The Verbunkos idiom in Liszt's 'Music of the Future': historical issues of reception and new cultural and analytical perspectives

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The *Verbunkos* Idiom in Liszt’s Music of the Future:

Historical Issues of Reception and New Cultural and Analytical Perspectives

Vol. I: Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis seeks new cultural and analytical perspectives of Liszt’s much underrated and misunderstood 'verbunkos idiom', i.e. generic materials and harmonic practices that Liszt derived from the Hungarian-Romani musical genre known as verbunkos. In particular, it seeks to highlight the verbunkos idiom’s impact on Liszt’s modernist tonal practices, a transcultural phenomenon that has remained unacknowledged to date due to a complex web of received ideas and musicological conventions. Each chapter unpicks a specific set of these received ideas in order to develop analytical tools that are less constrained by traditional limitations and more responsive to the idiom’s role in composition. Chapter 1, ‘The Unacknowledged Past’, looks broadly at long-established cultural biases and at past research that largely failed to link the verbunkos idiom to Liszt’s modernism. Chapter 2, ‘Modernism and Authenticity’, discusses the adverse influence of Bartókian culture politics on research in this area. Liszt’s transcultural harmonic practices, however, are shown to challenge the received meaning of ‘authenticity’ and ‘modernism’. Chapter 3, ‘Style hongrois and the Question of Influence’ critiques the postcolonial notion of ‘appropriation’ and seeks a more nuanced transcultural understanding of Liszt’s music by bridging the discursive gap between ‘humanist’ and ‘formalist’ musicology. As a case in point, the chapter presents an intertextual analysis of two works by Liszt and Brahms based on the same source material. Chapter 4, ‘Listening to Alternative Tonal Practices’, demonstrates ways in which we can perceive verbunkos-derived modality and how this perception may sometimes reveal the modern aspects of Liszt’s tonal syntax. Chapter 5, ‘The Verbunkos Idiom in Liszt’s late works’, critiques prevalent tendencies to place the late works outside or beyond music history. It concludes with an analysis of the Csárdás macabre, a work whose unique harmony and sonata form were shaped by the verbunkos idiom.
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Notes on nomenclature and abbreviations

1. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a comprehensive list of the special nomenclature and terms used in this thesis.
2. Mode names are usually abbreviated, e.g. the *verbunkos* dorian mode on D is ‘D-ver/dor’. Please consult Appendix 2.
3. Otherwise, abbreviations have been generally avoided, except for RH (*Rhapsodies hongroises*) and MD (*Magyar dalok*), which are standard acronyms in the Liszt literature.
4. In the main text, mode names will appear in lower case, e.g. major, minor, *verbunkos* dorian, etc.
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Introduction

Late in 1839, after a long absence from his native country, Liszt embarked on a historic concert tour in Hungary that brought him once more into contact with verbunkos, the music of Hungarian Romani bands, music which until then had been a childhood memory. The ecstatic reception he received in Hungary was patriotically reciprocated by a deep commitment to Hungarian music. For Liszt this meant thoroughly reacquainting himself with the folk music of his childhood, this time as a fully-formed and world-famous musician, and placing this music at the vanguard of European art music. Nevertheless, his thorough study of this music seems to exceed a nationalist obligation: something in the music itself created an irresistible attraction, so much so that Liszt once likened his craving to that of an opium addict.¹ During this and two additional tours in 1846 (the longest of which lasted half a year), he studied verbunkos thoroughly and systematically.² His first transcriptions are half-objective, one might say the 1840s’ imperfect equivalent of what we might call today ‘ethnomusicological’, but at the same time he harboured aesthetic sensibilities that prompted him to explore the compositional possibilities inherent in this music, particularly the brilliant way it seemed to ‘work’ in defiance of academic opinion and the classical aesthetic it promoted. This study led to an increasingly subjective verbunkos idiom and a tremendous outpouring of works that intensified during the Weimar period (1848-1861) and culminated in the Hungarian Rhapsodies and large-scale pieces such as the symphonic poem Hungaria, the ‘Gran’ Mass and the oratorio St. Elisabeth.

During the same time Liszt allied himself to Wagner and created a circle of followers devoted to radical musical innovations, an aesthetic that was initially and informally known as Zukunftsmusik (‘Music of the Future’) and later institutionalised and proclaimed as ‘The New Weimar School’ and ‘The New German School’, in 1854 and 1859 respectively. We know this story as part of a major (and rather oversimplified) narrative in Western music

² The three Hungarian tours took place in (1) December 1839 to February 1840; (2) 1846: April 30-May 14 and (3) August 3 to end of 1846. From November 2 Liszt toured mainly towns in Transylvania. For a full itinerary of Liszt’s East European tour during 1846-7 (the last years of his virtuoso career) see ibid., 429-31.
history: the so-called ‘War of the Romantics’ which split German musical opinion into two warring factions, one rallied around Liszt and Wagner and extolling the ideal of ‘progress’, the other led by Hanslick, Joachim and Brahms, ostensibly advancing a ‘classical’ aesthetic. In 1859 Liszt resigned from his Weimar post and unofficially from acting as the figurehead of the Zukunftsmusik movement. He considered his Weimar ‘solutions’ to compositional ‘problems’ a closed chapter and moved on to new genres and new aesthetic objectives, continuing, in effect, his lifelong commitments to ‘progress’ in music as well as to a development of a ‘progressive’ verbunkos idiom, which constantly influenced non-Hungarian works as well. Unfortunately for him, the journalistic and academic polemics of the 1850s continued to centre on issues of programmatic vs. absolute music, the ‘symphony’ problem, the Wagnerian opera, and the future of German music. In such a climate there was little scope for an insightful assessment of much of his oeuvre, let alone the verbunkos idiom’s role in his composition. But why is this scope so limited still today?

The fact is, we still know very little about the extent and depth of the verbunkos idiom in Liszt’s works, and even less about how, if at all, this idiom relates to his modernist aesthetics. On the face of it, the whole mystery can be solved by deciding that this idiom was ‘modern’ for its time inasmuch as it embodied an early instance of a non-Western ‘national’ school of composition, or inasmuch as Liszt mixed traditional popular genres with progressive piano techniques and harmonic progressions. However, this rather facile solution provides an easy way out of thinking through the idiom’s compositional role in the history of Western music. What I mean is that, while it has always been easy to assume that the ‘progressive’ manner of Zukunftsmusik permeated Liszt’s Hungarian works, the opposite was much more difficult to conceptualise; namely, that the verbunkos idiom itself was integral to Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik, perhaps giving it some of its distinct Lisztian features. Indeed, conventional wisdom would have us believe that the verbunkos idiom is an artificial appendage to compositional craft, and from a strictly formal perspective, is completely subservient to Western theoretical rules of tonality and form. I believe this epistemology is flawed – and in Liszt’s case, fundamentally so – as it conceals a much more interesting transcultural process, one which a new focus on the verbunkos idiom may reveal.³

³ The term ‘transcultural’ is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of ‘transculturation’, i.e. mutual yet discreet and unacknowledged cultural influences between politically dominant and subordinate groups; see
These statements may raise some scholarly eyebrows. Is this subject not rather yesterday’s musicology and the new revelations I speak of yesteryear’s news? And am I not confusing compositional craft with style and cultural gestures? After all, the big story of composition in the nineteenth century has always been the demise of tonality and classical form. Liszt was an important player in this history, but, so the argument may go, his attachment to a musical idiom identified with Hungary was an expression of sentimental patriotism and not musical necessity. The ‘Hungarian’ aspect of his modernism is not exactly hidden or in need of discovery. And what about all the musicological studies that already (decades ago!) pointed to ‘Hungarian’ scales that generate a modern-sounding harmony: does this not sum up the entire relationship of the verbunkos idiom to ‘modernism’? And is this old perspective not, in the end, rather dubious from a formalist point of view? My answer to these legitimate arguments is that the modernist aspect of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom has indeed been before us for the first decades of the postwar years, but its examination has been extremely proscribed, and it became a dead subject circa 1975. The ‘news’ may be ‘old’ but it has never acquired the kind of in-depth coverage and analysis it deserved. Renowned scholars of Liszt’s music such as Gárdonyi, Szabolcsi, Bárdos and others have dipped their toes in this subject and somehow thought that shallow waters were deep enough. They have not given us a compositional perspective. Why? Is it because there are ‘simply’ logical limitations to how much a ‘style’ can be treated formally as a part of composition? The advent of structural analysis in the 1970s and 80s certainly reinforced this view. We come full circle to the assumption that if Liszt’s verbunkos idiom sounds modern,

Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992). See also in this thesis Chapter 3, 121-7.

it is ‘simply’ because Liszt imported modernisms into it rather than the other way around. After all, it is common knowledge that, Liszt aside, the nationalist verbunkos idiom of the nineteenth century was rather traditional and formulaic. Case dismissed.

Only that, as my inverted commas and rhetorical ‘after alls’ suggest, there is nothing simple or obvious about the above truisms. It is not any fault of Liszt’s music or of individual musicologists for that matter, that it has been so difficult to articulate the idiom’s modernist aspect. The difficulty rather arises, first and foremost, from a wide discursive gap within musicology, i.e. the incommensurable perspectives of humanist disciplines on the one hand and formalist disciplines on the other. Secondly, any attempt to understand this transcultural modernist aspect would inevitably come up against a ‘web’ of received ideas that either obviate this connection or deflect one’s attention to other issues. These ideas, habits of thought, discourses and/or disciplines powerfully reinforce each other in both obvious and subtle ways (Figure 1).

Figure 1 gives a schematic representation of this ‘web’: ideas, discourses and disciplines (shown in the circles) which work together to obscure the connection between Liszt’s verbunkos idiom and his modernism (the pale background). The fact that there are quite heavy orthodoxies involved – major-minor theory and Bartókian appropriation of ‘folklore’ to name but two – gives one good reason for suspecting that what we think we know about Liszt’s verbunkos idiom was formed in historical periods of musicology when these orthodoxies severely limited the perception of the idiom’s modernism. The way newer discourses continue to reinforce these orthodoxies is particularly tricky. How is it possible, for example, that new musicology’s rejection of formalism might reinforce divisions between ‘East’ and ‘West’? How does the tonal/post-tonal divide within music analysis obstruct a transcultural perspective? Such likely or unlikely connections will become increasingly clear as we progress through each chapter.
Figure 1: The modernist aspect of Liszt's *verbunkos* idiom is obscured by a web of mutually-reinforcing received ideas, discourses and musicological traditions. Dotted lines signify indirect or unintended reinforcements.
In the end, though, the exploration of these reception problems is not an exposé per se but a means of developing an alternative reading. Each chapter looks at a particular set of problems, and these give rise to an analytical ‘response’. As we progress from Chapter 1 to 5, and our acquaintance with the verbunkos idiom deepens, analyses will become more complex and generally longer. Overall, the emphasis shifts from more critique at the beginning of the thesis to more analysis towards its end. Chapter 1 looks broadly at traditional cultural biases and the appropriation of Zukunftsmusik by German nationalism. It then surveys the most influential work that has been done on the verbunkos idiom’s role in Liszt’s composition and examines its limitations. The second chapter, ‘Modernism and Authenticity’, discusses how Bartók appropriated Liszt to his cause, creating sets of influential dichotomies that divorce Liszt’s verbunkos idiom from his modernism, thus adversely affecting subsequent studies of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. After challenging or otherwise destabilising some Bartókian truisms, the chapter concludes with analyses of passages from Liszt’s works that seek to redefine ‘authenticity’ and ‘modernism’ by examining some novel aspects of his transcultural harmonic practices.

The third chapter, ‘Style hongrois and the Question of Influence’, brings us forward in time to modern scholarship and to the crux of the matter: how can one read transcultural influences? What methodology should one use? One argument I put forward is that a broader and sharper perspective of transculturation will emerge if humanist and formalist disciplines inform each other, or even combine their methodologies. More specifically, I propose to begin with bringing some musical-analytical perspective into style analysis. As a first step, I add harmonic topoi to Jonathan Bellman’s ‘lexicon of style hongrois’ and expound those that were already given. Since these topoi constitute certain chords, progressions, or even ‘syntax’, they invariably interact with the tonal syntax of a given work. These interactions necessarily transform our perspective of the idiom from something that is pasted on the compositional design to something that is intrinsic to it; and that, in turn, opens up more possibilities of re-reading other (non-harmonic) topoi in the same way. However, I do not argue that this is the only way of exploring transculturation; in another part of the chapter I discuss a certain ‘postcolonial’ discourse that seems to reduce the complexities of transculturation into narrow (and decidedly evil) acts of cultural appropriation by ignoring or rejecting analytical methodologies that could have helped in highlighting these greater complexities. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of two arrangements of the same Hungarian tune by Liszt and Brahms.

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respectively, which demonstrates not only differing personal styles, but quite possibly two distinct transcultural traditions as well.

The next two chapters close the discursive gap from the formalist side. Chapter 4, ‘Listening to Alternative Tonal Practices’, offers ways of listening to modal structures against the teaching of tonal theory which subsumes all modality in the nineteenth century within the major and minor ‘system’. It argues that the tradition of viewing tonality as a closed ‘system’ has conditioned our perception of harmony and thus constituted perhaps the most crucial hurdle to a more profound understanding of transcultural influence. On the other hand, it demonstrates ways in which we can perceive verbunkos-derived modality and how this perception may sometimes reveal the modern aspects of Liszt’s tonal syntax. This is demonstrated through an analysis of two works: the third Hungarian Rhapsody and the finale of the sixth Hungarian Rhapsody. The first analysis shows how Liszt’s ostensibly chromatic relationships between keys become even more extraordinary when perceived as a diatonic-modal process. The second analysis shows that, firstly, an ‘alternative tonal practice’ could involve other verbunkos elements (i.e. not only modes) and secondly, that a transcultural perspective can reveal the innovative aspects of this music where a normative tonal analysis (I take Schenkerian analysis as an example) would only confirm prejudices about its conventional major-minor syntax and crude form. In the fifth and final chapter, ‘The Verbunkos Idiom in Liszt’s Late Works’, we examine how myth-prone tendencies to perceive Liszt’s late works as miraculous creations that somehow stand outside or above history have (in combination with previously-discussed causes) made the formidable presence of the verbunkos idiom either inaudible or inconsequential. Against this, and in keeping with the methodology which I built in the previous two chapters, we first look at concrete and abstract forms of verbunkos topoi from the 1870s and 1880s and then turn to a large-scale analysis of the remarkable Csárdás macabre, a work whose unique harmony, sonata form and poetic content are inextricable from its verbunkos idiom.

* * *
At bottom, this study is mainly about the impact of the idiom on Liszt’s tonal syntax, which is why my analysis is mainly ‘structural’. However, I did not intend to present an alternative ‘theory’ of transculturation. I believe that as a noun, ‘theory’ is rather too grand and too misleading (at least at this stage if not in principle) when the particularities of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom still remain unknown. Rather than jumping into grand theory I attempt throughout the thesis to gradually build up an analytical approach that responds to particular problems of reception. If there is anything that binds this eclectic and *ad hoc* approach, it is an attempt to understand the idiom syntactically, culturally, and aesthetically, and close the epistemic divide between formalist and humanist contexts. Secondly, my emphasis on the ‘structural’ does not necessarily mean Schenkerian analysis, or that surface features cease to matter. As we shall see in Chapter 4, reading dazzling pianistic effects as part of the ‘structure’ has its surprising rewards, and there is also a middle way between accepting or rejecting conventional tonal theory, since the harmony itself comprises both ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ aspects.

Perhaps I could have served the purpose better by presenting more case studies, more examples of different approaches to the idiom. However, the quantity of case studies had to be, in the first place, balanced against the importance of analytical detail. Therefore specific works and passages were chosen to address specific issues, and not to represent Liszt’s entire experience with the idiom, or form in any way an exhaustive survey. Secondly, increasing the number of case studies at the inevitable expense of a rigorous critique would have been a mistake: it would have undoubtedly resulted in compromising what analysis can actually interpret and show, by letting inimical thought habits slip in at unawares and constrain it. This is especially true in cases where (as the dotted lines in Figure 1 schematically demonstrate) seemingly unrelated ideas create subtle epistemological connections with each other, and where such connections could not be conveniently pigeonholed into one cultural-political persuasion, ideology or disciplinary approach. One can feel falsely secure in delving straight into analysis without realising that one’s analytical tools may be inadequate or even part of the problem. One can feel satisfaction and assurance in rejecting the ‘canon’ and ‘Eurocentric’ perspectives, only to be unaware that one may be indirectly prolonging assumptions about the cultural supremacy of the West by inverting traditional polar opposites and by using traditional musical-theoretical terminology. One might use phrases such as ‘the so-called Gypsy scale’ without properly
realising that it is not one’s own words as much as a passive reproduction of a Bartókian phrase that carries with it a suggestion of artlessness and inauthenticity; and so on. I would argue, therefore, that at this stage, both critique of discourse and a detailed analysis of the musical text were required in equal measure.

Finally, the academic prestige of some of the ‘obstructing’ discourses, the fact that we travel from Schenker to Edward Said, from musical-theoretical debates to cultural-political ones, points to a much bigger picture. This thesis explores just one instance of far-reaching transculturation, against a conceptual world that has conditioned us to understand ‘Western music’ as a stable and impregnable culture, one that can occasionally masquerade as ‘other’ but whose history and main development is only truly governed by internal laws. I hope that this study will expose a problem and provide some solutions that would emphasise the need for more ‘transcultural studies’ and methodological approaches. For now, at any rate, Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom is a very good place to start.
Chapter 1:

The Unacknowledged Past

I. The Verbunkos Idiom: a generic-compositional perspective

Everything known abroad since 1780 by the name of Hungarian music consisted without exception of the music of the "verbunkos"...

In [Liszt's] monumental programme [of reinventing art music] an important role is given to the voice of his native country, to the Hungarian musical material ...

- Bence Szabolcsi

Franz Liszt’s close affinity with Hungary’s popular musical culture is an acknowledged fact. His well-known Rhapsodies are a constant reminder of musical ideas and generic materials drawn from outside Western ‘high art’ traditions, and anyone sufficiently acquainted with his vast oeuvre will know that this is only the tip of the iceberg. As a general rule, these influences have been regarded as important historical landmarks from a cultural perspective, but not as significant contributions to the development of Western composition. There are always exceptions to that rule, of course. Jim Samson, for example, writes the following about folkloristic and quasi-folkloristic influences in East and Central Europe:

... [around the middle of the nineteenth century] there was an upsurge of creativity in popular song, especially associated with the gypsy bands of Hungary and Romania ... There was nothing new in the composer turning to such music. What was new around the mid-century was the spirit in which it was deployed, as it came increasingly under the sway of nationalist commitment. No longer a decorative elaboration of existing syntax, it became the means of reshaping that syntax.2

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1 Bence Szabolcsi, A Concise History of Hungarian Music, trans. Sára Karig and Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina, 1974); quoted from pp. 54 and 73 respectively.

The last statement (which I emphasised in italics), which is not a universally-accepted fact by any stretch, is precisely the aspect of transcultural influence I would like to explore in this thesis. A discussion of ‘syntax’ requires by definition a compositional perspective, one that is perhaps not weighed down by terminology that invites other discourses to impose their own (sometimes obstructive) ‘knowledge’ on such a study. Therefore, we begin by giving a musical name to this specific transcultural influence in Liszt’s composition. Generically speaking, the popular songs and dances he drew on relate to or derive from ‘verbunkos’, a broad nineteenth-century genre with many roots and offshoots. From a generic perspective, then, one could define Liszt’s adaptation of these musical materials and practices as the ‘verbunkos idiom’ in his composition.³ This is all the more apt since, as Szabolcsi remarks about the idiom’s popularity beyond Hungary, “everything known abroad since 1780 by the name of Hungarian music consisted without exception of the music of the verbunkos.”⁴

Thus defined, it would seem obvious that, while this verbunkos idiom is to a certain extent Liszt’s own invention, and as such serves his compositional ends, it also bears a constant reference to its popular origins. Yet I would argue that only the latter half of this statement has ever been ‘obvious’, and then only in cases where Liszt’s rhythms, modes and melodic turns patently resemble verbunkos features.⁵ If it makes perfect common sense that Liszt partly invented and reshaped the materials he borrowed, it is still far from obvious how exactly this musical translation served his compositional ends. Indeed, the most common approach to reading Liszt’s verbunkos idiom is that it evokes a non-Western culture. This is not ‘wrong’ per se, but at the same time, it is the kind of received wisdom that leaves little room for a compositional perspective, since it encourages us to conceptualise the verbunkos idiom as signifying something ‘outside’ the composition rather than as also being integral to the compositional craft. It allows us to stay within the comfort zone of traditional and

³ The reader who is unfamiliar with the terminology and various musical features that make up the verbunkos idiom might wish initially to consult Appendix 1, based on Jonathan Bellman’s The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 93-130. A very short description of verbunkos, however, is given here on pp. 27-28. My preference for a generic (rather than the current ethnocentric) terminology is explained on pp. 25-26.

⁴ Szabolcsi, op. cit., 54; my italics.

⁵ Perceiving the idiom becomes rather less obvious when verbunkos elements are abstracted or fused with non-verbunkos elements, a problem I shall tackle generally throughout this thesis and particularly in Chapter 5.
Western-centric perspectives that separate ‘style’ from ‘composition’ and ‘East’ from ‘West’ – discursive traditions that (either deliberately or fortuitously) discount the possibility of genuine hybridity.

Being mainly in the intellectual domain of style and culture studies, study of the verbunkos idiom tended, therefore, to be completely segregated from the main narratives and disciplines that deal with Liszt’s composition: namely, historical and musical-analytical musicology that focuses on his role as a nineteenth-century innovator.\(^6\) On the face of it, it seems that this is as things should be. After all, the so-called Zukunftsmusik (‘music of the future’) relates to Liszt’s ‘German’ (read: ‘serious’) works like the symphonic poems and piano sonata as well as his championing of Wagner, Berlioz, and other (less memorable) composers ‘of the future’. On the other hand, concert music containing verbunkos elements is part of narratives of nationalism and/or exoticism. By definition, or rather through musicological habit, these narratives are all about the representation of culture, identity and musical traditions, and not the breaking of new compositional grounds. It would have been easy to leave it at that, if only the verbunkos idiom neatly followed such a distinction, if only it consigned itself to being an easily-recognisable signifier, exclusively associated with entertainment rather than contemplation; or, perhaps, if only the composers who dabbled in it were not in other ways considered to be significant. However, one need only look at the list of composers and works surveyed in Jonathan Bellman’s *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* to realise that the idiom permeated the most elevated and ‘high culture’ genres (e.g. symphonies and sonatas) and that it attracted the attention of some of the most innovative composers in the history of Western music from Haydn to Ravel.\(^7\) What is the significance of all this?

One damning and quite widespread opinion is that notwithstanding its presence in genres such as symphonies, the verbunkos idiom is invariably to be found in the lighter Classical and Romantic genres, such as divertimentos, fantasias, rondos and so forth, rather than, for example, in fugues, sonata forms and the like. In short, it may have crossed over into

\(^6\) We shall see later in the chapter that a small and mainly Hungarian musicological discourse had attempted – and largely failed – to redress this impression. For a concise bibliography, see footnote 4 of the introduction on p. 11.

\(^7\) Jonathan Bellman, op. cit.
Western music but it never truly penetrated the higher spheres of ‘high art’. Another damning perspective is that composers were either consciously or subliminally projecting Western superiority by ‘appropriating’ or ‘elevating’ peripheral music to the concert stage. Yet there is another possibility. Perhaps this idiom did interact with Western compositional practices. Perhaps it formed (or transformed) part of those practices. Yet perhaps it did so in ways that were unperceived or unclear to critics, musicologists and other mediators of reception due to historical circumstances, discursive constraints and/or methodological habits. We need, therefore, to understand not only how the *verbunkos* idiom ‘works’ in Liszt’s composition (something which we shall properly begin to examine only towards the end of Chapter 2) but why it has been so difficult to perceive and articulate a compositional context and why the idiom has been excluded from a narrative of modernism. In the introduction I have argued that this oversight and exclusion was a result of a complex history of reception and of mutually-reinforcing discourses. We shall survey this web of received ideas over the thesis’ five chapters. In this chapter and the next we begin by looking at the better-known causes for the *verbunkos* idiom’s low status: the fact that it relates to music which is itself infamous, suspect, or downright disreputable.

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8 It is interesting that both Bartók and Schoenberg agree on this point. See, respectively, Chapter 2 pp. 78 and 80; and Chapter 3, p. 131.

9 This is the gist of the postcolonial argument, which I shall explore in Chapter 3.
II. Cultural, National and Racial Biases

The low status and infamy of music derived from the verbunkos repertoire of Gypsy bands was always tinted, of course, with cultural and racial prejudice. Covert or even overt racialist overtones are common in description of this music, especially when writers allude to the mesmerising performances, ‘animalistic’ passions and allegedly carefree and dissolute lifestyles of Roma musicians. Before the ascent of today’s political correctness, it was very common to ground the performance aesthetic of verbunkos in ethnic characterisation whether one loved or loathed the music, since the unique quality of the music effortlessly translated to the ‘otherness’ of the Roma. This was an extremely crude way of conflating culture and social circumstances with ethnicity or ‘race’. Rather more sensibly, Bálint Sárosi made the point that the unbridled abandon that characterised ‘Gypsy music’ was not an innate ethnic quality but a circumstantial and relational phenomenon that grew out of an uneasy social function: that of the entertaining social pariah. Romani musicians were expected to exceed the decorum of mainstream society, since by watching rather than participating, proper ‘Christian citizens’ could enjoy themselves without crossing a forbidden line:

The gypsy was at an advantage in comparison with other musicians: he was less interested in “damnation”; and the church had less opportunity to call him to account; he was more excused by society for making music for entertainment purposes; what was unworthy of a respectable person, an improper thing (cigányiság – gypsiness), was all right for him.

The dreadful meaning of the word ‘Gypsiness’ and its equally dreadful connotations (life on the road, lawlessness, sexual license, theft, and so forth) speaks volumes about the place of the allowed fools, and the price they paid for artistic freedom. And since these cigányiság associations were largely shared by other Europeans as well, we cannot underestimate how

10 Unfortunately, many of these racialist attitudes are found in abundance in Liszt’s book on ‘Gypsy music’, Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie (1859), though some of the descriptions in that book quote previous writers as well. See also Jonathan Bellman, ‘The Hungarian Gypsies and the Poetics of Exclusion’ in: The Exotic in Western Music, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 74-103. Bellman makes an interesting connection between musicians’ and writers’ fascination with the apparently superhuman or daemonic musical abilities of Romani musicians on the one hand and their dubious morality and way of life on the other (ibid., 79-80).


12 Ibid.
much they affected the reception of Liszt’s famous Hungarian Rhapsodies, works that celebrated the most uninhibited aspects of verbunkos. And undoubtedly, this somewhat prurient reception of the music was reinforced by Liszt’s (in)famous book Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie (see footnote 10) as well as more generally by widespread perceptions of his inimitable ‘daemonic’ virtuosity. Conversely, the popularity of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, and the fact that Liszt dedicated a whole book to explaining their particular aesthetic and its relationship to Romani life and music making, has cemented the reception of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom as a whole; i.e., to this day, his verbunkos idiom is largely perceived and discussed through these works, and almost exclusively in terms of pianistic qualities and verbunkos performance practices. 13 This is not to say that virtuosity and improvisation were not vitally important in the formation of such works, only that the discourse of ‘Gypsiness’ and the notions of abandon, savageness, and daemonic possession promoted the image of ‘free’, improvisation-based and loosely-constructed works where a structural logic is inconsequential, and where, as a result, we remain none the wiser about deeper compositional influences. Furthermore, the virtuoso and performance-orientated aspect of verbunkos idiom attracted the same kind of censure that Liszt’s virtuosity attracts in general. As Jim Samson argued, by the latter half of the nineteenth century the aesthetic of an unstable musical text, i.e. Liszt’s propensity to provide several versions of his works in both performance and publication, had come up against the dominant Werktreue (and later the concept of ‘organicism’), i.e. a masterpiece complete in every unalterable detail. 14 And the censure of virtuosity itself was already an established critical position that had its roots in the eighteenth century. 15 When eighteenth-century ‘taste’ evolved into the high praise of ‘progress’ it still retained in its genealogy the polarity between mechanical dexterity and musical substance. Therefore Liszt’s conception of a ‘transcendental’ virtuosity, which he grounded in progressive ideology and aesthetic as well as in progressive technique, and which he distinguished from a more mechanical and musically


15 Ibid., 4.
vapid tradition, was lost on those for whom ‘virtuosity’ of whatever kind was a by-word for
the debasement of art.\textsuperscript{16}

Liszt’s own emphasis on the importance of the Gypsy art of performance, as mentioned
earlier, became a sore point when he erroneously supposed that \textit{verbunkos} had ancient
origins outside of Hungary. It sparked an eternal debate on what constitutes ‘Hungarian’
(Magyar) and what constitutes ‘Gypsy’ (Roma) in \textit{verbunkos}, and by extension in Liszt’s
\textit{verbunkos} idiom. The debate, which began in the nineteenth century, acquired fresh
poignancy with Bartók’s and Kodály’s rehabilitation of Magyar folk music and (particularly
Bartók’s) rejection of both \textit{verbunkos} and the art music that drew its inspiration from it.
Without going into much detail here (we shall do so in Chapter 2), it is important to observe
that this discourse was deeply implicated in reinforcing the general hostility towards (or
otherwise suspicion or derision of) ‘Gypsy’ influences by implying that these influences
contaminated Liszt’s music and prevented it from reaching a full or mature Hungarian
national style. On a different level, this tired and regurgitated discourse has, in a sense,
obstructed a compositional one by pretending to sum up the single most important thing one
needs to know about the idiom; or at least one might get this impression by opening any
generalist book or reading through sleeve notes of any given recording of the Hungarian
Rhapsodies (a bibliography would be superfluous here).

Most fatally, we inherited from this discourse an ethnocentric terminology that charges any
discussion of the music with ethnological anxiety, as anyone who was ever struck by (or
tried to wrestle with) the terminology will probably agree. In the first place, is the idiom
Liszt used ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Gypsy’? Or is it ‘Hungarian-Gypsy’? Should the iconic scale
with two augmented seconds (e.g. D-E-F-G\#-A-B\#-C\#) be called the ‘Hungarian minor’ or
‘Gypsy minor’? Not only are the answers far from clear-cut, the constant ethnological
adjectives demand that at every turn one has to choose between elements that one finds to
be either more ‘Hungarian’ or more ‘Gypsy’ (e.g. ‘Hungarian rhythm’ as opposed to
‘Gypsy ornaments’), leading to gross inaccuracies, inevitable inconsistencies, and in any
case to a constant need to refer to ethnological matters even when one tries to focus on

\textsuperscript{16} See for example Bartók’s dichotomy between Liszt’s virtuosity and the real ‘substance’ of his music in
Chapter 2, p. 80. For Liszt, however, ‘transcendental’ virtuosity was part of a whole philosophy of ‘progress’;
see this chapter, pp. 32-33.
musical ones. It might be refreshing and even a revelatory experience for analysts if they could sometimes avoid this unremitting discursive intrusion. After all, to use a good analogy, one would be mired in similar unrelenting racialist language if instead of ‘blues scale’ one would have to refer to it as ‘the American minor scale’ or ‘the African-American scale’, or even (to copy an apologetic habit from Hungarian musicology) ‘the so-called African-American scale’. If this seems ridiculous and clumsy, one should consider that in the case of popular music in Hungary and its surroundings, racialist attributes can be as crudely reductive and perhaps even more factually misleading.\(^{17}\)

For this reason I have already proposed the generic term ‘verbunkos idiom’. I next propose to apply ‘verbunkos’ to individual generic features instead of the problematic ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Gypsy’ attributes, but to retain, otherwise, shared terminology. Thus throughout this thesis I replace the misnomer ‘Hungarian/Gypsy minor’ with ‘verbunkos minor’, while retaining the name ‘kalindra’, common in Hungarian musicology, for the scale based on the verbunkos minor’s fifth degree (see ex. 1.1). Likewise, rather than create unnecessary neologisms, it is preferable to retain some historical terms such as ‘bokázo’ (much better than the inaccurate ‘Hungarian cadence’ in any case) or ‘Kuruc fourth’, especially when they properly describe specific features without creating ethnological confusion.\(^{18}\) I hope that this terminological principle will diffuse maddening confusions and ensuing anxieties that constantly interfere with our need to describe and appreciate the music. Whatever is ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Hungarian’ in this music (or generally ‘Balkan’ or ‘Austrian’ for that matter), it is always verbunkos.

\(^{17}\) To take only one example, the scale which reductively came to symbolise ‘Gypsy music’, is common, in fact, to several Eastern European musical cultures. ‘Gypsy scale’ seems to be especially reductive, as the Roma have many scales and musical cultures. The idea of ‘Gypsy scale’ is also deeply implicated with the Hungarian culture politics of authenticity, an intellectual attempt (even before Bartók and Kodály) to distinguish between a purely ‘Magyar’ culture and ‘Gypsy’ elements that were ‘foreign’ to it. See Chapter 2, pp. 58, 59 and 62.

\(^{18}\) The attribute ‘Kuruc’ comes from a patriotic association with the Rákóczi Song, where the undulating fourth is a recurring motive, which celebrates the rebellion against the Habsburg Empire, led by Thököly and Rákóczi in the early eighteenth century. We are not concerned here with the possibility that this fourth may have existed in folk music before it assumed this particular name and association, but with the fact that it is historically pertinent to verbunkos music and its adaptation in composition. Likewise, ‘Bokázo’, which means ‘capering’, rather appositely evokes the clicking of the heels in Hungarian dances, i.e. it reminds us that music and dance were part of the same culture. See also the ‘Glossary of Terms’ in Appendix 1.
This is not to say that using the word ‘verbunkos’ is always a clean and easy solution. In fact, we should pause to look at this stage at the culture politics inherent in the word before proceeding to use it carelessly. *Verbunkos* literally means ‘recruiting’, from the Magyarised German *Werbung*. The name and its German-language origin is not accidental: it specifically recalls a somewhat unpleasant history of recruitment by stealth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when young and naïve Hungarian lads were encouraged to drink, dance, sing songs of military glory and make merry to music played by professional Gypsy bands – only to find themselves the following morning with a hangover and a binding contract to serve in the imperial Austrian army. This etymology is deeply rooted in Hungary’s wounded collective memory of occupation, but it is also somewhat misleading. In the end, this was only one limited function of *verbunkos* music, and on the other hand, being largely based on Hungarian folk songs and cultivated by the Hungarian ruling classes (and particularly for the political and artistic elite that Liszt knew), *verbunkos* was never so much about the memory of deceitful recruitment techniques than about national identity and self-determination.\(^\text{19}\)

The transformation of *verbunkos* into a national asset and the basis of a national musical culture (both ‘high’ and ‘low’) was especially pronounced during the years leading to the 1849 insurrection against the Austrian empire, but before that period the *verbunkos* idiom had already a long history in Vienna and Hungary (dating back to at least the 1780s) which was not invested with so much patriotism. In fact for the Viennese it was more a diverting ‘exotic’ topos that worked well in light genres. Jonathan Bellman’s term ‘style hongrois’ captures this Viennese perspective perfectly: as a pan-European rather than specifically ‘Hungarian’ phenomenon, *style hongrois* was the exotic style of choice, music written ‘about’ Hungary, Hungarians and/or Gypsies which represented them as exotic ‘others’.\(^\text{20}\) I shall therefore sometimes use this term to denote its ‘pan-European’ and ‘exoticist’ aspects or to address Bellman’s stylistic-analytical approach. Conversely, when I use the term

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\(^{19}\) The famous Rákóczi March, for example, was understood by all to represent political aspirations for independence, not least by the imperial authorities who grew concerned and suspicious when they learned Liszt was playing this tune on his Hungarian tour. For a more detailed history of the origins of *verbunkos* and its cultural repercussions see Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, 85-119.

\(^{20}\) This is of course only the narrow sense of the word *style hongrois*; in its broader musical sense it simply means the *verbunkos* idiom in Western composition – including compositions written in Hungary – with an emphasis on its cultural associations.
'verbunkos idiom' I almost invariably mean Liszt's idiom, one that derived its materials from his direct engagement with Hungarian popular culture and Gypsy-band playing rather than the Viennese style hongrois tradition. It would not be far-fetched to hypothesise that Liszt, along with Ferenc Erkel, Mihály Mosonyi and other Hungarian composers, was consciously founding a national school against the Viennese habit of adapting verbunkos to light postclassical genres and aesthetics.

By this hypothesis I do not mean that a 'nationalist' idiom is somehow 'better' than an 'exotic' one or that such distinctions somehow redeem Liszt's music. In fact, I would argue that a primarily 'nationalist' perspective that celebrates works simply for being 'Hungarian', creates some degree of suspicion in a non-patriotic mind that the music itself might not have any 'universal' aesthetic significance. This becomes particularly poignant when we confront Liszt's role in influencing the rise of 'national schools' in Hungary and elsewhere, with his role in the rise of Zukunftsmusik. We might celebrate Liszt for encouraging Hungarian composers as well as Smetana, Grieg, the Russian 'Five' and others to pursue a 'national' rather than 'universal' aesthetic, but as a 'musician of the future' we celebrate him for founding the main root of modernism, and for leaving us acclaimed masterpieces. In the first instance we acknowledge a historical role; in the second, we open the door to aesthetic appreciation. It is not impossible to conclude from many 'patriotic' statements, not least by Liszt himself, that he wrote 'Hungarian works' primarily as a patriot and not necessarily because he was compelled to do so artistically. For example, in one letter he stressed that becoming a national hero in his native land after the triumphant 1840 tour imposed on him "serious duties ... lifelong obligations as both man and artist".21 In another letter he cites a certain repertoire of works (the Rhapsodies, the Coronation Mass, Hungaria and several marches) as a testimony of his "patriotisme dans l'art.", as if his immense project of assimilating Hungarian popular-folk genres into his entire composition would be reduced to only a handful of 'manifestly Hungarian works'.22 I believe Liszt simplified matters in his public communications to oblige the (not necessarily musical) patriotism of others. We,

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21 This appeared on November 15, 1840, in Reveu des Deux Mondes, a French literary periodical, in reply to an article that mocked the 'sword of honour' he received from the Hungarian nobility. In his short reply Liszt wrote that the sword was a symbol of Magyar manhood and by accepting it he was accepting patriotic burdens on himself; see Adrian Williams, Portrait of Liszt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 146-7.

22 Quoted in Hamburger, 'Hungarian Idiom in Liszt's Sacred Works', 242.
however, need to get a much better sense of his devotion to the verbunkos idiom, and the attraction it held for him as a musician – far beyond the call of duty.

III. Conceptualising the Development of Liszt's Verbunkos Idiom

The first fact that complicates reductive lists of 'Hungarian' works is that the verbunkos idiom appears in an enormous amount of compositions, to different degrees and in various guises. This may lead to interminable debates about what constitutes a 'Hungarian' work, which might deflect a musical and compositional focus. A compositional perspective would demand us to view, rather, how Liszt developed the way verbunkos-related elements interact, inform and/or transform his compositional craft.\(^\text{23}\) Bearing this problem in mind, we can nevertheless begin by gaining an overview of the relevant repertoire and by attempting to conceptualise Liszt's compositional approaches to the verbunkos idiom in broad brushstrokes.

