculine, as represented by this change in setting**;** this same quality is detectable in Schubert's original. His last 'sung' syllable in Liszt's transcription, the '-walt' of 'Gewalt', is the only one of his notes *not* transposed up an octave, the Erlkönig's final adoption of a masculine tessitura for the noun 'force'.[103] In transcription, Liszt toys with the tessitura of the Erlkönig in order to accentuate or diminish that character's imagined masculine or feminine characteristics—doing so heightens the gendered drama that inheres in the work.

As we have seen, instrumental performance can allow for a gendered transformation; in *Gretchen*, the piano becomes a metaphor for the spinning wheel, and the performing Liszt becomes a metaphor for Gretchen. Similarly, in *Erlkönig,* Liszt's careful use of differing piano techniques leads from mere depiction to an *embodiment* of differing gendered subjectivities.

[103] George Friedrich Haas has speculated on the looming spectre of sexual violence in this work. See Georg Friedrich Haas, "Strange Dissonance," *Van Magazine*, https://van-magazine.com/mag/strange-dissonance/ (accessed December 13, 2022).

Liszt was seen to cross the divide between masculine and feminine in the 19th century when he performed; Richard Leppert has considered reviews of Liszt's performances, and found he was sometimes read as a 'hyperphallic pianist-artist', but other times imagined as 'its extreme opposite, a fainting woman who nonetheless revives to become hysterical'.[104] For Leppert, Liszt was part of a group of 'male virtuosos, who publicly leapt back and forth across the increasingly higher walls of gender boundaries under construction during this period'.[105] As he performed this work hundreds of times over his *Glanzzeit, Erlkönig* came to represent, for Liszt, 'an emblem of his virtuoso years'.[106] The ritualised, public leap over the walls of gendered difference that inheres in this work is a quintessential aspect of its virtuosic meaning.

As Leppert notes above, it was predominantly male virtuosos that performed this gender crossing. Philip Friedheim notes in 1960 that a core element of romantic ideology (one that transcription could perform exceptionally well) was 'the desire of the individual to include every human experience within himself… all emotions and actions are available to him; nothing is beyond the potential range of his vision. (Liszt can be) both priest and libertine, God, devil, and man in one'.[107] Although this extract may intend 'man' and other masculine nouns in a gender-neutral sense, it doesn't seem that the ability to 'contain every experience within themselves' was equally afforded to female performers in the 19th century. Katharine Ellis has considered how female performers at this time were criticised for performing in a masculine way, but it seems that Liszt could enact a crossing of the gender boundary into femininity, provided that it took place within an overarching 'masculine' framework (such as public solo piano performance).[108]

The overarching masculine presence in *Erlkönig* is further evidenced through a consideration of the final character in the work, the narrator. As Kramer points out, the narrator in this work

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[104] Richard Leppert, "Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt," in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 215.
[105] Leppert, "Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt," 216.
[106] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 212.
[107] Philip Friedheim, "The Piano Transcriptions of Franz Liszt," *Studies in Romanticism* 1, no. 2 (1962): 87.
[108] See Katharine Ellis' consideration of Louise Mattman's playing in Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris." For more on public solo piano performance as a masculine ritual, see Tia DeNora, "The Concerto and Society," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19–32.

assumes the gender of the performer; they 'speak in *propria persona*'.[109] If Liszt becomes the 'narrator' of this piece when he performs it, then we might ask how the opening sections of the piece have generally been received. Liszt's performance of this piece, both his own solo transcription and when he accompanied, has long been noted for its dazzling power. Contemporary reviews spoke of Liszt's 'energy and power', that listeners 'trembled with terror' as Liszt played both left and right hands 'in octaves'. This review was from August 1837, of a charity concert where Liszt was accompanying a singer; even on this occasion Liszt doubled the octaves of the introduction to lend the opening more strength, power, and drama.[110]

This same reviewer posed a rhetorical question: 'who else but Liszt… would have dared to play them (the left hand notes) in octaves?'.[111] If a pianist can play Schubert's octaves in the right hand, they can surely play the octaves in the left hand without too much difficulty—it doesn't strike me as the feat of astonishing technical skill that the reviewer implies it to be. Nonetheless, they *sound* spectacular, and create quite an effect. If *Gretchen am Spinnrade* featured 'private' virtuosity, harder than it sounded, to represent a female character's inner world, could *Erlkönig* be said to represent a 'public' virtuosity, *easier* than it sounds, representing a world of maleness?

Characteristics of strength, power, and muscularity, while of course not exclusively masculine qualities, were increasingly identified in the early 19th century with a heroic, Napoleonic, 'martial', bravura character, read as a masculine style of instrumental playing.[112] Similar readings of the piece's introduction persist to this day—for George Friedrich Haas, writing in 2016, Schubert's original opening bar (preserved in Liszt's transcription) evoke a (male) onanistic quality.[113] When Liszt performed this work, both as solo and accompaniment, the opening was read as powerful and bravura, qualities associated at the time with the increasingly public 'masculine' style of performance. It is in this way that the piece is framed

[109] Lawrence Kramer, "Song Revisited", https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:14845/ (accessed December 13, 2022).
[110] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 232.
[111] Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 232.
[112] Maiko Kawabata, "Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender (1789-1830)," *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 2 (2004): 89–107.
[113] Georg Friedrich Haas, "Strange Dissonance," Van Magazine, https://van-magazine.com/mag/strange-dissonance/ (accessed February 23, 2022).

within an overarching masculine subjectivity, and the 'gender-crossing' that occurs throughout the middle section is 'contained'.

Erlkönig is not an unambiguous statement of the masculine, however. Earlier versions of Schubert's *Erlkönig* begin *piano* instead of *forte,* suggesting a surreal nocturnal ride through the woods. Other settings of the poem have explored a similar concept—Carl Loewe's 1818 setting, written when that composer did not know Schubert's setting, also begins *piano* and has a surreal, uncanny quality. These alternate imaginings of *Erlkönig* stand in contrast to the famous *forte* octaves that open Schubert's setting and Liszt's transcription, and attest to *Erlkönig's* little-known antecedents. The poem was originally written as part of a singspiel called *Die Fischerin.* It is sung by the character Dortchen as she makes dinner awaiting the arrival of her father and her fiancée who are out hunting for the day. The father and son in *Erlkönig* metaphorically allude to the men who are away hunting in the singspiel. Lawrence Kramer believes that, when sung by a woman in this context, the poem becomes a criticism of the male characters, a 'lament and accusation' of the 'failures of traditional paternity'.[114] The feminine presence in the original performance of the poem would have been even more pronounced; the actress who played Dortchen, Corona Schröter, is also responsible for the first ever setting of the text to music, given below at figure 19.