Liszt’s great Hungarian project, his relentless collecting of tunes, numerous encounters with Gypsy bands and countless transcriptions (of which the ones we know about are probably only a few) began with his Hungarian tour of 1840.\(^\text{24}\) It first led to the *Magyar Dalok* ('Hungarian melodies', published throughout the 1840s) and culminated in the publication of the Hungarian Rhapsodies (1851/3). This stage already reveals Liszt’s many approaches to the idiom, from almost objective transcriptions on the one hand (e.g. the first set of *Magyar Dalok*, nos. 1-5) to an abstract integration of verbunkos elements into his wider compositional practices on the other. The latter approach was expanded in the mid-1850s in what we can loosely call the second stage, when Liszt began consciously adapting the idiom

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\(^{23}\) Conversely, a greater familiarity with the extent and complexity of the repertoire inevitably leads to a very different appreciation of the most emblematic oeuvre, the Hungarian Rhapsodies. Placing these works against a history of constant aesthetic and compositional development rescues them from over-familiarity: they appear in a new and unknown light, as radical works, as I hope many of the musical analyses in this thesis will show.

\(^{24}\) Before this phase Liszt’s ‘Hungarian’ repertoire comprises only of the youthful Zwei Ungarische Werbungstänze von László Fáy und János Bihari (1828), his transcription of Schubert’s *Divertissement à l’hongroise*, which he entitled *Mélodies hongroises d’après Schubert* (1838/9), and the first version of the Rákóczi March (1839). With regard to this pre-tour phase, it is particularly interesting to note the Viennese style hongrois manner in the 1828 work, and the way Liszt ‘read’ Schubert in his transcription (see Chapter 3, footnote 66 on p. 160).
to large-scale orchestral and vocal works (e.g. the symphonic poem Hungaria, the St. Elizabeth oratorio and the Hungarian Coronation Mass). The declared ‘Hungarian’ works of 1840-70 naturally constitute the bulk of Liszt’s contribution to an emerging Hungarian school. Yet during the same period he freely incorporated verbunkos elements in his general oeuvre; the list of works that contain such elements is potentially very long, as one might appreciate from Appendix 3.25 In the third stage, roughly coinciding with his ‘late period’ of 1870-1886, Liszt presented traditional verbunkos features in new and unknown contexts on the one hand, while his abstraction of idiomatic features could be sometimes so far removed from any recognisable stylistic cliché, that it would be quite easy to miss them.26

One should be quite wary, however, of simple chronological timelines or even rough ‘stages’. While we can easily be seduced into thinking of a chronological development from faithful transcription to structural abstraction (all the more as this corresponds to some broad changes in Liszt’s compositional approach in general), it is not entirely supported by the evidence. One must also note that Liszt continued to transcribe songs in 1872, that expansion of genre occurred already in 1838 (in the new form he gave Schubert’s march from the Divertissement à l’hongroise), and that a certain modernist aesthetic can be discernible as early as the 1840s. Still, with these qualifications in mind, there is a case for a broad conceptualisation of ‘development’ in Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. The case was first made, in fact, with much conviction and less qualification by Zoltán Gárdonyi in his seminal Die ungarischen Stileigentümlichkeiten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts (1931).27 Gárdonyi was one of the first scholars to survey the whole of what he conceptualised as Liszt’s works ‘in the Hungarian style’ (or works ‘with Hungarian elements’), including some works that were virtually unknown at the time. Whether one agrees with Gárdonyi’s overarching historicist narrative or not, the sheer amount of works he surveys (see Appendix 3) exceeds, as far as I know, anything that has been done to this day in Liszt scholarship – quite an achievement for a book written eight decades ago, or

25 As for the depth of compositional influence in any given work, one needs to decide, of course, on a case-by-case basis. The analyses in this thesis will generally focus on what I consider to be interesting examples of the idiom’s impact on Liszt’s compositional thinking and harmonic style.

26 See Chapter 5/111.

27 I have used the French translation (Le style hongrois de Franz Liszt, National Széchényi Library, 1936) of the original 1931 German edition (Die ungarischen Stileigentümlichkeiten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts ... Mit 17 Notenbeispielen, Ungarische Bibliothek. Reihe 1. no. 16).
rather quite a sad state of affairs that proves how low the *verbunkos* idiom ranks in Liszt scholarship. Gärdonyi’s list of works could be significantly updated, in fact, giving us an even better perspective of the prevalence of the *verbunkos* idiom.\(^{28}\) To make some initial suggestions in that direction, I have listed in Appendix 3.2 a complementary repertoire of works. My list, part of which is indebted to Klára Hamburger (1997), complements Gärdonyi’s in two other respects: first, it demonstrates Liszt’s continued interest in the *verbunkos* idiom of other (particularly Hungarian) composers. Secondly, it shows that *verbunkos* elements abounded in many non-Hungarian works from the 1870s and 80s, and not only from the Weimar period. It would be excellent if a new definitive survey that incorporates such updates would replace Gärdonyi’s.\(^{30}\)

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that Gärdonyi’s 1931 study, particularly his conceptualisation of Liszt’s final phase as ‘abstract and subjective Hungarian style’\(^{31}\) — offered an insight into the modernist aspect of the *verbunkos* idiom that proved to be very influential in subsequent research. Gärdonyi’s chief argument was that from the 1870s on, Liszt concentrated on abstracting the *verbunkos* minor scale (‘Gypsy scale’ in his book), while taking less interest in what, according to Gärdonyi, could not be further developed: concrete elements, such as characteristic ornaments.\(^{32}\) Gärdonyi did not pursue a deep

\(^{28}\) Gärdonyi’s book was bound to have its omissions, not all of which even reflected a conscious decision, as there were some works which were virtually unknown or forgotten at the time. For example, he could not have known Liszt’s *Ungarische Romanzen* (1853), as these works lay in manuscriptural obscurity in the Richard Wagner Museum in Bayreuth. But, to my mind, his biggest omission was not to have discussed Liszt’s arrangements of Hungarian works by other composers, e.g. Erkel’s *Hunyadi László*, Conradi’s *Zigeunerpolka*, as well as Liszt’s truly startling harmonisations of *Revive Szegadin* (on Massenet’s version of Szabady’s march), since they tell something about Liszt’s approach to other works with *verbunkos* elements. And there are plenty of works with an ‘abstracted’ *verbunkos* idiom, which he does not consider, e.g. the *Mephisto* works, including *Bagatelle sans tonalité*.


\(^{30}\) Not that such a survey would be without its problems. The list in Appendix 3.2, for example, could have been made much longer if I were obliged to include *every single work* that had one or two *verbunkos* elements in them. That, however, would have made defining criterions for inclusion in such a list very difficult or might have resulted in a counterproductive preference for defining a ‘Hungarian’ work by the number of *verbunkos* elements in it. Instead the list comprises of select examples of works that invite research into how their character, expression and even tonality and structure may have been defined or generated by *verbunkos* elements.


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 106-7. Gärdonyi argued that Liszt used the scale as a collection of pitches devoid of the original tonal hierarchies; in particular he used the augmented seconds enharmonically, thus expanding the harmonic
analysis of Liszt's treatment of the \textit{verbunkos} minor scale, but he certainly gave other scholars much to think about. His insights into the idiom's `progressive' aspects were chiefly taken up and developed by other Hungarian scholars, including notable figures such as Bence Szabolcsi and Lajos Bárdos. Their research, like Gárdonyi's, was underpinned by nationalist motives: repatriating Liszt (against Liszt's cosmopolitan or German image), and conceptualising a `Hungarian' repertoire that would somehow be as progressive as the German narrative of \textit{Zukunftsmusik}. They had their work cut out for them: there was simply no history of Liszt's \textit{verbunkos} idiom that fitted very easily with hegemonic narratives of modernism. This problem – as well as a general wariness of German cultural hegemony – accounts for the occasional anti-German and anti-Wagner sentiments in their writings.\textsuperscript{33}

Whilst it seems superfluous to rehash partisan anti-Wagnerian views here, it is important that we understand at least what Hungarian scholars were reacting against. We therefore turn to examine how a received narrative of \textit{Zukunftsmusik} had first narrowed down and then marginalised Lisztian modernist aesthetics. We shall then look at how a revised perspective of Liszt's modernism from the 1950s both reinforced and undermined Hungarian scholars' desire to recast Liszt as a Hungarian \textit{Zukunftsmusiker}.

\textbf{IV. The German Nationalisation of Zukunftsmusik}

Long before the German concept of \textit{Zukunftsmusik} was born, Liszt's 'progressive' outlook was already formed by French romanticism. His \textit{annus mirabilis} was 1830, the year he was fired up by the July Revolution, absorbed Saint-Simonian socialist ideals, and became a frequent habitué of fashionable Parisian salons that hosted the most celebrated intellectuals and artists. 1830 was also the year Liszt heard (and soon after transcribed) Berlioz's \textit{Symphonie Fantastique}, a work which set new standards of orchestration, harmony and thematicism, as well as announcing the advent of high-brow 'programme music'. Liszt's formative 'progressive' education was complete in April 1832 when he heard Paganini. It

\textsuperscript{33} E.g. Gárdonyi, \textit{op. cit.} 90; Bence Szabolcsi, \textit{The Twilight of Ferenc Liszt}, Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences 19-24; and Lajos Bárdos (see footnote 70).
was not the mechanics of virtuosity (impressive as they were) which caught his attention, as much as the way Paganini seemed to 'transcend' such mechanics, in contrast to a postclassical school that seemed to focus on them. He was struck by how a single musician on stage could become a charismatic messenger of Music, more like a prophet or a high priest than an entertainer; and how this could lead to music playing a higher role in the betterment of mankind.  These thoughts, fortified by a Saint-Simonian (and later Lammenais') sense of social-historical mission, crystallised in his 1835 essay 'On the Situation of Artists and on their Condition in Society', where he advocated a priestly or even Promethean role for the most gifted artists, a calling to share their enlightened perception of Truth and Beauty with the masses – an idea which he later condensed into the motto "Génie oblige". Perhaps from today's perspective such opinions and statements may seem too earnest or grandiose, but in the high social circles in which Liszt moved, post-Hegelian beliefs in historical imperatives and inevitabilities had the kind of intellectual edge that is equivalent to the advent of postmodernism in the 1980s.

Liszt's compositions also started to acquire an edge: a new kind of imaginative and creative virtuosity, but also a propensity to experiment with rhythm, texture and harmony as well, in a manner that was quite unknown at the time. It was not simply a naïve delight in new possibilities but a conscious choice to ride the tide of history. Liszt was aware that the very 'language' of music might soon 'develop' in astonishing strides. Some of these thoughts were given concrete conceptualisation in the theories of François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), who envisaged the inevitable 'decline' of music into an ordre omnitonique, a stage where sensual chromatic and enharmonic relationships would weaken any sense of tonal logic and coherence in musical works. Liszt was well aware of this theory and openly admired it.

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34 Walker, Liszt, 1, 173-4.
35 Ibid., 154-9. The Abbé Felicité Lammenais promoted a combination of liberal Catholicism and social reforms in which artists were accorded a profound role. He became Liszt's close friend and mentor in 1834.
36 This motto ends Liszt's 1840 tribute to the recently-deceased Paganini, which ends with a gentle admonition of the latter for having squandered his talents for personal advancement rather than the education of the masses (the article can be found in Lina Ramman, Gesammelte Schriften, II (1883), 108-12). For a comprehensive account of the Saint-Simonian origins of Liszt's progressive outlook see Ralph Locke, 'Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure', Nineteenth-Century Music, 4/3 (Spring 1981), 209-27.
38 See Chapter 4, pp. 167-168.
But he did not share Fétis’ or others’ chagrin; he did not believe musical form would be destroyed or that the achievements of the Viennese masters would be squandered. Rather, he believed that music was destined to develop gloriously, that it could not be artificially frozen in some moment of glory from the past, and years later he would ridicule those who attempted to do so as the ‘posthumous party’. 40

Liszt was thus a Zukunftsmusiker in all but name well before he became the iconic leader of a new circle of progressively-minded musicians in the late 1840s. When the term ‘Zukunftsmusik’ came to public attention, initially as a derisive critical response to Wagner’s article “Art-Work of the Future” (1849), Liszt was well-prepared to take this term and turn it around into high praise. 41 But it is a step too far to suppose that his championing of Wagner and the fusion of music and drama, his preoccupation with sonata forms and the ‘symphony problem’, or the fact that he waged his culture battles from Weimar, led him to conceive of musical-artistic development as the exclusive province of German culture. Rather, Liszt settled in the provincial town of Weimar because it offered him an opportunity (more than the sophisticated European capitals ever could) to create a unique space for the cultivation of progressive music. His plan was to transform Weimar into an open and pan-European centre of creativity that would achieve in music what literature had achieved there decades before; Wagner and he were to be the “leading spirits, just as Goethe and Schiller were formerly.” 42 Liszt was quite well aware that Goethe and Schiller invoked strong


40 The context of this remark, taken from a letter from November 16 1860 to his confidante, Agnes Streeter-Klindworth, is worth quoting in full: “If when I settled here [in Weimar] in ’48, I had wished to attach myself to the posthumous party in music, associate myself with its hypocrisy, cherish its prejudices, etc., then because of my previous relationships with the principal bigwigs in that same party, nothing would have been easier. I would certainly have gained outwardly in consideration and acceptance; and those very newspapers which now find fit to heap insults and abuse upon me would have vied with one another in singing my praises ... They would readily have declared me not guilty of a few youthful peccadilloes, in order to extol and call attention in every way to the enthusiastic upholder of the fine, wholesome tradition from Palestrina to Mendelssohn. But such was not my lot; my conviction was too sincere, my belief in the present and future of art at once too ardent and too positive to allow me to put up with the empty objurgatory formulae of our pseudo-classicists who do their utmost to cry that art is going astray, that art is lost ... the art of the present century has [nevertheless] something to say just as that of the previous centuries – and it will say it, without fail.” Quoted in Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 370; italics in the original.

41 Ibid., 310.

42 La Mara, Liszts Briefe, 1, 366. Liszt came closest to realising this dream when in 1855 he proposed to the Grand Duke of Weimar, Carl Alexander, to establish a prestigious music school in Weimar (Wagner was to be one of the staff members). Liszt argued that this would establish Weimar as the centre of new music and music
nationalist feelings as well as artistic ones, but that did not bother him. In fact, he actively encouraged German national as well as more local civic sentiments if these could be harnessed to develop music and to fulfil his more cosmopolitan artistic vision. One could say that this is just about the opposite of the kind of political nationalism which appropriates art to its own ends. Indeed, he encouraged national (but not ‘nationalist’) and local sentiments from Russia to Spain, since he believed that cultural diversity was good for the development of music in general, and since such sentiments invariably led to the development of concert life in those countries. But it was not the same for most other champions of Zukunftsmusik. The fact remains that Liszt lived in Weimar, in the heady days when Zukunftsmusik was formed, debated and fought over. Most of his pupils, performers and composers alike, had the interest of German culture at heart in a much more exclusive manner than their teacher did. It was just a matter of a few years before the more civic and potentially universal ‘New Weimar School’ (Neu-Weimar-Verein founded in 1854) would be recast as the ‘New German School’ (Neu-deutsche Schule, 1859) and propagated through the Allgemeiner deutsche Musikverein (founded 1861), an organisation that promoted performances of new (and largely) German compositions.

Likewise, by the end of the 1850s, the controversy surrounding Zukunftsmusik had acquired a sharper nationalist tone. It was during June 1859, at the Tonkünstler-Versammlung (‘Musicians’ Gathering’) that Franz Brendel, its organiser and the editor of the ‘pro-Zukunftsmusik’ journal Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, exhorted his audience to reject the decade-old concept of ‘Zukunftsmusik’ in favour of ‘The New German School’. In his Liszt biography, Alan Walker opines that Brendel meant to replace a potentially divisive concept

education (particularly orchestral education) in Europe. Despite the appeal of so much cultural capital, the plan was thwarted, mainly due to lack of funds as well as Wagner’s problematic political status. The Weimar Orchesterschule, as it was called, opened only in 1872, thirteen years after Liszt resigned from its Kapellmeister post. The school was committed to performing Zukunftsmusik works from its inception – a clear legacy of Liszt’s time in Weimar, and it was associated with the Allgemeiner deutscher Musikverein, which was founded in 1859. See also E. D. Bomberger, ‘Charting the Future of Zukunftmusik: Liszt and the Weimar Orchesterschule’, Musical Quarterly, 80/2 (1996), 349, 352 and 356.

43 See for example how Liszt gently admonished the Viennese conductor Johann von Herbeck for dismissing the originality and contribution of Czech musicians by playing Smetana’s music and then departing with the words, “here you have the composer with the genuine Czech spirit, the God-inspired artist!” (Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 340); or how he encouraged the most ‘Norwegian’ aspects of Grieg’s works when the two composers met (ibid., 454 and 456). There are many more vivid examples of Liszt’s belief in the strengthening of national schools for the benefit of music at large. For a detailed context of Liszt’s activities in Vormärz Germany, see Michael Saffle, Liszt in Germany 1840-1845 (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1994).
with a consensual, conciliatory and inclusive ‘German’ concept.\footnote{Walker, Liszt, 2, 511-12 and footnote 89; See also F. Brendel, “Zur Anbahnung einer Verständigung: Vortrag zur Eröffnung der Tonkünstler-Versammlung”, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, 1859), 1, 265-73.} Yet Brendel either miscalculated or was being intentionally provocative. When in April 1860 Brahms, Joachim and others retorted in an open ‘Manifesto’ that has since come to symbolise the ‘War of the Romantics’, they not only famously condemned the aesthetic of the new school as “contrary to the innermost spirit of music”, but were particularly upset by the claims of ‘Brendel’s party’ that “altogether, and especially in Northern Germany, the contentions for and against the so-called Music of the Future are concluded, and that the dispute is settled in its favour.”\footnote{The entire Manifesto is quoted in Walker, op. cit., 349.} Perhaps not without reason, they saw the ceremonial nationalisation of Zukunftsmusik as an unacceptable and aggressive attempt to appropriate their “North German” music, the rightful heir to the glorious German music of the past. That Zukunftsmusik already occupied an undeserved place in German culture was bad enough; but its proclamation as the official Music of the realm was really the last straw.

Even before this fierce outbreak, the terms of the public debate were already set: it chiefly concerned the legitimacy of the symphonic poems (fiercely denounced by Eduard Hanslick and defended by Wagner and Brendel),\footnote{See Eduard Hanslick, “Liszt’s Symphonic Poems” in: Music Criticisms, trans. and ed. Henry Pleasants (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 53-7; Richard Wagner, ‘On Liszt’s Symphonic Poems’, in: Wagner Prose Works 3, trans. and ed. William A. Ellis (London: Kagen Paul et al, 1894), 236-54. Both essays were written in 1857; and Karen M. Stevenson, The Music Criticisms of Franz Brendel (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 1994), 236-64.} Wagner’s opera reforms, and the new harmony and orchestration of Liszt, Wagner and Berlioz. At the heart of the matter was the history and future of the symphony and the (contentious) ‘true legacy’ of Beethoven. Naturally, such a serious debate would have little space for what were universally perceived to be trivial and exotic dance-genre compositions. Yet we should also observe that Wagner’s own version of history, his assertions that Beethoven’s symphonies led to his operas and that Music itself inexorably progressed from primitive ‘dance’ melodies to his own ‘neverending melody’, had effectively consigned all the ‘national’ and ‘peripheral’ musics based on dance melodies to the past. And if one compares Wagner’s ‘Liszt’s Symphonic Poems’ (1857) with his ‘Zukunftsmusik’ (1861), one does not need to read too much between the lines to perceive the minor role he accords his brother-in-arms in general: Liszt’s symphonic poems
merely innovated the overture, while Wagner’s musical dramas truly fulfilled the promise of
the Beethovenian symphony and embody the true course of musical evolution. He also
dismisses the need for further developments in traditional church music, which Beethoven
in his opinion had already ‘solved’, which amounts to nothing less than a full rejection of
Liszt’s vision of ‘progressive’ church music. Still, one gets the sense that Liszt has a place
as an honorary German and a (deputy) Zukunftsmusiker as much as his symphonic poems
played their own (humble) part in the solution of the ‘symphony problem’.47

But as Liszt went on to solve other compositional problems he was out of the game. When
in 1861 he quit Weimar to become an abbé in Rome and concentrate on Catholic sacred
music, he couldn’t have removed himself further away from the nationalist, and mostly
North German ethos surrounding the new music. Liszt’s cosmopolitan, religious and pacifist
views and the increasingly intimate, personal and mysterious nature of his music were at
odds with the desire for strong, passionate, extrovertly German nationalist music in a
Germany that was heading towards unification and an increasingly militarised future under
the leadership of Bismarck’s Prussia. The different public positions of Liszt and Wagner
can be witnessed in their differing reactions to the 1870 war: when the Franco-Prussian war
broke out, Wagner enthusiastically endorsed the German campaign while Liszt, who greatly
admired Napoleon III but was averse to war, remained aloof in Szekszárd (Hungary).48

Liszt’s lack of ‘commitment’ to Germany, his peripatetic life and fuzzy Hungarian-French-
German identity made him an odd and perhaps rather old-fashioned figure in a world
clamouring for sharp nationalist divisions. But it was ultimately the strangeness of his
works, out of tune with the ‘normal’ trends of the various progressive schools (whether in
East Europe, France or Germany) which made him increasingly irrelevant. Even Hanslick,
at this stage left him alone; evidently, he was no longer a threat to ‘Music’.49 During this


48 Walker, Liszt, 3, 222-25. For clear evidence of Liszt’s pacifist views and religiously-based objections to any
societal sanction of blood-spilling, be it war, duels or the death penalty, see his letter to Carolyne Sayn-
Wittegenstein. It was written on March 4 1871, i.e. during the bloody insurrection that broke out in Paris
shortly after France’s defeat (Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 463).

49 In his biographical introduction to Hanslick’s essays, Henry Pleasants writes that “… Hanslick, in his
Beauty in Music, had aligned himself with Leipzig as the defender of the musical art against the
transcendentalists in Weimar, who had decided that the ‘music of the future’ had to consist of elements other
than music alone. Hanslick’s rejection of Liszt was a lively skirmish, but no more than that, since Liszt was
not the real enemy. He joined the battle proper in 1858, with his review of the Vienna production of
Lohengrin.” (Hanslick, op. cit., 31). This is but one example of how Liszt is sometimes casually demoted in
final period of his life (ca. 1870-86), he returned again and again to the verbunkos idiom with the fullest conviction that it served his compositional purposes as it had done in Weimar; but it was a preoccupation that was even more irrelevant to the inner-German discourse of Zukunftsmusik than it had been in the 1850s.

Despite having staunch supporters in Germany, for the growing faction of Wagner and his supporters, he was mainly Wagner’s loyal friend and champion. Wagner himself did not wish to publicly acknowledge the importance of Liszt’s music to his own, although privately he is known to have done so, and as Wagner’s prestige and fame grew, the spectre of Liszt’s once foundational role in the new music was enough to cause occasional outbreaks of anxiety-ridden pronouncements in the Wagner circle. The conductor Hermann Levi, for example, one of the greatest interpreters of Wagner’s music and an intimate of his inner circle, had declared that “the people who call themselves Wagnerians, and lift on their shields, side by side with Wagner, a talented humbug like Liszt, are as nauseous to me as those who oppose Wagner on principle are incomprehensible.” And even long after Wagner’s and Liszt’s death, Wagner’s biographer Ernst Newman (from whom I borrowed the Levi quote) found it expedient to write a whole ‘biography’ bent on ‘proving’, through numerous citations of contemporaneous hostile opinions, that Liszt was a failed musician, unfit to stand next to the real genius, the real shaker and mover of Zukunftsmusik, Richard Wagner.

It is not clear where Hanslick’s perspective ends and the author’s begins, i.e. whether the fact that Liszt was ‘not the real enemy’ merely describes a historical perception of his comparative compositional insignificance or also, by the way, reaffirms a received aesthetic judgement.

For example, in a letter to von Bülow from October 7 1859 he writes: “There are matters which we are quite frank about among ourselves (for example, that since my acquaintance with Liszt’s works, my treatment of harmony has become very different from what it was formerly), but it is indiscreet, to say the least, of friend Pohl [a Liszt student and Wagner’s supporter] to babble this secret to the world.” Quoted in Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 360.

In a letter to Clara Schumann from 1876; quoted in Ernst Newman, The Man Liszt: a study of the tragicomedy of a soul divided against itself (London: Cassell and Company Ltd. 1934), 209.

See especially ibid., 214-19. Statements that evoke Wagnerian rhetoric and worldview abound throughout the book. Readers are invited to form their own opinions from the following quote (ibid., 215-16): “There was a good deal of these Weimar works that grated on the sensibilities of certain temperaments: for all their fine qualities, it cannot be denied that occasionally there is something theatrical in their pose, something rank in their sentiment ... Every composer’s mind has a certain odour, so to speak, that either strikes pleasantly on our nostrils or does not: it is the somewhat corrupt odour of Meyerbeer’s mind, for instance, that makes us turn away from him today. In the Weimar days Liszt’s mind has taken on a peculiar odour, largely as the result of his daily association with the mind of the Princess. In basic essentials, it is true, this odour is the same as that of his first period; but it has now become more pungent, with an occasional drift into downright rankness.”
The demotion of Liszt’s role in Zukunftsmusik and more generally his uneven reception and the precarious place of his works in the canon had naturally provoked Liszt champions to react, either protectively, by suppressing ‘difficult’ works that the public might not like, or defiantly, by promoting works that emphasised his modernism. The first approach was generally taken by Liszt’s last pupils in the final years of his life and the first few decades after his death. It is mainly due to these pianists that the Hungarian Rhapsodies (as well as some of the operatic transcriptions, several Paganini etudes and ‘sentimental’ pieces like the ‘Liebestraum’) have been so popular in the early twentieth century. We know from eyewitness accounts that this selectiveness was not an accident of taste, but a deliberate effort to promote and protect their late master’s memory, which may have begun while he was still alive. All this rather reinforced Liszt’s image as a composer of old-fashioned (and mostly virtuoso) pieces, which for modernists meant works whose time had passed. It was this unjustified image that prompted modernist composers and performers such as Busoni and Bartók to promote a very different Liszt repertoire: works such as the Faust Symphony, piano sonata, Totentanz, the B-A-C-H Fantasy and Fugue, as well as works from the late period. But there was one crucial difference between them. Busoni believed in the ‘transcendental’ aesthetic and the open-ended work. He had no qualms with verbunkos or any other folkloristic genre in composition, as long as it was conducive to a modernist aesthetic, which is why he promoted for example, Liszt’s Rhapsody no. 19. Bartók, on the

53 Some of these early recordings can be found in Pupils of Liszt, Pearl, GEMM CDS 9972.

54 It is well-known from several sources that Liszt did not push for the performance of his works, least of all the ‘difficult’ ones, lest the adverse critical reaction harmed well-wishing colleagues or pupils who might perform them. “His own works,” writes his student Kellerman in 1873, “... he almost completely neglected. He composed from an inner compulsion; and what later happened to his works was quite indifferent to him, since, in contrast to Richard Wagner, he felt no urge to assert himself as a composer.” Quoted in Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 486; See also ibid., 529.

55 According to Klára Hamburger, Busoni is known to have performed Apparitions (1834), Magyar Dalok no. 20 (the so-called ‘Rumanian Rhapsody’ from 1847, but unknown in Busoni’s time) the piano sonata in B minor (1852), the Faust symphony (1854-7, 1861, both as conductor and pianist) Mephisto Waltz (1856-61), the Weinen, Klagen variations (1862), the Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H (1870), all three volumes of the Années de Pèlerinage (including the third volume from the late 1870s), Concerto Pathétique (1877-85), Weihnachtsbaum (1874-81), The Valses oubliées (1881-4) the nineteenth Hungarian Rhapsody (1885), and La lagubre gondola (1882-5). See Klára Hamburger, Liszt, trans. Gyula Gulyás, Budapest: Corvina, 1980), 193. Bartók recommended some of these pieces and others in his 1936 article ‘Liszt Problems’; see Béla Bartók, Essays, ed. Benjamin Souchoff (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 502-5.

56 It is interesting to note that Vladimir Horowitz, perhaps the last greatest exponent of the Liszt-Busoni ‘transcendental’ tradition of performance, added some breathtaking modernisms to this particular rhapsody
other hand, was determined to demolish the aesthetic of the nineteenth-century Hungarian school of composition, which is why he could not bring himself to support anything that would somehow allow Liszt's verbunksos idiom into the pantheon of modernism. Being also decidedly on the side of 'complete' works (rather than 'open-ended' ones) and the predominantly German Werktreue ideal\textsuperscript{57}, he had to concede that Wagner left much more 'complete' and 'perfect' works than Liszt; but he turned the tables on the post-Wagnerites by claiming that that only meant Wagner exhausted all there was to develop in the Wagnerian style, while Liszt's tantalising yet incomplete invention left much that was desired and sought after by contemporary composers.\textsuperscript{58}

This was the beginning of a rehabilitative movement that sought to restore Liszt's compositional credentials on modernist grounds. It came into its own in the middle of the twentieth century, when hitherto unknown works from Liszt's final years were published for the first time or republished after decades of oblivion, principally by the British and Hungarian Liszt Societies; works such as the four Valses oubliées (1881-4), the late Mephisto works (1878/9-1885), Unstern! (1881), Nuages Gris (1881), the 'Wagner' and 'Gondola' elegies (1882-5), vocal works such as Via Crucis and Ossa arida (both from 1879) – to mention only some of the more frequent examples that recur in the literature dedicated to Liszt's late works.\textsuperscript{59} At the early stage of this discourse (up to ca. 1975), which, one imagines, would not have displeased the composer. See Vladimir Horowitz: The Complete Masterworks Recordings Vol. I, The Studio Recordings 1962-1963, Sony Classics, CD no. 053457.

\textsuperscript{57} See footnote 15.

\textsuperscript{58} Subverting his opponents' truisms was something Bartók was especially adept at doing as we shall see in Chapter 2. Bartók's own words, taken from his article 'Liszt Problems' (1936) are quoted on p. 82 in this thesis and the full context is given in Chapter 2/IV.

writers sought to emphasise the most radical features in these works, e.g. peculiar intervals, harsh dissonances and textures, and ambiguous tonality. Liszt’s original tonality attracted attention in particular, and the idea that he had come to the ‘brink of atonality’ seized the musicological imagination and informed the more structural-analytical approach of later twentieth-century research. Yet it was the distinctly pro-Lisztian ‘1950’s approach’ (if I may call it that), that set out to prove above all that Liszt was peerless in his ‘prophetic’ reading of music’s ultimate destiny. A quasi-Hegelian reading of music history certainly informed the way in which features like strange chords and harsh textures could make the Tristan chord look timid in comparison, and thus potentially raise Liszt’s historical importance above Wagner’s. This opened up new and welcome possibilities for Hungarian scholars who were mostly committed to nationalist ideologies and were in any case all too sensitive about German cultural hegemony and the (German) nationalisation and marginalisation of Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik. They have noted among the newly-discovered avant-garde works that were explicitly ‘Hungarian’ but very different from the Hungarian Rhapsodies, e.g. the Csárdás macabre (1881), Csárdás obstinée (1885), and Historische ungarische Bildnisse (1885). It was also clear that Liszt’s late works were radically different from Wagner’s operas in style, much more than the Weimar works on which his modernist reputation formerly rested, at any rate. From a historicist point of view, that could mean that a nineteenth-century Hungarian composer was on the winning side of history after all, while news of the German composer’s greater importance had been premature. It could mean that there was no more need to measure Liszt up against ‘German’ aesthetics, and be forever trapped in a discourse that posited him as a minor ‘New German’ composer. Showing that Liszt was never a German in any sense and that his modernist aesthetics had completely outgrown those of the ‘New German School’ was enormously seductive from a nationalist point of view, because it meant that now Liszt could be enlisted as a Hungarian to establish a counter-narrative of Zukunftsmusik and national pride.

°0 This rehabilitative literature as well as the wave of post-tonal analyses that came in its wake will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

V. The Hungarian Nationalisation of (Liszt's) Zukunftsmusik

Of course, establishing an alternative narrative of modernism based on the newly-acquired prestige of the late works from a distinctly nationalist perspective was not going to lead to consistent musical insights when it was not entirely clear what made Liszt’s ‘progressive’ music also ‘Hungarian’. Was there any way that Liszt’s late music could be described as being generally ‘Hungarian’ in character? Conversely, how should the more traditional Hungarian repertoire be treated in retrospect (the rhapsodies and the ‘Hungarian’ orchestral works)? Should the new ‘prestige’ of the late works be exploited to confer modernist respectability on the entire Hungarian repertoire, or should this repertoire be kept exclusive to emphasise Liszt’s superior modernism? Through all of these dilemmas ran the most interminable one: can Liszt’s verbunkos elements be legitimately considered to be both Hungarian and modern? This was a pertinent question for a post-Bartókian age, as Bartók persuasively and bitterly argued against the harmful influence of the ‘urban’ verbunkos culture on Hungarian art music (as opposed to the ‘good’ and modernising influence of genuinely rural folk music). The verbunkos idiom was, therefore, not necessarily a welcome aspect of Liszt’s Hungarian idiom, and not a natural or comfortable aspect of his modernism at any rate. We shall deal in detail with the complexity and influence of Bartók’s arguments in Chapter 2. Here, however, I would like to focus more on the effects and pressures of the Zukunftsmusik and ‘late works’ discourses, by examining some tensions between musical insight and nationalist imperatives in the postwar writings of three prominent Liszt scholars: Bence Szabolcsi, István Szelenyi, and Lajos Bárdos.

One inescapable problem that every Hungarian writer faced was that while the Austro-German tradition could enjoy being both particular and universal, the traditional way of dealing with ‘national’ schools was to emphasise their difference against the ‘main’ tradition. They were thus not universal; conversely, if a non-German composer was deemed more ‘universal’ then he was invariably less ‘national’ as well. In his 1931 book on Liszt’s ‘Hungarian style’ Gárdonyi had already pointed one possible way out of this conundrum by claiming that the universality of Liszt’s Hungarian music – comparable to the universal language of the classics – was achieved through abstraction of some verbunkos elements,
particularly the *verbunkos* minor scale. Furthermore, Liszt demonstrated through works like the *Hungaria* symphonic poem that “his style had become capable of expressing not only national particularities but also all the great ideas of humanity as a whole.”\(^{61}\) Possibly drawing on these arguments, Bence Szabolcsi, a close adherent of Bartók and Kodály (and a pupil of the latter) was nevertheless careful to minimise the importance of the *verbunkos* idiom in his construction of a universal ‘Hungarian’ music. In his book *The Twilight of Ferenc Liszt* (1959) he attempted to construct Liszt as both a ‘universal’ and ‘Hungarian’ composer by describing his music as being universally ‘East European’, and moreover as being deeply indebted to the burgeoning Russian school.\(^{62}\) While Gárdonyi maintained that “the Gypsy scale played a truly important role” in Liszt’s “art music of a higher order”\(^{63}\), Szabolcsi, for what could only be ideological reasons, did not look into the role of this ‘Gypsy scale’ nor that of other ‘narrow stylistic details’ associated with the nineteenth-century *verbunkos* idiom. In fact, he directly challenged the appropriateness of focusing too much on this style in Liszt’s oeuvre, when both the ‘Hungarianess’ and the modernism of the music lay elsewhere:

> The question whether or not Liszt’s *whole oeuvre* belongs to Hungary cannot depend on simple quotations and stylistic details … there can be no doubt that Liszt’s figure and oeuvre form an integral part of the awakening and widening East-Europe of the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century … One thing is absolutely certain: Liszt’s “world music” and “Hungarian voice” are steadily converging, to become indissolubly united in the last phase of his life and creative genius.\(^{64}\)

Rather inconsistently with his rejection of ‘narrow stylistic details’, Szabolcsi cited works that have Gregorian-modal elements (as if these were somehow prescient of the modern Hungarian school’s affinity to the modality of peasant music!) and, in the case of *Unstern*, works that resembled or ‘predicted’ in some way Bartók’s style. It would appear, then, that he was not so much against a narrow style-analysis approach *per se* as against the appropriateness of representing Hungarian/East European modernisms in a style that, as

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\(^{61}\) Gárdonyi, *Le Style Hongrois*, 95.

\(^{62}\) Bence Szabolcsi, *The Twilight of Ferenc Liszt*, 30-1.

\(^{63}\) Gárdonyi, *Le Style Hongrois*, 93 : « Malgré tout, on aurait tort de sous-estimer la signification de la gamme tzigane puisque l’art de Liszt nous prouve justement que parmi le facteurs qui sont entrés dans la formations de la musique savante hongroise qui imitait le style populaire, et, par cette voie, de la musique savante d’un niveau plus élevé, la gamme tzigane a joué un rôle fort important. »

\(^{64}\) Szabolcsi, 61-2; original italics.
many would have agreed at the time, was too old-fashioned and too narrow to sustain such an interpretation.

However, not everyone agreed that Liszt’s verbunkos idiom should be completely marginalised. Rather, it seemed expedient to locate elements that were demonstrably connected to his avant-garde harmony, and that invariably led to a focus on scales. Yet these scales were not merely formal elements in music: in some way, if they were to become part of a new history of progressive music, they had to attain some cultural respectability as well. Furthermore, as the habit of highlighting the most radical features in the late works became an established practice in musicological literature, it was only natural that musicologists would try to show in similar vein how such scales could also be counted as ‘modern’ features. In his ‘Der unbekannte Liszt’ (‘The Unknown Liszt’, 1963), István Szelenyi set out to enhance the modernist role and respectability of Liszt’s treatment of the verbunkos minor scale by associating it with radical reinterpretation of ancient Greek theory. Szelenyi observes that between 1856 and 1857 Liszt noted in his sketchbook the ancient Greek concept of Metabole, i.e. the practice of inflecting the interior intervals of a tetrachord, and he ties in this interest in Greek theory with the verbunkos minor scale by showing how this scale is derived from rotations of the Greek chromatic tetrachord, which consists of a third and two quarter tones (translated to 1:1:3 or 3:1:1 in equal temperament) (ex. 1.2). Most of Szelenyi’s examples try to show that the ‘Gypsy’ tetrachord (Szelenyi’s Type I) and the locrian minor (Type II) are basic ‘building-blocks’ of the late style, as Liszt created a great deal of his scalar material from simply rotating Metabole-fashion these two tetrachord types. Nevertheless, Szelenyi was being intentionally selective: as ex. 1.2 shows, the complete rotation of the Greek chromatic tetrachord results not only (occasionally) in the ‘gypsy’ and ‘locrian’ tetrachords (1:3:1 and 1:2:1 respectively) but also in tetrachords that remain unmentioned and unnamed in the article, presumably as they are less relevant to Liszt’s music, or less relevant to the supposed connection between Greek theory and verbunkos material. Furthermore, by not rigorously establishing how these tetrachords generated a harmony that was in some way different to the general practice of Liszt’s time, Szelenyi exposed his argument to an easy formalist dismissal. Reviewing Szelenyi’s ideas in 1997, Ramon Satyendera argued that the tetrachord-types I and II are as much (if not

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65 István Szelenyi, op. cit.
more) a consequence of passing notes between ‘emblematic’ Lisztian chords, such as the diminished and the augmented, than true ‘building blocks’ in any structural sense. Thus despite Szelenyi’s cultural agenda, “the influence of Greek theory to whatever extent it might exist, is [actually] couched within features that are native to the tonal idiom of Liszt’s time.”

In other words: Liszt did not reinvent his syntax or take off to another tonal planet with *Metabole* or Gypsy tetrachords, and neither a passing interest in Greek theory, nor an occasional use of exotic scale is truly the ‘key’ to unlocking his late style. However, notwithstanding Szelenyi’s unsuccessful attempt to create a Greco-Hungarian genome for Liszt’s late music, one question with regard to the ubiquitous *verbunkos* idiom still remained: are there instances where Liszt’s unconventional harmony can be *demonstrably derived* from his use of ‘Hungarian’ (scalar or other) material?

This, I believe, is the question Lajos Bárdos tried to answer in ‘Die volkmusikalischen Tonleitern bei Liszt’ (first published in 1968).

Significantly, Bárdos claimed that beyond the universally recognised ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Gypsy Minor’ scale there was a whole *culture* of Hungarian folkloristic scales that permeated Liszt’s works. Bárdos provided an impressive list of thirteen different scales grouped into ‘minor’, ‘phrygian’ and ‘major’ types (see Appendix 2), and several examples of each scale in his work. In itself, this observation was important, as it demonstrated a richness of harmonic possibilities that ran counter to the orthodox and reductive perception of a single hackneyed ‘Gypsy scale’. Furthermore, Bárdos cleverly pre-empted objections from peasant-music purists by occasionally demonstrating that these scales existed both in real folk music and in Bartók’s and Kodály’s compositions, and by implying that this connection shows a continuity of Hungarian composition from Liszt to the new Hungarian school.

But his strategy for bestowing cultural respectability on *verbunkos* material was only a means to a greater patriotic end.

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66 Ramon Satyendra, op. cit., 226. Satyendra offers the more rigorous and consistent concept of ‘inflected repetitions’ a few pages later (230-238). However, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, his formalist perspective does not necessarily invalidate a cultural context, as in some cases certain types of ‘inflected repetitions’ may have their origins in *verbunkos* practices (see Chapter 5, pp. 217-218).


68 See exx. in ibid., pp. 172-3, 175-7, 184, 186.

69 The article is also framed by explicit patriotic sentiments (see the first and last paragraphs). Towards the end of the original Hungarian version of the article, Bárdos writes the following: ‘About fifty years ago they wrote over there [presumably in Germany]: 'the Master has closed his blue German eyes for ever'.
Throughout the article Bárdos gives examples from the traditional ‘Hungarian’ repertoire (e.g. Hungarian Rhapsodies, ‘Gran’ Mass), the ‘progressive’ national repertoire (e.g. *Sunt Lacrymae Rerum, Historische ungarische Bildnisse*), the Zukunftsmusik repertoire (e.g. ‘Faust’ Symphony, *B-A-C-H*), and the not-specifically-Hungarian ‘late works’ (e.g. *Nuages Gris, En rêve*). By including both ‘colourful’ and avant-garde instances of modality, and by showing that Liszt used these scales frequently, in explicitly ‘Hungarian’ and non-specifically ‘Hungarian’ works alike, he gave the most compelling argument yet for viewing a great deal of Liszt’s oeuvre as ‘Hungarian’ without having to deal with the musically-restrictive and ontologically slippery notion of a ‘Hungarian work’. The Hungarianness was in the generic material, most specifically in folk-music scales that formed Liszt’s unique language. Therefore, in a way, much or most of Liszt’s music (if not, by inference, all of it) was both Hungarian and modern. Although Bárdos never argued that Liszt’s progressive style was wholly ‘Hungarian’, we can infer from this article that his Zukunftsmusik was certainly partly Hungarian, and it is also this part which distinguishes it from the German one. Moreover, it is the ‘Hungarian’ aspect of Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik which may have led him to his most ‘far-sighted’ innovations; subtext: ‘German’ aspects led to the conventional-cum-Wagnerian Zukunftsmusik while ‘Hungarian’ aspects led to even more progressive music. Bárdos clinches this argument at the end of his article by showing that the thirteen folk-music scales bore some relationship to symmetrical scale-types such as 1:2 (octatonic), 1:3 and 1:5. These ‘intertonal’ scales (i.e. symmetrical scales that were not bound to specific keys but ‘hovered’ freely between them) were discussed by Ernő Lendvai in connection with Bartók’s music. Liszt already used such scales in his works. QED.70

So had Bárdos finally found the holy grail of Liszt’s Hungarian Zukunftsmusik? I would say that Bárdos opened up very helpful possibilities, particularly his shift of emphasis (despite

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Blue German eyes?

Let the Master himself answer:

"I am Hungarian! ... I too belong to the old, strong race, I too am the son of this unbreakable nation, for which - I believe - yet better days will come." (From Venice, 1838)" See Bárdos, ‘Liszt Ferenc "népi" hangsorai’, in: *Harminc irás a zeneelméletének és gyakorlatának különböző kérdéseiről 1929-1969* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó 1969), 126. In the German translation the implicitly anti-German paragraph about ‘German blue eyes’ has been omitted (cf. Bárdos, ‘Die volkmusikalischen Tonleitern bei Liszt’, 196). I thank Rachel Beckles Willson for drawing my attention to this passage in Hungarian and for her translation.

70 Ibid., 191-4.
the nationalist subtext) to a more generic outlook. More specifically, Bárdos’ idea of a plurality of scales is palpably supported by Liszt’s music, if not by the specific examples in the article, as I shall shortly argue. Yet it may be that not all these scales are equally important; the music examples and analyses in this thesis may collectively suggest that some recur more frequently and have a greater structural role in Liszt’s music than others. Besides the verbunkos minor and its fifth-degree relative the kalindra (ex. 1.1a), these more frequent scales include nos. 3, 5, 9 and 12 in Bárdos’ list (Appendix 2), i.e. respectively the verbunkos dorian (e.g. D-E-F-G♯-A-B-C), aeolian kalindra (D-E♯-F♯-G-A-B♯-C), harmonic major (D-E-F♯-G-A-B♯-C♯), and – one of Liszt’s favourites – the verbunkos lydian (D-E♯-F♯-G♯-A-B-C♯).

I have found that in certain cases (not always and not as a rule) a modal hearing actually reveals the originality of Liszt’s syntax, and it is these cases which will form some of our interest in this thesis. Nevertheless, Bárdos’ ‘postwar’ method of presenting tiny chopped-up examples of these scales does not make the necessary leap into compositional analysis that would allow us to assess whether any given generic material (of whatever origin) has really made a difference to normative ‘Western’ harmonic formulae. Formal analysts are not inclined to view music as being either ‘German’ or ‘Hungarian’ anyway, but even from a generic point of view, which could potentially bridge the disciplines, it would be all too simple to dismiss Bárdos’ examples when one examines a few more bars before or after the ones he cited. However, I certainly do not wish to doubt Bárdos’ integrity. On the contrary, I believe that his examples demonstrate incredible intuition and intellectual independence, and it is rather his method of presentation, an inheritance from the ‘late works’ discourse, that restricts and in some ways misrepresents his insights.

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71 It is important to note that Bárdos had little effect on mainstream musicology, in that respect, to judge by the way the ‘Gypsy minor’ continues to enjoy exclusive attention. This, despite the fact that Liszt demonstrably uses several scales in his music, and the fact that he himself referred later in life (in a letter from July 1879) to these scales in the plural – “Certains modes magyars, tristes et nobles, me sont inséparables et j’y rattache d’abondance de cœur le peu de talent acquis durant en travail continue de plus de 50 années.” – a quote which opens Bárdos’ article.

72 As Appendix 2 shows, I have replaced all of Bárdos’ ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Hungarian’ attributes with verbunkos in accordance with the principle I have laid out at the beginning of the chapter. I will also consistently use throughout the thesis abbreviations to denote modal scales and modal keys (a concept that will be fully developed in Chapter 4), thus Bǐ-ver/lyd is the verbunkos lydian mode on Bǐ; the kalindra mode on A is A-kal, and so forth. The reader is advised to use Appendix 2 from time to time as a point of reference; however, as we shall be dealing mostly with 5-6 modes, these abbreviations should become familiar soon enough.
One of Bárdos' greatest insights was that Liszt worked with such materials innovatively throughout his life, thereby encouraging us towards an inclusive and historically flexible approach that does not rigidly separate the 'late works' from the rest of the repertoire. He fearlessly examines innovative features even in such 'tarnished' works as the Hungarian Rhapsodies, casting aside misguided historicist and cultural anxieties. So, for example, Bárdos draws our attention to an exquisitely beautiful passage in B♭-ver/lyd from Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13 (henceforth RH1373, ex. 1.3). If not exactly 'modern' by twentieth-century standards, we can at least appreciate the unique quality of this scale, especially when we exercise a historical imagination and try to hear it against major-minor conventions. Yet when Bárdos' example is put even in a limited context (see bs. 44-5 enclosed in the rectangle in ex. 1.3), this appreciative sensibility seems a bit overblown. The overall key is A major. 'B♭-ver/lyd', notwithstanding its exotic C♯ and E♯, functions quite conventionally as a II₆, ('Neapolitan') chord that leads to the dominant. All we hear is a slightly colourful version of the authentic cadence II-V-I. Some might consider this a sobering example of how formal analysis can cut through the pretensions of style analysts with a cultural agenda. Yet if we were to stop here (as might well happen if one felt misled by such a context-free example), we would not see that perhaps the harmony is not as conventional as conventional theory would have us believe (or hear) and perhaps B♭-ver/lyd plays a more significant structural role after all. First, we could observe that the phrase which starts in A major ends in a half cadence in bs. 23-39 (not quoted). It is at this stage that the B♭-ver/lyd passage enters, effectively creating tritone relationships with V (E major), and then leading the phrase to a close in A minor. The B♭-ver/lyd is not only a catalyst for a modal shift from major to minor; it also shares C♯ with A major, making the quality of this change somewhat smoother. Moreover, it does not simply 'function' as II₆, but also leads to F♯ major, its shared chromatic submediant with A major; and sure enough, in b. 49 (not quoted) we bounce back from F♯ to A major without any preparation. Could it be, then, that the introduction of B♭-ver/lyd, which from a tonal perspective is a peculiar major-minor mixture of pitches, has generated the chromatic relationship we hear (A minor – F♯ major – A major) in a non-conventional way? And could it be that such a passage reveals a certain harmonic style that requires conceptualisation beyond 'scales'?

73 See 'Notes on nomenclature and abbreviations', p. 3.
We shall have ample opportunities to answer such questions as we accumulate more analytical case studies. Here I just offer these questions to suggest that the historical (and now old-fashioned) ‘scalar approach’ may show only the surface of something much deeper and more complex. Bárdos, for example, was not entirely wrong to point to the symmetrical properties of the scale, but his examples do not properly demonstrate the significance of his observation. We can see from ex. 1.4 (based on Bárdos’s ex. 67, p. 192 in the article) that certain symmetric scales taken from the modern discourse of post-tonality are surprisingly similar to folklorist scales, generic materials that thus far had been habitually confined to a very different discourse (style, history, nationalism, etc.). But he missed an opportunity to conceptualise its importance for Liszt’s harmony and instead preferred to remind us that this is the kind of modernism that led to the brave new composition of the twentieth century (his allusion to Bartók and Lendvai). The problem with such comparisons is that they force unrealistic and anachronistic expectations that clash with real differences between Liszt and twentieth-century composers and, coupled with a method of disguising these differences by presenting modernist ‘features’ out of compositional context, this could easily lead one to dismiss his whole modernist case out of hand. Put for example Bárdos’ evidence for a 1:3 scale in La Notte in its local context (ex. 1.5; Bárdos ex. 71 from op. cit., 193, is enclosed in the rectangle). Looking at his example in isolation, we might well conclude that scale-steps in A major with one chromatic passing note (B#) hardly amount to cutting-edge tonal symmetry; case dismissed. But the context is revelatory. Notice the startling D♭ note in Bárdos’ example: it forcefully asserts a semitonal relationship between D minor and C♯ minor that was only tentatively drawn in the preceding bars, and which dominates the whole passage. These semitonal relationships have a modal-diatonic basis: ‘D minor’, or rather D-ver/dor (D-E-F♯-G♯-A-B-C) is not a chromatically-lowered degree, but initially IV♯ of A minor (b. 72) and then II of C♯-har/phryg (C♯, D♭, E, [no F♯], G♯, A, B♯) whose second degree is, diatonically, D♭. The particular harmonic quality of the passage, its seamless transition from one key to the other, is enabled by a subtle use of common pitches from the verbunkos dorian (on D) and harmonic phrygian (on C♯), and through a deliberate avoidance of the uncommon F♯. Ex. 1.6 schematically summarises how Liszt effectively constructs one seamless tone row out of the two semitonally-juxtaposed modes, where the perception of the tonic triad depends on the entrance of a supportive chord, a melodic shift of emphasis, or a slight inflection (e.g. from D to D♯ in bs. 77-9). Finally, as in the previous
example from RH13, there is something about the overall style of the passage, the strangeness or perhaps even ‘wrongness’ of the tonal directionality (an overall subdominant directionality and ‘wrong-key’ cadences) which should invite further inquiry and conceptualisation beyond ‘scales’. And of course, there are many more non-pitch elements that may have a relationship to verbunkos and which perhaps also play a part in the compositional design.

We will leave such questions well alone for now. Nevertheless, it is possible to say this: Bárdos’ article begs further research and refinement, a deeper look into whether Liszt used any of these scales structurally, whether one or more of them mattered more than others to his composition, and whether or not there are other features of his verbunkos idiom that mattered compositionally in his work. This has, by and large, not happened to this day, perhaps owing to the fact that Bárdos seemed to have found a serviceable technical solution to the question ‘what made Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik (at least partly) Hungarian?’ – That, and the misleading appearance of completeness and neatness of Bárdos’s taxonomic method, led to the false impression that he had effectively summarised all there is to say about Liszt’s ‘folk-music scales’, or the modernist element in his ‘Hungarian’ style. Research in the same vein therefore either followed his methodology and insights, or moved towards a more formalist approach that lost focus on the ‘folkloristic’ aspect he highlighted. Meanwhile, the advent of formalism has ‘exposed’ Bárdos’ (and others’) marriage of music analysis and cultural-national studies as an old-fashioned exercise in nationalism complete with analytically inadequate methodologies that beclouded the ‘real’ issue: Liszt’s post-tonal syntax. The counter-advent of ‘new musicology’ in the 1980s and 1990s has further complicated matters by seemingly endorsing a wholesale rejection of formal theory and

74 I shall cite three representative examples. Klára Hamburger (1997) expands the repertoire, discussing specific works not mentioned in Bárdos’s article (and some that are not mentioned in Gárdonyi’s book), but she does not expand the methodology itself. Lajos Zeke (1986), on the other hand, attempted to find a structural significance in the succession of different scale-types. It is not always clear whether these scales really have their origins in verbunkos or other East European musical cultures, and what the relative structural importance of one scale or another may be. Nevertheless, his structural insights are a step beyond Bárdos as well as his intriguing suggestion (supported by two examples, pp. 182-3) that we could sharpen our perception of the verbunkos idiom through intertextual analysis – both ideas which I have found helpful. Leonard Ott (1977) repeats some of Bárdos’ examples, yet is more focused on how Liszt may have generated certain modern-sounding sonorities from the verbunkos minor. This is helpful (to the extent that he only observes very short stretches of music), but at the same time Lott’s focus on a single ‘Gypsy scale’ is a step back from Bárdos’ scale-group approach.

75 See Chapter 5, pp. 213-214.
analysis, thereby further discouraging the development of a more rigorous analytical approach to the verbunkos idiom (we shall explore this complication in Chapter 3). But it may be that this discourse was fettered in the first place by the remit of its questions. The scale-orientated answer to ‘what made Liszt’s music Hungarian’ may have satisfied the need to repatriate Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik, but a rather different question has never been properly formulated and explored: how does Liszt’s verbunkos idiom (not his ‘Hungarian music’) in its entirety (not only ‘scales’) relate to his compositional innovations (rather than to national/ethnic character)? And even when we discount the ideological hurdles, it is evident that, in the latter quarter of the twentieth century, the attempt to link cultural and formal perspectives through scales fell short of holding together an ever-widening discursive gap between style analysis and music analysis. Thus the question of the style’s role in composition reached both ideological satisfaction and a methodological impasse, and had consequently been dropped. But perhaps, as some of my previous musical examples may have already suggested, it is an issue that had been prematurely dropped, and a way out of the methodological impasse can be found.

**VI. Intermezzo: Disentangling the Web of Received Ideas**

My critique of the main discourses that relate to this issue stems from a need to understand how received ideas, ideologies and methodologies obscured a compositional perspective of the idiom. Its ultimate aim, however, is to argue for a renewed analytical interest in Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. I believe we are better positioned to appreciate these compositional aspects today than in the past, in view of developments in methodological possibilities and the decline of all-powerful narratives of ethnicity, nationality, and modernism. This musical idiom deserves a reappraisal, since past scholarship never explored and analysed it in a compositional context. As the title of this chapter suggests, although there have always been musicians and scholars for whom the influence of verbunkos on Liszt’s music was palpable enough, these intuitions did not translate into rigorous music analysis, leaving a potentially important transcultural phenomenon largely unexplained and unacknowledged. So far we have broadly dealt with the marginalisation of both Liszt and his verbunkos idiom from the discourse of Zukunftsmusik and the particular efforts of prominent Hungarian scholars to redress this situation. The Hungarian effort to repatriate Liszt’s music required an
interpretation that emphasised its ‘universality’, against similar claims for the German canon. Furthermore, it seems that Hungarian scholars were uncomfortable with the low cultural status of Hungarian-Gypsy ‘café music’ in Europe, and sought ways of adding dignity to verbunkos-related elements in Liszt’s music by focusing on the most abstract scalar material or conversely by denying verbunkos an important place altogether and seeking other ways of establishing Liszt as a Hungarian composer. Bence Szabolcsi has opted for the latter solution in his construction of a Liszt whose cosmopolitan modernism comes from many nations but not from German or Gypsy influences, and in this he came closest to developing Bartók’s views on Liszt’s importance to modern composition in Hungary. We, however, should understand such opinions in the context of contemporaneous culture politics. Such an understanding has a salutary effect on analysis, since it destabilises ideologically-based truisms, removes long-established reasons for neglecting repertoires or even forces one to think through methodological issues.

And so we turn in the next chapter to one of the most important players in our web of received ideas. Bartók’s ideas on modernism and authenticity, and his particular ‘rehabilitative’ narrative of Liszt’s modernism have been enormously influential in Liszt studies, both in Hungary and in the West. We shall unpick the original Bartókian ideas that have since been interminably reproduced, and finally explore further means of responding to these historic modes of appreciation through the analysis of more passages from Liszt’s music. By ‘responding’ I do not necessarily mean a negative response. The context of Bartók’s ideas, his reasons and justifications will be taken into consideration. Some of his epistemic certainties will be challenged, while at other times Bartókian ideas will be borrowed and manipulated to the advantage of this thesis. It will emerge, for example, that Bartók’s notion of the impact of folk music on consonance and dissonance, and how folk music may pervade and structure ‘art music’ in original ways, may turn out to be helpful rather than obstructive – helpful, that is, if one is prepared to ‘sacrilegiously’ apply such ideas to the analysis of the verbunkos idiom. The results can be most surprising.
Chapter 2:

Modernism and Authenticity

Liszt’s *Rhapsodies hongroises* – so it would seem – have already fulfilled their function as works of musical art. The occasional practice and performance of ... [certain] *Rhapsodies hongroises* ... may be traced back principally to the virtuoso impulses of a few pianists. Generally these works have been considered as a sort of “superior light music”. Works of later composers, obviously written under the influence of Liszt’s *Rhapsodies hongroises* – to mention but the most renowned: the *Rhapsody*, Op. 1 of Béla Bartók (1904) and the *Tzigane* of Maurice Ravel (1924) – rank much higher on the aesthetic scale than Liszt’s paradigmatic *Rhapsodies*, despite their dependence on them.

– Zoltán Gárdonyi (1963)

At the turn of the century Kodály and Bartók produced their monumental work in Hungarian folk song. They demonstrated that the genuine folk music of Hungary originated in the remote Hungarian-speaking villages and hamlets of the hinterland, of Transylvania and Rumania, kept alive by an oral tradition stretching hundreds of years, and that it had nothing whatsoever to do with the Gypsies. For a long time the rhapsodies fell into disrepute. It seemed that they were “corrupt,” and musicologists wanted nothing to do with them. This was a foolish attitude: the value of music is inherent and has nothing to do with how close it remains to, or how far it departs from, an ethnomusicological standpoint ... As we now know, the Gypsies had no real creative tradition of their own. They took music wherever they found it and refashioned it in their own image. Liszt knew nothing of all this in 1840 – the science of ethnomusicology did not yet exist – and it shows a lack of historical imagination to condemn him for not behaving like a twentieth-century scholar.

– Alan Walker (1987)

Alan Walker could have added that it equally shows a ‘lack of historical imagination’ to think of Liszt’s adaptation of *verbunkos* as an old-fashioned and middlebrow exemplar of a spent romantic tradition, as Gárdonyi seems to suggest. The two quotes represent two common issues in their reception: the Rhapsodies’ (lack of) artistic value on the one hand, and their (lack of) cultural authenticity on the other. More often than not, these two issues are wedded to each other, or otherwise tacitly or explicitly reinforce each other, to suggest that the rhapsodies are also part of some kind of failed history. Their combined message has

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effectively divided and conquered the appreciation of Liszt’s repertoire. It is absolutely acceptable to consider Liszt’s *Faust* symphony as ‘modernist’; one takes for granted that such a designation is historically relative. No one would condemn *Les Préludes* for not keeping up with the modernisms of *Pierrot Lunaire*. But this is precisely the kind of anachronism applied to the rhapsodies: they fail the test of early twentieth-century folklorist aesthetics.

There is certainly one easy way of redeeming Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom in this sense. One could leave ‘superior light music’ like the Hungarian Rhapsodies aside and concentrate on instances where the idiom is abstracted and where there are no longer obvious or blatant associations to Gypsy-band playing. Yet this puts one under unwelcome obligations to decide when the *verbunkos* idiom fulfils the expectations of ‘high art’ and when it is only ‘superior light music’; or it obliges one to separate the ‘good elements’ of the *verbunkos* idiom from the ‘bad’. Furthermore, such a historically disjunctive approach can only obscure how Liszt’s late works relate to earlier ones, and rather reinforce the impression that the idiom is, by and large, extraneous to the modernism and artistry of these works.\(^3\) An approach that seeks a more complete perspective on the modernist aspect of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom therefore cannot ignore the Rhapsodies, and nor should it. If the *verbunkos* idiom was indeed *integral* to Liszt’s modernism, as I believe, then his Hungarian Rhapsodies mattered a great deal, and the interdictions of any hostile agenda should be either rebutted or summarily dismissed. But perhaps it is better to engage with this agenda actively than to assume it is too obsolete to matter any more. Perhaps it still matters, because we are living with the consequences of its influence, and because we have inherited ideas from it that keep raising nagging doubts. Is it not true, for example, that twentieth-century composers were much more attuned to folklore than their predecessors, that their compositions have more deeply penetrated the spirit, tuning, instrumental sound and performance practices of folk musics? Is it not true that *verbunkos*, at any rate, is not too distant from conventional Western music, not least in the way it seems to conform to ‘common practice’ tonality? Did Bartók not make valid points about the connection between folk music and modern composition that rather put Liszt’s Rhapsodies to shame?

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Ignoring powerful ideas does not invalidate them. This chapter therefore looks at how the reception and interpretation of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, or generically-related pieces from ca. 1840-53, have been influenced by, and sometimes confused with, early twentieth-century issues of folksong authenticity. Ultimately it seeks a way out of this confusion and towards a more sympathetic appreciation of the modernism that lay at the heart of Liszt’s great Hungarian project. To that end, I shall analyse in Part VI of this chapter a section from one of Liszt’s rhapsodies which specifically ‘responds’ to authenticity issues from today’s vantage point. We begin, however, with an historical event that in many ways defined the reception of the rhapsodies.

I. Des Bohémiens: Liszt’s ‘Original Sin’ and its Aftermath

In 1859 Liszt published a book on Gypsy music entitled *Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie*, which was meant to bring to European attention the art of Gypsy playing and the artistic impetus that led to his, by then highly successful, Hungarian Rhapsodies. Behind him was the long experience of transcribing hundreds of Hungarian-Gypsy melodies and combining and recombining them to larger forms through several revisions. Liszt’s mastery of this folkloristic idiom was unparalleled in scope and detail, and he wished to draw attention firstly to the musical features of this style (as this was music that merited serious attention in his opinion) and secondly, to contend that greater attention to the more unusual features of the style (‘unusual’ from a Western point of view) could present composition with new possibilities of expanding its musical language and transgressing dry academic strictures. Funnily enough, *Des Bohémiens* purports to ‘explain’ all of this, despite, or perhaps for the very fact that the music itself was so well received. Liszt, I believe, knew all too well into what category of appreciation his rhapsodies would fall. He therefore wanted his audience to understand that this was serious art music rather than conventional and entertaining exoticism, and was loathe to letting them enjoy his rhapsodies for all the wrong reasons. He also wished to communicate directly with lay readers, over the heads of academics and critics, which he deeply distrusted (perhaps for a good reason, after receiving more than his fair share of harsh criticism for almost a decade). This is probably why the
whole book does not contain a single musical example, and some truly bold and suggestive statements about the use of verbunkos harmonic practices to modern composition remain unexplained. For example this is what he writes about harmony derived from the verbunkos minor scale:

[Bohemian music] ordinarily adopts for its minor scale the augmented fourth, diminished sixth and augmented seventh. It is above all through the augmentation of the fourth that the harmony often assumes a very strange and disorientating brilliancy. Musicians will immediately perceive in which manner and sense this triple and quasi-constant modification of the intervals distinguishes this harmony from our own.

And in the following passage about the practice of unprepared modulations, Liszt seems to be rallying this music under the banner of Zukunftsmusik:

Chords of transition, with very few exceptions, are completely left out ... in the true (genuine) Bohemian music. When faced with such salto mortale for the first time, our ordinary musicians remain completely dumbfounded and disapproving. Often intimidated ... they can think of nothing better to say than: “this would be very beautiful if it were [done] well!” – forgetting that in certain cases the beautiful can only be beautiful if it frees itself from certain made-up proscriptions; which, not having existed always and everywhere, cannot, without pretence, continue [to be regarded as abiding laws] always and everywhere.

[The civilised musician] is ... disorientated by such modulations, which are so abrupt as to upset his most cherished musical beliefs and [cause him to react with] indigation, were he to take them seriously ...

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4 Translated from Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie (Paris: A. Bourdilliat et Ce, 1859), 223; my italics. ‘Diminished sixth’ and ‘augmented seventh’ are of course part of an outmoded jargon; they simply mean minor sixth and major seventh. By ‘triple modification’ Liszt probably means that the combination of the normative minor sixth and major seventh with the augmented fourth (a specifically non-Western interval, which he points out as the most typical interval) results in a harmony that is highly unusual. Cf. original text: « D’ordinaire, elle prend dans la gamme mineure la quarte augmentée, la sixie diminuée, et la septième augmentée. Par l’augmentation de la quarte surtout, l’harmonie y acquiert des chatoiements souvent très-bizarres et d’un éclat offusquant. Les musiciens saisiront de suite en combien et en quoi cette triple et quasi constante modifications des intervalles fait différer cette harmonie de la nôtre. » (original italics).

5 Des Bohémiens, 222: « Les accords de transition sont, à peu d’exceptions près, complètement oubliés dans la brusque attaque d’un ton après un autre, quand c’est de la vraie (genuine) musique bohémienne que l’on entend. Devant ces salto mortale, l’esprit de nos musiciens ordinaires reste, la première fois, ébahi et interloqué. Souvent intimidés … ils ne savent que dire … « Ce serait fort beau si s’était bien ! » oubliant qu’en certaines occurrences, le beau n’est pas beau qu’à la condition de se dégager de certaines entraves fictices [sic], qui n’ayant pas existé toujours et partout, ne sauraient, sans outrecuidance, prétendre se perpétuer toujours et partout. »

6 Des Bohémiens, 224: « Le musicien civilisé est … désorienté par des modulations si abruptes qu’elles choquant ses plus chères croyances musicales et l’indigneraient s’il pouvait les prendre au sérieux. »
While it is possible to show instances of modally-inflected harmony and ‘capricious’
modulations and chord changes in the rhapsodies, Liszt did us a disservice by not providing
some detailed examples of the harmonic practices he heard. As a result, we have only an
imprecise and historically anachronistic idea of what this music sounded like, which makes
a more concrete transcultural connection to the original hard to establish. Another problem
is that even vague musical descriptions, such as the two quotes above, are few and far
between. Overall, the book is predominantly obsessed with non-musical issues that concern
the *Bohémien* much more than providing a useful guide to *leur musique* as the title
promises, let alone serving as an enlightening preamble to the Hungarian Rhapsodies, which
was Liszt’s original intention.

The book however is much better known for its racist comparisons between Jews and Roma
(racist to both peoples in the end, though positing Jews as a negative foil to the virtuous
‘character’ and lifestyle of the Gypsies), and the mistaken assertion that ‘Gypsy music’
originated in Asia, and that the Hungarians merely accepted and cultivated it. There is some
agreement between scholars that Liszt was not responsible for the anti-Semitism, but he
may well have been responsible for the theory about the origins of the music. Even ahead
of the appearance of the Hungarian translation in 1860, Liszt’s assertions about the origins
of Hungarian music were already known and caused a heated public controversy. Liszt was
in turn criticised, condemned and defended by various writers. A most vocal and somewhat
pompous protest came from the *magyar nőtő* composer, Kálmán Simonffy:

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7 No manuscript of the book survives, therefore there is no conclusive proof how much Liszt was responsible
or even involved with most of its content. It is highly unlikely, though, that he was the author of the endless
(and rather pointless) digressions into anti-Semitic diatribes, theological speculations and pseudo-Hegelian
rambling, as he was not anti-Semitic and his theological views were extremely tolerant; moreover, the
discussion of music (which becomes more frequent towards the end of the book, as the other nonsense
becomes more infrequent) give the impression that he was, after all, primarily interested in making a powerful
case for the artistic purpose of his Rhapsodies. It is quite telling, then, that whenever a musical issue is being
discussed, the style of writing suddenly becomes much crisper and the argumentation more precise. On the
other hand, the lengthy digressions into puerile (but often quite pernicious) racism, narrow-minded arguments
and at times truly convoluted phraseology, have all the stylistic and ideological fingerprints of his life
companion, and in this case highly interventionist editor, Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein. See
alleged anti-Semitism.
Sir:
What are you doing? What have you written in your pamphlet, which I have not read myself, but which the entire Hungarian press quotes the following: “Hungarian music does not belong to the Hungarians but to the Gypsies.” My goodness, what a deception! Public opinion is against you, and I inform you herewith that I have to refute you with all the severity you deserve... 8

A week later, Simonffy was to assert in the same journal (the Pesti Napló) that he, as one who had studied Hungarian national music and its performance by Gypsy bands “for many years”, was “in a position to know the... ways of thinking of these people and their relationship to our music, and their tricks and abuses in connection with copyrights, from Bihari to the latest Abony gypsy, better than Mr. Liszt.” 9 Charges of inauthenticity, cultural pilfering and perversion that already had a basis in Hungarian discourse, now reached a decisive boiling point. 10 In 1860, Liszt’s ideas were rebutted most vigorously and systematically by Sámuel Brassai, who endeavoured to prove, in the most ‘scientific’ manner known then (notwithstanding the occasional snide rhetoric) that ‘Gypsy Music’ was in fact Hungarian Music. The title of his booklet, Magyar vagy zigányzene? [Hungarian or Gypsy Music?], set the main and persistent theme of cultural proprietorship that would hijack future academic discussions of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. Brassai’s acerbic contention that “with our compatriot Liszt’s permission” Gypsies overuse augmented seconds more “than is desired by good taste” prefigures Bartók’s rejection of such ‘oriental’ interpolations. 11 In it, one can already sense the ‘anxiety of orientalism’, the fear of being branded too ‘Asiatic’ in European eyes and the need to differentiate ‘Magyar’ from ‘Gypsy’, that underpins future tirades against Gypsiness in Hungarian music. The argument that there is no such thing as ‘Gypsy Music’, and that Gypsy ‘performance’ is simply a bad version of ‘pure’ Hungarian music, thus became the most important thing one could say in

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8 Walker, Liszt, 2, 385. Originally published in the Pesti Napló on September 6, 1859.
10 Five years before the publication of Liszt’s book, Gábor Mátray, who was then the leading authority on Hungarian national music, wrote: “Unfortunately earlier the more cultured Hungarians did not generally practise the national music, and entrusted its preservation and spreading only to gypsies; on account of which it must not be a matter of surprise if foreign musicians begin to doubt the true Hungarian character of the national music customarily performer by our gypsies, and if they regard this as being Indian gypsy music rather than Hungarian music.” Quoted in Sárosi, 144; originally quoted in Gábor Mátray, ‘A magyar zene és a magyar cigányok zenéje’ [Hungarian Music and Hungarian-Gypsy music] in: Magyar- és Erdélyorzág képekben IV [Hungary and Transylvania in Pictures IV], ed. Kubinyi & Vahot, Pest: (1854), 120.
11 Ibid., 147. Original quote from Sámuel Brassai, Magyar vagy zigányzene? [Hungarian or Gypsy Music?] (Kolozsvár: 1860), 44.
the matter. Liszt stressed that it was in any case the performance (i.e. the improvised composition based on the tunes, not the tunes per se) which interested him, and moreover inserted a caveat in Des Bohémiens that even if he were proven wrong about the origins of the music, his high opinion of Hungarian-Gypsy music would remain the same: scientific accuracy had little to do with artistic taste, and the latter was clearly more important to him. This did very little to deflate the burgeoning discourse of authenticity and the indignation of his critics. His ultimate sin was to give creative credit to the Gypsies, and to consider precisely the most outlandishly ‘oriental’ aspects of the style (ornamentation, exotic-modal scales) as worthy; and it was precisely these aspects which his critics were loathe to recognise as Hungarian, but at the same time, they were unable to value their cultural difference and possible importance to art music.

12 Liszt never intended to make a central issue of the origins of the music and was prepared to admit he might be wrong. The point was rather that Hungarian music attained its most vibrant and brilliant existence when (good) Gypsy bands played it. Whether right or wrong about the origin of the music, Liszt asserted his right as an artist to prefer the highly-cultivated verbunkos version, and to accord due respect not only to the brilliance of its delivery, but to those elements which make it original, creative, distinctive and unique, including the oriental elements that so horrified some of his critics (translated from Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie, 283-4):

... the solution to this problem does not appear to us to be of any major importance, and what we have maintained about the intimate correlation between the music and the spirit of the Bohemians, will neither be strengthened, if [the solution to the Hungarian/Gypsy question] favour our opinion, nor be weakened if the contrary view prevails; virtuosity has its own poetic and creative power. Moreover, neither the interests of art nor those of vain nationalism should be involved in deciding it, as it is evident that in Hungary it had grown between the adopter [i.e. the host Magyars] and the adopted [the Gypsies], where the [mutual] identification was so complete ... that both have an equal share in the honour, glory and merit of having brought this art, through each other and with each other, to its highest degree and its most beautiful expression. Of course, [even if] the Bohemians were the first authors of these melodies and rhythms, the first introducers of this style and these flourishes, the original proprietors of the intervals of the scale which distinguishes their music, they would have never dared to cultivate [these elements] to such a degree, if their noble hosts had not given them the occasion to do so, and had not been excited and delighted to listen to them; and those who continue to maintain that it was the Magyars who had instructed the Bohemians in their melodies and their dance tunes, would not, nevertheless, deny that it is only due to the Gypsies that [this music] was delivered from the patchy and badly fragmented state in which we find most of the national music traditions of other countries.

« ... la solution de ce probléme ne nous paraît être nullement d’une importance majeure, et ce que nous soutenons sur l’intime corrélation existante entre la musique et l’âme de Bohémiens, ne serait ni fortifié, si elle était favorable à notre opinion, ni infirmé dans le cas contraire, la virtuosité ayant aussi ses puissances poétiques et créatrices. De plus, ni les intérêts de l’art ni ceux de la vanité nationale n’y sont engagés, car il est évident qu’en Hongrie il s’est établie entre l’adopte et l’adoptant, quels qu’ils fussent une identification si entière ... qu’il ont part égale dont l’honneur, la gloire et le mérite d’avoir amené cet art, l’un par l’autre et l’un avec l’autre, à son plus haut degré et à sa plus belle expression. Certes, les Bohémiens, en étant même les premiers auteurs de ces mélodies, de ces rythmes, les premiers intoducteurs de ce style et de ses floritures, les propriétaires originaires des intervalles de la gamme qui distingue leur musique, ne l’eussent jamais cultivée au même degré, si leurs nobles hôtes ne leur en eussent donné l’occasion, ne les y eussent excités, ne se fussent délectés à les entendre ; et ceux même qui continueront à admettre que sont les Magyars qui ont enseigné aux Bohémiens leurs chants à eux et leurs airs de danses, ne sauraient pourtant nier que du moins ils doivent uniquement aux Cygany de les voir sortis de l’état morcelé et pauvrement fragmentaire dans lequel sont restées la plupart des traditions de musique nationale dans les autres pays. »
From Liszt’s point of view, all of this hullabaloo inflated a minor point, the origins of the music (a scientific problem), at the expense of what was meant to be a serious aesthetic discussion of Hungary’s verbunkos music and its relevance for contemporary composition, something which obviously intensely interested and occupied Liszt as a composer, and which unfortunately does not come out very clearly from his muddled and meddled-with book. It certainly has not offered anything that would effectively prevent the rhapsodies from being misunderstood and misjudged as brilliant, but ultimately frivolous show pieces.

Eventually, the nationalist indignation and controversy over Des Bohémiens calmed down. Liszt, after all, was a living legend, a towering musician of Hungarian origins and a prominent patriotic figure that could not be ignored or shunned. Moreover, the influence of the Hungarian Rhapsodies on Hungarian art composition could not be denied. Yet the controversy left a bitter taste, and the discourse of proprietorship and the nature of Hungarianness persisted. In 1881 another storm blew (this time with fiercer charges of anti-Semitism)\(^\text{13}\), but it too subsided into an uneasy consensus of forgiving Liszt his errors in the name of Hungarian generosity and recognition of his undeniable artistic and patriotic merits. By 1911, during the centennial celebrations of Liszt’s birth, it was possible to completely appropriate him as a Hungarian composer, brushing aside Des Bohémiens as an unfortunate misunderstanding that did not matter too much in the end, or as one critic wrote, it was “a sin [which Liszt] expiated ... with his works, with his activities, and with ... the establishment of the Music Academy ...”\(^\text{14}\) Such a flippant circumvention of contentious issues of Hungarian musical identity was doomed to fail. With a solution to the Hungarian/Gypsy question looming large in the form of Bartók’s and Kodály’s comparative

\(^{13}\) The second edition of Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie was completely out of Liszt’s hands. Princess Carolyne added some 200 pages to the original 350, mostly adding detail and bile to the anti-Semitic content of the first edition. At the time the book was published (1881) there was a much larger and socially- and economically active Jewish community in Budapest, in comparison with 1859. Also, Jewish emancipation in Europe had made some strides in the latter half of the nineteenth century, therefore the Jewish community in Budapest could protest with force against the contents of the book in a way that was unthinkable in 1859. Needless to say, the virulent anti-Semitic content – which implicated Liszt in views that, from all other accounts, he did not share with the princess – sealed his anti-Semitic reputation, and created yet another exasperating shift of emphasis from the by then hopelessly lost original intention of the book.

\(^{14}\) Lynn Hooker, ‘Liszt is ours: The Hungarian Commemoration of the Liszt Centennial’ (paper presented at the annual meeting of the AMS, Houston, TX, November 13, 2003), 9. The quote is originally taken from Bertalan Fabó, ‘Liszt Ferenc visszamagyarosodása és magyar működése’ [Franz Liszt’s Re-Hungarianization and Hungarian Activities’], Népművelés 6/17-18 (1911), 303.
musicology, a different acceptance of Liszt, a different kind of apology or defence was called for. And it is this reinterpretation of Liszt’s importance to Hungary, this new ‘acceptance’ of Liszt that ultimately completed what the distorted Des Bohémiens and the ensuing controversy had begun: the creation of a nationalist-authenticist discourse that was averse to or uneasy with Liszt’s verbunkos idiom, even while seeking to appropriate and ‘rehabilitate’ both Liszt and his œuvre.