[114] Kramer, "Song Revisited".

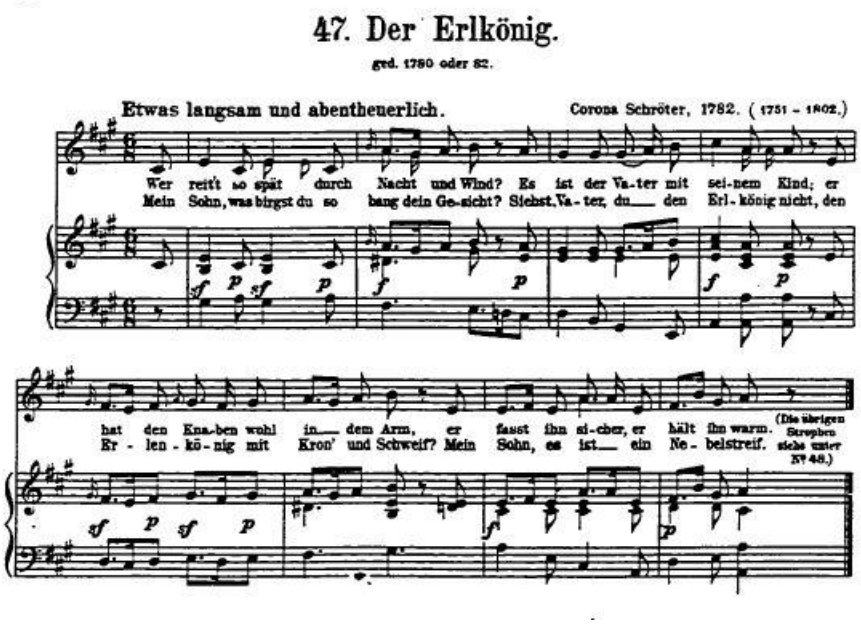

Figure 19 Schröter, Der Erlkönig.[115]

So, the original *Erlkönig* was intended as a private, domestic, female musing on men and masculinity. Loewe's early setting of the poem, and possibly Schubert's alternate version with the *piano* introduction, allude to this reading of *Erlkönig* as a kind of domestic nocturne, associated with the feminine. But by the time that Liszt was performing this work as a solo transcription, it had become a highly public, masculinised, virtuoso showpiece. We are reminded once again of Christensen's comment, that gendered meaning is altered through the process of transcription via an alteration of the grounds of production and reception—as *Erlkönig* moved from Goethe's Singspiel, through the semi-domestic setting of a Schubertiad, and to the public setting of a concert hall, its gendered meaning also changed.[116] The transmutation of gendered meaning that Liszt's transcription facilitates relates not only to where it is played, but how it is played as well, relying as it does on gendered characterisation as outlined above.

[115] Printed in Gibbs, "The Presence of Erlkönig," 444.
[116] Christensen, "Four-Hand Piano Transcription," 291.

Chapter 3: Performing the Don—the *Réminiscences de Don Juan*

In 1841, Liszt was performing Beethoven's *Kreutzer* sonata with Massart, a professor at the Paris conservatoire, to raise money for Beethoven's planned monument. As the pair began playing, a voice in the audience cried out for *Robert le Diable,* and then more joined in. Liszt commented that he was always the public's servant, and obliged the audience with his operatic fantasy. This story is infamous; both Berlioz and Wagner commented on it, and it persists in musicology as a kind of moral fable about the operatic transcriptions, that Liszt created these transcriptions at the behest of popular demand, and they formed a distraction from more 'serious' works.[117] As I have discussed, the gendered identity that Liszt adopted when he performed at the behest of popular demand was complicated; performance could make him more masculine, but also risked rendering him feminine. The risks of performance to Liszt's gendered identity are writ large in consideration of one of his finest operatic fantasies, the *Réminiscences de Don Juan.*

The outer sections of the *Réminiscences* are based on the music of the Don and the Commendatore. While these sections are virtuosic in character, the middle section, based on the duet of the Don and Zerlina, is technically the 'easiest' part of the piece, although the variations that follow it are increasingly difficult. Again, we can entertain the possibility here that brilliant Lisztian virtuosity is associated with depictions of male characters, and less barnstorming music is associated with scenes that involve female characters.[118] This distinction can be read regardless of the *actual* difficulty of the music; Walker's 'private' virtuosity in *Gretchen* can attest to this.

[117] Hamilton has dealt with this in greater depth, see Hamilton, "The Opera Fantasias and Transcriptions of Franz Liszt", 3.

[118] There are, of course, Liszt depictions of female characters that feature explosively virtuosic music, e.g. the *Réminiscences de Norma,* while male characters can be associated with more subdued music e.g. the *Feierlicher Marsch zum Heiligen Gral aus Parsifal*.

A similar dichotomy, between 'private' and 'public' virtuosity, can be located in Liszt's aforementioned transcription of *Robert le Diable*: it opens with the diabolical *Valse infernale* featuring music sung by men in the original, but an ensuing section marked *dolce con somma passione* (figure 20) shifts the melody into the soprano register with easier pianistic writing. Although the original is sung by male characters throughout, an arpeggiated left hand, slower tempo, and especially the registral change mark this as a noticeable shift in style, with gendered implications. This writing is not dissimilar to the entry of the phantom in *Erlkönig;* after dramatic and virtuosic opening material for the male characters, the Erlkönig, gendered feminine in Schubert and Liszt's transcription as described above, is clear and lyrical.