II. On Bartók’s Privileged Position to Judge Liszt

In 1904 Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály started to explore Hungary’s little-known folk musics, collecting, recording (on the then newly-invented cylinder recorders), transcribing, comparing and systematically cataloguing their findings – thereby establishing a cutting-edge discipline of comparative musicology and an ethos of conscientious scientific field work. It was this ethos, as well as Bartók’s and Kodály’s prestige as composers, that secured a slow but steady paradigm shift in Hungary’s national musical culture. By the end of the 1930s, Magyar peasant music and other previously marginalised ethnic musics were widely recognised as ‘genuine’ folk musics, while Hungarian-Gypsy genres were increasingly viewed as an artificial outgrowth of these deeper cultures, often distorting their spirit and ‘purity’ with foreign intervals and excessive embellishments, and generally having no deep roots of their own.15 After the Second World War this became an orthodox fact in Hungarian academia, and was generally accepted outside Hungary.16 Bartók’s and

15 This ‘paradigm shift’ was by no means smooth. It was always enmeshed with a bitter political strife between nationalists and liberals (see Part III in this chapter) and with the reception of Bartók’s and Kodály’s works. See David E. Schneider, ‘Hungarian nationalism and the reception of Bartók’s and Kodály’s works, 1904-1940’, in: The Cambridge Companion to Bartók, ed. Amanda Bayley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 177-189.

16 In the early postwar years, the pressures of Stalinist, nationalist, and authenticist politics on musicologists meant that a fine balance had to be struck: while verbunkos could not be wholly rejected, it had to be kept in its place. Thus on the one hand, it could be given an almost socialist glamour. Bence Szabolcsi, for example, rehabilitated verbunkos in 1951 by describing it as music that transcended class divisions and expressed “the soul of the villages as well as the soul of the towns”; quoted in Judith Frigyesi, Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 58. On the other hand, such a token rehabilitation did not upset overmuch the belief in an ancient Hungarian folk music, which verbunkos could never match musically for its purity and quality, and for which reason verbunkos-based art music “presented a transitory solution only [to the future of Hungarian composition].” See Szabolcsi, A Concise History of Hungarian Music (Budapest: Corvina, 1974; orig. 1955), 83.
Kodály’s research and stature as composers made them undisputed authorities in both folk music and the adaptation of folk music in composition. Their opinions about Liszt’s verbunkos idiom, therefore, mattered a great deal, and of the two, it was Bartók who was more exercised about Liszt’s ‘problematic’ position as a Hungarian composer and as a ‘forward looking’ composer.17

This influence, as we have seen in Chapter 1, created conflicting obligations for Hungarian Liszt scholars: on the one hand they saw it as a patriotic duty to appropriate Liszt as a progressive nationalist composer (against the claims of German writers), and on the other hand they were obliged to reject or at least marginalise the verbunkos tradition. This required either some sort of half-hearted rehabilitation of verbunkos, or finding ways of attributing Hungarianness to Liszt without relying too much on verbunkos.18 Outside of Hungary the problem was less knotty, since Liszt’s stature as a composer had little to do with his relationship to his native country and its culture. On the contrary, defence cases for Liszt’s composition invariably rested on what was perceived to be his most ‘universal’ works (symphonic poems, piano sonata, piano concerti, etudes, character pieces and so forth) and works from his late period.19

There was thus little incentive to critique a prestigious ethnomusicological discourse that was not perceived to harm Liszt in any significant way; on the other hand, academics were obliged to acknowledge it, whether or not it had anything to do with their own agenda. For example, in Franz Liszt: Les Eléments du Langage Musical (1975), a book that is for the most part devoted to Liszt’s daring compositional language, Serge Gut incorporated a chapter on ‘Les élémens tzigano-hongrois’, where he suspends the book’s main theme of musical innovation and modernism, and instead – in explicit deference to Bartók – he concentrates on developing categories of distinction between Hungarian and Gypsy elements. Aside from the questionability of such an exercise (is it really possible to surgically separate ‘Hungarian’ from ‘Gypsy’ elements, and if so, what is the relevance to

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17 See part IV in this chapter. It is unnecessary to list every book, article or jacket note that rehearsed the story of Liszt’s ‘mistake’ or explain what ‘genuine’ folk music is: the ubiquity of these accounts attests to the widespread success of the authenticist agenda in Liszt studies.
18 See Chapter 1/V.
19 See Chapter 1/IV, pp. 40-41.
Liszt’s ‘language’?), what is truly striking about this chapter is how it manifests the
discursive clout of the authenticist agenda, its ability to hijack and dominate the discussion
of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom in a book whose main concern has nothing at all to do with
questions of ethnological purity and everything to do with Liszt’s musical uniqueness. We
may infer from this that the tzigano-hongrois element in Liszt’s music is best left to the
expertise of ethnomusicologists while music analysts may not find anything that is worthy
of analysis, i.e. anything that is strikingly new or original in the music. 20

Even when an author emphatically disagrees with the politics of folk-music authenticity, as
Alan Walker does in his Liszt biography, it is not always easy to escape concepts and habits
of thoughts that have become entrenched in musicology. As the quote at the beginning of
the chapter shows, Walker reproduces, despite his explicit position, terms such as ‘genuine
g folksong’ that inadvertently reinforce the kind of music appreciation he deplores. The
harshly-phrased idea that the Roma had “no creative tradition of their own” is presented as a
scientific fact without qualification (“the science of ethnomusicology”), even though it is
hard to believe that Walker had any intention to belittle Roma musicians. The point is, these
are not his opinions or even his terms but Bartók’s; and they are irrelevant to (or even
undermine) his argument about the musical worthiness of the Rhapsodies. A few pages later

20 For example: “It is preferable to disassociate, as much as possible, the two elements: especially as modern
Hungarian composers, headed by Bartók, were extremely careful in borrowing as little as possible from Gypsy
elements which they judged to be degrading and giving a false image of the true Hungary.”; Serge Gut, Franz
Liszt: Les Éléments du Langage Musicale (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975), 399 (my translation). This is quite
glaring in a book that focuses in the main on innovative features in Liszt’s works, and it clearly demonstrates
that how Bartók’s prestige as a composer and an ethnomusicologist (and the strong connection he had
established between these two occupations) wielded an enormous influence on Western scholarship. In
rejecting Haraszti’s conservative and pronouncedly anti-Bartókian assertion that ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Hungarian’ are
inextricably enmeshed, he is in fact embracing a successful academic paradigm shift, and feels that an
important academic truth obliges him to address this matter in particular, although this would form a
digression from the main purpose of his book. The power of the authenticist discourse is evident: He does not
tell us how these Hungarian-Gypsy elements feature in innovative passages; by contrast, in another chapter he
discusses Liszt’s relationship with Russian music (particularly in a ‘neo-modal’ connection). That is because a
discourse about ‘progressive’ modality existed, but not one about ‘progressive’ Hungarian-Gypsy style: for
that style a very different discourse demanded complete intellectual compliance, and indeed, this is announced
at the beginning of the chapter: “We embark here on an extremely delicate subject ... In fact, these two
musical particularities, the Gypsy and the Hungarian, are so often enmeshed, confused and interchanged –
Liszt being the first to do so – that their disassociation becomes difficult. They are nevertheless far from
identical.”; ibid., 394. But later, by his own admission, it emerges that this theoretical division between
‘oriental’ Gypsy elements and ‘purer’ Hungarian elements (mainly rhythmic and associated with a heroic
character) is a purely theoretical exercise that has little bearing on Liszt’s music, since in Liszt’s own mind,
the two ‘far from identical’ elements were in fact one and the same. The whole point of the exercise, therefore,
has nothing to do with Liszt’s music, and everything to do with the power of the authenticists’ agenda in the
1970s.
he actually enlists Bartók’s opinions from the 1936 ‘Liszt Problems’ article (which we shall have an opportunity to examine later in this chapter), to claim that Liszt made an innocent and blameless error in *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*. Once again, the argument about Liszt’s ‘innocence’ and the way it is presented as an apology for his composition, does not at all inspire confidence in the musical content of the Rhapsodies. Yet all this may not be so obvious when we consider (as Walker must have done) that this is probably the most high-profile defence Liszt’s verbunkos idiom ever got. Was Bartók not a famous champion of Liszt’s music? Did he not emphatically absolve Liszt of his sins towards the Hungarian nation? It seems wasteful not to draw on Bartók’s prestige to defend Liszt’s beleaguered reputation. Indeed, the sheer weight of his authority is a particular selling point:

Béla Bartók knew better than anyone else how unreasonable it was of the Hungarians to adopt a holier-than-thou attitude towards Liszt, since they themselves were partly to blame for his error.22

A similar and even more enthusiastic opinion is expressed by Klára Hamburger in her Liszt biography:

The extent of Liszt’s error, its gravity and whether the fault was Liszt’s, could best be judged by a person qualified to do so by accomplishing what Liszt could not undertake yet, and did not wish to. A person who had roamed the most remote villages with “a knapsack on his back”, developed out of their melodies art music of the highest order; who as a performing artist and scholar recognised and proclaimed Liszt’s enormous significance both in theory and practice; who as a composer became the true inheritor and further developer of Liszt’s most noble traditions: Béla Bartók.23

The paragraph above reaffirms in a nutshell everything which Bartók wished to promote in relation to Liszt: his pardonable failing as a folklorist, his unfortunate lack of connection with real Hungarian folk and their folksongs, his use of poor substitutes in the form of popular urban material that did not enable him to produce “art music of the highest order”, and finally, the idea that Bartók was Liszt’s ”true inheritor”, but only on his own terms.

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21 Walker, *Liszt*, 2, 387-8. Bartók argued that Liszt was misled by his own compatriots and therefore cannot be blamed for his errors. See this chapter, pp. 80 and 84-85.

22 Ibid., 387; my italics.

which precluded the *verbunkos* idiom. Although stated indirectly, it is understood that this idiom is definitely *not* one of Liszt’s “most noble traditions”. 24

I would argue that using Bartók’s scientific and artistic authority as an ‘ethical’ shield against hostile criticism of Liszt’s folkloristic music is highly problematic if not ultimately self-defeating. It is astonishing, in fact, that Liszt champions have placed the *verbunkos* idiom under Bartók’s protection, given Bartók’s tirades against *verbunkos* and the old ‘nationalist’ style of nineteenth-century Hungarian art music, or given the fact that he could only sympathise with aspects of Liszt’s music that fitted with his own aesthetic and cultural crusade. Far from being best placed to judge benevolently in these matters, his enduring influence on the appreciation of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom has been prohibitive and disabling; it encouraged scholars to apologise for Liszt rather than understand the importance of the style to his composition, and it certainly discouraged a ‘modernist’ perspective of the style. It would be important then, to re-examine, albeit briefly, Bartók’s main arguments for divorcing the nineteenth-century *verbunkos* idiom from twentieth-century modernism, how these ideas are couched in the ideologies and rhetoric prevalent in turn-of-the-century Budapest, and how these in turn relate to Bartók’s ‘defence’, or more accurately, *appropriation* of Liszt.

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24 Klára Hamburger, it should be stressed, although not directly disagreeing with Bartók, produces an assessment of Liszt’s works that does not tally with his beliefs. She states, at the end of her discussion of Liszt’s early ‘rhapsodic’ style, that as there is no need to fight for the ‘genuine folksong’ any more, the real historical contribution of the rhapsodies lies in spreading Hungary’s fame abroad, the establishment of a musical form that informed some of Bartók’s own pieces, and above all, these works formed a pool of stylistic elements, chief of which was the *verbunkos* minor scale (this evokes Bárdos’s research), which became abstracted and ‘organically absorbed’ into his general style. (ibid., 66) We are being given a confused message: is this music ‘organic’ or not? Is the *verbunkos* idiom a good source material after all, and should we then view the rhapsodies as a first slightly awkward attempt at composition? Given Bartók’s and Kodály’s position on the ‘organic’ relationship between native language and native (‘natural’) music (which I shall discuss presently in this chapter), how does the inauthenticity of the material tally with its successful abstraction and ‘organic absorption’ into the composer’s immediate (‘native’) musical language? Tensions and inconsistencies appear to be an inevitable consequence of mixing Bartókian authenticity politics with an attempt to appraise favourably the role of Hungarian elements in Liszt’s musical language. See ibid., 60-67 and 113-4.
III. Culture War Dichotomies

Bartók’s rejection of both verbunkos and verbunkos-based composition was never a simple matter of taste; it was deeply grounded in the political circumstances of his time. In Liszt’s time nationalism and patriotism often entailed aspirations for economic and social progress. However, by the late nineteenth century, the swift urbanisation of Budapest opened up huge cultural gaps between the capital and the rest of the country. Traditionalists viewed with dismay the growing confidence and influence of a new urban middle class and of the Jewish and German communities in the capital. These traditionalists invariably came from the ranks of the old elite which comprised of a sizable (but comparatively minor) population of citizens with noble titles who viewed themselves as descendants of an old warrior race, and all the other peoples of Hungary, including the Magyar peasantry, as inferior degenerates. These people had much to lose and so they became increasingly wary of where ‘social reforms’ and ‘progress’ might end. While the old elite wished to keep the semi-feudal order and Magyar domination of Hungary, or at least to be in absolute control of the pace of change, a burgeoning intelligentsia in Budapest began demanding democratisation, social justice and change. For the traditionalists, the alarming prospects of losing political power was thus inextricably linked with fear of losing a whole culture and a way of life to ‘sophisticated’ cosmopolitan trends and the fear of Austrian and German political and cultural hegemony. As the dominant political mood became increasingly xenophobic and conservative it was only natural that the authorities would enshrine the nineteenth-century legacy of verbunkos and magyar nóta as the expression of true Hungarian identity and brand modern trends from abroad as ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘decadent’. Verbunkos-related genres, on the other hand, became a handy tool of state-sponsored propaganda. Even in Liszt’s time music like the Rákóczi March was used to whip up nationalist demands for independence. In the twentieth century verbunkos was increasingly used to consolidate the ruling classes’ power and supremacist beliefs. It evoked the kind of patriotism that was

calculated to undermine the liberal intelligentsia, raise the spectre of an endangered national identity, and divert attention away from the unsatisfactory pace of reform.

In his youth Bartók associated himself with the most extreme chauvinist politics. He despised Budapest's cosmopolitanism, but was equally ambitious to create a national style that would rival Germany's. He therefore wrote in a post-Lisztian and post-Straussian style, using verbunkos elements in such pieces as the Rhapsody op. 1 and the Kossuth symphonic poem (which celebrates Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the 1848 uprising). Bartók at that time completely identified with the Magyar nobility's ideals of Eurasian ancientness, the god-given right to dominate all other classes and races in Hungary, and with the music that symbolised these values. But even in this early chauvinist phase there was something about Bartók's music that did not quite fit the mould: his mixture of Hungarian elements with post-Straussian modernism was at odds with the political-aesthetic ideals of 'wholesome simplicity' and 'classicism' which many believed should characterise genuine Hungarian music in contrast to the 'decadence' of post-Wagnerian German music. Bartók's political outlook began changing as he began perceiving that his mixture of verbunkos and modernism was misperceived both at home and abroad. In Vienna, where he had his first international success, he received warm reviews that "made it very clear", to quote Leon Botstein, "that from the Western perspective, the Hungarian element had a conservative function, in effect minimising the modernity of the music ... The conservative philistinism in the Budapest public remained equally aesthetic and political in character." Shortly after this disturbing 'success', Bartók's early political and aesthetic views continued to erode as in his field trips to the Hungarian hinterland he increasingly came to identify with the oppressed peasants and ethnic minorities. His political journey from chauvinism to liberalism was encouraged by his new friendship with Kodály and by the support both his modern music and his field work received from reformist circles of the Budapest intelligentsia – in contrast to the increasingly shrill invective that rained from conservative newspapers.


Throughout this transformation, Bartók remained steadfast in his belief in modernism; yet it was becoming the kind of modernism that the conservatives could no longer tolerate or forgive. Bartók and Kodály openly defied the official culture in their field studies and polemical publications but, above all, by creating a new school of modern composition of an international standing that was based on the folk musics that the ruling classes did not wish to hear: that of Hungary’s suppressed peasantry and ethnic minorities. For Bartók and his followers this was not merely an aesthetic or academic debate, but a real cultural-political war that was to decide Hungary’s sense of identity. Moreover, since it was his work and his person that was very much at the centre of debate, the culture war was also personal. It is evident from his writings that he bore a grudge against the authorities on two accounts. First, notwithstanding his circle of supporters, his works were much more widely appreciated and performed abroad, due to the hostility of the music establishment and continued attacks on his works in the conservative press; secondly, he felt that while he and Kodály were on a high mission to record and thereby preserve a vanishing folklore culture for posterity, the authorities, in their arrogance and stupidity, kept ignoring this effort while propagating a superficial and already *too* widespread ‘urban’ culture. This personal angle undoubtedly contributed to the vehemence with which Bartók attacked the state-approved musical culture. For Bartók, the *verbunkos* came to embody a *usurping* culture imposed by the ruling classes; a culture that prospered *at the expense of* Hungary’s long-suppressed folk musics; a culture that parasitically derived its material from Hungary’s rich but socially-excluded folk music; and a culture which regularly perverted and ‘contaminated’ the ‘pure essence’ of the original melodies.

To bring these points home, Bartók drew on the chauvinist discourse of folklore purity which thrives on dichotomous juxtapositions (Hungarianness vs. cosmopolitanism, ancientness vs. modernity, and so forth) and which had previously formed his youthful views. He borrowed from it politically-charged ideas about the mythic roots and ‘healthy’/’pure’ character of Hungarian music, the need to preserve it and guard it against

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29 Liszt, who was a pacifist and who supported social reform and social and cultural progress in Hungary, would have been amazed to learn that two decades after his death, his Hungarian music would be appropriated by an increasingly conservative establishment, and that as a result of a complete paradigm shift in authenticity and folklorism in art, his *verbunkos* idiom would then be identified with ‘regressive’ artistic aims.
both the strong influence of ‘decadent’ German music and the ‘polluting’ influence of Gypsy performances. However, he was now in a position to turn these ideas around against their progenitors with devastating precision, as Table 2.1 in pp. 70-71 shows in summary.30

Bartók’s binary oppositions still influence our appreciation of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom, even if their original discursive context is forgotten. His particular claims about the ‘healthy’ relationship between authentic folksong and modernism, as opposed to the unwholesome alliance between Romantic art music and verbunkos, needs to be scrutinised therefore more closely. In particular we should pay attention to how much of what Bartók said is really relevant to Liszt’s music and its historical context rather than to his own circumstances and political agenda, and how such a re-contextualisation of his opinions can help us form a more independent perspective of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. Bartók promoted several powerful and interrelated notions that divorce ‘modernism’ from the nineteenth-century verbunkos idiom. Here I shall present these ideas by consolidating them into three major arguments (turn to p. 72).

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30 My table of dichotomies is especially indebted to Lynn Hooker (2001) who specifically shows how Bartók’s ideas and rhetoric are ironically derived from his opponents. The two right columns summarise Bartók’s position as can be gleaned from his essays on the subject; see Béla Bartók, Essays, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 301-396.
Table 2.1: The turn-of-the-century culture war as reflected through Bartók’s dichotomies set against those of his opponents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Old School</th>
<th>New School</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class and Nationality</strong></td>
<td>The upper- and middle-nobility (the gentry) are the true descendent and of the ancient Magyar race, and therefore the true Hungarian ‘people’.</td>
<td>The peasants are a degenerate subspecies of the noble Magyar warrior-race; the minority nationalities of Hungary are racially and culturally inferior, are rightfully dominated, and should therefore be Magyarised, for their own good.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hungarianess vs. Foreign Influence</strong></td>
<td>Hungary should be represented by one musical culture — magyar nőta and verbunkos — that unites the people. Art music in Hungary should also be based on verbunkos and magyar nőta.</td>
<td>Romantic music represents German influence and does not accord with the true Hungarian spirit. Westernised Hungarian composers betray their country and culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Old School</td>
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<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td><em>Magyar nőta</em> has the perfection of a classical form;</td>
<td>*Peasant melodies are perfect masterpieces in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beauty and</td>
<td>it is straightforward and unpretentious, therefore</td>
<td>miniature. Old-style songs are truly ancient and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernism</td>
<td>suited for art music that seeks the same qualities.</td>
<td>untouched by Western influence therefore they are</td>
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<td>the best source for a new Hungarian music, which</td>
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<td>can be ultramodern but still maintain a non-major-</td>
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<td>minor ‘tonal’ backbone due to its reliance on</td>
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<td>genuine folksong. The constant and healthy contact</td>
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<td>with true and living folklore will ensure Hungarian</td>
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<td>superiority over German art music.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science and</td>
<td>*Statistics prove that what the majority of</td>
<td>*Comparative musicology involving meticulous field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Hungarians understand to be Hungarian music is</td>
<td>work, recording, comparing and classifying has</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hungarian music.</td>
<td>led to the discovery of Hungary’s genuine folk</td>
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*Magyar nőta* are second-rate pseudo-folklorisms by dilettantes – they do not spring freely from the people, and show all the hackneyed features of Western harmony. Gypsy band music is similarly a hackneyed urban art, full of vulgar excesses and peculiarities. Contemporary German music is a pathetic relic from a glorious, but ultimately dead past.

Lack of science (or pseudo-science), misdirected patriotism, and social segregation and arrogance have kept these genuine folksongs in obscurity.
The inherent 'classical' perfection of genuine folklore is truly Hungarian, a natural antidote to the excesses of foreign influences – both German romanticism and the Hungarian-Gypsy manner.

... a genuine peasant melody of our land is an example of perfect art. I consider it quite as much a masterpiece, for instance, in miniature, as a Bach fugue or a Mozart sonata movement is a masterpiece in larger form. A melody of this kind is a classic example of the expression of a musical thought in its most conceivably concise form, with the avoidance of all that is superfluous ... So above all, from this music we have learned how best to employ terseness of expression, the utmost excision of the nonessential – and it was this very thing after the grandiloquence of the Romantic period, which we thirsted to learn.31

On the face of it, this condemns Liszt's verbunkos idiom in its entirety. However, to view Liszt's entire verbunkos idiom as diametrically opposed to these aesthetics is a fallacy. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, his verbunkos idiom in the late works is often 'terse' in the Bartókian sense (see esp. the Fünf ungarische Volkslieder from 1873), and even in the Hungarian Rhapsodies there are passages that conform to these aesthetics (see, for instance, the 'Walachian Melody' from MD20, quoted in ex. 3.3.). Yet, overemphasising this terseness as a line of defence can also lead to a harmful division between the 'good' (modern) and the 'bad' (Romantic) repertoire. In any case, there seems to be little reason to accept Bartók's polar positioning of virtuosity, romanticism and verbunkos against simplicity, modernism, and 'genuine' folk music, and apply these polarities to the appreciation of Liszt's music, when no such dichotomous distinctions seem to apply to his own music. As David Schneider and Judith Frigyesi have shown, Bartók's works exhibit at times a rhythmic and textural exuberance that is not too far removed from the old world of verbunkos after all.32 So far so good, at least until we confront a far more devastating claim:

Modern tonality means a new tonal order that breaks away from the major and minor system; therefore Hungary's folk music, written in ancient folk modes, is a particularly suitable source material for modern composition, whereas the popular verbunkos and magyar nőta, harmonised conventionally in major and minor, are not.

In the majority of [East European] tonal modes the fifth degree in general does not play the dominant part which we can observe in the case of the fifth degree of the major or minor scale 33.

Most trained and good musicians [in the last two decades of the nineteenth century] ... believed that only simple harmonizations were well suited to folk melodies. And worse, by simple harmonies they meant a succession of triads of tonic, dominant and possibly subdominant. How can we account for this strange belief? What kind of folk songs did these musicians know? Mostly new German and Western European songs and so-called folk songs made up by popular composers. The melody of such songs usually moves along the triad of tonic and dominant ... [and does] not go well with a more complex harmonization. But our musicians wanted to apply the theory derived from this kind of song to an entirely different type of Hungarian song built up on pentatonic scales ... the strange tunings of melodies in our East European peasant music showed us new ways of harmonization. For instance the new chord of the seventh which we use as a concord may be traced back to the fact that in our folk melodies of a pentatonic character the seventh appears as an interval of equal importance with the third and the fifth ... 34

Bartók argued that due to social and political circumstances in Hungary, peasants remained largely uninfluenced by cosmopolitan and urban cultures, which meant that the ancient Eurasian modality of their music survived intact, unlike other modal musics in Europe which were swamped by the advent of the major-minor system. This, according to Bartók, proved to be immensely profitable for the needs of modern Hungarian composition – it was a gift from nature, a readymade shortcut (for the early twentieth-century modernist) out of the tyranny of the major-minor system. Bartók was at pains to emphasise that peasant music was a way of arriving at alternative tonal practices ‘through Nature’ rather than through the kind of theoretical speculation that characterised Western (read: German) composers. 35 This natural and effortless modality gave even harmonically complicated and chromatic works a diatonic backbone that “save[d] such works from the danger of falling into wearying and surfeiting extreme.” 36 The official, verbunkos-based ‘national music’ was the opposite of

33 Bartók, Essays, 333-34.
34 Ibid., 342.
35 Ibid., 338.
36 Ibid., 323.
that. It constituted an impure mixture of folk music, Romantic phraseology and banal major and minor harmony. It was not different in essence from foreign compositions (such as Brahms’ Hungarian Dances or Berlioz’s version of the Rákóczi-March) It was therefore both un-modern and pseudo-Hungarian: a road that looked to the past, not the future. 37

Bartók’s dismissal of the trite harmonisation of the Romantic verbunkos idiom may be true of many popular folk songs in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century but, once again, we should look at a few problematic or false premises. First, we can question whether the mid-nineteenth-century verbunkos Liszt heard always followed conventional rules of harmony and whether the harmony in his own works (and that of his contemporaries), inspired by verbunkos, is best described by conventional tonal analysis. Could it be that a composer like Liszt found alternative tonal syntaxes through his exploration of non-major-minor scales, intervallic fluctuations and/or other harmonic practices typical of verbunkos? 38 For Bartók this would have been an illogical question, as he did not consider verbunkos to be ‘outside’ the common practice. 39 Secondly, although the argument that the modal musics of isolated rural areas were further from Western tonality than verbunkos had ever been is valid, it is ultimately what composers seek and find in such source materials that makes the difference. Therefore, there is no reason to accept at face value that the modality of peasant folksongs is intrinsically ‘modern’ and that verbunkos is its historical opposite. Pentatonic scales in European art music, at any rate, were inherited directly from nineteenth-century composition and its transcultural interaction with ancient church and folk musics. Thirdly, we should remember that Bartók was not interested in fine historical points (e.g. verbunkos-inspired works with a harmony that is ‘progressive’ or otherwise unusual in relation to its own time) but rather in drawing clear battle lines and winning a very contemporary aesthetic war. And in this war, the ‘natural’ alliance between

37 Ibid., 304, 316, 334 and 361-75.
38 See Part V of this chapter.
39 Furthermore, in Bartók’s time there seemed to be little distinction between the theory and the reality of a ‘system’ of major and minor. The ‘system’ was theoretically perfect and was believed to embody a ‘common practice’ that determined European composition all through the nineteenth century until its possibilities were supposedly exhausted, whereupon composers searched for or invented new ‘systems’. This worldview has no room for modality and alternative tonal practices, since all can be theoretically explained and contained in one perfect and unassailable system. Today, however, there is no consensus about how well this ‘system’ describes different musical phenomena and realities, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. I shall develop this point more fully in Chapter 4.
peasant music and modernism served Bartók on two fronts: against conservatives who claimed his modern harmonisation of peasant melodies were ‘incompatible’ with the spirit of folklore and against modernists who believed that “the basing of modern music on folk music harmful and not suited to our time.”

(3) ‘Pure’, ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ folk sources are ideally suited to musical genius and high art; fake folklorisms, on the other hand, lead only to mediocre results, even in the case of great composers.

Peasant music, in the strict sense of the word, must be regarded as a natural phenomenon; the forms in which it manifests itself are due to the instinctive transforming power of a community completely devoid of erudition. It is just as much a natural phenomenon as, for instance, the various manifestations of Nature in fauna and flora. Correspondingly it has in its individual parts and absolute artistic perfection, a perfection in miniature forms which – one might say – is equal to the perfection of a musical masterpiece of the largest proportion … [but the average musician] finds it empty and inexpressive; popular art music suits his taste much better … With us in East Europe it comes from amateurs of gentle birth who satisfy the creative impulse of their slender musical talents by the composition of more or less simple tunes. Their music is partly made up of elements of Western European art music – a jumble of commonplaces in this respect – but it also bears traces of the peasant music of their country. This is what lends their music a certain exotic flavour by which even men like Liszt, Brahms and Chopin felt themselves attracted. Nevertheless the outcome of this mixture of exoticism and banality is something imperfect, inartistic, in contrast to the marked clarity of real peasant music with which it compares most unfavourably. At all events it is a noteworthy fact that artistic perfection can only be achieved by one of the two extremes: on the one hand by peasant folk in the mass, completely devoid of the culture of the town-dweller, on the other hand by the creative power of the individual genius. The creative impulse of anyone who has the misfortune to be born somewhere between these two extremes leads only to barren, pointless and misshapen works.

For Bartók ‘organic’ composition was more than formal coherence (which is how the metaphor is largely understood today) or the way music seemed to cohere ‘naturally’ through the higher musical consciousness of the genius; it was also about reconnecting with Hungarian ‘nature’, i.e. with its indigenous ‘folk’, their culture, their language and their music. In other words, a distinctive Hungarian music of the future depended equally on individual genius and the willingness and ability of that genius to draw inspiration from

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40 David Schneider, op. cit. (2001), 188.
41 Bartók, Essays, 345.
42 Ibid., 321-2.
‘deep’ reservoirs of ‘natural’ musics.\textsuperscript{43} The distance Bartók wanted to place between his music and the Romantics’ rested, in this sense, on two claims. First, unlike the Romantics, he and Kodály understood that \textit{verbunkos} was an unnatural outgrowth from the deeper Hungarian culture, that it was an instrumental style which had little connection to the Hungarian language, and that it was full of ‘oriental’ interpolations, such as augmented seconds, that perverted the original melodies and were likewise alien to the indigenous culture.\textsuperscript{44} Secondly, in contrast to the Romantic folklorists \textit{en masse}, he and Kodály broke the barriers between genius composers and ‘the people’ by listening to the music in its own natural habitat and living with the people who made it. Nineteenth-century composers, on the other hand, did not understand this anthropological principle or its benefits for composition; they relied on the dead letter of “inanimate collections of folk music”, that perverted folk melodies and set them to banal Western harmonisations.\textsuperscript{45}

Of the two arguments the latter is the more compelling. It may be easier to show, on the basis of more recent ethnomusicological research, that ‘oriental’ elements were not necessarily ‘un-Hungarian’ (see footnote 44); it is not so easy to ignore the anthropological argument, which is why the traditional excuses for Liszt’s lack of ethnomusicological awareness do not work in the end. Crucially, they leave intact the widespread notion that greater fidelity to the source, available through recordings and ostensibly enhanced in art

\textsuperscript{43} See also ibid., 395.

\textsuperscript{44} “In the folksong, text and music form an indivisible unity. Gypsy performance destroys this unity because it transforms, without exception, the vocal pieces into purely instrumental ones.”; Bartók, ‘Gypsy Music or Hungarian Music?’, \textit{Musical Quarterly}, 33 (1947), 252. As for the augmented seconds, Bartók asserted that they “much more common in the Balkans and the East, with the Turks and the Arabs, than in Central Europe. It is... reasonable to assume that the gypsies themselves acquired the distinctive interval from Oriental sources during their wandering.” (Ibid., 252-3). The ‘superficial’ insertion of foreign intervals into Hungarian melodies was therefore doubly alienating, since these intervals were originally not even part of the Romani – let alone Hungarian – musical culture. However, in direct opposition to Bartók’s ‘purist’ stance, the Hungarian scholar Bálint Sárosi has argued that although not originally Hungarian, scales with augmented seconds have nevertheless become deeply-rooted in Hungarian indigenous culture. See Bálint Sárosi, ‘Chromatik mit übermassiger Sekunde in der ungarischen Volksmusik’ in: ‘\textit{Weine, meine Laute ...}’ Gedenkschrift Kurt Reinhard, ed. Christian Ahrens et al (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1984), 185-95.

\textsuperscript{45} “... The pure folk music can be considered as a natural phenomenon influencing higher art music ... This influence is most effective for the musician if he acquaints himself with folk music in the form in which it lives, in unbridled strength, amidst the lower people, and not by means of inanimate collections of folk music which anyway lack adequate diatonic symbols capable of restoring their minute nuances and throbbing life. If he surrenders himself to the impact of this living folk music and to all the circumstances which are the conditions of this life, and if he reflects in his works the effects of these impressions, then we might say of him that he has portrayed therein a part of life.” (Bartók, \textit{Essays}, 318). But elsewhere, Bartók is at pains to clarify that ‘genuine’ folk music becomes high art only though the individual genius, never through mediocre composers, however much they steep themselves in folklore (ibid., 347).
music through greater attention to timbre and microtonal elements of performance, has completely overturned the more timid and domesticated ways of Romantic folklorism. We, however, should look at this truism more closely. In the first place, it is much too uncritical of disciplinary traditions of anthropology and ethnomusicology (e.g. the bias towards rural cultures or ways in which the ‘objective’ evidence was classified or presented). Secondly, are recordings always a precondition for ‘authenticity’? Did nineteenth-century composers always rely on simplistic renditions of folk songs? True, there was some justification in seeing recordings as a benchmark of faithful rendition, a ‘positive’ piece of evidence against the subjectivity and reductionism of notated transcriptions in the pre-phonographic era. Moreover, since these recordings allowed one to hear more aspects of folk music such as timbre and tuning, twentieth-century composers who displayed such aspects in their compositions could boast greater ‘authenticity’. However, welding positivism to authenticity in this manner ignores, in the first place, performative liberties taken beyond the printed page in the nineteenth century, which may well have included timbral and improvisational aspects. Secondly, we know that Liszt did come into contact with verhunkos bands, and though he did not share their life, we should not underestimate how much of the ‘throbbing life’ or ‘nuance’ of the music he absorbed. Finally, the positivist arguments for authenticity simply ignore the subjectivity of composers and composition. Composers are not curators (even Bartók was not an ethnomusicologist when he composed!); they paint rather than photograph; they rarely give us a hyper-realistic phonographic image of their source material, and this was as true of Liszt and the nineteenth century as it was true of Bartók and the twentieth.

I do not mean to say that there is no logical ground to this ‘myth of objectivity’, since, undeniably, the phonograph introduced the novelty of transmitting music without thinking, translating, or interpreting its structure or meaning, and therefore, as Alexander Rehding observed, “it was precisely in this emphatically unintelligent but unquestionably faithful function that the phonograph shook up the field of musicology [and greatly affected compositional aesthetics as well, one could add] around the turn of the last century”. See Alexander Rehding, ‘Music Theory and ‘other’ Music 1800/1900’ (paper presented at the 39th RMA Annual Conference at Cardiff University on September 13, 2003), 6. While the phonograph may record objectively, the myth lies in overlooking the human agency of the subjective listener, artist or commentator.

Furthermore, the ‘objectivity’ myth promotes the notion that phonograph preserve the initial impression in its freshness, which is not true: multiple listening change fresh impressions; artistic ideas form and consolidate, affecting the ‘active listening’ of a creative composer. The artistic result is, at any rate, highly subjective. This is not so far removed from Liszt’s situation as it would seem. Although lacking the technological means to capture this music perfectly, Liszt made up for it by having a superbly accurate musical memory that could hold a musical impression in all its detail (see footnote 81). However, perfect memory or recording technology aside, each time he composed with the aural image of this music in mind he was at a different stage of his development as an artist.
Bearing all this in mind, we should also remember that Bartók never meant to completely reject his Romantic predecessors – only their folkloristic legacy. The greatness of most of their oeuvre proves, as it were, that they could have created great folkloristic art if only they had had proper access to real folk music. But the fact is they did not, and the music was correspondingly insubstantial and unworthy of their genius. Even more unfortunate were the efforts of local composers: they had the bleak choice between one foreign influence (German) and another (Gypsy), and the latter choice was decidedly worse:

... the endeavours of our serious-minded musicians were also sterile, because, while several of them servilely imitated foreign styles, others, for instance Ferenc Erkel, tried to solve the task by wedging between musical items of Italian character one or two gipsy-type tunes or csárdás. The mixture of such heterogeneous elements does not produce a Hungarian style, merely a conglomerate lacking in any style.

Where did these judgements leave Liszt? Bartók’s problem, of course, was that although he regarded Liszt as an interesting composer (if not the most accomplished) and understood the value of a patriotic celebration of his achievements, he also knew that such patriotism usually reinforced the school of composition he rejected and its contemporary cultural guardians which he detested. But how could Liszt be celebrated as a forerunner of modern Hungarian composition while his most ‘Hungarian’ idiom remained beyond the pale?

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48 However, at one point Bartók claimed: “It might be attributed to the influence of this popular art music that the higher art music of the nineteenth century shows a considerable preference for banalities.” (op. cit., 317). Thus Romantic folklorism is a vicious circle: it is bad because of the Romantic expression, which is incompatible with the terseness and lack of sentimentality of real folklorism; on the other hand, Romantic music itself was adversely affected by its attraction to this fake folklorism.

49 For example: “Chopin was to a certain extent influenced by the Polish, and Liszt by the Hungarian popular art music ... Yet so much that was banal was incorporated by them with much that was exotic that the works concerned were not benefited thereby. That is why it is not the nationalistic Polonaises that rank highest amongst Chopin’s works, and the same applies to Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies and to his Tarantellas and Polonaises. In any case it is only these slighter works that have received what is after all a nationalistic whitewash; the principal works of both composers are happily for the most part exempt from this influence.” (Ibid., 323). Bartók contrasts this with the organic connection between the genius composer and the people in the passage quoted on p. 75. The real purpose of such critique was, of course, to shoot missiles at his contemporary adversaries.

50 Ibid., “On Hungarian Music” (1911), 301.
IV. Bartók’s ‘Modernist Rehabilitation’ of Liszt

Bartók’s solution was to disown Liszt’s ‘trivial’ folkloristic works and to urge his readers to celebrate those works that influenced non-German modernist composition in general and the new Hungarian school in particular. True to form, Bartók was not interested in history per se as much as its implications for the present. The two articles he wrote on issues of Liszt reception constitute therefore not so much a defence of Liszt’s music as an attack on his contemporary opponents and the dominant state culture, or even more specifically, as David Schneider observed, “a thinly-veiled attack on his exclusion from Hungarian concert life”.

The first article, entitled ‘Liszt’s Music and Today’s Public’, published in 1911, at the time of Liszt’s centenary, presents Liszt as a misunderstood composer whose public (much like Bartók’s) fails to see the real substance of his work due to its predilection for external effects. This critique of Liszt’s reception was to return with greater rigour twenty-five years later, in a speech Bartók gave on the occasion of the anniversary of Liszt’s death and his own appointment to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which was published as ‘Liszt Problems’ (Nyugat, March 1936). The event itself was a moment of triumph for Bartók, an unprecedented recognition of his achievements by the establishment. Bartók chose that moment to vindicate his life’s work, marshalling to great effect the same rhetorical dichotomies he had cultivated in a lifetime of polemical writings. We should note that it is mostly this ‘rehabilitative’ article which is quoted from to apologise for Liszt’s rhapsodies or his verbunkos idiom, and therefore its context and subtext merits a closer look.

The crux of Bartók’s argument is that Liszt’s oeuvre can be separated into two groups that are completely opposed to each other. The ‘good’ oeuvre, which the ignorant public characteristically fails to understand, is also invariably forward-looking, leading to the new school of composition. The ‘bad’, although externally brilliant (and well-made in that limited sense) is conservative, popular, and artistically inferior. Bartók takes care to give the verbunkos idiom a special place of notoriety in this bi-polar division. The popularity of the

52 Bartók, Essays, 451.
53 No musician before Bartók had been elected to the Academy of Sciences. See David Schneider, ibid.
Rhapsodies in particular attests to the inverse relationship between public taste and artistic value:

For the sake of truth, I must stress that the rhapsodies – particularly the Hungarian ones – are perfect creations of their own kind. The material that Liszt uses in them could not be treated with greater artistry and beauty. That the material itself is not always of value is quite another matter, and is obviously one reason why the general importance of the works is slight, and their popularity great.  

It is as if *despite* his artistry Liszt hit a glass ceiling whenever he reverted to this idiom. There is only so much a composer can do with such poor material. Yet it is just as clear that this was not Liszt’s fault. The people who led him astray, who diverted his attention away from peasant music and fed him with poor Hungarian-Gypsy substitutes, were the direct ancestors of the traditionalists who opposed his own music. It was these mediocrities who historically disabled the much-needed organic unity between deep folk culture and high art composition. They had no right to complain about Liszt’s mistaken claims about the origins of *verbunkos*, since they were the native inhabitants who should have introduced him to the real folk treasures of the country; they knew the truth but wilfully concealed it. Therefore their indignation at Liszt’s error only betrayed their lack of integrity and moral fibre, whereas Liszt was blameless for his error and, moreover, praiseworthy for his conviction:

... from what [Liszt] saw and heard he could hardly have come to any different conclusions from the ones he put forward in his book. Moreover, the courage and conviction with which Liszt stated his opinions, wrong as they were, demands our admiration, for he must have known that by doing so he would rouse considerable hostility towards himself among his people. It is rather ourselves we must blame for not being able to, or not wanting to, or at best for failing to set him on the road to truth, though that road was there before us in our own villages.  

However, there is something which is altogether exaggerated and even patronising about this particular line of defence. It presents Liszt as a misinformed naif, a hapless victim of his historical circumstances. Liszt himself, however, testified that he knew this music from his childhood, and there is evidence that he sought it with or without guides during his 1840s

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concert tours in Hungary and later in life. Bartók could not overlook, however, that in Des Bohémiens Liszt himself described peasant music as ‘too simple and imperfect’ and only with Romani performance does it acquire its ‘true colourfulness’. Yet this too is turned to his advantage. Bartók explains that peasant music was so alien to the age in both sound and spirit that Liszt would have needed to abandon all his other projects and dedicate a decade of his life to intensive research – and that of course would have been unthinkable for a musician of his station at that time. Liszt’s ‘choice’ of Hungarian-Gypsy music was thus not a choice at all, but a given reality. The possibility that Liszt found something in verbunkos that excited his imagination and inventiveness did not exist for Bartók (or at any rate it did not serve his ‘rehabilitative’ agenda); it was simply material that catered to the public demand for entertainment. The bottom line of this ‘defence’ is that despite his integrity and public courage Liszt compromised to shallow public taste, resulting in too many imperfect masterpieces and middle-brow works. Liszt’s claims in Des Bohémiens are excusable, but his artistic compromise is lamentable. Bartók’s message to both opponents and followers was that Liszt’s case should serve as a historical lesson and a warning to the present and the future.

The other half of Bartók’s rehabilitation was to cite uncompromising modernist compositions that point ‘so amazingly ahead of their time’, such as the B minor piano sonata, the symphonic poems, the Faust Symphony, Totentanz, the piano concerto in E-flat major, as well as pre-‘impressionist’ works from the Harmonies poétiques et religieuses and the Années de Pèlerinage. Despite the fact that these works and genres were not ‘Hungarian’ in any sense, Liszt could still be counted as an indirect ancestor of the new Hungarian school in two important ways. First, he presented a clear alternative to Wagnerian Zukunftsmusik and Brahmsian classicism:

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56 Walker, Liszt, 1, 379, 410 and 434 (footnote 17); See also quote in this chapter, p. 107.
57 Bartók, Essays, 506.
58 Ibid., 506.
59 Ibid., 502-4.
60 Ibid., 503 and 505.
One can say anything of [the style of Liszt’s works] rather than that it is German. His art is
the antithesis of the excessive density and laboriousness so characteristic of the works of
outstanding German composers of the nineteenth century; it is rather the clarity and
transparency [sic] of French music that manifests itself in every measure of Liszt’s works. 61

These aesthetics were as much ‘anti-German’ as they were French, and as such they were a
legitimate ideal for an East European national school that tries to resist German hegemony.
Liszt, then, was not a German Zukunftsmusiker. Of course, the point would not be complete
without defining him as Wagner’s opposite. Therefore, Bartók went one step further,
presenting a complex and ironic double-dichotomy:

... in Wagner we find greater formal perfection, richer expression, and greater unity of style.
And yet – Liszt’s works had a more fertilizing influence on the following generations than
Wagner’s. Let no one be misled by the host of Wagner’s imitators. Wagner solved his whole
problem and every detail of it so perfectly that only servile imitation of him was possible for
his successors; it was almost impossible to derive any impulse from him for further
development, and any kind of imitation was barren, dead from the outset. Liszt on the other
hand touched upon so many possibilities in his works, without being able to exhaust them
utterly, that he provided an incomparably greater stimulus than Wagner. 62

Is Bartók being patronising here too? Perhaps all he is doing, in his customary table-turning
manner, is transforming the accepted image of Liszt’s ‘deficient’ genius into an
advantage. 63 Be that as it may, the message was primarily directed at contemporary
“Wagner imitators”: they had neither roots in Liszt’s true Zukunftsmusik (which was not
German or Wagnerian) nor any chance of composing anything new. This concluded the
negative proof of Liszt’s ancestry.

Yet Bartók’s hardest task was to show the positive proof. Beyond a general description of
progressive works (which incidentally influenced also Hungarians) Bartók makes a more
specific link by emphasising the Frenchness of Liszt’s music, and in particular the fact that

61 ibid., 509.
62 Ibid., 505.
63 There is little doubt that Bartók thought of Liszt as a deficient genius, and that he went out of his way to
play down Liszt’s deficiency in the most protective rhetoric he could muster. For example, describing how
Liszt breaks the unity of his style with ill-suited stylistic elements in Totentanz he writes: “In the end,
however, this is not so important; this fleeting disturbance of the unity is merely external, and is dwarfed into
insignificance beside the wealth of power and beauty that form the essence of the work.” (Ibid., 503; see also
in the same page his apology for Liszt’s prolixity and his love of the works for their ‘prophetic boldness’
rather than artistic refinement.) However, behind the rhetorical sympathy lies quite a harsh aesthetic
judgement of Liszt’s works which, once more, calls his role as Liszt’s famous defender into question.
he foreshadowed in some ways the impressionist style. The fact that Bartók’s and Kodály’s music was influenced by Debussy and Ravel was well known and acknowledged, and so by making this emphasis, he was placing Liszt in an honourable genealogical line that was perceived to be free of both Gypsy and German influences, and which led directly to Hungary’s musical future. The dichotomous perspective he presents throughout the article does not allow any other direct link with Liszt, but in the same passage where he signals the pre-impressionist style for special attention, he lets slip something which tantalisingly suggests a much more direct and material influence on the new Hungarian school:

We can also discover a surprising relationship between certain of Liszt’s works, such as single pieces from the Années de Pèlerinage, and the Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, on the one hand, and certain works by the two greatest figures in modern French music, Debussy and Ravel, on the other hand. It is my conviction that without Liszt’s Jeux d’eau de la Villa d’Este [sic] and related works, the works of similar atmosphere and expression by these two French composers would be unimaginable. In the new school of Hungarian music clear traces of Liszt’s legacy can be found in any number of works. But there was one composer who among us all most rarely escaped Liszt’s spell: Busoni, the most zealous propagator of Liszt’s art and the greatest follower of his traditions ... [etc.]65

The quote is part of a paragraph which deals with Liszt’s influence on twentieth-century composers. It is preceded by a few short comments on Strauss and is followed by a lengthy tribute to Busoni. The casual remark in the middle about Liszt’s influence on the Hungarian school (quoted in italics) is truly impenetrable, and could easily be missed. It almost feels like a sentence that needed burying. What are those ‘clear traces’ of Liszt’s legacy? Are they simply the same stylistic elements that foreshadow turn-of-the-century French music? Or is this a hurried half-admission of unmentionable influences?66

64 The ‘French connection’ becomes all the more apparent when we consider what Bartók writes in 1938 (two years later) about the influence of Debussy and Ravel in Hungary: “From the political and cultural viewpoint Hungary for four centuries has suffered the proximity of Germany; this fact cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, our intelligentsia always rebelled against this abnormal situation and acknowledged that the Latin spirit – above all the French spirit – is infinitely nearer to the Hungarian genius than the German ... From the beginning of this century the young Hungarian musicians, among whom I belonged, already oriented themselves in other domains towards the French culture. One can easily imagine the significance with which they beheld Debussy’s appearance. The situation stabilized and took on all its significance when we became acquainted with the music of Maurice Ravel.” Quoted in Bartók, Essays, 518.

65 Ibid., 505. My italics.

66 Elsewhere Bartók mentions, in a similar cryptic manner, that “it was Liszt who, after Berlioz, developed the Symphonic Poem even further, and we may say that the musical form that arose from the juxtaposition of lassú (slow) and friss (fast) was Liszt’s innovation, though he was in fact led to it by the usual order of Hungarian folk and semi-folk dances.” (Ibid., 503). This is the only other place where we get some sort of intimation of a folkloristic source for Liszt’s modernism. What remains unclear is what made Liszt’s pairing
Bartók does not tell us. Indeed, his most glaring omission is not to say a single word about the verbunkos idiom in Liszt's late style. Was it because he believed that Liszt's 'late style' did not owe anything to Hungarian-Gypsy elements, or did he simply suppress the question, and even suppress evidence that would undermine the logic of his dichotomies and clear-cut reading of music history? Why else would he not mention 'progressive' Hungarian compositions from the late period which he knew about, e.g. the Csárdás macabre which he edited in 1912? Why does he not say anything about Sunt lacrymae rerum, which is just a page-turn away from Jeux d'eau à la villa d'Este, the 'pre-Ravel' piece from the third Années de Pèlerinage which he cites for modernist merit? Bartók's omission is all the more glaring and ironic, as the stark textures and novel use of the verbunkos minor scale in Sunt lacrymae rerum evince a radical adaptation of folkloristic elements that is much closer to his style (or at least creates a much more immediate association with it) than Jeux d'eau à la villa d'Este. It seems to me that this is a case where, despite his customary integrity, Bartók may have been brushing aside evidence that got in the way of his arguments.

Whether these omissions were wilful or not, they are consistent with his ideology, and his real need to invent a 'modern' Liszt for the twentieth century who is not tainted by association with the hated gentry and their pathetic version of a Hungarian culture. Liszt had to become modern and authentically Hungarian against something that was not. Indeed, the real purpose of 'Liszt Problems' is laid bare with razor-sharp directness in the closing paragraph:

... there are important and publicly respected gentlemen in our musical life who are stubbornly opposed to everything new that has happened in Hungarian music since Liszt; who prevent, as far as they can, the following of Liszt's traditions; who, whether as composers or as writers, spend their whole lives crying down Liszt's artistic principles; who in spite of all this, pharisaically call themselves supporters of Liszt, and pay homage to the memory of an

of fast and slow movements any different than other Romantics', and what made this particular borrowing from folk culture (and here Bartók does not separate the semi-popular from the genuine folkloristic) modern and relevant to Bartók's aesthetics.

67 The Csárdás macabre was eventually published only in 1952. This work will received considerable attention in Chapter 5.

68 This is also true of the works he would like to see promoted. It almost feels as if Bartók suppresses the existence verbunkos elements which one cannot imagine he had missed, such as the scales and dotted rhythms in the first variation of Totentanz, or the verbunkos minor scales and rhythms in the piano sonata.
artist whose whole life and work was in absolute opposition to their own. It is these who have the least right to take Liszt's name in vain, to claim him as Hungarian and to boast of him as a compatriot.  59

As Table 2.2 summarises (overleaf), constructing a new Liszt whose life and work was 'in absolute opposition' to Bartók's rivals, meant positioning him on the positive side of a set of binary oppositions that were consistent with his culture war dichotomies (cf. Table 2.1, pp. 70-71). Perhaps it is well that we take note of how much more remains concealed than is being revealed in a discourse that, overall, has not been too sympathetic to Liszt's aesthetic.

59 Ibid., 510.
Table 2.2: Bartók’s dichotomies in ‘Liszt Problems’ (1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern, progressive</td>
<td>Conservative, retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, field research</td>
<td>Pseudo-science, arrogance and ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New school of Hungarian composition and non-German modern music (particularly French-impressionist)</td>
<td>Old school of Hungarian composition, and German influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High art</td>
<td>Popular taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘genuine’, rural folk musics</td>
<td>Verbunkos, artificial folklore and other ‘urban’ popular genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liszt’s music</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works exhibiting French ‘clarity and transparency’</td>
<td>Works manifest “the antithesis of the excessive density and laboriousness so characteristic of the works of outstanding German composers of the nineteenth century.” (Bartók, ‘Liszt Problems’, 509)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt’s ‘incomplete’ art and multitude of unfulfilled paths, which fertilised modern composition</td>
<td>Wagner’s ‘perfect’ art which was followed by sterile imitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original but imperfect pieces that sought to solve certain historical compositional problems, and left much for the future</td>
<td>Crowd-pleasing virtuoso pieces and arrangements (including the Rhapsodies), which were ‘perfect creations of their own kind’ but left nothing of great artistic worth or potential for future development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late style (in general)</td>
<td>Early style (in general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal integrity and historical role</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt’s musical genius, intellectual and moral integrity</td>
<td>The Hungarian gentry’s musical mediocrity, arrogance, ignorance and obstructionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt’s constructive historical role; his true significance and legacy</td>
<td>The traditionalists’ destructive historical role and their misunderstanding and misappropriation of Liszt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Renegotiating the Politics of Authenticity and its Limits

In the last decade, Bartók’s scientific findings, approach, methods of classification and ideology have been scrutinised, qualified, modified or criticised by several writers. The specific purpose of my critique, however, is to highlight that content of Bartók’s conceptual world which had trapped subsequent research on Liszt’s verbunkos idiom, indeed, subjugated Liszt research to its overriding demands. This is not to say that researchers have been completely docile in accepting every Bartókian tenet. On the contrary, the fact that almost everything in the musicological literature about the modernist aspect of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom comes from Hungarian academia points to an active resistance. The problem, as I see it, was that all too often Hungarian musicologists who tried to resist the politics of authenticity were too deeply steeped in it themselves, and sometimes too obliging to its original authors – Bartók and Kodály – for their resistance to be effective.

This problem was already evident in Zoltán Gárdonyi’s foundational Die ungarischen Stileigentümlichkeiten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts (1931), which was mentioned in Chapter 1. It will be recalled that Gárdonyi argued that Liszt’s more faithful adaptation of verbunkos (and more ‘authentic’ in that sense) was also a primitive and initial stage in his development of the idiom; artistic maturity was rather achieved through a process of abstraction, whereby verbunkos elements were completely synthesised with his ‘universal’ and ‘progressive’ compositional language. By inference, this process is not too dissimilar from Bartók’s description of three stages in modern Hungarian composition of adapting folk music to art music, namely (1) sympathetic arrangement, (2) invention of


71 See Chapter 1, Parts III and V. Nevertheless, the fact that most of this research came from Hungary also meant that it was determined by a nationalist agenda, and to judge by the meagre response outside Hungary, perhaps that nationalist agenda gave the impression that the whole issue was not really about the history of modern composition as much as about Hungary’s place in the sun. What I mean by this is that the verbunkos idiom did not form part of the mid-twentieth-century wave of ‘Liszt modernist rehabilitation’, that there has been a comparative lack of analytical interest in the modernist aspect of this idiom against a willingness to rehearse authenticist issues (see also Part II of this chapter).

72 See Chapter 1, pp. 31 and 42.
folk-like material, and (3) compositional abstraction. Moreover, not unlike the claims Bartók made for the influence of ‘peasant music’, Liszt seemed to have successfully transformed a peripheral idiom into a universal form of high art music, fulfilling Hungary’s desire to stand up and be counted already in the nineteenth-century. Only he did this by assimilating verbunkos. It was a direct challenge to the idea that the verbunkos idiom was inherently incompatible with modern and great composition. Against the premise of a clean break between the nineteenth and twentieth century, Gárdonyi presents Liszt as a pre-Bartókian (or Kodályian) composer, who set an early example for the new school in the way he immersed himself in folkloristic music and transformed it into high art. The trajectory of his narrative leads him to criticize Bartók strongly for disowning his predecessors, and for fallaciously using ethnomusicology to impose personal aesthetic judgements on the study of nineteenth-century composition:

It is false to declare that that form of music which nourished Liszt’s Hungarian style led Hungarian music on a false trail, to a dead-end and contributed nothing to its development ... This artistic conception, arbitrary to a fanatical degree, is as justifiable and important to a [certain] contemporary composer, as it is out of place and harmful when it affects writing on music. These judgments ... have nothing to do with science. A more objective examination has brought us to the following conclusion: the roots of Liszt’s Hungarian style, i.e. the Hungarian music of the nineteenth century, harbours ideas which, [though they appear] to be exhausted and empty in the eyes of today’s Hungarian composers who take folk music as their basis, have not entirely changed but were transformed ...

Although not mentioned by name, the identity of this ‘contemporary composer’ is not in doubt. It is certainly not Zoltán Kodály. Kodály, in fact, was the one who suggested the topic for the original PhD thesis which forms the basis of Gárdonyi’s book. It is therefore almost tempting to think that Kodály stood for a softer approach to Liszt’s verbunkos idiom,

73 Bartók, ‘The influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music’ (1931), in: Essays (1976), 341-44. The article was published the same year as Gárdonyi’s book.

74 I translate from the French edition (1936): « Il est faux de déclarer que cette forme de musique hongroise dont s’est nourri le style hongrois de Liszt a mené la musique hongroise sur une fausse route, dans un cul de sac et n’aide en rien à son développement ... Autant cette conception artistique, arbitraire presque jusqu’au fanatisme, peut avoir sa raison d’être et son importance chez un compositeur contemporain, autant elle est déplacée et nuisible lorsqu’il s’agit de musicographie. Ces jugements dans lesquels se reflètent, à côté d’une vérité objective, les tendances subjectives et soumises aux variations d’un individu ou d’une époque qui porte ces jugements, non rien à voir avec la science. Un examen plus objectif nous amène à la conclusion suivante: la racine du style hongrois de Liszt, c’est-à-dire la musique hongroise de la XIXe siècle, renferme des valeurs qui, pour être épuisées et pour paraître vides aux yeux des compositeurs hongrois d’aujourd’hui qui prennent pour base la musique populaire, n’ont pas entièrement disparues mais se sont transformées... » (Gárdonyi, Le Style Hongrois, 118-19).

or to authenticity issues in general. Indeed, some researchers believe that Kodály tolerated urban Gypsy-band music much more than Bartók did, and was overall more relaxed about definitions of folklore. But one scholar who devoted a lifetime of research to historical and contemporary Hungarian-Gypsy music took an opposite view. For Bálint Sárosi, Kodály’s profound influence on Hungarian music education put much greater limitations on a positive and fair appreciation of verbunkos and related genres. His protest (quoted below) against inculcating children with ‘pure’ pentatonic melodies, and against the ideology which marginalises instrumental folk music, is an obvious attack on Kodály’s legacy. Here too, academic etiquette is observed and Kodály’s name is not mentioned, but just to prevent any unlikely misunderstanding of who is being criticised, he enlists Bartók’s authority to his cause:

According to an obsolete, fixed notion, only the folk song, accessible to everyone, and brought forth by the “people” spontaneously, almost involuntarily, can be considered folk music. Children at school are introduced to folk music almost exclusively through selected folk songs, which represent “pure” styles, and they scarcely even hear of instrumental folk music, and even less of music played by professional musicians to accompany the dances of the people ... The question is whether the stock of mixed melodies in the repertoire of professional rural musicians, and their performing styles, which cannot be always identified with the spirit of the folk song, fits within the general approach to the Hungarian folk song, or whether this approach needs to be expanded. In fact Béla Bartók stood for such a broader approach when he said, “Musically the rural gypsies [sic] have completely adapted to the type of people among which they live; that is why we have no reason to expel them.”

Such magisterial tolerance of Roma musicians is quoted without a hint of irony. We are really meant to think that Bartók stood for an approach to folklore that was not fixated on the primacy of the folksong and on notions of spontaneity and purity, never mind what the man himself wrote. Or are we? It depends who ‘we’ are. For a wide readership that may

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76 Several writers have commented on Kodály’s more inclusive approach to folk music, and his greater willingness to include Gypsy-band music. See for example Stephan Erdely in op. cit. (2001), 24-42; and Katie Trumpener, op. cit., 413-15. It should be remembered, however, that Kodály wrote many of his opinions (particularly those often quoted from his 1952 book on folksong) long after Bartók was dead, and therefore the comparison of the two tends to be anachronistic, and oblivious to the fact that Kodály was writing this book during Hungary’s Stalinist days. The extent to which Kodály’s greater inclusiveness was a result of political compromise, i.e. a willingness to adapt to the needs of Hungary’s totalitarian regimes both before and after the war, is a moot point which cannot be explored here. I thank Rachel Beckles Willson for these qualifications.


78 Cf. Bartók, Essays, 316. Note that Bartók begins by limiting what actually constitutes folk music: “Folk music, generally speaking, is a rather broad concept which I would like to limit here by attempting the following definition: folk music is the music of the class of population the least affected by city culture, a
be only vaguely aware of the particulars of the discourse, but generally trusts Bartók as a
great expert in folk music (which of course he was), it could work. On the other hand, for an
academic ‘outsider’ like me, who has not been indoctrinated in a folksong ideology and who
deplores the cultural-political marginalisation of verbunkos, the substance of Sárosi’s
criticism is poignant and pointed, but his recruitment of Bartók’s authority seems to be
illogical, if not counterproductive: would Bartók really have disapproved of a ‘wholesome’
diet of pentatonic songs, or approved of introducing schoolchildren to Gypsy-band music as
part of the official curriculum?

Still, there may be quite a different logic at work here. Perhaps it was necessary for Sárosi
to justify his potentially heretic views by invoking one of the gods of folk music, or even
better, by playing one god against the other. It is not too dissimilar, I believe, from the way
Gárdonyi’s attack on Bartók’s ‘arbitrary’ and ‘fanatical’ reading of music history sets up (in
a much subtler way) Kodály against Bartók. In both cases the authors refer to the
authenticity discourse to justify an argument that is not really commensurable with it. It
could therefore be a mistake to take such ‘Bartók vs. Kodály’ tactics at face value, when
what they really express is an evasive manner of pushing against the discursive boundaries
while maintaining an appearance of being in good faith.

Yet I would argue that this manner of fighting the authenticity discourse ‘from within’
comes at a price: it forces writers, in the end, to rely on concepts and ideas that do not
advance their own agenda and may even interfere with it. Gárdonyi, for example, feels
obliged to charge Liszt with breaking the ‘organic’ unity of the original folksongs in his
variation technique and rhapsodic forms. 79 And although Gárdonyi views Liszt’s stylisation
and abstraction of verbunkos elements with approval, he finds it necessary to speculate that
it may have resulted from Liszt’s loss of touch with ‘living folklore’ during the Weimar
years and his increasing reliance on (Romantic) folksong collections. 80 Gárdonyi would

79 Gárdonyi, op. cit., 81-2. The basic argument is that motives from the melodies are developed independently
(unlike their static existence in folksong), which could be understood to impinge somehow on the authenticity
and organism of Liszt’s folkloristic ‘transcriptions’. This argument might have carried more weight if
Bartók’s and Kodály’s compositions were not guilty of similar sins.
80 Ibid., 88.
have perhaps hesitated to make that speculation if he had known about (or remembered) Liszt's reputation for having an infallible musical memory.\footnote{Liszt could retain a complete impression of music he had heard or played years or even decades before, down to its minute details. See contemporaneous testimonies of this in Williams, \textit{A Portrait of Liszt}, 22-3, 104, 144, 249, 410, and 501.} The point, however, is that he evokes the Bartókian spectre of a Romantic composer who is indifferent to the 'throbbing' life of folklore and who prefers the 'inaanimate' collections of songs (to use Bartók's imagery). He therefore potentially reinforces the very dichotomy he sets out to debunk in his conclusion, i.e. that twentieth-century folklorist composition is the \textit{opposite} of nineteenth-century folklorism.

There are even more subtle ways in which the authenticity discourse entraps writers. Sárosi's \textit{Gypsy Music} (1970; trans. 1978) is a rich and informative account of \textit{verbunkos}, \textit{magyar nótak} and the sociological circumstances of Roma musicians. He also boldly states that the tune-orientated approach and the aesthetics of folksongs' 'terseness' completely miss the point when it comes to the appreciation of \textit{verbunkos}; i.e. the very Romantic aesthetics which Bartók deplores, Sárosi admires, and he even defends Liszt on this account.\footnote{For example: "For the expression of the Hungarian character, recognized by Romantic ideals as heroic, proud and swaying between extremes, the simple sung folksongs or the folk-like songs composed by contemporary Hungarian composers were indeed inadequate. For the Romantic viewpoint the interesting thing was not the puritan terseness of the simply written or performed song but the way in which the virtuoso Gypsy ensembles brought these to life. It is here, reflected in the \textit{Rhapsodies}, that we can best see what made Liszt consider the gypsy [sic] musicians to be the sole source of Hungarian music" (Sárosi, \textit{Gypsy Music}, 114). Sárosi, then, does not misrepresent Liszt as an indiscriminate naïf who was misled by his Hungarian hosts, and rejects the idea that Liszt was composing from simplistic folksong collections.} His description of Liszt's \textit{Des Bohémiens} debacle leads to a celebration of \textit{verbunkos} that is not inhibited by the ethos of \textit{Werktreue} or the need to hide the Rhapsodies:

\begin{quote}
Liszt's error ... is not so great as may be concluded from taking his words literally. In folk music and popular music used as folk music, the performance has a fundamentally important role. The performance here is not merely a successful reproduction of the printed music worked out in every detail (as in the case of classical European music) but an important component part in the music. From Liszt's words – even though with not quite unequivocal clarity – it is possible to feel that in the music of the gypsy musicians he is thinking primarily of this part of the process of creation which is repeated again and again with every new performance. In this respect the creative role of the gypsy [sic] musicians cannot be doubted (since for example in performing a song composed by a "whistling composer" they add a lot of different things to it – orchestration, harmonization, ornamentation, variation ... – which the composer could not even have imagined originally.\footnote{Ibid., 149-50.}
\end{quote}
This is made clear from his description of the opening bars of Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 8*:

Liszt imitates every effect-creating trick (and mannerism) of Gypsy *verbunkos* performance so faithfully that when we see the piano music of the first bars it is as if we heard gypsy [sic] ensemble in them: the broken chords (arpeggios) of the cimbalom, the short rush beginnings of the first violin, the favoured diminished seventh chord (with the cunning audacious F sharp minor – B flat minor chord change, however, Liszt rather idealizes than imitates the one-time clumsiness of gypsy harmonization). 84

Sárosi rightly insists, against the authenticist fixation with pure and unaccompanied melodies, that *verbunkos* involves much more than tune-whistling (and this is not to underestimate the making of a good tune), and refuses to deal with this music in terms that minimise its richness. Unfortunately, his descriptions are sometimes invaded with received language that belittles the music (‘effect-creating trick’, ‘clumsiness of gypsy harmonization’). This goes beyond the question of ‘language’, however; it affects what can or cannot be conceptualised. It may be that the legacy of an ethnomusicology that sees pure folk music in purely melodic terms plays a part in Sárosi’s conceptualisation of it as a badly-executed Western harmony, which is effectively the same thing as denying its originality; it may have something to do with a belief that ‘harmony’ can only ever be Western; or with his overriding insistence that *verbunkos* is a combination of Hungarian tunes, ‘Western’ harmony and ‘gypsy [sic]’ performance practices. Whatever his motives, we are left with an impression that there is nothing original about this harmony. Even more glaringly, in pp. 226-229 of his book he gives the most breathtaking example of *verbunkos* harmony, full of ninth and ‘quartal’ chords. Yet this harmony, which he describes as having an ‘archaic character, fresh and beautiful’ produces these remarkable chords ‘quite independently of the performers’ intentions’. Furthermore, it is not original, but the inheritance of modal art-music from “aristocratic residences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” 85 Once more, the problem with this concept of bungled Western harmony and the insistence on denying any harmonic originality of *verbunkos* in general, is that it replaces a proper conceptualisation of this harmony with ideological obligations.

84 Ibid., 115.
85 Ibid., 226. This argument is consistent with his inability or unwillingness to conceptualise an original *verbunkos* harmony in this book.
completely underrates how ‘unschooled’ musicians can intuitively understand harmony and produce it by ear, even if that harmony does not fit into textbook descriptions (that is, until one decides to conceptualise this harmony). It is also a fundamentally illogical approach. As Peter Van der Merwe amply put it: “… One is faced with the usual difficulty of deriving positive effects from negative causes. Progressions caused by sheer ignorance do not sound striking, beautiful, or exotic, but merely wrong.”

Composers are not too concerned with negative causes either; they are rather struck by the positive effects. And they have noticed a consistency of certain progressions, chordal inversions, dissonances and other harmonic elements that have appealed to them. They could not have been able (nor would they have wished) to adapt verbunkos harmonic practices, if these practices did not have a certain logic and consistency. A simple point in case: is it accidental that in his Rondo all’Ongherese from the D major piano concerto (Hob. XVIII:11, 1784), Haydn superimposes an E major chord over an ‘open-string’ A-E fifth and creates harsh parallel textures; or that Schubert and Liszt create similar pungent chords in similar verbunkos-related contexts (ex. 2.1)? All three examples specifically show drone-based harmonisations: the Haydn seems to be especially striking, as if it should have been more properly written by Grieg. How could such bold harmonic innovations have their basis in such traditional music? The authenticity discourse obliges us to refrain from such questions for the many reasons we have explored, from straightforward ‘anti-Gypsy’ bias to Bartók’s sophisticated dichotomies. We should not heed such prohibitions. A worldview that divides verbunkos into its constituent cultural parts (Hungary and the West), and refuses to engage with the aesthetic regularities (‘rules’) of this harmonic style, can only tell us so much about Liszt’s verbunkos idiom.

86 Peter Van der Merwe, Roots of the Classical (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 155-56.
VI. Beyond the Politics of Authenticity: conceptualising and analysing transcultural harmonic practices

So, does it follow from this critique that we should completely reject Bartók’s worldview in a study of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom? Not at all; we need only reject the authenticity culture politics. Beyond that there is a wonderful oeuvre of works (including ones inspired by verbunkos) and recordings of folklore that have, and should continue to inform us about transculturation. Furthermore, we could separate the culture politics from interesting ideas pertaining to the transcultural influence of folk musics on modern art music and alternative tonal practices, as these could actually suggest investigative routes into Liszt’s music. I would therefore like to explore here some of Bartók’s more ‘positive’ ideas about the relationship between folk and art music. This, in turn, will lead us finally to the first large-scale analysis in this thesis: a reading of the verbunkos idiom in the finale of the fourteenth Hungarian Rhapsody, which is given as a response to both the previously discussed Bartókian dichotomies and the more positive Bartókian ideas which shall be briefly discussed here.

Bartók had claimed much for the ‘beneficial’ influence of folk music on modern composition: it has the power to recalibrate what we normally perceive as consonance and dissonance, or what we normally conceive of as chromatic or diatonic. In ‘The Folk Songs of Hungary’ (1928), Bartók demonstrated that since pentatonic melodies consist only of consonant tones, any combination of these tones would be heard as a consonant chord, and chords derived from such melodies (e.g. F-B6-D to G-B6-D) would naturally and easily avoid the ‘trite’ progression V-I. In one of his ‘Harvard Lectures’ (1943), he showed that the relationship between diatonism and chromaticism changes when non-major-minor modes are used, especially in bimodal superimpositions, since the resulting ‘sharpened’ or ‘flattened’ notes we hear when two different scales occur at the same time are not altered or chromatic tones but ‘diatonic ingredients of a diatonic modal scale.’

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87 Bartók, Essays, 334.
88 Bartók gives an example of this in ibid., 367: a descending phrygian scale on C is juxtaposed against an ascending lydian scale on C, thus in the space of three bars we hear the entire 12-tone gamut. Bartók stresses, however that “in our polymodal chromaticism ... the flat and sharp tones are not altered degrees at all; they are diatonic ingredients of a diatonic modal scale.” (Ibid.)
Do these observations have any implications for the study of the *verbunkos* idiom? The intriguing possibility that harmonic aspects of the *verbunkos* idiom can or may have altered the perception of chromaticism and diatonism runs against a big problem: a very considerable theoretical apparatus that tends to describe all music in major and minor terms, unless the music crosses over some indefinable line into ‘post-tonality’. Bartók was happily free to conceptualise his music in modal terms at a time when theoretical certainties were collapsing. We shall have to deal with the theoretical ramifications of this possibility in Liszt’s music in a separate chapter (Chapter 4). However, we can note here that bimodal superimpositions of the kind Bartók described are not too far removed from those Liszt derived from *verbunkos*. In Bartók’s examples, different modes with the same *finalis* can be constantly inflected according to melodic direction in a way that creates striking dissonance yet allows us to hear both versions of the inflection as ‘diatonic’. Consider then, the ‘diatonic-bimodal’ dissonances in a passage from the seventh Hungarian Rhapsody (ex. 2.2b), which all stem from a simultaneous juxtaposition of opposing melodic directions. G♯ leads to A in the melody of b. 68, but as we reach A only through B♭, we hear cross-relations between the two upper voices. These cross-relations become texturally bolder when G♯ in the bass clashes with a descending G♯ in the melody in b. 69; the major-mode repeat of the phrase is even bolder in the equivalent second beat (b. 70) where passing notes jar irreconcilably against the bass. This example also demonstrates how part of the harshness or brightness of the sonorities derives from parallel (albeit broken) descending fifths and the hidden parallel octaves in bs. 70-71 (A-D jump in the bass against B♭-C♯-D in the middle part).

How do such sonorities relate to *verbunkos* performance practices? One of the features of *verbunkos* is the modal flexibility of the melody. The first violin in a Gypsy band can alter the intervals of the melody’s scale *ad hoc*, sometimes against the same chords, which produces a bimodal effect. Melodically, it brings out the melody in sharp relief against the harmony; to a harmonic ear (such as Liszt possessed to the highest degree) it creates non-triadic and dissonant chords. These, however, are not random dissonances: they are mostly

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89 The modal independence of the melody can be understood more broadly when one also considers that in an ensemble of three players or more, the bass line can sometimes be heard as ‘out of synch’ with the chords or the melody. This is so typical of the music (and Liszt imitates this aspect too, as we shall see in the next
to do with a certain manner of inflecting scale steps. What we have to notice in the context of this study is that a transcultural phenomenon in Western music, like the name suggests, may have similarities to Western practices, but one should also attempt to tease out its uniqueness, and in some cases, its *modern* aspect. We can already see a small example of how the innovative aspect of such inflections has already occurred to Liszt in his first known transcription of *verbunkos* from 1828, *Zum Andenken: Zwei ungarische Werbungstänze von Lázló Fáy und Janos Bihari* (S241) (ex. 2.2a). The ascending A-major arpeggio is consonant with the chords in the accompaniment, but the melodic descent juxtaposes C♮ instead of C♯ against the same A major chord. This dissonance is both familiar and unfamiliar in an 1828 context. The melodic descent of a phrygian tetrachord (and specifically the 76-66-5 trichord) in a dominant chord context is familiar enough, and could be theoretically rationalised as being derived from melodic direction in a minor key context. Moreover, a dash of minor mode within major has also plenty of examples from the classical repertoire. What *is* unusual is that the inflection occurs within the same chordal context.\(^{90}\)

Towards the end of his life, Liszt still reworked this modal independence, sometimes creating near-‘octatonic’ sonorities, as the passage from the *Csárdás obstinée* (1885) in ex. 2.2c shows. Although there is a familiar melodic logic here (A♯ 4 B, A♮ 4 G), a bimodal effect is created by the descending B-aeolian scale which remains ‘indifferent’, to the dominant-chord harmony. The effect is heightened by a repetition of the melodic A♯ on the strong beat and by a deliberate juxtaposition of the melodic cell A♯-G-F♯ in the upper part against the augmented second A♯-G in the lower part. Finally, this passage gives us an example of a dominant chord which is melodically resolved to the tonic over the same dominant bass. We can intuitively hear this as a solution despite the fact that theoretically, a chord of this kind is supposed to resolve to the dominant. But we cannot say this about a

\(^{90}\) This modal sensibility used to be an integral part of Western practices. For example, such a dissonant colouring of a single note can be seen in early sixteenth-century monodies. But, quite obviously, this is not where Liszt derived this particular modal inflection from.
progression that for all intents and purposes is V₇ → I₉; the strange stability of I₉ is further reaffirmed in the rest of the piece. We shall have an opportunity to witness it in many of the examples of this thesis. Note, however, that we have already encountered another example of this type of chord in the quoted passage from La Notte in Chapter 1 (see C♯ minor chords in ex. 1.5). Such a distinctive and recurrent harmonic phenomenon ought to be called the 'verbunkos I₉'.

The extent to which the verbunkos I₉ changes normal tonal cadences or confuses tonic with dominant or tonic with subdominant (i.e. as a IV₉) varies on a case-by-case basis. It might be used very 'lightly', as in bs. 209-224 of RH14 (ex. 2.3a), to the extent that we will not notice it at all or all too easily listen to it with conventional ears and miss the way it might still affect the harmony of the piece. Which brings us to a wider issue: something like the existence of a 'verbunkos I₉' suggest that we should develop a conceptualisation of verbunkos-related harmony that goes beyond the traditional and narrow preoccupation with 'modes'. It is also possible that a more comprehensive view of verbunkos-related harmony will allow us to understand better how this harmony relates to specific or 'alternative' (i.e. innovative) harmonic practices in Liszt's composition. We need to collect more evidence of such harmonic features, and to assess their impact on longer stretches of music, and we shall do so from this point on, beginning in a case study which I shall shortly present. However, we need also to consider in this light whether it would not be too far-fetched to apply some of the Bartókian ideas about authenticity and organicism to the appreciation of Liszt's use of the verbunkos idiom in composition. Did Liszt's imaginative new rhapsodic composition stem, in part, from a considerable fidelity to the 'spirit' and substance of verbunkos, and/or from a thorough and effective coherence between the disparate elements of verbunkos in his composition? It is not my intention here to compare Liszt to his predecessors or contemporaries here, but rather to inquire whether his compositional adaptation has, in the first place, resulted in original tonal practices that determine whole movements or even

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91 Peter Van der Merwe has similarly identified what he calls the 'consonant ⁴' (op. cit., 169-71). During the present research, I have observed this phenomenon strictly within the context of the verbunkos idiom – hence my narrower designation. However, I note that most of Van der Merwe's examples for the 'consonant ⁴' also relate to verbunkos.
works; and if so, whether such original tonal practices can be shown to relate to the borrowed melodies and the performative style of his ‘rhapsodic’ genre.