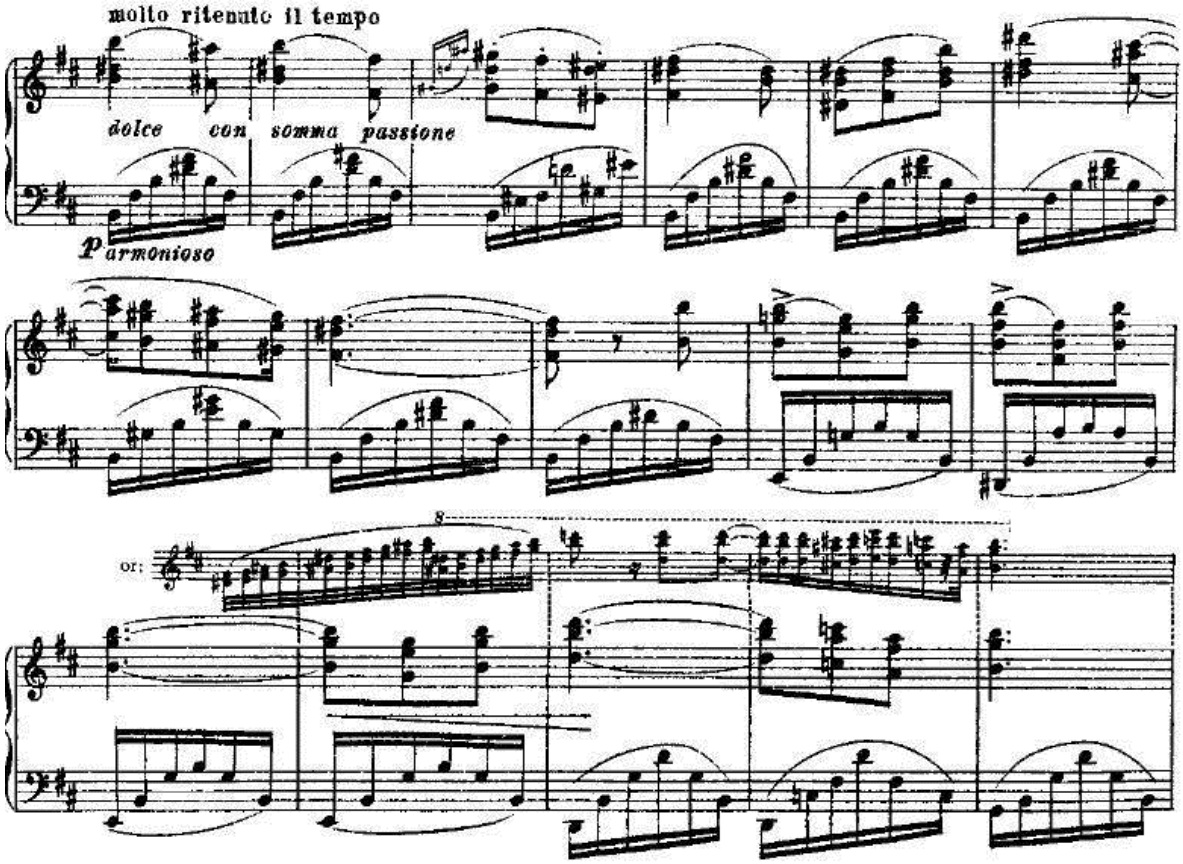

Figure 20 Meyerbeer arr. Liszt, "Valse infernale" from Robert le Diable: bars 171–186.

These examples fit in more broadly with the notion that the 'second theme' often plays a gendered role in works of the early 19th century, especially those in sonata form; in Marx's aforementioned famous formulation it is the 'feminine to the preceding masculine'.[119] This is a notion well established in gendered literature.[120] Of course, these Liszt transcriptions are not

[119] A.B. Marx, quoted in Hepokoski, "Masculine, Feminine," 494.
[120] See e.g. McClary, "Narrative Agendas in 'Absolute' Music," 326–44.

in sonata form, but they employ a similar trope of a stormy/dramatic/'masculine' opening section followed by a dolce/lyrical/'feminine' secondary theme group.

This trope is seen not only in the virtuoso transcriptions of the 1830s/40s under consideration here, but in later works too. Consider Liszt's celebrated arrangement of the end of *Tristan und Isolde*, where Liszt inserts four bars from the Act II love duet to serve as an introduction to Isolde's *Liebestod*. Barbara Allen Crockett identifies this as an attempt to 'indicate the presence of the opera's hero even though he does not sing'; this is somewhat complicated by the fact that this passage from the love duet was sung by both characters.[121] I think it serves more as both a dramatically arresting opening, and a reminder that Isolde is singing this over the dead body of her lover. This, too, functions a little like the introductory sections of music read as 'masculine' in the case of *Erlkönig*, *Réminiscences*, and the *Valse infernale;* it serves to contextualise and 'contain' the ensuing feminine subjectivity.[122]

Gendered language persisted throughout the 19th century to describe musical difference of this kind. In the *Réminiscences,* Busoni proposed that the transition between the introduction and the theme and variations shown at figure 21 (bars 59–68) reflects 'the listener, led to a sharp bend in the road, (looking) from the steep rocks unexpectedly into a lovely valley.'[123] This kind of description, from steep rocks to a lovely valley, evokes the dichotomy between sublime and beautiful, itself a commonly gendered pairing in the 19th century.[124]

[121] Barbara Allen Crockett, "Liszt's Opera Transcriptions for Piano," (D.Mus.A diss.: University of Illinois, 1968), 37.

[122] For more on the notion of 'containment' of feminine subjectivity in instrumental works, see McClary, "Narrative Agendas in 'Absolute' Music." It is difficult to say, however, that the *Liebestod* or the theme and variations of the *Réminiscences* is 'contained' by proclamation(s) of maleness at the outset; it might be a better reading to argue that these works often begin with a sense of *structure,* that is then compromised, and 'structure' is often construed as masculine. See Hepokoski, "Masculine, Feminine," 494–99.

[123] Franz Liszt, "Réminiscences de Don Juan; Konzert-Fantasie über Motive aus Mozart's "Don Giovanni" für das Pianoforte. Kritisch-Instruktive Ausgabe von Ferrucio Busoni.," ed. Ferruccio Busoni (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1918), 12.

[124] For more on the gendering of aesthetic notions of the beautiful and the sublime, see Katherine B. Attié, "Regendering the Sublime and the Beautiful: Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Feminist Formalism," in *Routledge Companion to Women, Sex, and Gender in the Early British Colonial World* ed. Kimberley Anne Coles and Eve Keller, (London: Routledge, 2019), 46–57.