Liszt’s borrowing of melodies is, on the face of it, the biggest problem for an ‘organic’ conception. It raises the suspicion (and prejudice) that we are dealing with second-rate compositions of the ‘piano arrangement’ type; or, put differently, the fact that these melodies come from different songs and/or sources ostensibly points to loose and compositionally-incoherent forms. It may also raise the suspicion that the ‘arrangement’ is quite unrelated to the material itself, or that it is incommensurable with the composer’s more personal artistic language or Zukunftsmusik mission, as Bartók seems to have argued in ‘Liszt Problems’. Now, it is possible to take a relativist stance and say that it is fine for a work of art to be episodic or to argue that loose forms are not necessarily bad ones, as Jim Samson has argued. I certainly agree with this and do not intend to suggest that we should be in awe of the metaphor of organicism or that we should condemn ‘loose construction’ wherever we find it in Liszt’s composition: only that in the Rhapsodies there are plenty of instances where melodies follow each other and relate to each other through an ‘intuitive’ melodic flow for which Mozart, for example, usually gets much praise. It is a logic that is sometimes not fully revealed through a narrow and straightforward motivic analysis. Nevertheless, it is not mythic or beyond analytical comprehension, and it is possible that an analysis of the themes and their relationship to the whole may reveal a form that besides being ‘episodic’ is also surprisingly ‘taut’—despite the appearance (and tradition) of carefree improvisation.

The vivace assai from Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody no. 14

The vivace assai section from Hungarian Rhapsody no. 14 (RH14) can serve as a compact example of how Liszt achieves coherence not only through surface melodic resemblances (although this too is important), but also through an overarching structure that binds the melodies together, through an ‘alternative’ tonal process which is completely dependent on

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92 See Chapter 3, pp. 131-132.
93 See this chapter, p. 80.
their order, and through a deliberate and subtle use of transcultural performance practices that are related to the melodies themselves, as well as the tonal process.

The whole section is based on three themes (represented in ex. 2.3a) which we know came to Liszt from different sources.\(^{95}\) It is also full of idiomatic features: \textit{verbunkos} scales (e.g. the \textit{verbunkos} minor and \textit{kalindra} in bs. 241 and 258 respectively); \textit{verbunkos}-related pedal point on the dominant (i.e. the ‘\textit{I}' in bs. 217-20); the chronically unstable third of Theme II which goes much beyond \textit{tierce de Picardie} conventions\(^{96}\); root-position chords, parallelisms and bimodal dissonance in Theme III (see especially the melodic D\textsubscript{b}-C\textsubscript{7}-B\textsubscript{b} against the B major chords in b. 251), and plenty of rhythmic and melodic gestures, e.g. the dotted rhythm of Theme II or the repeated \textit{Karuc} (i.e. undulating) fourths in Theme III; and so on. From a harmonic point of view, each theme seems to be enclosed in its own key and harmonic style. Theme I is in F major, Theme II is in D minor-major (where minor phrases are constantly and successively punctuated by Picardy thirds, hence my hyphenated designation 'minor-major'), and Theme III is in a curious A major\textsubscript{iminor} (where a minor melody is \textit{simultaneously} juxtaposed against major chords, hence the vertical line, |). Moreover, Liszt seems to jump from one tonal environment to the other.

The succession of themes is also somewhat capricious. Theme II, for example, makes a very poignant entrance in bs. 225-40, but then it completely disappears. The structure of the \textit{vivace assai} as a whole could be described as a succession of these themes, grouped into two subsections in the following way: \{Theme I, Theme II + repeat\} + \{Theme III, Theme I', Theme III', Theme I'\}. Taking the phrase repetitions and textural variations into consideration, we could describe the structure in more detail as \{I\textsubscript{1}I\textsubscript{2}, II\textsubscript{1}II\textsubscript{2} + repeat\} + \{III,III\textsubscript{2}, I\textsubscript{3}I\textsubscript{3}'I\textsubscript{1}', III\textsubscript{2}, I\textsubscript{3}I\textsubscript{3}'I\textsubscript{1}'\}. The first noticeable aspect of this thematic structure is that it is very repetitive and it \textit{really} is based on straightforward succession; i.e., there is no

\(^{95}\) Gärdonyi, op. cit. (1995), 52. Gärdonyi informs us that Theme II and III appeared in succession also in 50 \textit{csárdás} no. 50 published in 1852/3 by Ede Bartay; yet he informs us that this is not proof positive that the two belonged originally together – Bartay could have borrowed the idea from Liszt.

\(^{96}\) It is possibly misleading to describe the D minor-major harmony of Theme II as a series of ‘Picardy thirds', since such a ‘serial' majorisation at every half phrase is not a common practice in Western harmony. Moreover, after constantly veering to D major at the end of each half-phrase, the fourth half-phrase (bs. 237-240) ends in D minor, against all ‘Picardy third' conventions. Liszt is obviously interested in the overall rough or ‘dissonant' quality of this harmony, i.e. the implied cross-relations which he rather emphasises in bs. 236-7 (not quoted). Yet he also saw in it a more structural potential, as I shall argue on p. 101.
material besides the themes, and though these themes are texturally varied throughout, they are not developed motivically. Yet this apparent simplicity and capriciousness hides Liszt's compositional thinking. There are, in the first instance, motivic similarities between the themes. Ex. 2.4 shows that the three themes are based on the same melodic idea: a descending tetrachord (where a poignant 4 functions as an embellishment to the main 3-2-1 descent), preceded by an intervallic leap. Although in the third theme the melodic line basically descends from E to A (i.e. the tetrachord ^5^-^4^-^2^-^1), on a more detailed level it features the same melodic characteristics, as the beaming of the small notes emphasises.

A more complex connection between the themes is revealed when one considers their succession as one continuous whole. This relationship is highlighted for the first time when all three themes have completed their first appearance, i.e. in bs. 209-274 (ex. 2.5). Although these themes appear to jump from one key area to another, and notwithstanding the frequent skips in piano register, the themes are seamlessly connected through the progression of their basic melodic line. Liszt's masterstroke was to allow this line to descend continuously throughout the vivace assai – and potentially ad infinitum. This structural melodic line, moreover, is cyclic: when Theme I returns, it starts descending again from A, and the melodic descent continues uninterrupted regardless of the disappearance of Theme II. When Theme I is followed by III instead of II in b. 300 (i.e. immediately where ex. 2.3 ends), the same melodic descent continues unremittingly, since Theme I concludes in F and Theme III begins a step below on E.

I would argue that this A note is structurally prolonged, although within the context of F major and the C bass, the convention of reading the '6' of a 9/ chord as a dissonant upper neighbour to 5 forbids such an interpretation. However, a more contextual (or intertextual) reading allows us to hear the stable I\(^\frac{6}{4}\) typical to the verbunkos idiom.\(^{97}\) Furthermore, despite theoretical conventions, it seems that in the vivace assai one cannot automatically assume that the melodic structure is a priori subservient to the bass and the harmony. Indeed, it could be that sometimes the opposite is true. In Theme III, for example, the melody keeps

\(^{97}\) One notices that, for example, in bs. 209-12, it is rather G that passes between A and F. That, admittedly, is a very slight touch (it does not radically alter the 'common practice'), but heard contextually (or intertextually, against other instances of the verbunkos I\(^{6}\), the tonic stability of the 9/ chord, or the A note (at least initially, as the beamed and stemmed note in ex. 2.5 suggests) cannot be discounted.
its modal independence and even seems to generate the bass, which moves in parallel octaves with it. Liszt rather makes a ‘structural point’ of this melodic supremacy when the bass continues to move in parallel octaves in the next cycle of melodic descent, i.e. at the repeat of Theme I beginning in b. 275 (see ex. 2.3b). His reharmonisation of Theme I (Theme I₃ and I₃') is very telling: the melody begins in A major, making the structural-melodic A ‘officially’ concordant while destabilising F major as the controlling key.⁹⁸

What, then, is the relationship between this structural and cyclic melodic descent, the succession of keys, and the changing perception of local and overall (controlling) tonic? And, to take this question a step further, from a perceptual point of view, is it so obvious that overall we are ‘in’ the key of F major? We need at this point a little more context. The Rhapsody on the whole is in F major, but in b. 77 it switches unceremoniously to D major (Poco allegretto section), then modulates to A minor in b. 121 (the Allegretto alla zingarese) which is once capriciously interrupted by a short F major passage (allegro vivace, beginning b. 137), and which eventually slowly modulates back to F minor. However that key is thwarted by a deceptive D₆ major (VI of F minor) in b. 194, which is all the more deceptive for quoting the main ‘heroic’ theme of the F major section from the beginning. The transition to the F major of the vivace assai in b. 209 is equally sudden and capricious (see bs. 205-9, not quoted), and when sixteen bars later we are already in D minor-major, F major’s status as the recapitulated key is not at all certain.

The first factor which enables a smooth tonal transition from Theme I to Theme III to take place is the idiomatically-unstable third (F♯/F♯) of Theme II. The minor-major modality of this theme is rather volatile and unstable; it could stabilise as either D major or D minor, a fact which Liszt exploits structurally: The first repeat concludes in D minor, in a descending D-ver scale that leads to the opening theme in F major (b. 240), while the second repeat proceeds to what we might hear at first as a prolongation of D major which concludes in a half close on the dominant A (ex. 2.5; cf. ex. 2.3a). However, the ‘irrational’ (from a tonal point of view) repeat of Theme III and thus of this ostensibly ‘imperfect cadence’ (bs. 259-74, represented by the repeat sign in ex. 2.3a), throws that into question: are we still in D or

⁹⁸ There is also something else that this reharmonisation teaches us: it demonstrates to a ‘learned’ ear that the more ‘cultivated’ voice-leading that goes through the circle of fifths (Theme I₃’) is actually not too far from an ostensibly ‘crude’ world of parallelism (Theme I₃).
is the key rather A major? The question becomes more pertinent as Liszt re-harmonises Theme I as a transition from A major to F major in bs. 275-90 (ex. 2.3b) and when, from this point to the end of the vivace assai (bs. 275-358) we hear, in fact, a succession of ‘capricious’ key changes between F major and A major. For a while – perhaps almost to the very end of the vivace assai – the controlling key could be either F or A.

What makes this ‘tonality’ fresh and new in the context of a work from the mid-nineteenth century (or even today), is that it seems so unpredictable and volatile despite the diatonic and triadic quality of the harmony. Yet, in the end, the primacy of F is not in doubt. I use the expression ‘in the end’ literally here, since it is possible to hear the entire tonality of the vivace assai as a gradual clarification of tonal hierarchy, rather than a given key. And this tonal process, as I would like to argue, is established in three main stages (Figure 2.1, overleaf). At the first stage (bs. 209-74) we hear an open-ended harmonic progression where D minor-major serves as a pivot key, and which ends enigmatically in A major-minor (it is not possible to determine if this is a half-close in D or a complete cadence in A). At the second stage we are abruptly back in F major, and then with the same lack of harmonic preparation, back in A major-minor (bs. 275-82): either key could become the tonic. But the final stage reasserts F by simply reiterating the first theme (315-338). Thus we could hear the entire process as a gradual ‘contraction’ of key areas, leading to a reinforcement of F at an accelerated pace.

This seemingly calculated and precise tonal process – in effect an alternative to normal procedures of creating hierarchies between keys – is all the more remarkable for hiding behind a veneer of complete harmonic abandon. We could say that this tonal process is directly related to transcultural harmonic practices and idiomatic elements: the tonal stasis of each theme and the abrupt tonal leaps between themes (aided by idiomatic elements such as verbunkos scales and glissandi that substitute ‘proper’ modulations); the comparative lack of tonal tension (despite the C pedal-point in Theme I); and, on the other hand, the ‘weak’ subdominant directionality of ‘stage 1’ in general, and of Theme III in particular. All of these things enhance a process of expanding a basic F major tonal area and then contracting it without recourse to conventional harmonic progression, where subsidiary keys are approached through modulation and then require a strong resolution (commonly through a structural dominant).
We can finally see in ex. 2.6 how this 'spiral' process of changing keys (Figure 2.1) relates to the overarching and descending melodic line that binds the three themes (ex. 2.5), as well as the structural role of some 'surface' idiomatic element. The 'three (tonal) stages' of Figure 2.1 correspond to sections [A] to [F], [G] to [J] and [K], respectively. This division, in turn, clearly corresponds to three structural melodic descents: the first octave descent from A to A (stage 1), the same octave descent despite the omission of the D minor-major theme (stage 2) and the final descent from A to the tonic F (stage 3). As ex. 2.6 shows, the way phrase repetitions break this structural melodic line within each of the three cycles is also highly relevant to the unfolding harmonic process. Stage 1, accordingly, is itself a three-stage process: first, the melodic line descends to D, as the key of D minor-major is established (sections [A] and [B]), and a verbunkos minor scale in b. 241 returns us to F major by re-inflecting D to the minor and by suggestively emphasising motivic notes that point ahead to the return of the F major theme (particularly the B–A–G# motto, as shown by the

![Figure 2.1](image-url)
dotted lines in section ⑭; cf. ‘x’ marks in ex. 2.3a, b. 241). Secondly, in sections ⑮ to ⑯ the
melodic line descends all the way to A, in what sounds like a half-close in D major (hence
the D major key signature in the example). Third, as was already mentioned, the repeat of
the A major|minor phrase (section ⑮), subverts the previous function of E (and the E♭ major
chord) as an interceding upper neighbour that prolongs Theme II’s structural D (cf. ⑯). At
this point, as E-D-B♭-A is repeated, the strong modal independence of the melody (a
descending A aeolian scale in effect), and the melody-generated bass line, give rise to the
possibility that A major|minor is the actual tonal destination, and that the melodic descent
actually reached the tonic (hence the white note).

It is therefore impossible to understand this structure without writing out some of the
repetitions as we would hear them in performance. In Stage 2, the descending line is again
broken into a three-stage descent, but this time the repetitions gradually reaffirm F major as
the tonic key, and the local F tonic as the (ostensible) final melodic destination (hence the
white notes should be understood as a provisional perception). Still, the A retrospectively
gains its structural-melodic significance as in section ⑱ Theme I is effortlessly combined
with Theme III (section ⑱), forming one continuous melodic arc, and once more concluding
in A major|minor. It will be recalled that unlike stage 1, this melodic descent dispenses with
the intercession of Theme II and the local prolongation of D, which means that now the
perception of A as the local key or final tonal destination becomes unquestionable (whereas
in ⑯ it was equivocal at best, and in ⑯ it was still more suggestive than certain). Thus
through manifold repetitions of the F major Theme I on the one hand, and the overarching
descent to the A tonic of Theme II on the other, Liszt achieves a fine balance between the
two keys; we can say that the initially unclear ‘bipolar tonality’ of stage 1 has now achieved
its high point. However, the return to F is accelerated at stage 2, as Theme III appears only
once. Finally, the repetitions in stage 3 (section ⑲) completely do away with alternative
keys and cut short the structural melodic descent, making the F tonic uncontested and the F
major key area virtually monolithic (despite the ‘dynamic’ reharmonisations of Theme I₃
and I₃’). It would appear, then, that in this uniquely ‘spiral’ and ‘accelerating’ tonal process,
not a single repetition is arbitrary or superfluous, and that notwithstanding the image of
'exotic' overabundance or musical crudeness, in compositional practice they serve a sophisticated and effective thematic-tonal design.\textsuperscript{99}

One could make the same claim about the 'surface' idiomatic elements. The themes are joined on the surface by what authenticity politics would have us see as the cheapest effects in Liszt's Gypsy bag of tricks: \textit{verbunkos} scale passages and glissandi, splashed across the piano keyboard. However, these 'effects' actually reflect deep compositional thinking. I have already mentioned that the scale in b. 241 serves not only to turn the modality of D minor-major to D-\textit{ver}, and thus prepare us for a return to Theme I's F major, but also creates motivic connections with Theme I that are based on B\textsubscript{b}-A-G\textsuperscript{#}, i.e. a melodic cell that is inherent in the mode (see p. 103). From b. 242 on, scales and glissandi will serve to enhance the shift away from the tonal process mediated by the D minor-major theme to the more direct relations between F and A major. The near-symmetrical A-B\textsubscript{b}-C\textsuperscript{#}-D-E-F-G\textsuperscript{#} scale which we can call either D-\textit{ver} or A-\textit{kal} plays on the tonal connection between D minor and A major. D-\textit{ver} is associated with D minor, A-\textit{kal} with A major, due to its major third (C\textsuperscript{#}). The scale then acts as a catalyst; its slight shift of emphasis from D to A perfectly reflects the gradual dissipation of a D-centred tonality in favour of an A-centred one at the end of 'stage 1' of the tonal process, and it is perhaps in its last appearance in b. 259 (section \textsuperscript{[3]}\textsuperscript{2}) that the transition is complete.

Even something as simple as the melodic direction of the scale reflects structural thinking. Theme I is always approached by a descending scale, and Theme III by an ascending one. The same idea is later served by glissandi: a glissando rises to meet Theme III, while twice we hear descending glissandi that hurl us back to Theme I.\textsuperscript{100} The appearance of these glissandi, in lieu of the \textit{verbunkos} scales, is also related to the three-stage tonal process. By

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Some repetitions also have a structural motivic significance. Theme 13 is a variant that recalls the parallelism of Theme III, imitating its descending pentachord and seamlessly continuing its bass-melody melodic descent. The harmonisation of Theme 13, not only 'explains' the parallelisms of its predecessor in surprising terms (see footnote \textsuperscript{98}) but also foreshadows a similar passage in the coda (see bs. 371-90, not quoted). Theme 11, which harks back to the original opening theme, reinforcing the V-I progression, and thus also serving a tonal function of concluding the F major key area in both sections \textsuperscript{[3]} and \textsuperscript{[2]}.\textsuperscript{100}

\item The glissando direction is represented in ex. 2.6 by the tilted glissando marks where '/' = up and 'V' = down. Note that the reason for this direction is that Theme 1\textsubscript{III} is in the high register (represented by the 15\textsuperscript{ths} sign in the example), while Theme 1 is in the lower one. This may also impact on how we may perceive A-major/minor to be 'fantastic' or 'unreal' in relation to the more 'earthly' (and therefore more 'real') F major.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the time the first glissando appears (b. 274 between \( F \) and \( G \)), the D-major-minor connection and its associative verbunkos minor scale have faded away. A new and more direct relationship between F major and A major\( _{\text{minor}} \) begins to unfold: a structural and 'contra-harmonic' A-aeol scale. The glissandi (which should be played clearly with a delicate touch: see ex. 2.3b, bs. 274 and 298-9) are the most direct 'surface' appearance of the structural A-aeol melodic descent, and they perform a similar harmonic function: they clash bimodally with the A major chords of Theme III on the one hand, and on the other hand they 'diatonically' bridge F major and A major\( _{\text{minor}} \) through common pitches.

This analysis has hopefully demonstrated that the many idiomatic features – repetitions, glissandi, verbunkos minor scales, modal inflection and (bi)modal melodic independence, textural parallelism, 'sudden' key alterations, static and circular harmony – are not irrelevant to the compositional craft; they are not a string of clichés adapted to equally clichéd 'common practice' progressions; and they do not contrast in any way with Liszt's 'real' self or his Zukunftsmusik ambitions. Rather, it can be argued that they form both a cohesive style in themselves (evoking verbunkos in detail) and a modern style for music in the 1840s and 50s. Above all, often enough in such works, behind the preoccupation with so many idiomatic features Liszt seems to be asking: what else can music do?
VII. Conclusion: Liszt’s Modernism and Authenticity

Moved as we have been since childhood by Bohemian music – being already then familiar with the incomparable attractions, initiated into the secret of its life-giving sentiment, gradually penetrating the sense of its form and the need for preserving its eccentricities in order not to lose its character and personality, it is only natural that we should have been very early on inclined to appropriate some of its pieces to the piano ... However, after having submitted several of these pieces to transcription it dawned upon us that we should never finish ... A mountain of material piled up before us; we had to compare, select, eliminate and elucidate. Thereby we became convinced that in reality these detached pieces, these disjointed and dispersed melodies were the disseminated, torn and scattered parts of one great whole [here Liszt speaks of the formation of a `national epopee' and `Bohemian epopee'] ... we easily perceived that the [individual] poesies that abound in Bohemian music... such as odes, dithyrambs, elegies [etc.] ... as well as martial funeral and bacchanalian songs, could come together in a [single] homogenous body, a complete work, in which each song [could] be ... judged individually and independently of the whole, while remaining connected to the others through a common subject, inspiration and unity of form.

- Franz Liszt (probably)\textsuperscript{101}

Liszt wrote these ideas in the concluding chapter of Des Bohémiens. One can speculate that the original ‘preamble’ to the Rhapsodies would not have been too dissimilar, since it is at this point, after hundreds of highly digressive pages (and most probably prolific editorial expansions and distortions), he finally explains what prompted him to write the rhapsodies and why he felt that such works needed a verbal introduction. We therefore have little reasons to doubt that these are his ideas, if not his exact words. Liszt was, as his compositions attest, patently aware of the musical and cultural interrelations of melodies he

\textsuperscript{101} Translated from Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie, 344-5 in consultation with Edwin Evans’ translation in Liszt, The Gypsy in Music (1926), 343-5. The original text is given below:

« Ému comme nous l’avons été depuis notre enfance par la musique des Bohémiens, familiarisé dès lors avec ses allures à nulle autre pareilles, initié petit à petit à ce secret de son sentiment vivificateur, pénétré de plus en plus le sens de sa forme et la nécessité où elle est de garder ses excentricités pour ne pas abdiquer son caractère et ne pas perdre son individualité, nous avons été naturellement porté de très-bonne heure à en approprier quelques fragments au piano… Toutefois, après avoir soumis bon nombre de fragments à ce procédé de transcription, il ne nous semblait jamais en avoir fini… Un monceau de matériaux s’élevait devant nous ; il fallut comparer, choisir, éliminer, elucidier. Alors nous acquimes la conviction que ces morceaux détachés, ces mélodies disjointes et éparpillées étaient les parties disséminées, émiettées, éparpillées d’un grand tout… nous aperçûmes sans peine que les poésies qui abondent dans la musique bohémienne et s’y détachent, telle que des odes, des dithyrambes des élégies, des ballades, des idylles, des gazelles, des distiques [sic], des chants martiaux, funèbres, amoureux et bacchiques, pouvaient se ressembler en un corps homogène, en un œuvre complète, divisée de sorte que chaque chant soit à la fois total et partie, susceptible d’être séparé du reste, jugé à part et indépendamment de l’ensemble, tout en demeurant lié aux autres par l’identité du sujet, l’analogie de l’inspiration et l’unité de la forme.»
had assembled together as well as their relationship to *verbunkos* performance practices. Reading passages such as the above, one gets the impression that Liszt’s notions of the importance of *verbunkos* to his own sense of identity and his need to ‘organically’ absorb it to achieve true novelty, is not very far removed from Bartók’s. As the above quote shows, he was convinced that *verbunkos* was his ‘native’ tongue, language endowed with ‘life-giving sentiments’ which ‘profoundly moved’ him since childhood and whose secrets he had gradually penetrated as an already fully-formed composer. Furthermore, like Bartók he had a decidedly ‘organicist’ view of how the numerous melodies he came across related to a single metaphysical music idea. In fact, towards the end of *Des Bohémiens* we learn that his perception of this metaphysical oneness prompted him to view the fifteen rhapsodies as a single ‘national epopee’, to put together, as it were, what history had torn apart: in other words he was acting through natural forces, realising the precompositional bonds that existed between these melodies. Without getting into a debate about Liszt’s idealist visions (which I have no cause to dispute), I would say in more technical terms that it was probably the resemblance and potential interconnectedness of the melodies which created in Liszt’s imagination the form and directionality of each rhapsody. It is also possible to deduce from the entire trajectory of the book that he perceived the ‘one great whole’ (‘un grand tout’) to be not only an endless reservoir of related melodies, but one that is inextricably connected to *verbunkos* performance practice.¹⁰² This is what he says on both cultural and compositional coherence:

The Bohemian musical fragments which we have already completed [as isolated and individual works] seemed to undergo a new examination; they were revised, recast, reunited with others with the intention of creating a body of works, which, thus cemented, offers a work which corresponds more or less to what we believe could be considered as a Bohemian epic. Having done that, it was impossible to ignore that an epic such as this one runs a great risk of remaining little understood and even less appreciated in the civilised world to which we were about to introduce it, as we took great care to give that assemblage [of melodies] a consistency indispensable in works of art that lay claim to a lasting existence in the great arena of all artworks, without this having caused any loss of the savage spirit which animates this music.¹⁰³

¹⁰² I intentionally avoid a philosophical debate about one subjective perception of organicism or another. What matters here is that these individual perceptions were important to individual composers and in some sense directed their composition.

¹⁰³ « Les fragments de musique bohémienne que nous avions déjà fait isolément paraître subirent un nouveau examen ; ils furent révisés, refondus, réunis à d’autres dans l’intention de former un corps d’ouvrage, qui ainsi cimenté, offre un Œuvre correspondante, à peu près, à ce que nous croyions permis de considérer comme une épopee bohémienne. Ceci fait, nous ne nous dissimulions point qu’une telle épopee courait grand risque de rester peu comprise et encore moins goûtée du monde civilisé au milieu duquel nous comptions l’introduire,
The ‘civilised world’, as it turned out, was too preoccupied with the disputed origins of verbunkos to care about the fine balance between authenticity and artistry. What Liszt was trying to say, however, is that ‘isolated Bohemian musical fragments’ though these melodies may be, they are naturally related (see previous quote). His image for that unity was literary (‘Bohemian Epic’) rather than biological (‘organicism’), but it is clear that he meant the same thing. The ‘savage’ element, the nineteenth-century equivalent of twentieth-century ‘primitivism’, is the very reason for bringing such music to the ‘great arena’, giving artists new and liberating ideas that overcome the boundaries of a musical world that has become too civilised to the point of academicism. In this chapter we saw that this sometimes meant altering the normative tonal practices of his time by imaginatively developing the non-major-minor potential of the generic materials he adopted. He used such materials, of course, in ways that were un-thought-of in the original folkloristic context. That is not yet another reason to consider his composition to be ‘inauthentic’ or too far removed from the ‘spirit’ of the original. Bartók, in that respect, also took his generic materials far away from their original environment, and in both cases, if something was lost in the translation, something original and worthy was also gained. Yet unlike Bartók, who completely dreamed up a harmony out of his folksong modality, Liszt was deeply struck by verbunkos harmonic practices that were both real and unconventional, and saw a way of combining his own harmonic ideas with these practices. Perhaps for Bartók the harmonies of Gypsy ‘café music’ were already too tired and pedestrian to be of any use to a modern composer, but then he himself suggested that “it is likely that the gipsy [sic] bands of [Liszt’s] time performed much better material, and much more interestingly than today, and probable, too, that rather more in their programmes was of folk origin.” Liszt clearly found the music fascinating, fresh and new. On the strength of his composition and his own words, he savoured the hybridic aspect of the harmony, which, in the 1840s, appeared to

quelques soins que nous ayons mis à donner à cet assemblage la consistance indispensable aux œuvre d’art qui prétendent à quelque durée sur le grand arène où tout les formes de l’art figurent, sans pour cela rien faire perdre à cette musique du souffle sauvage qui l’anime.» (Ibid., 344-5).

104 Bártok, ‘Liszt Problems’, in: Essays, 507. This is Bartók at his most charitable, and it is telling that this charity comes in the context of defending Liszt’s reputation. Sárosi, as we saw, was rather less charitable when he summed up the greater originality of early- and mid-nineteenth-century Gypsy bands which inspired Liszt’s harmonic ideas as ‘the one-time clumsiness of Gypsy harmonization.’ (Sárosi, Gypsy Music, 115). The possibility that in Liszt’s time Gypsy band harmony was more ‘rural’ or ‘non-Western’ is intriguing and requires a thorough research beyond the confines of the present study.
him quite distinct from the tonal possibilities then known. It provided a welcome ‘accent’ and even ‘syntax’ unknown to or unrecognised by musical conventions.

Assessing the compositional impact of the rhapsodies remains a task for future research, pending a considerable accumulation of comparative studies that include these works. In fact, giving these works the analytical attention they deserve, is perhaps the most effective way of rescuing their reception from the pejorative judgement of early twentieth-century modernist aesthetics. As we now turn to examine other, more contemporary cultural-political discourses that might have their own reasons for condemning works like the rhapsodies, it would be good to bear in mind that many hostile assumptions about what ‘exotic’ music is (simple, crude, superficial) have their origins in a long history of cultural elitism; and on the other hand, it has little to do with any specific knowledge of, or accrued experience in, analysing this idiom. We, however, shall continue to examine these truisms in the next chapters as well as analyse more passages, movements and complete works that disprove them. And as we do so, it will become increasingly evident that Liszt – in his own uncompromising and original manner – was both modern and authentic to the hilt.
Chapter 3:  

*Style hongrois and the Question of Influence*

We may at present be in a unique position to rediscover more transcultural aspects of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom. The general climate is favourable: crossover music is very much in fashion, absolute certainties and master-narratives are crumbling, and there is an overall tendency and willingness to abandon received cultural hierarchies. Exposing unacceptable or ‘politically-incorrect’ modes of thinking that are concealed in ostensibly ‘objective’ musicology is already a critical tradition. I cannot imagine that anyone today would be really shocked by Peter Van der Merwe’s recent arguments in *Roots of the Classical* (2004) that music from the ‘Fringe’ influenced practically all nineteenth-century composers (and not only East European national schools), including the most Teutonic of them all, Richard Wagner.¹ For anyone interested in questions of cultural influence, such claims are highly intriguing, and they are not likely to shock a general readership that has become accustomed to historical revision. On the other hand, we can say that much of the shock factor is averted by what reassuringly appears to be another incarnation of the familiar and traditional topic of non-Western influences. This is somewhat justified; however, I would argue that in some recent research the emphasis has crucially shifted from viewing ‘Western music’ as a closed system that occasionally and temporarily dons a ‘foreign’ Eastern habit, to interpreting sustained cultural interactions that have hybridised, shaped and transformed European musical practices.

This is how I read Jonathan Bellman’s *The Style hongrois in the Music of Western Music* (1993).² On the one hand, Bellman continues (and in fact revives) old musicological studies which looked at ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Gypsy’ elements in (mainly) German and Hungarian

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composition. On the other hand, his detailed and comprehensive narrative of a sustained cultural influence that stretches almost a century and a half (ca. 1780-1920), gives the impression that Western musicology has conveniently forgotten the depth and extent of this influence, and that research in the past has only touched on this influence in general descriptions and/or has given us a fractured picture by focusing on individual composers.\(^3\) In this chapter I shall briefly discuss Bellman's claims and approach, as well as some reactions to it. It is my belief that Bellman has been widely misread and sometimes misrepresented as his ideas occupy an uneasy place between 'old' and 'new' musicology. Equally, I believe some of his assumptions should be qualified, as well as the use of a concept such as 'style hongrois'. Nevertheless, I shall also argue for the insights into transculturation which a lexicon of musical 'topics' may afford. This will bring us to Part III which explores a certain 'postcolonial' agenda which, on the one hand, tends to reject 'old musicology' and which, on the other hand, concentrates on cultural 'appropriations' while largely neglecting the more complex possibilities and/or manifestations of transculturation. I shall trace some of this thinking to Said's Orientalism (1978)\(^4\) and will attempt to expose how its application in musicology has sometimes resulted in prejudgements and misrepresentations that ironically depend on very 'old musicology' biases and conservative music theory. In this context, I shall further argue for the impossibility of predetermining what 'signifiers' mean in every circumstance, not least in Liszt's music, where signifiers tend to be particularly unstable and unpredictable. As a response to both 'appropriation' politics and the disciplinary reality of a widening discursive gap between music analysis and culture studies, I will first (in Part IV) take Bellman's model of lexical topoi and expand it harmonically. This will also provide a summary of some of the harmonic aspects of the style we have already encountered in previous chapters, and add new ones to them. Secondly, in Part V, the interpretation of these (as well as Bellman's) topoi will be put to the test: I shall demonstrate in a comparative analysis of two different arrangements of the same Hungarian tune by Liszt

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\(^3\) Bellman does not make the latter argument: however, as his bibliography reveals, the standard musicological practice has been to draw either a very broad-brush picture or concentrate on one composer or one piece. I do not know of any other monograph that examines the entire history of the idiom in such detail through works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert, Liszt and Brahms (as well as less famous composers).

and Brahms how these topoi may be immensely useful in actual analysis, as points of reference that may help us gain keener insights into transcultural possibilities.

I. Style Hongrois: the concept, its possibilities and problems

In the eighteenth century... an ongherese was merely a topic; the nineteenth-century style hongrois was a discrete musical language.

- Jonathan Bellman (1993)²

Style hongrois is a useful and relatively recent concept. It was first conceived, in its present musicological meaning, in Jonathan Bellman’s The style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe (1993). The French designation, especially when used in English, creates the association of a pan-European ‘topic’ which found its most concentrated expression in Viennese composition, not unlike the way alla turca did. Nevertheless, as the quote above shows, Bellman made a distinction between eighteenth-century adaptations which wore their turqueries and hongroises lightly on their sleeve, and the nineteenth century, where style hongrois seems to have gradually played a much more significant role. Bellman was not the first, of course, to point to the influence of verbunkos in Western composition. This was a subject that interested Hungarian scholars, particularly Bence Szabolcsi who detected ‘traces’ of this style in the eighteenth-century Viennese school.⁶ However, Bellman’s whole point was that the influence was much more important in the period between Schubert and Brahms, when from a ‘topic’ the style evolved into a ‘discrete musical language’, potent in composition but largely unacknowledged by music criticism and musicology, or the cause of critical anxiety and suppression.⁷

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² Jonathan Bellman, op. cit., 65.
⁷ See for example his critique of J.A. Westrup in Bellman, op. cit., 158-9, partly reproduced here in footnote 11.
Another point which emerges from Bellman’s book is that although style hongrois bore some relationship to the ‘national’ Hungarian school of composition, it was also independent of it. Composers in Vienna, including those that are central to the canon, could take their inspiration directly from verbunkos played by professional Gypsy bands in the streets, cafés and theatres; they did not need to refer to Hungarian composition, or accept Hungarians’ appropriation of verbunkos as a national symbol. To my mind, this kind of non-Hungarian representation of Gypsies or Hungarians is style hongrois in its narrower and most precise sense, and for this reason I am not entirely convinced that Liszt should be placed on a style hongrois continuum between Schubert and Brahms. But this is a quibble that will be explored later in the chapter. More importantly, Bellman has put on the map, so to speak, the existence of a style hongrois based in Vienna that has made inroads to the heart of the canon, and from which other Europeans in other locales and countries could have directly drawn inspiration. If in traditional Hungarian scholarship the influence of verbunkos on non-Hungarian composition was a footnote to the ‘real’ national music, Bellman has shown that style hongrois was actually a very important pan-European influence in its own right, stretching over a considerably ‘long nineteenth century’ (ca. 1780-1920).

It follows from Bellman’s book that we can define style hongrois as a transcultural tradition and phenomenon in its own right, which consolidated through a cumulative and common experience of translating one particular musical culture into another. This means that style hongrois not only ‘evokes’ another music, but also has a relationship with Western genres and compositional practices, of which it is an integral part, and moreover, it may have some definable peculiarities of its own that it does not necessarily share with verbunkos. To give an example of my own, the Viennese manner of combining the verbunkos minor with the (‘German’) IV\textsuperscript{6} chord could be said to be musically specific to style hongrois.\textsuperscript{9} The specificity of style hongrois, as well as the practical need to read it fluently in Western composition led Bellman to compile the different features of the style

\textsuperscript{8} In the final part of this chapter I will nevertheless try to demonstrate, albeit within the limitations of a single example, some possible differences between the Viennese and the Hungarian approach (beyond individual differences between Brahms and Liszt).

\textsuperscript{9} The first evidence of Liszt using such harmonisation is from his early Zwei Werbungstänze (1828; see ex. 3.10), and it suggests similarities with the Viennese manner that could have later evolved into more complex harmonisations of the verbunkos minor; see Chapter 5 pp. 231-233.
into a comprehensive ‘lexicon’, which I have reproduced in summary in Appendix 1b.\textsuperscript{10} In doing so, he recognised that the lack of acknowledgement for the pervasiveness of style hongrois could also be a function of plain unfamiliarity. This was clearly a problem of Western (and more specifically of late twentieth-century Anglo-American) musicology that had best be confronted, admitted and rectified, since the old days when Hungarian musicologists could simply assume that their (mainly central European readership) possessed ‘some native familiarity with the gestures of the dialect’ had long passed. Therefore, each convention of a collective style hongrois had to be rigorously defined.\textsuperscript{11} The alternative was collective amnesia, especially when it came to the appreciation of symphonies and sonatas that imposed a ‘high art’ image by default and/or where composers used the verbunkos idiom without officially announcing it in verbal designations or titles. In other words, the lexicon was indispensable to making any claims about the pervasiveness or importance of style hongrois.\textsuperscript{12}

Bellman’s concepts and methods occupy an uneasy middleground between various discourses and approaches, which may account for the confusing reactions they have provoked. First, from a musical-generic perspective, it could be argued that his style hongrois concept is either too concrete or not specific enough. Klára Hamburger, for example, has generally objected to representing Liszt’s verbunkos idiom through works that are riddled with obvious verbunkos gestures, when a great deal of his music contains

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\item \textsuperscript{10} Bellman, op. cit., 93-130.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 127 and 130. For Bellman this was also conducive to a more rigorous way of reading ‘how, why and with what intent’ the idiom was being used in the compositions he was about to examine. The usual ‘intent’ in his interpretation was the evocation of one ‘Gypsy stereotype’ or another (or several) with which specific composers identified. These interpretations ring true when one has a Viennese audience in mind, but then, as I will later show, the ‘meaning’ of the idiom could be highly unstable, variable, and not necessarily or easily conformable to stereotypes.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Most listeners, for example, would perceive the finale from Schubert’s String Quintet in C major (D596), as an exemplar of ‘chamber music’ which is very ‘civilised’ and ‘classical’, a revered relic from the past; whereas Schubert’s audience would have undoubtedly picked up the specific vernacular, which was both familiar to them and quite distinct from Austrian folk music. It was only later that this music was canonised, and that these folkloristic and ‘quaint’ aspects of the works stood in ‘odd contradiction’ to the ‘noble’ and ‘spiritual’ dimensions expected of high art. Bellman cites one particularly illuminating example of this perceptual gap between Schubert’s time and the twentieth-century canon, in J.A. Westrup’s prudish resentment of Schubert’s aforementioned finale: “We might have wished that the Quintet should end otherwise, that the finale should capture the lofty tones of the first movement. We may not want to be reminded of the open-air café and the Hungarian band… [But] better the string quintet with its uncomfortable finale than no quintet at all.” (Quoted in Bellman, op. cit., 158-9).
\end{itemize}
abstract features of the idiom. Csilla Pethő, on the other hand, although following Bellman in adopting the term ‘style hongrois’ and focusing on canonic composers such as Weber and Schubert, objected to the inclusion of a repertoire of works whose style hongrois was ‘uncertain’ or not specific enough. For her, the litmus test is how concretely the music alludes to real verbunkos from the period of its development and maturity (1780-1850). Both critiques are legitimate, and they legitimately pull style hongrois in different directions: the compositional and abstract (Hamburger) and the ethnomusicologically concrete (Pethő). These necessary expansions of style hongrois are not mutually exclusive, however, especially not in Liszt’s case where we need to be aware of both the concrete derivation of generic material and musical practices from verbunkos, and the composer’s abstractions and novel manipulation of these materials. These dual possibilities also carry a double-risk: too much abstraction might stretch the verbunkos idiom to absurd inclusiveness, while criteria that are too rigidly based on concrete resemblance to verbunkos may impose on our appreciation a limiting ‘neo-authenticist’ agenda. In any case, a list of topic is not a blueprint for analysis: it is simply a rough guide where analysts, according to their inclinations and strengths, are free to use their discretion.

Methodologically, a lexicon of topics occupies the middleground between the representational and the musical, i.e. between the interpretation of what music signifies or represents, and the interpretation of what music consists of or how it ‘works’ musically. This has consequences for how we perceive style hongrois, since historically, the representational and musical have been largely incommensurable aspects of musicological inquiry. The representational aspect encourages us to listen to the surface appearances of style hongrois topics, regardless of the composer’s own style or the period of composition, and to speculate about what is being represented. The musical, or more specifically, compositional aspect diverts our attention away from stylistic features into such things as

14 Csilla Pethő, op. cit., 252-3 and 264-7.
15 Pethő did not deny this more abstract and self-referential aspect of style hongrois. She shows, for example, how Schubert alludes back to Haydn’s all’ingerese in one of his earlier and less style hongrois-specific works (ibid. 265-7). Overall, however, her interpretation of style hongrois is based on its verisimilitude to verbunkos.
motives, themes, structure, tonality, process, ‘idea’ and so forth. It follows then that studies of the verbunkos idiom could benefit by drawing an interdisciplinary bridge across the musicological divides, as I have already suggested in this thesis. Later in this chapter, I shall endeavour to do so in my own way, by exploring how a conceptualisation of structural and harmonic ‘topics’ or topoi can actually help to draw the disciplines of music analysis and style analysis together and thus enable more transcultural aspects of composers’ works to come to light.

Finally, we can say that from a political perspective, style hongrois presently inhabits the uneasy middleground between ‘old’ and ‘new’ musicology. On the one hand it is a discourse that engages old aesthetic truisms and exposes the marginalisation of an important style. On the other hand, its sympathetic approach to composition based on or influenced by verbunkos does not sit well with current critical traditions that either suspect analytical interests as an ‘old musicology’ way of raising ‘the aesthetic’ above ‘the political’, and/or condemn composers for ‘appropriating’ minority cultures. Thus a study of style hongrois which takes the music seriously but does not reduce the terms of discussion to the evils of cultural appropriation, falls short of satisfying either the ‘right-wing’ politics of marginalisation or the ‘left-wing’ politics of indignation. Today, however, it would seem that there is little protest from the ‘right’ and on the other hand, there are demands for discursive hegemony from postcolonial critics (as we shall presently see) that not only narrow down the critical reading of music, but which prohibit or severely limit textual analysis that may have deep repercussions for their own perspectives. These demands stem from a moral high ground: the argument, to put it succinctly (before we explore it), is that Western musicologists cannot ignore the historical context of domination and exploitation of non-Western (or non-White) people by escaping into the (falsely) ‘neutral’ realm of the aesthetic, since by doing so they are complicit in a moral blindness that has made this domination possible. This is not to say that postcolonial critique does not ‘celebrate’ music aesthetically: it generally does, as long as the music belongs to an oppressed minority, or that it can be shown to resist or subvert Western influence. In other words, it would be legitimate and desirable to celebrate verbunkos. The same kind of postcolonial benediction, however, does not generally extend to the ‘appropriation’ of verbunkos, i.e. the verbunkos idiom.
The ‘problem’ for the style hongrois discourse is that its cultural-critical aspect leaves it ostensibly exposed to a hostile postcolonial takeover that will make it impossible to admire the works (one of the objectives of the style hongrois discourse) and greatly reduce our ability to assess the music’s complex and sometimes contradictory cultural signification. When the verbunkos idiom is specifically conceptualised as an exotic style seen through the eyes of the Viennese (‘style hongrois’), it opens the door to a blanket assumption that this style existed to serve the most immoral politics, brushing aside many other possible cultural readings. One could even go one step further, as Matthew Head has, and view a method of classifying signifiers as a latter-day racial science that follows a most unsavoury nineteenth-century tradition:

There are several odd assumptions and claims here: first, it is assumed that Liszt’s complex musical interaction with verbunkos amounts to a catalogue of musically-illustrative racial characteristics. This does not differentiate between Des Bohémiens, a book that is saturated with such racialist discourse, and the music which is open to many more interpretations, and which musically is far richer than the rigid, reductive and laymen-directed text. Secondly, there is an assumption that Bellman’s lexicon can serve some sort of crypto-fascist agenda of classifying racial characteristics and/or the Western obsession of containing otherness through taxonomic control. Well, hypothetically speaking, it can. As I mentioned before, the lexicon is not a blueprint for analysis, and it can be exploited for many purposes, including unsavoury ones; however, I am not aware of a single example where it served such a racist agenda (perchance I missed it). Bellman himself certainly does

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not use it to suggest that we should still play at ‘spot the Gypsy’ today, which brings me to my third point: Head is misrepresenting Bellman by implying that his interpretation of nineteenth-century perceptions reflects his own perception and political beliefs. Bellman, in fact, painstakingly charts every negative stereotype of the Roma and the way these stereotypes worked to ‘titillate’ audiences on the one hand (reminding them of the ‘danger’ to Western civilisation from ‘the East’) but also give composers license to do things that would not be accepted or possible under ‘normal’ circumstances. This is a reading that allows a certain ‘positive’ perspective of the style but it certainly does not preclude a ‘negative’ one. The point Head is making, however, is that the ‘positive’ aspects (which are suspect in the first place) are an escape route from the full theoretical rigour that the negative ones demand. He makes it clear elsewhere in the same article:

The resistance to theory operates as much through the conventions of the discipline of musicology as through acts of individual authorial will … A tone of defensiveness [typical of ‘theory-resisting’ musicologists], a lack of explicitness about critical framework and a recourse to ‘the musical’ as apparently furnishing some realm of free culture and ideology, amount to an unscholarly resistance to, rather than an explicit engagement with, postcolonial, and more broadly, culture theory. There is no scholarly escape route from this theory because the existing literature, within and beyond musicology, has already made it relevant.  

In other words, too much music analysis in the study of ‘exoticist’ European music, and likewise too little culture theory and too little postcolonial politics in particular, amount to intellectual blindness, cowardice or laziness. The ‘theory’ Head refers to is almost invariably Edward Said’s critical approach in Orientalism (1978), which set out to expose how the Middle East was invented and explained by explorers, philologists, and artists (mainly writers) in a way that either directly or tacitly justified its occupation by Western powers.  

Writers’ and explorers’ ‘fascination’ with ‘the Orient’, according to Said, was never innocent. Their language and the repetitive host of clichés they used betrayed a need to reduce and contain the complexity of the world they were surveying in the interest of a dominant and dominating knowledge, whether scientific or artistic. Their language was always underpinned by a presumption of cultural superiority, even when they spoke ‘admiringly’ of the others, since this admiration was invariably a Romantic idealisation that also reduced reality and promoted the image of an ‘ancient East’ against a ‘progressive

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17 Ibid., 218; italics in the original.

18 Said, op. cit. The following is intended as a brief (and admittedly partial) synopsis.
West’ (which therefore, by inference, had a right to rule over it). Even ethnographers and philologists, however much they loved their subject, betray their European ‘positional superiority’ (to use Said’s term) in the way they catalogue and process their subject for domestic study, i.e. they treat other locales and peoples in the same superior way biologists observe and record the animal world. All this activity was underpinned by, and at the same time served to reinforce, a set of binary oppositions between ‘self’ and ‘other’. Thus both blatant misrepresentation and the more subtle formed of controlled (or ‘domesticated’) presentation provided the culture for real political suppression.

Postcolonial critique of music has accordingly sought to change the traditional musicological emphasis on ethnological origins (i.e. how and to what extent the borrowed music resembles its original) to an emphasis on power relationships between the appropriators – Western composers and audiences – and the appropriated – the ‘others’ who are being (mis)represented in the appropriator’s music. The political role of ‘exoticism’ is thus laid bare, stripped of its veneer of innocent fun. The question is always “what political purpose did exoticism serve?”; and the answer (almost) always accords with Said’s ‘positional superiority’: as part of a wider discourse of orientalism, musical exotica were invented to explain and contain ‘exotic’ or ‘oriental’ otherness securing for ‘the West’ a sense of its superior ‘self’ and thus provide a supportive culture for its imperial projects and/or the marginalisation and suppression of minorities in White and Christian-dominated countries. Some Said-influenced writings integrate this interpretation with other perspectives, while others accord it an exclusive place.19

Head makes it quite clear in the rest of the article that the only proper ‘scholarly’ response to this ‘theory’ is to accept it wholly; even a partial acceptance is not scholarly sufficient or ‘robust’.20 This is nothing short of a demand for discursive hegemony in all things exotic,


20 See for example his critique of Michael Pisani’s ‘I’m an Indian Too’ in ibid., 221-3. Head does not consider that other musicologists may have ‘resisted’ fully subscribing to Said’s perspective due to real intellectual disagreement over some of his assertions and/or a perception that something in ‘the musical’ may
which is good enough a reason to reject it. It is not commensurable with ‘postmodern knowledge’ to demand compliance to a master-narrative in the name of dismantling other master-narratives. Moreover, it seems that this absolute commitment is at odds with the field of postcolonialism itself where Said, despite the recognition his work received, has never been universally (and certainly not uncritically) accepted. Homi Bhabha, for example, criticised Said for focusing too much on Western-centred perspectives, and on the most colonial-minded Western texts, without paying due attention to indigenous and subaltern resistance, to dissenting and independent voices in the West, and the way in which the contact between dominated and dominators reshapes and changes identities and ideas in both groups.21 I should say that I myself have borrowed some ‘postcolonial’ ideas and concepts without accepting that they necessarily lead to a default accusatory critique of Liszt’s music. To take the most pertinent example, the term ‘transculturation’, which I frequently use in this thesis, is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt. It is particularly useful to a study of unacknowledged influence, since Pratt argued that viewing European discourse as homogenously imperial, and Europe itself as a fabled impregnable fortress of elite culture that simply ‘represents’ otherness, obscures a deeper transcultural process:

How have Europe’s constructions of subordinate others been shaped by those others, by the construction of themselves and their habitats that they presented to the Europeans? Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out. Can this be said of its modes of representation? While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery ... it habitually blinds itself to the ways the periphery determines the metropolis – beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continuously to itself.22

complicate a straightforward projection of a political critique on the musical text (Head does argue, nevertheless, that instrumental music poses such ambivalence by not having the orientalist trappings of opera or programme music: see ibid., 224).


22 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992), 6; my italics.
For Pratt, representation of otherness, even when it is obsessive, deliberate and conspicuous, does not exclude transformative influences, or a susceptibility to ideas derived from other cultures. It is up to us to rediscover what ‘master discourses’ kept in the dark. For me, this means that there might be a real epistemological tension between what a certain music is called (‘exotic’) and what, on the other hand, it possibly is in a history of cultural influence (‘transcultural’). This is why a detailed music analysis, and moreover one that actively seeks to avoid ‘metropolitan’ (i.e. conventional music-theory) blind spots, is indispensable in a multi-layered interpretation. Nevertheless, this argument is not sufficient to qualify and illustrate the ambivalence of ‘appropriation’, ‘orientalism’ and/or the ambivalent signification of the verbunkos idiom in general. Rather, we should examine specific examples of ambiguity as well as how the discourse of ‘appropriation’ powerfully adds to and combines with other received ideas that have belittled the cultural significance of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom. And in line with my previous critiques, I do not intend to prove that it is simply ‘wrong’ to read ‘orientalist appropriation’ into Liszt’s music. Rather, as I shall presently argue in Part II, such an interpretation can only ever amount to one possibility, never exclusive or default, and in many situations, not even a very likely one. Part III shall then focus on how overriding obligations to non-musical political doctrines in tandem with a ‘new musicology’ rejection of ‘old musicology’ disciplines, can lead to a cavalier treatment of musical texts that hides transculturation and, most ironically of all, to a tacit reinforcement of the most conservative ideologies and methodologies.

II. The ‘Appropriation’ Case against Liszt and other Readings

If Liszt were brought to a postcolonial trial, he would be easily indicted for being an appropriator, a member of the elite who took advantage of people who lived on the margins of society, treated their culture as a free and natural resource without due acknowledgement and recompense to individuals and, adding insult to injury, used his music to represent them, as if they had no voice of their own. He would be especially condemned for positioning himself as an august and all-knowing observer, who was privileged to catalogue and explicate ‘the subaltern’ for the benefit of his own kind – the white-European

\[23\] I shall return to this point in more detail in Part III.
(and overwhelmingly Christian) aristocracy and ‘cultured’ bourgeoisie. The defence would attempt to declare Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie as inadmissible evidence on account of suspect editorial interpolations, but it would fail. The prosecution would be able to prove successfully that Liszt never repudiated the book and its essentialist racist characterisations, and that the book actually established links between music and racial characteristics. Nevertheless, the defence would probably succeed in establishing that these unfortunate acts of appropriation were done without malicious intent, and the defendant would therefore receive a reduced probationary sentence and a referral to a postcolonial re-education centre. Wagner, Bruckner, Reger and Schoenberg would watch this case as spectators, and silently shake their heads, thinking that Liszt could have avoided all that attention if he had only stuck to German music, or at least to what this court would not deem to be ‘exotic’ (and what good did this music do to his reputation anyway, even in the old days?). The court, however, would not notice these silent composers or their old-fashioned and silent (if qualified) sympathy. Its remit would only allow it to investigate, accuse and charge those who have been immorally misrepresenting the disadvantaged. Later, some of the more conservative spectators in the audience would tell each other that this was not altogether a bad day. On the one hand, a member of the elite, one of them (although an odd one out), had been charged with unfair and ridiculous accusations by an indoctrinated court. On the other hand, it all rather helped to distinguish non-exotic and universal European music even better, did it not?

I hope the parable is clear enough: extreme postcolonial judgements tacitly reinforce a conservative division between ‘universal’ and ‘exotic’ (and the related ‘national’/‘peripheral’) music. Moreover, such judgements rest on the quite untenable assumption that the verbunkos idiom (Liszt’s or anyone else’s) consists of stable and recurring ‘exotic/oriental’ signifiers when, in fact, there may be a considerable distance between authorial intent (i.e. the meaning of the idiom for Liszt) and public reception, and when, in any case, Liszt’s verbunkos idiom would have been differently perceived by different audiences and individuals. Consider even the smallest verbunkos topic and the crudest distinction between Hungarian and non-Hungarian reception: what is the ‘meaning’ of the Kuruc fourth? In a Hungarian patriotic discourse, the undulating fourths, as well as other motives from either the march or the song bearing Rákóczi’s name, came to symbolise Hungarian resistance and aspiration for independence. These undulating fourths
may have had a completely unrelated musical origin, but due to the fact that the Rákóczi March was officially banned in Hungary for much of the nineteenth century, using such fourths was symbolic of national pride (as was Liszt’s more explicitly defiant playing of the march itself during his Hungarian tours). However, outside Hungary, the Kuruc fourth was (to generalise crudely) just another musical feature that signalled ‘Hungarianness’ or ‘Gypsiness’. Even this initial complication demonstrates in the simplest terms the fallacy of stable signification, and therefore the fallacy of exclusive cultural-political readings.

We could rather ask what is being perceived and by whom, and this is where we enter deep ambiguity. First, we should consider the possibility that we can never be absolutely sure about the perception of a historical audience, particularly not of a multitude of anonymous individuals that we know virtually nothing about. Exotic ‘effect’ may convey a ‘denigrating’ message, but that too could be a result of mistranslation of authorial intentions in performance (e.g. the way the rhapsodies often served the function of show pieces), or of the ‘positional superiority’ of critics or individuals within an audience, or modern critics deciding that such effects are deliberately comical, when the original intention was very different, and when there were enough people who perceived otherwise. It is entirely possible that composers were quite a bit ahead of critics in lowering cultural boundaries and that it therefore adds insult to injury to accuse them of reinforcing the kind of polar oppositions that excite critical minds. Take for example the American critic R. D. Darell who testified in 1932 how a sustained exposure to otherness has lifted his previous patronising perception of jazz. In this case the music in question was Duke Ellington’s Black and Tan Fantasy:

I laughed like everyone else over its instrumental wa-waing and garbling and gobbling … But as I continued to play the record … I laughed less heartily and with less zest. In my ears the whinnies and the wa-was began to resolve into new tone colors, distorted and tortured but agonizingly expressive. The piece took surprising individuality … a twisted beauty that grew on me more and more and could not be shaken off. 24

One critic managed to ‘cross over’ into considering jazz music seriously, and even perceiving the transcultural effect (‘a twisted beauty’, i.e. beauty of the kind that twists previous notions of ‘the beautiful’). We must congratulate him. But did Duke Ellington and

his band ever think that their music was ridiculous and funny in the first place? Did all of their audience perceive it in denigrating or patronising terms? We could then ask by analogy: who is being an orientalist, Liszt, his audience, or the criticism and musicology that described his music? Is it not the case that presenting, critiquing and perpetually ‘understanding’ musical exoticisms as an intended joke or slur is a cultural prejudice in itself?

I would argue that rather than confirm us in cultural supremacy by presenting exoticism as a (now politically-incorrect) delightful amusement, Liszt always encouraged ‘us’, his audience then and now, to approach the music by dropping social and aesthetic filters. This is most noticeable in his more personal works, which make the application of an ‘orientalist’ reading so weak that its universal validity is stretched to absurd lengths. For example, in La Notte (1864) Liszt laments the untimely death of his son in mournful music that incorporates many verbunkos elements. La Notte is a movement within Trois odes funèbres (see ex. 1.5 which quotes one passage from it), and it follows an equally elegiac piece in memory of his recently deceased daughter, Belandine, which has no obvious verbunkos idiom. Trois odes funèbres is practically Liszt’s Kindertotenlieder. Can a work like La Notte be called ‘orientalist’? Where is the dividing line between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’? How would Liszt be reinforcing such polarities in such a work? Or do these questions, in fact, constitute a ‘retreat’ from ‘theory’, wrongly legitimating Liszt’s verbunkos idiom by considering its ‘personal’ dimension?

There are other, more public and culturally explicit ways, in which Liszt encourages us to lower cultural barriers between ‘high’ and ‘low’ as well as ‘East’ and ‘West’. It might be even possible to consider some instances where Liszt’s incorporation of concrete verbunkos elements constitutes a kind of countercultural comment (always personal and heartfelt, it seems) on hallowed musical traditions. For example, Liszt’s only explicit essay in sonata form, the piano sonata in B minor, starts with folkloristic scales associated with the verbunkos idiom: first, the phrygian, and then, the closely-related Kalindra which signals style hongrois unambiguously. The ‘meaning’ of such statements in a piece whose other Hungarian elements are highly abstract and non-specific is not altogether clear, but its solemnity cannot be confused with the usual readings of ‘exoticism’. This personal artistic statement, a mini-manifesto of opening up the greatest and most revered genres to
transcultural influence, is manifested in the many symbolic appearances of Hungarian gestures in Liszt’s sacred music, or in instrumental music that is associated with European spirituality and religion. 25 To take another example, what could be more culturally-transgressive and sacrilegious than placing a verbunkos minor scale right at the opening of a neo-Baroque prelude and fugue for organ based on Bach’s name, with all the trappings of high art, austerity and North German Protestantism that this genre evokes (ex. 3.1)? It is easy to miss the scale, particularly as one is conditioned to listen to such scales in very different generic and sonoric contexts. But there is no mistake: Liszt was very likely well aware of what he was juxtaposing against Bach’s name, and that the florid improvisatory style of verbunkos could be easily synthesised with the ‘high’ church-organ traditions of improvisation. No mockery was intended in such gestures. On the contrary, the Hungarian-Gypsy music which he deeply respected and loved, and which he constantly mined for compositional novelties and harmonic possibilities was in his mind compatible with Bach’s dramatic and richly expressive style. It shows that music does not have to respect extramusical and social-political borders, especially when in musical practice they are so compatible, as this double-signification testifies, i.e. the symbolic juxtaposition of two culturally-charged musical symbols (verbunkos minor scale and B-A-C-H motive). Like Mahler, Liszt was quite capable of mixing cultures that societal norms kept segregated, but unlike Mahler, there seems to be no irony intended, no sarcastic swipe at high culture, but a high-minded statement about the crossing of cultural frontiers. 26

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25 Liszt incorporated verbunkos elements in sacred works quite deliberately, and he fiercely defended his right to do so. In connection with the Hungarian Coronation Mass (1867), for example, Liszt wrote to Princess Wittgenstein: “It seems to me that ... the two principle themes of Hungarian national feeling and the Catholic faith combine and support each other from end to end.” Quoted in Paul Merrick, Revolution and religion in the music of Liszt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 129. See also footnote 28 in this chapter.

26 Liszt could even harness his ‘countercultural’ manner to more explicitly political ends. Gaudamus igitur, composed at a time of political unrest and war between Prussia and France (1869-70), is a ‘Humoreske’ written for the centenary of Jena’s academic concert society. In the piece, an apparently ‘German’ march morphs into a ‘Hungarian’ one in bs. 166-226 (not quoted; see NLE 1/16, 120-22). The question is, what are Hungarian signifiers doing in the middle of a work that should evoke the merry spirit of German university fraternities, and why should the German music lead to a Hungarian one? Was Liszt not aware that university fraternities were bastions of German nationalism? It is inconceivable that Liszt wished to reaffirm the Jena audience in supremacist beliefs by positing ‘Hungarian otherness’ (himself?) against a ‘German self’: if anything, the similarity and flexible transformation technique indicate the opposite artistic and political intention – as well as, perhaps, his own complex and cosmopolitan sense of identity.
We should finally consider Liszt’s programmatic music, since there the extra-musical narrative ‘amplifies’ the representational aspect of the idiom in a manner that is quite close to operatic situations (the usual site of postcolonial musicology). However, unlike opera, instrumental music can be much less bound by messages encoded in explicit drama and stage props; Liszt’s music, at any rate, continues to elude an unequivocal political reading. This is even the case with (what I consider to be) Liszt’s most blatantly ‘orientalist’ piece, the symphonic poem *Hunnenschlacht*. The work is based on a painting by Wilhelm von Kaulbach which depicts the defeat of the barbarian forces of Attila the Hun to the Romans in 451 CE. The savage Huns are portrayed by a whirlwind of scales replete with augmented seconds, while the Romans are represented by an orderly and major-key march, and later by a solemn, modal hymn, played on the organ and repeated in block chords by the orchestra. An orientalist reading is very plausible here: Liszt contrasts ‘oriental’ with ‘Occidental’ topics to show how the civilised Western world triumphs through its orderliness and through divine will over the chaotic ‘East’. However, there is one hitch to this neat dichotomy: the Huns are also the mythic ancestors of the Hungarians, and they were invoked in Romantic art to symbolise Hungarian fierceness, independence and indomitable soul (as against the more grim reality of being occupied by the Habsburgs). What do we make of this contradiction?

Liszt does not seem to provide any solace for the interpreter who seeks an orientalist consistency in his musical depictions. The *verbunkos* idiom is at times used with breathtaking cultural inaccuracy and anachronism, the same kind of inaccuracy we find in the Renaissance, where biblical scenes and heroes from the Holy Land are set in a European landscape, clad in contemporary attire. Following in that tradition, Liszt incorporated *style hongrois* elements in the ‘March of the Three Kings’ from the oratorio *Christus*. The three wise Kings are indeed from the kingdoms of the East, but this old Christian story predates the modern imperial ‘orientalism’ and does not carry connotations about Islam and certainly not about Hungarian Gypsies. Why did this religious and a-geographical reference to ‘the East’ prompt Liszt to add a few *style hongrois* touches to the

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27 This musical battle scene could well have been (at least one) model for Tchaikovsky’s *1812*, although there the evil others are the invading French, and the noble defenders are the Russians, not exactly the same kind of West-East confrontation as depicted in *Hunnenschlacht*. As a musical-poetic archetype, therefore, *Hunnenschlacht* was not confined in any way to one message or one cultural reading.
music? A clue can be found in a passing remark which Liszt made to one of his pupils about this work: “The Hungarian part of the March greatly shocked Müller-Hartung at one time. However, Rubens drew Flemings in his picture, so I can give one of my Magi a waxed moustache. That bothers me not at all!”

In other words, as far as Liszt was concerned, the verbunkos idiom was a normal part of his art, and in pictorial music there was a limitless artistic license to use it everywhere; if narrow-minded people always associated this style with popular or low culture and expected it therefore to remain constrained to appropriate ‘low’ genres, it was their problem; Liszt took special delight in contradicting such expectations. It is easy to misinterpret Liszt as being regressive, using one ostensibly ‘oriental’ style to depict the biblical ‘Orient’. Such a reading would miss the fact that this specific march does not blatantly display the most ‘oriental’ features of verbunkos; on the contrary, the quite ‘occidental’ march rhythm and minor modes blend seamlessly with a Beethovenian contrapuntal technique, as if deliberately to blur cultural lines rather than emphasise them. Furthermore, a monolithic reading of Liszt’s ‘appropriation’ of verbunkos would also miss an important historical nuance: Liszt was not living in the seventeenth century when exotic styles were enmeshed into a few repeated topoi, and when suspension of disbelief in culturally inaccurate representations was thus made much easier. He was a nineteenth-century composer who consciously and purposefully introduced the verbunkos idiom to every possible genre. He did not even try to suspend disbelief: on the contrary, he was pleased if people were aware of these Hungarian elements, and would at times point to them himself. They stood absolutely for themselves, whatever the storyline or context.

As a final example of this kind of deliberate, aware and artful use of the scale for creating vague and imprecise cultural associations, we can take the second version of Réminiscences de Don Juan (1875), where Liszt inserted ascending and descending kalindra scales into a particular passage from the famous ‘wine aria’ (Finch’ han del vino from Act II/15). In the

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28 Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 675. Liszt is reported to have made these remarks during a rehearsal of Christus, on June 5, 1886, i.e. about two months before his death (reported by Liszt’s pupil August Göllerich; italics in the original).

29 For example, during a rehearsal of the Hungarian Coronation Mass in June 12 1881, Liszt drew Alexander Borodin’s attention to the Kuruc-fourth in the Graduale. (Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 589).
original aria, Don Giovanni is planning to throw a ball to seduce more women and in
defiance of the catastrophe awaiting him. The passage in question occurs at the point where
he slyly associates the different dances tunes that are to be played in the ball with the
different women he will conquer (Ed io frattanto dall’altro canto con questa e quella vo’
ammoreggiar). The aria is in B♭ major; the Ed io frattanto dall’altro canto passage comes
after a conventional modulation to the dominant in the middle of the aria and its
harmonisation gives the aria a slight minor flavour (i.e. in F major: IV♭-I) before we return
to the bubbling B♭ major refrain. In Mozart’s aria, therefore, the minor mode is a brief
streak that only hints at the Don’s darker soul. In Liszt’s Réminiscences this minor-mode
section becomes autonomous. It arrives in b. 343 before the aria itself, after a reminder of
the dark overture theme, and is then much expanded and repeated before the B♭ major aria
in its entirety arrives as a closing movement to the fantasy. Liszt must have associated this
Ed io frattanto dall’altro canto moment of darkness with the dark D minor overture and its
brooding ascending and descending scales, since the F major/B♭ major exchange leads next
to an A major/D minor sequence through kalindra scales that recall similar scalar ascents
and descents in the overture (ex. 3.2). Musically, these scales help to smoothly link
chromatically-related keys in a way that makes the shift almost imperceptible. Before we
know it, we are back where we started, as after the modulation to D minor, sequential
modulations to F♯ minor and B♭ minor complete the symmetric division of the octave (not
quoted). The shifty tonality and uncanny quality of transition between keys was
undoubtedly meant to enhance poetically the menacing and supernatural world lurking just
beneath the Don’s bravado.

Is Liszt, however, also encoding an ‘orientalist’ message in this passage? Possibly: he
could be invoking the ‘Gypsy scale’ as a portrayal of the Don’s daemonic sexuality, alert
mind and ruthlessness. It is also possible that this is the ‘message’ that many of Liszt’s
contemporaries would have picked up. Mozart created a Giovanni that was meant to be
openly condemned and secretly admired, and if this is reflected in any way by the added
kalindra scales, then it could be Liszt’s way of responding to Giovanni’s complex persona

30 “Meanwhile to a different tune/I will make love to this or that [woman].”
31 D minor is moreover a key that is very common in the verbunkos literature, and which Liszt, too often uses
in a verbunkos-idiomatic context.
by presenting us with music that reminds us of the borders of social permissiveness and desire. But then we should also remember the personal dimension. Liszt at this stage was used to imprinting transcriptions and paraphrases with a personal ‘Hungarian’ stamp. The scale-based chromatic harmony was a typical Lisztian way of creating an elusive diatonic tonality: he uses it, for example, in La Notte (bs. 150-54; note quoted) for a completely different poetic purpose. Perhaps here he is also ‘personalising’ Mozart’s music in a similar way. Even more specifically, perhaps the title and original poetic intention of the work caused the old Liszt to ‘reminisce’ about his younger self (back in 1840 when he first composed the piece), perhaps even about his own ‘Don Juan’ peccadilloes. The ‘orientalist’ emphasis which focuses on public reception and ways in which Liszt would have reinforced otherness might miss this more psychological and personal dimension (i.e. it is not ‘other’ that is portrayed here as much as ‘self’).

Finally, with regard to the wider cultural resonance of this moment, there is yet another surprising possibility: Liszt may be directly commenting on Mozart’s own exoticisms, ‘augmenting’ the tinge of alla turca in this aria.\[32\] Liszt quite possibly reacted to these ‘Turkish’ elements and their connotations in opera (forbidden or excess sexuality for one), and so, taking on the same principle but transforming it in his manner – or to paraphrase the previous quote, “if Mozart can depict his Giovanni as a Turk I can give mine a waxed moustache” – he inserted those scales. The difference, of course, is that Liszt’s scales are so explicit and conspicuous that it would be simplistic to conclude that he was merely encoding otherness in the same eighteenth-century way that made knowledge of the source redundant. He is not asking us to suspend our ‘cultural disbelief’ and imagine a general oriental otherness. It seems to me more like a humorous comment on eighteenth-century exoticism, a historically aware musical pun. And this is only the beginning of interpretative possibilities. The definite ‘meaning’ of these scales, at any rate, will always remain elusive and unknowable, which is just as well.

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III. ‘Appropriation’ vs. Transculturation: The question of discipline

A wider cultural-political understanding of the verbunkos idiom (or other ‘vernaculars’) cannot be wholly based on presumptions about what the idiom represents: that representation, as we have seen, is quite unstable, and is in a constant relationship with other ‘aesthetic’ aspects of the music. Moreover, exclusive attention to representational issues can easily slide into a lack of distinction between music and musicology, a constant reference to received musicological ideas about exoticism, which actually narrow down, in quite specific and usually negative ways, the many possible readings which the music presents. Perhaps, when we are dealing with the relationship between verbunkos and Western composition, it is not composers who robbed the Roma of their voice (since style hongrois never really substituted verbunkos), but music historians who either failed or did not wish to acknowledge a history of influence. Perhaps it is music theory which, in its search for immutable and universal rules of an all-‘Western’ music, predicated on the classical aesthetic, did not provide tools that were responsive to transcultural aspects of Western music.

Part II began with a parable on the strange way in which ultra-supremacist perspectives of culture seem to coincide with or somehow reinforce extreme postcolonial views. It was Schoenberg who claimed in ‘Folkloristic Symphonies’ (1946), in an obvious attack on composers like Bartók and (early) Stravinsky, that high art music and musical progress was incommensurable with folk music. He used technical musical terms to prove his point. Taking Beethoven’s fifth symphony as a paradigmatic example of how high Western composition develops ‘organically’ through motivic work, he contrasted this with composition based on ‘tunes’ and superfluous repetitions. Folk music and non-Western music, in their own endearing and inferior way, remained pure and perfect as long as they remained in their original habitat. When they happened to ‘cross over’ the result was always artificial and inorganic, and in any case it has had no effect on the real history of compositional progress. With regard to the verbunkos idiom, Schoenberg had no doubt that it was just another example of exoticism which, although widespread and familiar, could

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never hope to truly “penetrate the walls separating folk music from art”; it invariably led to “pot-pourris, forms of looser construction what the classical masters from Bach to Brahms called ‘Phantasies’”; a far cry from the august Western ‘organicism’ that genealogically connected his own music to Beethoven’s.34

At its most extreme, postcolonial critique also denies transcultural influence. Rousseau and Porter, for example, argued that “despite exoticisms in culture and the arts, European culture proved highly resistant to any fundamental and authentic permeation by Eastern thought, art or culture. The East accepted the Western calendar; the West never made an equivalent gesture.”35 The difference between these two positions is that Rousseau and Porter obviously disapprove of what Schoenberg praises: but they both describe the same false picture of a West that is supremely impregnable to influence, despite all its dabbling in the exotic. When postcolonial critiques do not even need to resort to any specific aesthetic medium to prove this point, then they can also make simplistic analogies between asymmetric economic and political power on the one hand (the West never adopted an ‘Eastern’ calendar) and cultural power on the other. Even when there is recourse to the aesthetic, sometimes an overcommitted ‘interdisciplinary’ approach can lead to false analogies between essentialist literary/verbal topoi (such as those critiqued by Said) and the use of exoticist topics in music. These commitments usually overlook two crucial aspects in which textual media (literature, science, travelogues and so on) and music differ – meaning and transformative potential. While verbal topoi of otherness constitute descriptions and ideas that do not affect the language itself (English or French do not become more ‘Arabic’ through description of the Middle East), musical topoi, notwithstanding their descriptive dimension, have the potential power to permeate and transform the musical culture of the allegedly all-powerful and controlling appropriators.

What I find most remarkable of all is that sometimes musicologists will miss this transformative potential not through lack of aesthetic judgement or cultural sensitivity, but through passively accepting the most conservative music theory and related aesthetic value judgements (such as those offered in Schoenberg’s ‘Folkloristic Symphonies’). It is this

34 Ibid., 163.
35 Rousseau and Porter, 14.
that makes the portrayal of *monolithic* supremacist attitudes all too easy and an insight into transculturation all but impossible. Take for example Mary Hunter’s ‘The *alla turca* Style in the late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio’. Hunter’s approach to the many contradictory facets of orientalism is, overall, rounded and well-balanced. However, in her interpretation of the Scythian Chorus from Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Act I Scene 3), she takes unfavourable appraisals of Turkish music, written by eighteenth-century aestheticians, to represent not only a generally ‘Western’ view of oriental music, but also of how this negative view translates to actual Western composition. The represented ‘other’ music is not merely different, but constitutes a ‘lack’ of the most ‘civilised’ elements of Western composition: counterpoint, rich harmony and thematic invention. Hunter observes that the unison textures, chords in root position and repetitions in the Scythian chorus suggest ‘a certain deficiency of musical invention’ that contrasts with the chromaticism and counterpoint of the white heroes, thus encoding binary oppositions ‘in the music itself’. I have no argument with this interpretation: it is a valid possibility. However, it is also possible that, notwithstanding the opinions and theories of aesthetes and cultural guardians, not *everyone* perceived this style for what it ‘lacks’. The perception of ‘deficiency’ itself is a matter of *musical-theoretical* presumption and representation, and by using conservative analysis that sees motivic development, counterpoint and chromatic harmony as the measure of sophistication and progress, Hunter misses the real alternatives this music suggests. Perhaps there is also a subtext of cultural ‘resistance’ to hierarchies of good taste in such a passage; perhaps there is a case here of subversive ‘transculturation’ even if the culture is completely fictional (Turkish Scythians). Moreover, I would suggest that Gluck’s challenge to taste has modernist overtones. The ‘rather motoric repertory of gestures’, ‘carpet harmony’ and heterophonic gestures are not simply a lack of ‘Western’ aesthetics, they are *mainstream* Western aesthetics in the making. What is missing from a primarily negative-critical perspective of exoticism (*alla turca* in this instance) is the ironic relationship between what this music symbolically represents (low and savage culture) and what this music actually *is*: the beginning of a primitivist aesthetic which is as ‘Western’ as a fugue, and arguably more important than the

latter to the immediate future – the history of composition in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Postcolonial musicology’s discursive obligation towards the ‘orientalist’ narrative may sometimes result in a lack of qualification and historical specificity on the one hand (since ‘old musicology’ historiography is not to be trusted and since Said himself stretched the narrative from ancient times to our own), and a tacit acceptance of quite conservative authenticity politics on the other. As far as ‘authenticity’ is concerned, a nineteenth-century composer will always lose by virtue of having inhabited that era: too little resemblance to the borrowed music, and he is being reductive; too much resemblance, and he is even more of an obsessive taxonomist, and in both cases he is invariably participating in a narrative of domination. The issue may have shifted from the accuracy of adaptation to the (denigrating) meaning of (mis)representation, but at heart it is about authenticity, since much of Said’s (and other postcolonial critics’) critique was concerned with how orientalist signifiers substitute in representation real and specific cultures. One problem with this stance, when applied to verbunkos and style hongrois, is that politics of authenticity were historically used to exaggerate the artificiality and lack of real cultural influence of both verbunkos and the verbunkos idiom. Only when Bartók’s racialist perspective happens to be the specific target of the critique does this seem to matter; otherwise, the musical content of Bartók’s message remains undisturbed, and the inauthenticity of ‘Gypsy music’ actually constitutes a serviceable background truism to the claim of ‘invented’ representational music.

The ease with which an overarching narrative can place very different kinds of cultural interactions under the same rubric can sometimes only be sustained by bending, suspending or ignoring basic historical facts, and in the case of the verbunkos idiom this can be combined very effectively with background authenticity politics. In other words, the complex hybridity of Hungarian musical culture, the constant musical borrowing between cultures (verbunkos renditions of magyar nótak, and vice versa; borrowings from Viennese popular and art music, and vice versa; and so on), and the fact that verbunkos was never purely ‘Gypsy’, gets in the way of constructing simplistic cultural-political polarities. When Head criticises Liszt for creating a catalogue of ‘Gypsy’ racial-musical characteristics, for example, he does not consider that, by extension, this means Liszt was
also ‘cataloguing’ the Magyar overlords and their (simpleminded?) fondness for magyar nöta.

This is a point which Derek Scott also seems to have missed in ‘Orientalism and Musical Style’ (1998). He claims that “in Western music, Orientalist [sic] styles have related to previous Orientalist styles rather than to Eastern ethnic practices,” and therefore, “... one might ask if it is necessary to know anything about Eastern musical practices; for the most part, it seems that only a knowledge of Orientalist signifiers is required.”

Well, perhaps this is true about music depicting a fabled Middle East, but knowledge of orientalist signifiers may not be enough for an interpretation of the verbunkos idiom, not least the way Liszt used it. Otherwise, one can really claim too much based on too little, as Scott does in the following passage:

In the genealogy of musical Orientalism [sic], the next style to arrive after the style turc was the style hongrois, which Bellman describes as “derived from the exotic-sounding music played by Gypsy bands (not actual Magyars) in Hungary and westward to Vienna.” When it emerged alongside the Turkish Style in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was no clear line between the two ... It becomes a more distinct style in the nineteenth century, and the augmented second is increasingly used to connote ‘Gipsy’ [sic]. The ‘Gipsy Scale’ is then theorised by Liszt, who emphasises difference by choosing the raised fourth degree and omitting the equally common diatonic fourth degree [Scott gives D-ver as an example].

Hungaria, Symphonic Poem No. 9 (1854), has a conventional modulation to the dominant in bars 79-86 while retaining a transposed version of the ‘Hungarian’ augmented second [at this point Scott quotes the melody from bs. 79-86; see ex. 3.3] What we have here is a spiced-up major-minor tonality rather than music based on a different ethnic scale pattern – unorthodox augmented seconds, but an orthodox modulation.

On the face of it, Scott clearly demonstrates ‘orientalism’ par excellence, yet another instance where the walls of high Western art have proven to be impregnable. The problem with this line of argument, however, begins with an unproven assumption that (1) style hongrois and alla turca sprang from the same pool of signifiers, leading to the conclusion that (2) style hongrois always amounts to an ‘orientalist knowledge of orientalist signifiers’, and therefore (3) this is what critics too should acquaint themselves with, rather than misguidedly search for similarities with verbunkos. Assumption (1) inflects a hypothesis raised in Bellman’s The Style hongrois (1993) in a slight but meaningful way,

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completely ignoring the possibility (raised by Bellman and others) that there is also a more transcultural aspect to this blend, and that the music might be 'real' as well as 'imaginary'.