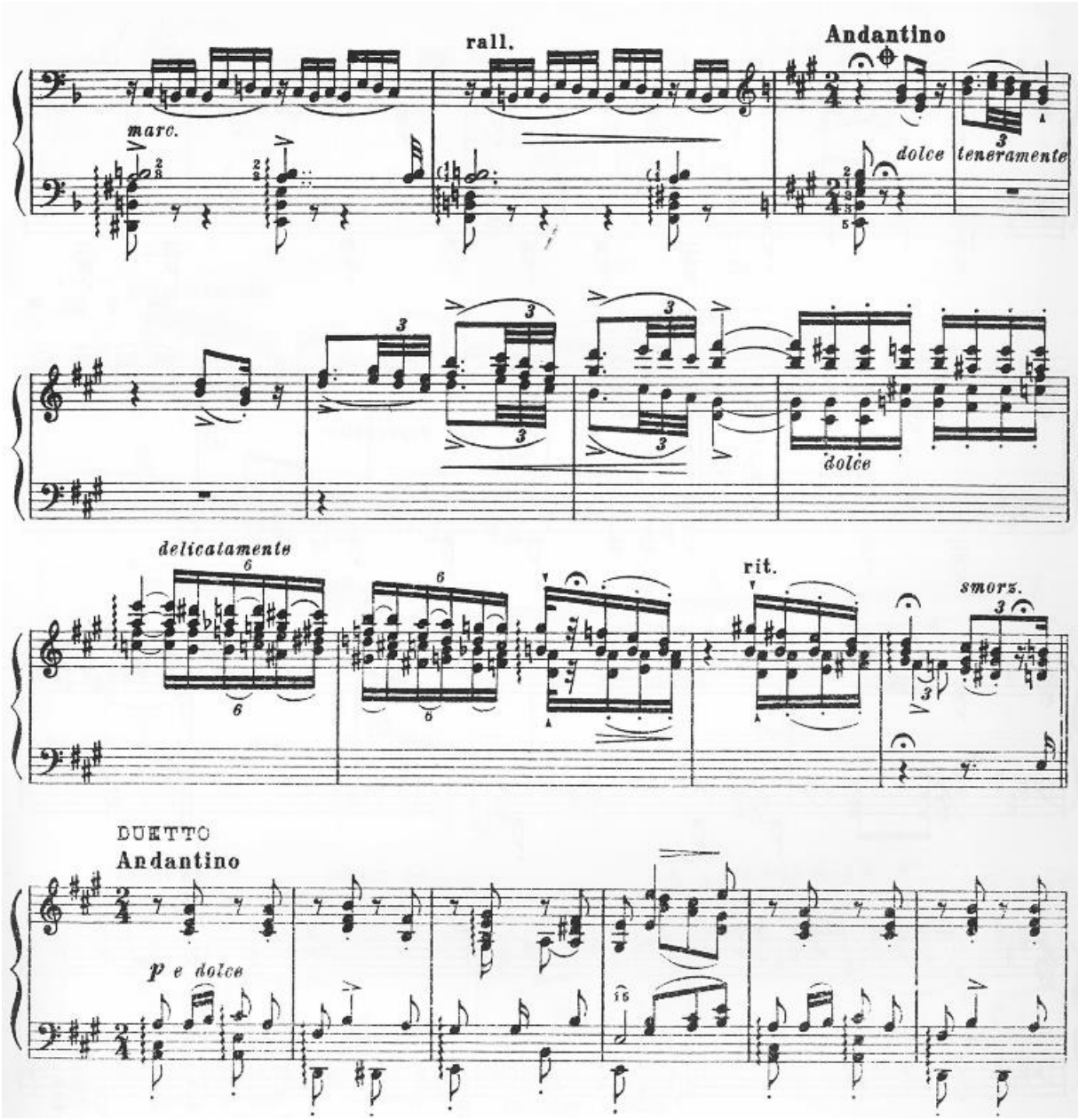

Figure 21 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 57–74.

In *Erlkönig*, Liszt is not only representing the 'voice' of differing gendered subjectivities, but embodying them. In the case of the *Réminiscences*, it seems that Liszt could so compellingly embody the gendered subjectivities of both the Don and Zerlina that he outdid even the men and women who performed these characters; after hearing Liszt play the duet, one contemporary noted that singers should learn from Liszt how to sing these roles.[125] Once again, Lizstian virtuosity inheres in an astonishing ability to embody different gendered subjectivities.

[125] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 268.

In *Erlkönig*, the ease with which Liszt could perform this pianistic *tour de force* was a crucial part of its function; he could adopt different gendered subjectivities without threatening or undermining his fundamentally 'male' nature, as the performance took place within an overarching masculine framework where Liszt controlled the virtuosic demands made upon him. The *Réminiscences*, however, was noted for its extreme physical demands on Liszt. After seeing him perform it, a contemporary noted how when he pressed his hand to Liszt's heart afterwards, it was beating incredibly rapidly, whereas Liszt could perform *Erlkönig* and allegedly barely break a sweat.[126] It may be that in *Erlkönig*, Liszt successfully adopts the gendered subjectivities in performance without also undermining the overarching male subjectivity, whereas the longer and even more technically demanding *Réminiscences* is constructed so that it is harder, if not impossible for him to do so. I will return to this point presently.

The *Réminiscences de Don Juan* gives Liszt an opportunity to engage with a central figure in romanticism, Don Giovanni himself.[127] For Charles Rosen, Liszt was even aware that the audience would identify him with the Don in this work: 'with his international reputation for erotic conquest already set, Liszt must have known that the public would take his fantasy as a self-portrait in sound'.[128] An example of this kind of embodiment of the Don can be found in the transition between sections mentioned above. The penultimate scene of *Don Giovanni*, where the Commendatore requests the Don's hand and his company, mirrors the Don's request of Zerlina's hand and her company. In this way, the relationship between the Don and the Commendatore inverts the Don's ordinary 'seducing' role, where *he* becomes the one 'seduced' by the Commendatore, to join him for dinner. Liszt joins these two scenes directly together (figure 21) indicating that this is a link of which he may also have been aware. This joining not only introduces the duet in Liszt's transcription, but also concludes the section—the third variation is 'interrupted' with the Commendatore's famous words '*tu m'invitasti a cena*', strengthening the textual link between the commendatore's invitation to the Don and the Don's invitation to Zerlina, shown below at figure 22.

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[126] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 268.

[127] For more on the identification of Liszt with Don Giovanni in this work, see Thomas S. Grey, "The Gothic Libertine: The Shadow of Don Giovanni in Romantic Music and Culture," in *The Don Giovanni Moment*, ed. Lydia Goehr and Daniel Herwitz, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 75–106.

[128] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 539.

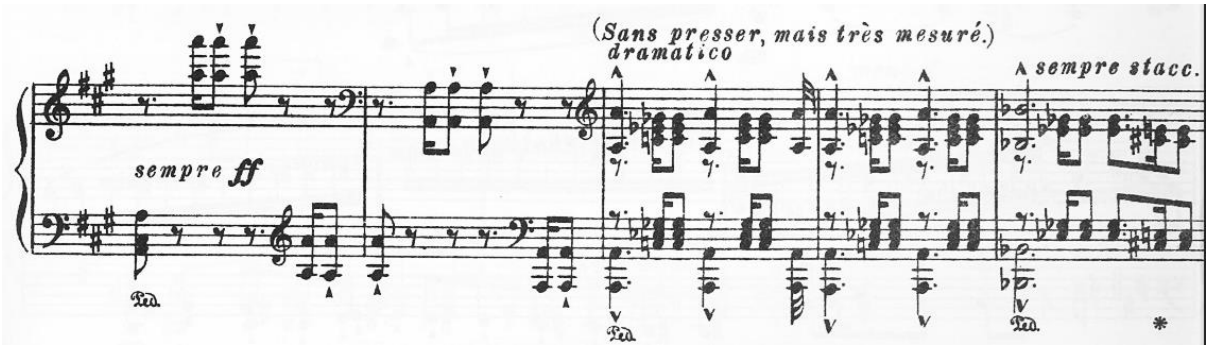

Figure 22 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 275–279.

To introduce the duet, Liszt develops the motif used with the Don's injunction to Zerlina; 'vieni, vieni'; come, come (bars 69–74, figure 21). At this quasi-improvisatory bridging passage, an audience listening may have understood that the music being presented is not an exact arrangement of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* but Liszt's own invention, using a contemporary chromatic language; where Liszt, not Mozart, begins to be heard. As the commendatore invites the Don, and the Don invites Zerlina, it is as if this Liszt is 'inviting' the audience to join him in the next section of the music, by extension incarnating *himself* as the Don. Even the physicality of Liszt playing the thirds, with the right hand alone, is a compelling visual image that strengthens the link; the Don offers a hand to Zerlina, the commendatore offers a hand to the Don, and Liszt performs the music with one hand only, 'offering a hand' to the audience to embody the Don more deeply.

Around the same time that the *Réminiscences* was published, Kierkegaard was writing *Either/Or,* a philosophical tract that featured an essay on *Don Giovanni.* For Kierkegaard, Don Juan 'continually hovers between being [an] idea… and being an individual. But this hovering is musical vibration… [Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is the only work] of which it can be said that its idea is altogether musical'.[129] In Kierkegaard's analysis, the character of Mozart's Don is a metaphor for music itself. In Liszt's transcription, a process of 'musical seduction' makes the music itself a metaphor for the Don. If Liszt is indeed attempting to incarnate himself as the Don, i.e., the masculine seducer, then could it be the audience that becomes the seduced? This was, indeed, a common way of reading Liszt's relationship with his audience in the 19th century. As has been noted, Kramer's concept of virtuosity overlaps with Liszt's description

[129] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard's Writings trans. Edna H. Hong and Howard V. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 93.

of the worship heaped upon him throughout his life by his female fans: that through loving Liszt/the performer, the fan loves themself. If Liszt is indeed playing the role of a masculine seducing virtuoso to the feminine audience, then the gender of the specific audience may be unimportant—being 'performed to' renders them the feminine counterpart to Liszt's masculine, seductive performer.

The picture is more complicated, however, than imagining Liszt as the virtuosic masculine seducer and the audience as the feminine seduced, however. The *andantino* bridging passage (figure 21, bars 59–68), in which Liszt incarnates the Don to lead the audience into the next section of music, is heard in the piano's upper register, which could have led to it being referred to by Busoni in coded feminine terminology as mentioned above. This is only the first of several moments in the variations that explores such a gendered ambiguity, and undermine Liszt's role as masculine seducer.

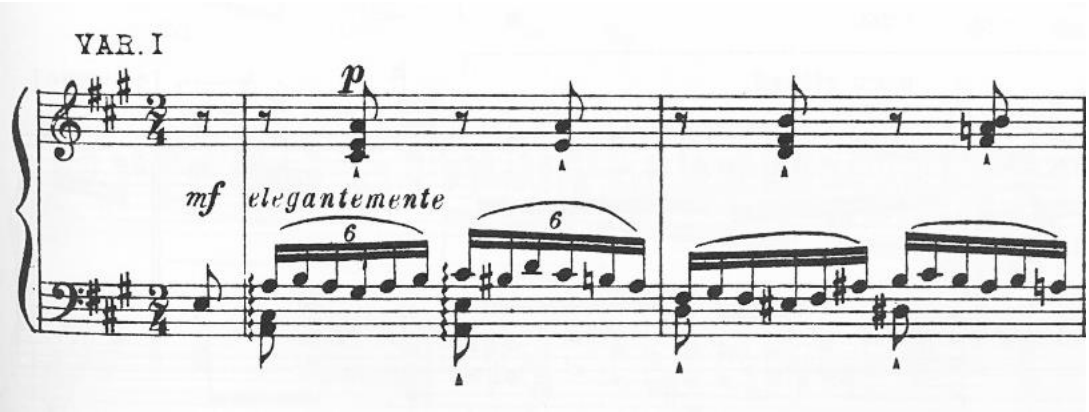

Figure 23 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 141–142.

The first variation opens with a florid elaboration of the Don's line, marked *elegantamente* (figure 23). This is unusual writing, as it's almost impossible to play it *elegantamente;* there's no way to play this passage with a smoothly fingered 'true' legato. Instead, the line is broken through double thumb fingerings, rolled chords, the thumb leaping onto black notes, et cetera. A far more pianistic solution, with the right hand crossing over the left hand melody, is specifically not notated. For Liszt, it is unusually awkward writing, and the challenge to perform it *elegantamente* evokes Walker's notion of private virtuosity. In contrast to the opening's bold chromatic pedalled octaves, here is elaborate Mozartean note-spinning, associated with a more 'feminine' middle section; for a variation/elaboration of the Don's part

in a duet, this is not the kind of music one might expect from a seductive performing Liszt/Don composite figure.

The variations continue to undermine the masculine stability of the Don's presence. Following a ferociously difficult moment of double leaps across the keyboard and a cadenza, the Don's part is almost not even present in the texture for the reprise of *andiam, andiam, mio bene*. (figure 24)

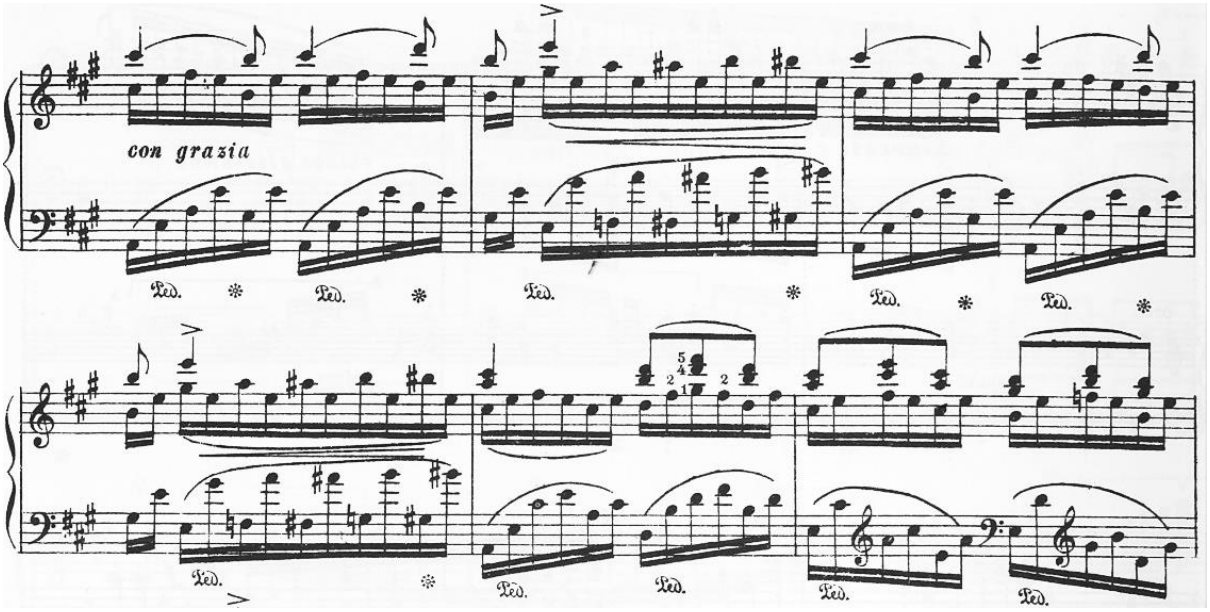

Figure 24 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 208–213.

Although the Don's notes are technically part of the left-hand figuration, they are not notated as their own voice as they were in the theme (figure 25). Moreover, his melody is transformed into a standard accompaniment figuration that is supporting Zerlina's part. The Don's melody returns for the *fugato* variation, with the pair contrapuntally entwined, but it is interesting to note that the soprano part leads and the tenor part follows (figure 26), inverting the relationship proposed by Mozart where the Don 'leads' and Zerlina 'follows'. There is a subtle and gradual erosion of the presence of the Don throughout the variations; unlike *Erlkönig*, the *Réminiscences* struggles to fully adopt or remain identified with the overarching masculine subject position.

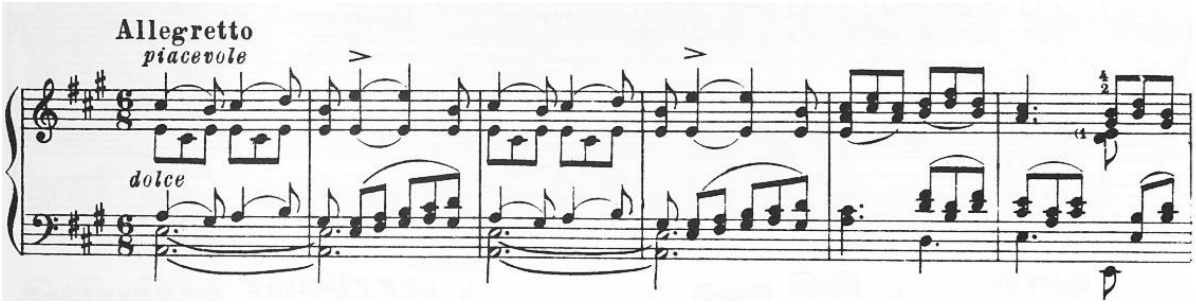

Figure 25 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 108–113.

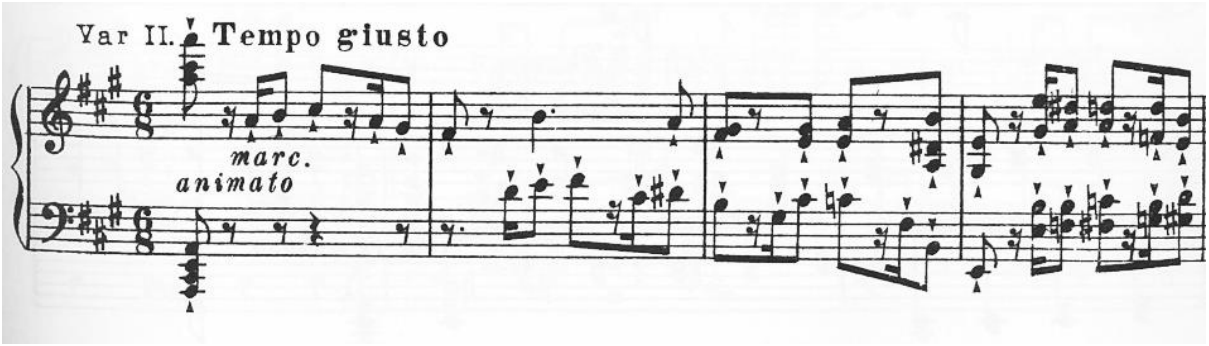

Figure 26 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan: bars 240–243.

Liszt, too, struggled to remain in control of his projected masculine self when he performed this work. He played it at a party in 1850, after much cajoling from the audience. The passage is replicated in full below:

> … once again Liszt turned to the keyboard. My knowledge of music and the works of Liszt is so slight that I do not know whether such a piece exists among the latter, or whether it was a free improvisation on themes from *Don Giovanni* into which he plunged. The only thing I remember is that the motif from "Finch'han dal vino calda la testa" returned again and again, that the music became ever wilder, ever more bacchanal, ever more daemonic, that the men, glasses in hand, finally all sprang up from the table and surrounded the player, and that in the end Liszt, as excited as everyone else, rose from the piano and, half laughing, half angry, burst out: "Il ne faut pas me faire jouer ces sortes de choses lá! Je ne devrais pas me faire entrainer! Mais enfin—c'est fait!"[130]

The embarrassment that Liszt felt upon being 'carried away' when performing this work had a gendered meaning in the 19th century, as I have discussed in Chapter 1. To reiterate, for Katherine Kolb-Reeve, 'to be "carried away", to "tremble"; to be the "slave", the "thing

[130] Although the auditor, Fanny Lewald, is uncertain what work is being played exactly, her description of the persistent return of the 'finch'han dal vino calda la testa' corresponds very closely to the coda of the *Réminiscences.* Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 258. Liszt's final comment in French translates as "Don't make me play that sort of thing! I ought not to get carried away! But anyway—it's done!"

moved"… these are negative, passive, subordinate, "feminine" positions.'[131] Lewald even specifies that it is the *men* that leap up with glasses in hand and goad Liszt on; in his role as virtuoso, he plays the passive role to the active (male) audience. The virtuosity of the *Réminiscences,* although dazzling, does not in this case exalt the projected masculine self, but instead threatens to *emasculate* it; Liszt is the victim of popular demand, being 'made to play' by the men of the audience and succumbing to the excitement and power of the music.

Embarrassment around the *Réminiscences* existed not only in performance, but when discussing it in the abstract. He wrote to Marie d'Agoult that he was 'working like a madman at certain operatic fantasies, including… *Don Giovanni…* when I am with you I shall work at more serious things, not to be entirely unworthy of my poor dear Marie'.[132] Even allowing for Liszt's characteristic self-deprecating nature, it is clear that he felt these works to be 'trifles' or distractions from more 'serious' compositions.

We can compare Liszt's feelings about performing works such as the *Réminiscences* or the *Valse Infernale* from *Robert le Diable* with his feelings about performing his Beethoven symphony transcriptions. Some years earlier, he had performed the last 3 movements of the Beethoven *Pastoral* symphony, but wrote later in a letter to D'Agoult that the reception had been cool: 'the pastoral symphony was understood by only half the audience… but, as always, I maintain and uphold the right of the artist to impose on the masses the best and most beautiful.'[133] Note the contrast between a work like the Beethoven *Pastoral* and the *Reminiscences*—performing a Beethoven symphonic transcription, Liszt proudly imposes on the masses not what they want but what they need, but performing operatic transcription, Liszt is reluctantly cajoled to give the masses not what they need but what they want.

Busoni has commented that the *Réminiscences* has an 'almost symbolic significance as the highest point of pianism' in the 19th century, but that it also 'treats of holy matters in an all-too-worldly manner'.[134] The *Réminiscences* is simultaneously apogee and nadir; a high point of pianism, but all too-worldly. Mozart's opera is the 'holy matter'; Liszt's transformation of it into a virtuoso transcription renders it in an 'all-too-worldly manner', better suited to the

[131] Reeve, "Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz," 230.
[132] Williams , *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters,* 157.
[133] Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 114.
[134] Quoted in Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 539.

Bacchanalian party observed by Fanny Lewald than a sober contemplation in the concert hall. The platonic opposition that Busoni's criticism draws upon has long been seen as a gendered one in the western world; this takes on a special, deeper meaning in the case of the *Réminiscences,* a work based on an opera obsessed with genfer politics**.** Despite various crossings into other gendered subjectivities, Liszt is strongly identified with the Don in this work. However, the gradual erosion of the Don throughout the variations, and Liszt's embarrassment both about the piece in the abstract and its realisations in performance undermine the stability of, and even threaten to emasculate, the Don's masculine subject position.

We can turn to the coda to see how Liszt attempts to resolve the contradictions of the masculine projected *imago* of the Liszt/Don. Although it is a dizzying celebration of the hyper-masculine Don's so-called 'champagne aria', an ode to the good life, it is undercut with persistent reminders of the damnation that awaits him using the music from the finale. Cuts and ossias proliferate throughout the coda, providing alternate pathways through the virtuosic denouement. These function as records of how Liszt might have performed the work on different occasions; presumably, it changed according to his mood and the atmosphere of the performance. They hint not only at status of the composition as a performed event, but also Liszt's indecision with the finale. In this way, they too perform a similar function to the persistent reminders of damnation that threaten the Don's masculine *imago.* Instead of creating a concrete and unchanging 'musical work', that (to extend Liszt's own metaphor) could 'tame' the minx of music, they allow a greater susceptibility to the whims of musical inspiration in the moment, allowing (to paraphrase Berlioz's gendered critique) the 'poet-artist to be carried away in feverish inspiration during the creation of his work'. The coda hints at the Don's fictional damnation, and simultaneously at Liszt's damnation to music itself—the psychic death of ego that he risks when he gets 'caught up' performing this work. Of course, Liszt extemporised extensively when he performed, but that he *sets down in print* these ossias and cuts reveals the paradox; although 'optional', their existence is in fact essential to the ambiguity of the coda's meaning.

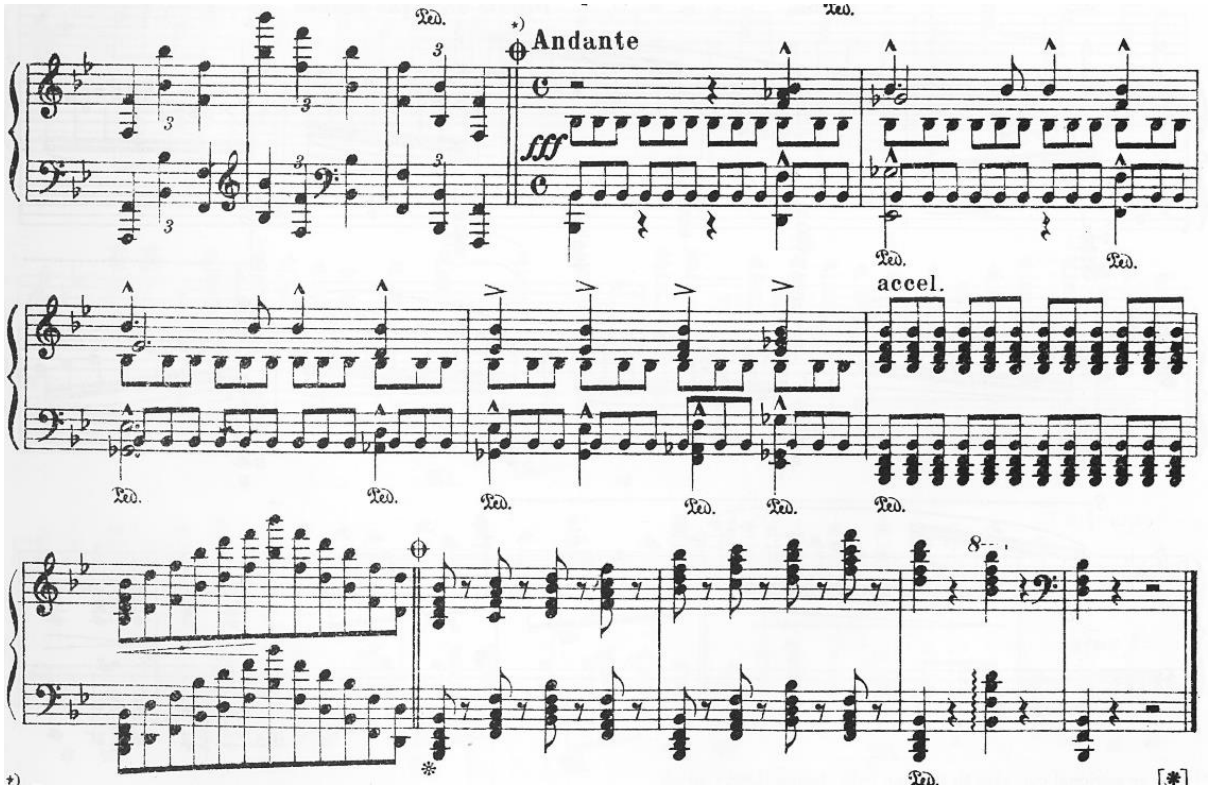

Figure 27 Mozart arr. Liszt, Réminiscences de Don Juan, coda.

In particular, the final eight bars of the coda feature a brief concluding *andante* (that can be cut), one that is striking for its marked shift of key and mood from the rest of the jubilant finale (figure 27). The famous denouement of *Don Giovanni* features the title character's damnation, but the opera concludes with a final chorus reminding the audience that all's well. Liszt's coda inverts this, by concluding an ode to the good life with a shift into the subdominant minor and an evocation of the commendatore's line that opened the piece, now up a semitone, before a jubilant final explosion of octave arpeggios. For Kramer, the virtuoso performance is a dissemination of the star; in Liszt's treatment, the Don's damnation is simultaneously an apotheosis, a public sacrifice of the composite Liszt/Don figure constructed throughout the work, one that leaves Liszt exhausted and embarrassed. Liszt employs the masculine *imago* of the Don to explore the relationship between gender and virtuosity/performance; in doing so, he produces a work that simultaneously exalts and emasculates a masculine ideal.

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters, I have considered arrangements from the late 1830s and early 1840s, that form part of Liszt's *Glanzzeit* and the period most associated with the episodes of 'Lisztomania'. I have found that a central component of Lisztian virtuosity is the process of a ritualised embodiment of non-male subjectivities; these explorations of different constructions of gender can both establish, and threaten, the gendered identity of the performing Liszt. I would like to conclude with a final rumination on a Liszt transcription from much later in his life, that of the *Feierlicher Marsch zum Heiligen Gral aus Parsifal***.** This work belongs aesthetically to a period that Ralph Locke has recently described as 'anti-virtuosic'. A list of Locke's characteristics of this period are given below:

1. Resistance of the virtuoso's habitual impulse to impress… listeners with waterfalls of notes and attention-getting sweeps of the arms. Instead, the musical materials are well within the technical abilities of an intermediate-level amateur.

2. Such pieces express or evoke moods or emotions that are very different from—and often darker or more doubt-filled than—the energetic agitation, forward drive, and surging passion so typical of Liszt's more virtuosic piano works.

3. They achieve their unusual expressive ends by means of unusual, even experimental musical choices (e.g., highly dissonant harmonies, unclear tonal direction, phrases that break off…)

4. … a short phrase may be repeated several times, or many times, and the repetition is relieved by slight shifts in pitch content, harmony, or figuration from one statement to the next. Sometimes a drifting scrap of melody enters, only to stop precipitously.[135]

Liszt's *Parsifal* arrangement exemplifies these characteristics. Although the middle section, with its glimpse of the grail, features waterfalls of notes and double octaves, the outer sections feature music well within the abilities of the intermediate amateur. Hamilton points out that this work is comprised of 'obsessive ostinato, constantly deflected cadences', that the 'right

[135] Ralph P. Locke, "Anti-Virtuosity and Musical Experimentalism: Liszt, Marie Jaëll, Debussy, and Others," in *Liszt and Virtuosity*, ed. Robert Doran (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), 349–50.

hand… tries to form fragments into a coherent extended melody [but is] cut short…' it is a 'musical picture of vacillation, fruitless striving, and disappointed resignation.'[136] In this sense, it exemplifies Locke's characteristics of 'anti-virtuosity'.

Liszt's transcription focusses on the music associated with male characters—the piece is based around the *leitmotifs* of the march, the 'grail' theme, and the theme of the 'fool'. Kundry's laugh, and the rich, striking, sumptuous music of the flower maidens, by contrast, make no appearance. To account for this difference, one might be led to muse on a sartorial difference between the composer and his arranger; though Wagner's private interest in crossdressing had by this time sensationally made its way into the tabloids, Liszt had adopted the cassock in his turn toward spiritualism/religiosity in later life.[137] Wagner's *Parsifal* coats religious meaning in splendour and opulence; Liszt's *Parsifal,* meanwhile, rejects virtuosity and adopts the humble garb of a monk. This is a marked contrast to the musical gender-bending of Liszt's youth—is it an essential aesthetic of Liszt's late work? Might we add to Locke's list of 'anti-virtuosic' traits a rejection of the potential for destabilisation of gender identity that public performance affords?

If a rejection of gender-crossing is indeed a staple of Liszt's late aesthetic of anti-virtuosity, then it could be read to prove the inverse; that Lisztian virtuosity of the 1830's/40's was not a rigid performance of masculinity, but relied instead on an ability to embody both masculine and feminine traits. *Gretchen am Spinnrade* imagined a deep affinity between the piano and the spinning wheel, and by extension Liszt and the character Gretchen. Liszt's *Ständchen* also featured a gendered ambiguity in its doubling as performance repertoire and repertoire for the amateur (female) market. The famous Liszt/Schubert *Erlkönig,* a work representative of Lisztian virtuosity from this period, wove elements of gender-crossing into the very physicality of the performance, allowing the performing Liszt to embody both a masculine and feminine self. Liszt used a similar device in the *Réminiscences de Don Juan,* but featured a coda that explored the threats that this kind of performance posed to him, and contextualised that threat using the opera *Don Giovanni.* Liszt's transcription of *Parsifal* rejects all these ambiguities and tensions, retreating into an anti-virtuosic obscurantism.

[136] Hamilton, "The Opera Fantasias and Transcriptions of Franz Liszt," 291–92.
[137] For more on Wagner's cross-dressing, see Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*, 147–50.

Nietzsche's famous work *The Birth of Tragedy* identifies and establishes an opposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian impulse in art; in 1872, Nietzsche sent Liszt a copy of *The Birth of Tragedy* with a personal letter identifying him as 'one of the few people who have grasped with true instinct… the Dionysian phenomenon'.[138] Dionysus was associated in the ancient world with, amongst many other things, both performance and cross-dressing; the virtuoso Liszt occupied this position in the psyche of his audiences in the late 19th century, as Nietzsche perceives. Similarly, Liszt himself is a model for male performing musicians in our time, who similarly enact a ritualised and performed crossing into constructs of femininity—he is embodied in figures such as the Beatles, David Bowie, or more recently Harry Styles.[139] It is hoped that this research not only opens up new avenues of inquiry into the constructions of femininity adopted by male musicians, but that it also deepens the already rich tradition of Liszt interpretation for performers and listeners.

[138] Larkin, "Dancing to the Devil's Tune," 215.

[139] The link between Liszt and the modern popular musician surfaces in the French band *Phoenix's* 2009 song from the album *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix;* titled *Lisztomania,* the music video features the long-haired band members exploring Bayreuth, Weimar, and the Altenburg, standing next to busts and portraits of Liszt, and performing music near his piano.

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