Assumption/conclusion (2) does not take into consideration that 'style hongrois' (and this is where the term becomes problematic) is also the way Hungarians constructed national self-identity, not 'otherness', and this was clearly the intention of Hungaria, which was appropriately received with patriotic fervour in Hungary in 1856 (if it was received as a specimen of exotica elsewhere, say in Paris, then that particular reception is 'orientalism', and it certainly does not represent Liszt's intention). And this is really where Scott's argument that to understand a phenomenon like Liszt's verbunkos idiom we need only refer to an extremely limited pool of culturally-insensitive and superficial signifiers, can lead into serious misrepresentation.

In fact, we need an 'old-fashioned' historical context and a close reading of the score to understand this point. First, what Liszt actually claimed in Des Bohémiens was that the special intervals and their 'quasi-constant modification' (i.e. \( \sharp/4, \flat/6 \) and \( \sharp/7 \)) create a peculiar harmonic quality not normally found in Western music, and draws special

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39 Ibid., 312. To be sure, Bellman raised the possibility that the 'Turkish style' was freely combined with East European elements in a non-specific exotic cocktail since both 'Turk' and 'Gypsy' conjured up the same kind of 'threatening East', especially in Vienna which had memories of the Turkish siege of 1683. But Bellman also put the rise of style hongrois in the context of changing Western aesthetics (the shift to Romanticism) and further speculated that it could have been a Gypsy-band manner of playing 'alla turca' that created the unique Hungaro-Turkish blend of Viennese sheet-music adaptations (Bellman, The Style hongrois, 25-48 and 60-62). Other researchers have also raised the possibility of 'real' (not 'imaginative' or 'representational') crossovers. Bence Szabolcsi speculated that Hungarians developed their own popular, quasi-folkloristic 'Turkish style' known as Törökös, and that this in turn influenced Viennese music (or vice versa); see Szabolcsi, "Exoticisms in Mozart", Music & Letters, 37/4 (October 1956), 329-30. Bálint Sárosi proposed that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries musical styles travelled between Turkey and Hungary, and that this stylistic dissemination and mixture was facilitated by wandering Roma musicians (Sárosi, Gypsy Music, 58). If Sárosi is right, then it is possible that what we know as 'verbunkos' is the end result of two centuries of transcultural exchanges, and that the Viennese mishmash so roundly condemned as invented orientalism is actually part of the same East-West phenomenon, where Hungary, and not Vienna, is the crucial crossroad. My personal hypothesis is that from the early days of musicology to the present, we have been misled by Viennese alla turca designations; i.e. alla turca could actually be a misnomer of something that is much closer to style hongrois than we think (with added impressions of the Janissary percussion battery). When alla turca is judged against some verbunkos transcriptions of the early verbunkos phase (see Géza Papp's early verbunkos anthology, 'Die Quellen der Verbunkos-Musik: Ein Bibliographischer Versuch. I: Gedruckte Werke, 1784-1823', Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 21 (1979), 151-217), it seems logical to speculate that the melodic syntax of janissary music was so alien to the eighteenth-century Viennese ear, that composers referred to the more Western verbunkos for the melodic and harmonic substance of their Turqueries, and appropriated it for orientalist operas. That, in turn, could have affected the popular demand for 'Turkish' instrumental music. This is just a hypothesis, but one which I believe is worth pursuing.
attention to the augmented fourth.\footnote{Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie, 223; see quote on p. 56.} This is not the same as saying that the scale degrees are fixed, and as Liszt’s music shows, he was in general much more interested in modal inflection than in simplistic ‘topical’ grafting. Even the small-scale ex. 3.3 shows Liszt’s proclivity for inflection (note the appoggiaturas). Secondly, Scott gives the impression that Liszt is a composer who treated verbunkos material in a conventional and boring way – once more a reinforcement of the ‘web of received ideas’ that separates his verbunkos idiom from Zukunftsmusik. This not only misrepresents his musical intelligence and the richness of his aesthetic and approach, it also oversimplifies the scale’s overall compositional role in Hungaria (see also footnote 40). Third, the claim that this passage evinces “a spiced-up major-minor tonality rather than music based on a different ethnic scale pattern” is devoid of historical context. The passage in ex. 3.3 would have signalled to Hungarians magyar nóta – the style of their popular folksong repertoire – and not particularly Gypsy-band music. In fact, the modal-tonal hybrid which Liszt depicts, where the key is habitually transposed a fifth up in the second phrase, was common to this genre, as was the occasional use of augmented seconds. The verbunkos scale in Liszt’s time (and earlier) was \textit{not} an ‘ethnic scale-pattern’ that originally existed in a non-harmonic culture and was then lamentably denuded of its supposed culture or ethos by an insensitive Western composer. It already \textit{had} a harmonic context, i.e. a tradition of harmonisation in verbunkos, magyar nóta and a related (if more Westernised) tradition in style hongrois.\footnote{\textit{Gypsy Music}, Corvina Press (1978), 151-96. It should be stated here, however, that strictly from a harmonic point of view, there is one slight and one important difference between this passage in Hungaria and a typical magyar nóta. The slight difference is that in Hungaria, Liszt uses a pivot chord to get to the dominant key, as would be ‘classical’ norm, whereas in magyar nóta the norm is a transposition to the fifth, without preparation. Liszt was aware of that practice (as can be gleaned from, for example, the A minor \textit{un poco meno vivo} theme in RH13), but here for his own purposes he chose to modulate rather than transpose. At any rate, whether through modulation or transposition, there is no difference where the mode is concerned: in both cases it would be transposed a fifth up. The \textit{real} difference is that in magyar nóta the transposition to the fifth is the principle way a tune is varied harmonically; in Hungaria A minor is only a point of departure from D minor, beginning many modulations that will take us through quite distant keys to the third theme in B major – the actual secondary key of the piece. Throughout these modulations, the verbunkos minor scale plays an enharmonic, and sometimes almost bimodal role, and even the symbolic gesture of I-V which Scott quotes, serves as a rare moment of harmonic stability in the greater scheme of things: this lack of context therefore also misrepresents the connection between Liszt’s verbunkos and Zukunftsmusik aesthetics.} Finally, the charge of ‘spicing up’ the harmony (which bolsters the suggestion of inauthenticity) is reliant on familiar musicological formalism: namely, the habit of
separating tonal-harmonic ‘syntax’ from modal-melodic ‘colour’. This is precisely the theoretical perspective that insists that ‘tonal’ ‘Western’ music in the nineteenth century is only ever part of the major-minor ‘system’, and which denies any possibility of harmonic hybridity. The only reason for this strange alliance of theoretical conservatism and political radicalism lies, I believe, in a misguided partisan rejection of ‘old musicology’ that has so dominated musicology in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Part of the rationale for this is the same as has been advanced by all critiques of ‘old musicology’, namely that ostensible neutrality of traditional historiography and analysis is not to be trusted, as notions such as ‘absolute music’, ‘universal music’, and the purely aesthetic often hide an unstated political agenda. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh made this point in their introduction to the postcolonial anthology Western Music and its Others (2000), and this led them to argue that music should not be at the centre of musicological attention:

It is true that much music scholarship has sought to avoid out-and-out formalism by addressing music’s various “contexts”; paradoxically, the very treatment of these contexts as explanatory factors in understanding musical texts can reinforce the tendency to privilege the text itself. What is lost here is any sense of dialectical relationship between acts of musical communication on the one hand and political, economic and cultural power-relations on the other. Postcolonial analysis, then, sets a fruitful example for music studies in that it pays meticulous attention to textual detail, but always sees such analysis as subsidiary to the larger project of thinking through the implications of cultural expression for understanding asymmetrical power-relations and concomitant processes of marginalization and denigration.\footnote{Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, Western Music and its Others, University of California Press (2000), 5.}

It would seem, then, that nothing is lost: on the one hand, the musical text is studied ‘meticulously’; on the other hand, musicology opens up to the most updated academic currents. Unfortunately, on the evidence of postcolonial writings that take their ‘new musicology’ ethos a bit too seriously, it is possible to say that they do not always set ‘a fruitful example for music studies’ in the way they read scores, especially when they opt to minimise that reading to the most superficial commentary, the most basic (and therefore conservative) technical terms, or indeed, when scores are avoided altogether. Ultimately, the best writings about music’s role in political domination invariably refer to and/or derive insights from Said’s Orientalism but are also independent enough to consider other possibilities (including those that are opposed to or incongruent with Said’s views) and are...
aware of the way the specific qualities of music (as opposed to literature, art and other media) make any interpretation less than certain. The desire to "think through the implications of cultural expression for understanding asymmetrical power-relations" may therefore be ill-served by a fashionable demotion of 'musical texts'. The lack of engagement with musical (and indeed, analytical and theoretical) questions, is hardly a cause for taking the high moral ground, since it leaves old musical-theoretical and aesthetic assumptions intact. What is so indefensible about this position is that it perversely denies the power of subaltern cultures to shape dominant cultures in meaningful ways by relying on a conservative/textbook music theory that is hard-wired with this very denial. It is certainly not a position from which we can read or explore the discreet and unacknowledged historical role of Liszt's verbunkos idiom.

So which 'discipline' would best serve this purpose? Quite a few disciplines, I should think. In no particular order (except free association) these could be ethnomusicology, historical musicology, style analysis, music analysis, culture studies, semiotics, archival research, editorial work and publication, performance, as well as any other non-musical discipline that may have any bearing on the subject. The appreciation of music that lies flexibly between social-cultural categories and divisions requires one to cross the disciplinary habits that define and stabilise them, and it may be that in this respect, bridging the gaps between the musicological disciplines may prove the bigger challenge. As the ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufmann Shelemay observed, historically, the three major disciplines within musicology, i.e. ethnomusicology, historical musicology, and music theory, were never part of a self-enclosed community; quite the contrary. They were ever-willing to borrow methodologies and philosophies from non-musical disciplines but in relation to each other they have traditionally constituted "different subcultures, each with

43 Jann Pasler, for example, in "Race, Orientalism and Distinction," presents a well-argued and nuanced analysis of two contemporary French composers' verbal and musical reaction to India through which she makes a compelling point about how ideological and aesthetic backgrounds and verbal pronouncements in letters and diaries do not always correspond, or at least do not fully explain, the music. See Jann Pasler, 'Race, Orientalism and Distinction,' in: Western Music and its Others, ed. G. Born and D. Hesmondhalgh, Berkley: University of California Press, 2000), 86-118. Similarly, in a recent paper, Ralph Locke presents nine different readings of Aida, ranging from the most literal to the most metaphorical, always questioning how much these interpretations rely on extraneous political agendas, the musical text and the realities of opera. Locke's flexible and plural 'readings' suggest tensions between the composer's intention and public reception, between history-oriented and discourse-oriented approaches and between the musical and representational. See Ralph Locke, "Aida and Nine Readings of Empire" (paper presented in the 13th Biennial International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music at the University of Durham on July 7, 2004).
its own professional organisation, to ensure the perpetuation of its distinctive social structure. The way the traditional ‘subculture’ of ethnomusicology enshrined fixed perspectives of otherness is a case in point: according to Shelemay, ethnomusicology tended to borrow methodologies from comparative linguistics and anthropology but rarely from music analysis. Furthermore, it followed the culture of anthropology in opting to study remote and isolated cultures, while being less interested (and ideologically uncomfortable with) hybridic and urban cultures. This, in the first place, made it intellectually servile and methodologically un inventive. Secondly, it helped reinforce the institutional division between the music of ‘the West’ (which receives musical-analytical attention) and that of ‘the rest’ (where harmony, for example, was rarely or never acknowledged). Many of the same received ideas that have been explored so far in this thesis also derive from the premise that all musics are ‘ethnic’ except Western ones. It would be a tremendous intellectual leap if we could combine ethnomusicology with music analysis, particularly in studies of verbunkos and the verbunkos idiom. My own approach in this thesis has been to combine a historical-cultural perspective with a method of reading how an ‘idiom’ can also bear on the ‘syntax’ – which is, of course, one among many possibilities in transcultural studies. I shall presently consolidate this approach from its stylistic-analytical side by giving a summary of the idiom’s structural and harmonic topoi – a necessary correction, I believe, to the ‘institutionalised’ manner in which harmony is generally avoided when the focus of the music analysis is on ‘idiomatic’ features.

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45 This constitutes just a partial summary of Shelemay’s lucid and penetrating critique (ibid., 13-30).
IV. Expanding the ‘Lexicon’: structural and harmonic features

In view of the above, I should immediately qualify that I am not the first to observe harmonic or structural features, and that probably many of the features that are about to be presented have been perceived by past musicologists (if not always conceptualised). Bence Szabolcsi, for example, noted that verbunkos are characterised by “sharply divided but widely arched melodic patterns”. And Jonathan Bellman included a harmonic category in his lexicon which comprised three features: tonal ambivalence of the verbunkos minor mode, juxtaposition of distant key and/or chords, and modal harmony in general (see Appendix 1a). Bellman describes such features as “harder to codify in specific terms” although they “colour the entire musical environment and are among the most compelling aspects of the language.”

The reason for this difficulty, of course, is that the default theoretical thinking about harmony is blind to stylistic particularity. For a person immersed in the verbunkos idiom this is not too much of a problem: Bence Szabolcsi’s description of phrase structures makes perfect sense, and it is also possible to get an immediate aural impression of style hongrois modality, if one knows many examples. The problem is rather this precondition of familiarity. In other words, it is the same problem Bellman raises with regard to the other features (see this chapter, pp. 114-115): we cannot take familiarity with the verbunkos idiom for granted, not least when, from a formalist point of view, it is not clear at all what makes this idiom distinctive from general ‘Western’ practices. What, after all, is so special about “sharply divided” phrases that join together into one whole? Does this not describe much of late eighteenth-century phraseology? I will answer these questions soon enough; my point is, that this is one good reason for a ‘lexical approach’ at this stage.

Another reason for a lexicon of structural and harmonic topoi is that it offers a perspective of the idiom that is music-orientated yet not necessarily about signification. It is entirely possible that some of the topoi I will describe here have signalled style hongrois to a relatively small number of people even when the idiom was current, or that they were perceived, but having no particular name they did not play a part in the discourse of signification (ethnic or national). This lack of signification is very important to a cultural

Bellman, op. cit. 94.
reading, since it discloses the more discreet but equally (if not more) influential aspects of transculturation. And even where a signification is clear and demands our attention (not least through discursive habits), a compositional perspective can put the transcultural aspect of the music into sharper focus. So, for example, while pedal points and parallelisms could be discussed as impressions of instruments and verbunkos performance practices, they are at the same time 'textural', and in that way they have a possibly transformative compositional role; even more obviously, they led to new piano techniques and keyboard-based harmonies (as will be shortly discussed below).

A third reason to attempt to define rigorously structural and harmonic topoi is precisely because in compositional reality they will interact and synthesise with Liszt's (or other composers') wider compositional practices. The immediate advantage is that this musical reality already invites an interdisciplinary (style/music analysis) perspective that places 'idiom' in the context of 'syntax', and vice versa. The apparent problem is that such topoi are 'porous' and unstable by virtue of their multifaceted compositional interactions. Yet greater familiarity (and more examples) can also point to a commonality. Conversely, conceptualising this commonality may help to sharpen one's observation of the different ways a composer engages with such practices, or differences in compositional approach between composers.

I should nevertheless disclaim this lexicon from being universally valid, as it has resulted in a large way from my preoccupation with Liszt, and it is specifically meant to summarise Liszt's topics from the mid-nineteenth century. At the same time, it can be helpful beyond Liszt's composition from this period. It will initially provide us with a useful point of reference in Part V, where we compare two different compositions by Liszt and Brahms. And in Chapter 5/III we shall look at how some of these topoi evolved in Liszt's late works. Finally, to repeat my argument from the beginning of this chapter, I do not intend to use a lexicon as a blueprint for analysis: wherever the music demands it, concepts will be bended, amended or discarded. In any case, this lexicon is very much work-in-progress, and it is likely to change, expand and evolve in the future.

47 Being 'structural', 'harmonic' and 'textural', they will also necessarily overlap and describe different aspects of the same phenomenon.
Structural features (or principles)

The lassán-friss ("slow-fast") pairing and the acceleration/intensification principle

The pairing of slow and fast movements is arguably neither unique nor inherently innovative. Yet one structural novelty of this genre is that, on the one hand, it allowed a brusque juxtaposition of passages in comparatively slow/fast tempi within the framework of one long movement, e.g. in RH14 the brisk F major Allegro vivace within the slower A minor Allegretto alla zingarese. On the other hand, within the framework of an entire rhapsody, such comparative pairing could lead to shades of tempo changes that create an overall acceleration from the initial slow movement to the tempestuous close, as is the case in the abovementioned RH14. Even more daringly, the acceleration principle inspired Liszt to think of ways of building gradual climaxes on a large scale, through continuous acceleration and idiomatic intensification, and often through a great amount of thematic repetition. One of the best examples of this is the in the Friska movement from the famous RH2 (not quoted), and we shall see this principle at work on a smaller scale in the finale of RH6 which is analysed in Chapter 4/V.

Magyar nóta (popular ‘Hungarian song’) forms

The most common and traditional formula is four phrases in the form of four rhyming lines (AABB) corresponding musically to ABCA, ABBA, or variants of these two main models. Most typically, the second phrase repeats or varies the first phrase a fifth higher, in both major and minor keys (as the previously discussed ex. 3.3 from Hungaria shows). Occasionally, the second ‘line’ in minor-key songs is repeated or varied in the relative major. Liszt sometimes adopted this manner: e.g. the first theme of the Ungarischer Sturmmarsch (bs. 17-24, not quoted), or the first theme of the un poco meno vivo from RH13 – which is also an example of a ‘fifth-up’ repeat (bs. 127-38, not quoted). Liszt

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48 In lieu of reproduced examples, especially in cases of very long passages, I shall sometimes refer to unquoted examples from the Hungarian Rhapsodies.

49 The novelty of this feature should not be underestimated. We still think of Ravel’s Bolero as novel in terms of its minimalism and build-up, but this model may have first entered European composers’ thinking through their contact with verbunkos, or indeed with the verbunkos idiom in the way it was realised by Liszt. There is nothing quite like Liszt’s verbunkos-inspired build up in Chopin’s composition, despite other transcultural elements that pervade the latter’s music.
sometimes used these simplistic formulae in a fragmented way, combining different tunes in different keys in a seamless way that creates a complex, overarching harmonic phrase. We still hear these tunes as self enclosed in their own keys, thanks to repetition, and this creates one instance of the unique “sharply divided but widely arched melodic patterns”, which Szabolcsi mentions in his book. I shall describe it, quite similarly, as:

**Long and complex phrases composed of numerous (and sharply-divided) phrase cells**

Perhaps the most striking examples of this feature are in Liszt’s *hallgató* (improvisational and highly ornate) movements. The melody can be extended potentially *ad infinitum* through a prolonged improvisation on a tiny phrase or even a single note. A good example of this is the opening *lento* of the D minor RH7. The D minor key ostensibly ‘modulates’ to G, and then even prolongs it through cadences, in the first eight bars. But in fact, there is no real modulation and these *faux* ‘key areas’ are part of one continuous phrase that only ends in b. 21. In the *vivace* that follows from b. 32 we can hear a variant progression (which also goes through G major) where the pace of this harmonic phrase is contracted through more compact two-bar phrase-cells. Liszt then combines this phraseology and harmony with idiomatically intensive repetitions in the *scherzando* section that begins in b. 105. The many repetitions and modal/tonal transitions create cross-relations and ‘illogical’ (and therefore ‘modernist’) chromatic juxtapositions (ex. 3.4). Even more illogically, the phrase always begins in G major and ends in E major (its VI₄), and then repeats, potentially forever. The D minor key becomes a distant memory through sheer repetition, but in fact, we are very much within a progression that has been suspended through a colossal expansion of the ‘phrase-cell’ principle. What Liszt effectively does is expand, through static and circular repetitions, melodic and harmonic progressions that we have already heard on a smaller scale, e.g. in the opening *lento* (cf. bs. 6-10). On a large scale the harmony comes to a standstill, while at phrase level it is extremely busy and restless, chasing itself in circles. This fascinating harmonic aspect of the idiom is inseparable from the phrase-cell structural principle, as well as from the idiomatic repetitions.

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50 The un poco meno vivo section from the thirteenth Hungarian Rhapsody, is a case in point: the A minor tune is left unresolved, only to be recapitulated through another tune that modulates to E minor/major (not quoted; see RH13, bs. 127-67).
Repetitions

The verbunkos idiom is typically rife with repetitions at all levels: circular repetition of single motives, repetitions of cadences, themes, whole sections. Sometimes a whole movement will be constructed on the repetition of two, or even one theme (as in the case of the abovementioned scherzando section from RH7 or the finale from RH6 which will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4/V). Repetitions of this kind are inextricable from the harmonic aspect of the idiom, as we shall presently see.

Harmonic and textural features

Tonal stasis and/or circular/pendular directionality

This generally describes a propensity to halt progression through a persistent circularity that suspends normative directionality, as we have just seen in ex. 3.4), or on a larger scale in the RH14’s vivace assai which was discussed in Chapter 2. The most common example of this feature is a constant ‘pendular’ motion between two keys, e.g. between B₃ major and D-har/maj in RH6’s finale (see Chapter 4/V). This idiomatic pendularity can potentially destabilise perceptions of monotonality (see ‘tonal ambiguity’ below), a potential which Liszt developed in his own way, as we can see in the same finale. On the other hand, the Walachische Melodie (‘Walachian melody’) passage from MD20 (1846-8), is a more extreme case of tonal stasis: it consists of ninety bars of an unwavering tonic G (and sixty-four bars of the same ostinato figuration), part of which is shown in ex. 3.5. Liszt, I believe, perceived that the suspension of major-minor syntactical directionality leads to a suspension of time, as it were, and therefore to a more heightened perception of kaleidoscopic modal changes and developing figurations. The ‘Walachian melody’ is an excellent example of this: from an initial (and bimodally-tinged) G-ver, it passes through several verbunkos modes on G, including the ‘acoustic scale’ (G-A-B₃-C♯-D-E-F♭) in bs. 151-8 (not quoted), which has been associated with Bartók’s music. Furthermore, its

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51 This aspect in particular is open to cultural interpretation: a sign of primitiveness, a ‘lack’ of invention, or a forerunner of the motoric repetitiveness of primitivist compositions in the early twentieth century?
figurations grow and thicken in a manner that is directly derived from *verbunkos* and is wholly typical of the Liszt’s rhapsodic genre.\(^{52}\)

**Tonal pairing or Open-ended tonality**

‘Tonal pairing’ is, of course, a close synonym of ‘pendular tonality’. However, put this way, it raises the prospect of a tonal direction that does not come full circle back to the tonic but rather ends ‘irrationally’ (from a conservative or pedagogic point of view) on a different scale degree and/or a different key. This potential is already inherent in the passage quoted in ex. 3.4: due to the repetitions of each half phrase, the phrase in its entirety can very well end in E major, and Liszt, in fact, makes this point by concluding the whole *scherzando* section with a lush E major arpeggio that stretches over bs. 177-84.\(^{53}\) It is also a phenomenon that helped Liszt cobble together disparate tunes into long and complex harmonic phrases (see ‘*magyar nóta*’ above); the repetitions of melodic cells and sharp individual profile of individual tunes, on the other hand, ensured that while we perceive the overall directional harmony, we also perceive the tonal open-endedness of these individual tunes.

**Subdominant directionality**

We witnessed this phenomenon to some extent in the same *vivace assai* movement from RH14, where D minor-major is resolved in A major (Chapter 2, pp. 102 and 104). It is possible that Liszt first perceived the possibility of adapting this practice in Western composition in Schubert’s *Divertissement à l’hongroise* which he transcribed in 1838 (i.e. before his grand Hungarian project began). For example, at one point in the third

\(^{52}\) The effect can be hypnotic, which is how, in a way one can also read ‘Orientalism’ into this practice (‘timelessness’, ‘lack’ of development, ‘simplicity’, etc.); however, when the whole syntax seems to be transformed, it not only ‘represents’ ‘other’ practices, it *becomes* something new and original which deserves a responsive musical description. Wagner’s prelude to *Das Rheingold* is, after all, justifiably celebrated as a landmark specimen of a modernist (read: Western) tonal stasis. Remove, as a mental exercise, the ‘orientalist’ association and it becomes clear that Liszt already arrived at this modernist aesthetic a few years before. The difference is, he came to it through transcultural influence, and he never took it to the ultimate minimalism of a single chord: rather it serves in his works as a suspension of directionality within an overall directional structure. And specifically in his rhapsodies, he was more generally interested in the syntactic potential of circular-pendular structures and modal variability (see p. 149).

\(^{53}\) As mentioned before, in this particular rhapsody, the G major to E major progression turns out to be part of a structural IV-II, which finally, in b. 185, begins a slow and steady progression back to the tonic.
movement of Schubert's *Divertissement*, we depart from the middle section's F# minor key in dramatic harmonic leaps, only to return to it very subtly through B minor, i.e. through a 'weak' subdominant progression (see third movement, bs. 319-29, not quoted). Subdominant directionality is also related sometimes to the ambivalence between tonic and dominant or subdominant and tonic, and in that respect it is commonly wedded with the *verbunkos* I\(^{\#}\) (a most remarkable specimen of which can be found in the *Csárdás macabre*; see Chapter 5/IV).

**'Pedal point principle': pedal points, the *verbunkos* I\(^{\#}\), and ostinato figures**

There are many ways in which long stretches of pedal point affect Liszt's harmony, and instances when this can clearly be seen to derive from *verbunkos*. An early example of a monolithic use of pedal point in the bass is, once more, the *'Walachian melody'* (ex. 3.5). Pedal points in the bass on either the tonic or the dominant are very often related to what I have already conceptualised in Chapter 2 as the *verbunkos* I\(^{\#}\), a tonic inversion on the fifth degree which encourages us to change the common perception of \(\#\) as a dissonance (see Chapter 2, pp. 96-97). Pedal points are also very common in figuration, i.e. as ostinato figures and even as 'ostinato cadences'. The most remarkable passage, in my view, that demonstrates this is in the *allegretto* section from the *finale* of the ninth Hungarian Rhapsody (ex. 3.6). The phrase is divided into 4 + 2 + 2 bars of subphrases that are well and truly 'sharply divided' by a repetitive ostinato cadence, which renders the whole phrase asymmetric (inc. repeats: 4 + 1c + 4 + 1c | 2 + 1c + 2 + 1c | 2 + 1c + 2 + 1c, where 1c = one bar of 'cut-in cadence'). Furthermore, in bs. 280-91 it cuts the phrase harmonically, disrupting each time the overall progression, and taking us back to a basic (either tonic or dominant) B major chord.\(^{54}\) We can also note that the combination of pedal points in several voices turns usually dissonant combinations into stable ones, e.g. the constant C# of the ostinato accompaniment against the B in the base.\(^{55}\) These sonorities, as well as the cut-in cadence, circularity of the melody and the static and (arguably) initial mixolydian mode create a sonic world that is not too remote from Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, even if the piece as a whole is very far from it.

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\(^{54}\) I shall discuss the tonic/dominant ambivalence of this passage in the next topic.

\(^{55}\) This is, of course, another instance of the kind of drone-based 'fresh' dissonances, which Sárosi noted and transcribed, and examples of which were already given in Chapter 2 (cf. ex. 2.1 and pp. 92-93).
There are so many manifestations of this verbunkos-related 'pedal point principle' (if I might call it that) in Liszt's composition, that this 'topic' really ought to be studied on a case-by-case basis. However, in general, we can say that it is an aspect that introduced either tonal stasis or tonal ambivalence (or both) to Liszt's music in ways that often renegotiated conventional tonal practices. Liszt himself apparently found this aspect of verbunkos crucial to his compositional craft, as well as potentially to others'. He advised Hans von Bülow, for example, to immerse himself in verbunkos musical practices, and among other things "not [to] forget the long pedal-points". We should follow the same advice when reading transcultural influence in Liszt's own music.

_Tonal ambivalence between V/I or I/IV_

Both subdominant directionality and 'pedal point principle' are often related to characteristic tonal ambivalence between V/I or I/IV. One could also conceptualise such ambivalence as not so much a 'theoretical' problem, but as a conflict between 'modal' and 'tonal' hearing (which usually afflicts theoretically-trained ears). For example, is B the tonic or the dominant in ex. 3.6? Is the recurring 'cut-in cadence' II7-V or V7-I? 'Officially' the key is E major. But this is only music-theory officialdom wedded to notational habits (the E major key signature) and received music history: if, on the other hand, we were told this passage was written in the early twentieth century, we would have found it easy to accept A and even C# as stable tones, and we would have been content with leaving the location of the B/E tonic equivocal. Yet this, I would argue, is precisely how we should read this music too. Furthermore, such ambivalence is not always easily (if at all) cleared through 'structural hearing': most of the finale of the ninth rhapsody, in fact, is characterised by this ambivalence. The opening Presto (not quoted) could be either in Eb minor, where it seems to begin, or in A6 minor where it seems to end; and due to this instance of 'subdominant directionality', neither in the beginning nor at the end can we be absolutely certain of the key.

56 Walker, Liszt, 2, 385, footnote 48. The occasion was von Bülow's 1853 debut in Hungary.

57 The I/V ambivalence is especially interesting in the relationship between verbunkos minor and kalindra. The two leading tones around 1 and 5 in the verbunkos minor and the identical interval content of the tetrachords that lead to these respective notes (in D-ver: A-Bb-C-D and E-F-G-A) mean that the place of the tonic is potentially ambivalent: with a slight shift of emphasis it could be either on 1 (D) or on 5 (A). This
Modal fluctuations and inflections: Successive and simultaneous polymodality

The title points to two aspects of the modal flexibility and richness that Liszt absorbed from verbunkos: first, to the kind of bimodal juxtaposition that arises from the melodic independence of the different parts in a given texture: see exx. 2.2 and 2.3a; and in this chapter, exx. 3.2 (bs. 415-19) and 3.5 (the melodic F♯ against the leading tone in the accompaniment). Secondly, verbunkos is characterised by successive and even serial inflections, a phenomenon which Lajos Zeke (1986) called 'successive polymodality', and which Ramon Satyandera (1997) refers to more formally as 'inflected repetition'. Here we are very much interested in the verbunkos-modal context and its relationship to compositional craft and innovation. Liszt, for his part, used successive polymodality not only to add fresh 'colour' to the normal major and minor modes, but also to create new relationships between key areas, as we shall see most pointedly in the analysis of RH3 in Chapter 4/IV.

The most common modal variability in verbunkos is a kind of persistent major-minor (or minor-major) flux which we saw in ex. 2.3a (see Theme II). Unlike the slight and occasional 'minor tinge' in a major-key classical piece (or the other way around) the major-minor flux could be a stable sonoric presence. It is common, for example, that minor will shift into major or vice versa in the middle of phrases, e.g. in the famous Rákóczi March theme (ex. 3.7), or, as in the example from RH7, towards the end of the phrase (ex. 3.4). Ex. 3.4 is also interesting in the sense that it shows us how successive polymodality can be complicated by subphrase repeats within a phrase. After the G major subphrase is reiterated we enter briefly into E minor (a diatonic extension) which then 'swings' back to G, in the manner of pendular tonality. But then E turns out to be the prolonged tonic after all, through a major-key prolongation that creates cross-relations with the G major/E minor key resemblance and ambivalence between the verbunkos minor and the kalindra (its fifth inversion), is only a theoretical potential. In practice, the perception of 'I' can be very stable, or extremely ambivalent, usually when Liszt uses the kalindra mode in combination with a subdominant directionality, as in ex. 3.2 (cf. Chapter 5, p. 226).

58 From a Western harmonic point of view, bimodal dissonance arises from loss of vertical harmonic control, or a certain lack of (conventional) synchronicity between the different voices in a given progression. I shall give two examples of this in Part V of this chapter (see pp. 157-158 and exx. 3.16 and 3.17).

59 See Chapter 1, p. 50, footnote 75 and Chapter 5, pp. 217-218.
area. The repetition of the second subphrase creates fresh modal clashes (major-minor-major), and the return to the G major subphrase creates the semblance of a brusque juxtaposition of distantly-related keys.

But of course, we might wish to hear the sudden leap between E major and G major in ex. 3.4 not as an instance of distantly-related keys, but as keys more closely related through a shared modality. Part of the context for this hearing is already given in the beginning of the piece. It will be recalled that this harmony derives from the *lento* section of the rhapsody (see p. 144). The G major and E major chords in particular derive from D-*ver/dor* (D-E-F-G♯-A-B♭-C₃), the most prominent mode in the *lento* section. The fourth degree (G♯/♯₄) is highly variable, which generates major triads on both the second and fourth degrees (G♯ for E major, G♮ for G major). It seems as if we are asked to accept that D minor, G major and E major could belong to the same `modal key' and relate to each other diatonically. On the other hand why the inverted commas in `modal key'? Is it possible that Liszt challenges us to change our perception of diatonism and chromaticism? We shall return to this question and its implications in Chapter 4. In the meantime, we should consider what it implies for the definition of the next feature:

*Unprepared shifts between ‘distantly-related’ (usu. modally related) keys or chords*

It was Liszt himself who drew attention to unprepared modulations as a major harmonic feature of the *verbunkos* idiom and one that might outrage learned musicians. However, this might just be an intentionally simple explanation, as the book was intended for laymen. Most often than not, there is a modal basis for such modulations in Liszt’s music, as ex. 3.4 showed. Even the tonal shifts between F major and A major/minor in RH14’s *vivace assai* are a good example of Liszt’s modal thinking: despite being unprepared in the conventional sense, they are bridged by a background A minor melodic line as well as scales and glissandi (see Chapter 2, pp. 100 and 105). As for juxtaposition of ‘distantly related’ chords, they might also be tied in with compositional thinking. For example, the same *vivace assai* ends appropriately on F major and is then hurled through flamboyant and

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60 See Chapter 2, p. 56.
chromatically-related chords to the distant G↓₃ major (ex. 3.8). Taken out of context, this is an ununchecked display of ‘colour’. However, the syntactic content is revealed, when G↓₃ serves as 6/1 of F, and when we consider that this cascade of chords effectively sums up (sometimes in a representative relative key) many of the key areas visited in this rhapsody.⁶¹ This is not to place ‘logic’ as a dampener on the perception of ‘colour’ or to deny that to someone who is not familiar with the idiom (or someone who is not a professional musician or musicologist), ‘unprepared modulations’ seems like a good enough description; only to suggest that our perception of ‘caprice’ might be a cultural conceit, and that we might be able to hear more than ‘abrupt’ or ‘bizarre’ harmony if we drop it, not unlike how R. D. Darell discovered new aesthetics when he stopped laughing at Duke Ellington’s ‘effects’.

The ‘classical’ IV₃ and II₃, in relation to the verbunkos minor scale

We have already seen several interesting cases of modal harmony derived from verbunkos modes. However, there is one topic which stands out as a special case, and which is more firmly grounded in the Viennese style hongrois tradition: the harmonisation of the verbunkos minor scale with classical chords on the minor sixth degree, most commonly IV₃ and II₃. These chords are associated with the verbunkos minor scale because they can be derived from the latter’s sharpened fourth and minor sixth, and one can say that it is the sharpened fourth in particular that led to this association (ex. 3.9). It could be objected that this harmonisation should not be at all part of a survey of verbunkos-related harmonic features. After all, it would seem that the IV₃ is too typical of Western music. However, the fact that IV₃ was deliberately used to allow the scale some space to roam and/or to intone the ‘exotic’ 4♯ – quite often beyond the call of functionality (the VI-V bass progression) – suggests Western ‘hybridic’ thinking. Schubert’s Divertissement à l’hongroise is replete with such opportune moments. There is also an early example of this archetypal (and one might say Viennese) harmonisation in Liszt’s Zwei Werbungstänze (ex. 3.10), though Liszt

⁶¹ They are, in order of appearance, F minor, F major, D major, E major (not ‘represented’ in this passage), A minor (the allegretto alla zingarese; this is the principal secondary key), D♯ major, and F major again (the vivace assai and coda).
further refined and expanded this topos in his later music.\textsuperscript{62} In all of these examples, the ‘German’ IV\textsuperscript{9} (or its ‘French’ relative, II\textsuperscript{7}) is usually prolonged.

\textit{Keyboard-based polychordal and bimodal effects}

The confluence of Lisztian piano techniques with verbunkos performance practices (particularly impressions of ‘percussive’ cimbalom playing) and modality, could result in sonorities we usually associate with more modern music. We already saw an instance of this in ex. 3.8. Truly dissonant sonorities can result from the juxtaposition of all-white against all-black keys of the piano, and when this topographical aspect meets verbunkos modality, the result is often unique. For example, in RH10 typically Lisztian black-against-white-keys tremolos intone the verbunkos minor (as well as conspicuously imitate the cimbalom; the sustaining pedal is held down throughout, blending the harmony, likewise in imitation of cimbalom playing (ex. 3.11a). The technique and resulting octatonic sonority are strikingly modern for their time, and decades later, both were still ‘modern’ enough to fit into twentieth-century compositional contexts (the C/F\# polychords from Ravel’s \textit{Jeux d’Eau} and Stravinsky’s \textit{Petrushka} are an obvious association). Nevertheless, it seems that even within the context of the 1840s and 50s Liszt was more than conscious of the modernity of such effects. Even his verbunkos-inspired glissandi (another cimbalom-like gesture) served a modernist ‘trans-tonal’ and/or bimodal function that was grounded in verbunkos modality. The glissandi from RH14 are one example of this (ex. 2.3). Another example is from the above RH10, where Liszt humorously delays the conclusion of his cadence (ex. 3.11b). Yet there is a modemist edge here too: the persistent glissandi give a clashing phrygian tinge to the E major chords. It is also possible to hear continued clashes between C major and E major, and in that respect, we can even say that Liszt fractures normal harmonic temporality by allowing the previous C major key area (from bs. 89-104, not quoted) to continuously invade E major and disrupt its unfolding.

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\textsuperscript{62} Klára Hamburger discusses this more refined harmonisation of the scale in “Hungarian idiom in Liszt’s sacred works”, in: \textit{New Light on Liszt and his Music: Franz Liszt study Series} \#6, ed. Saffle and Deaville (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 239-251. See also Chapter 5, pp. 231-233.
We can now use, amend, extend or modify the features above in more extensive and detailed analyses. The ultimate purpose of such features, to my mind, is to serve analysis and answer particular questions of transcultural influence. For example, it would be interesting to examine how apparently identical musical features manifest themselves differently in different cultural-political and aesthetic contexts. Such intertextual readings may destabilise any notion of fixed and rigidly-defined generic materials, let along fixed cultural meanings, and on the other hand they could enable us to perceive more clearly sub-traditions of *style hongrois* and the continuum between them, e.g. the Viennese and the Hungarian (and their mixture), the various shades between popular and artistic adaptations, and so on. A different approach would be to compare different settings of the same tune or piece. The similarity of themes can bring into sharp focus the way composers ‘understood’ the verbunkos idiom differently, i.e. the individual way it interacted with their musical thinking and aesthetic goals, and these individual differences, in turn, may also point to wider cultural issues. In Part V, therefore, we examine what Liszt and Brahms did with the same melody, what it reveals about their approach, and what it could possibly tell us about *style hongrois* and transculturation.
V. ‘Transcultural Thinking’ Compared: Liszt’s and Brahms’ setting of the same Hungarian melody as a case in point

We will probably never know the full extent and influence of style hongrois. There may be much archival work to be done before we know where certain tunes came from, how long they have circulated, and how they were received. A popular tune would have had many editions and copycat renditions, and it would have been endlessly improvised and performed without leaving a trace for posterity. Happily, by historical chance, one such tune has survived by virtue of having been recorded by Brahms (and to a lesser extent by Liszt, as I shall presently explain), and it tells us something about the pervasiveness of the verbunkos culture. We can be pretty certain, in fact, that it was hugely popular in its time and that its popularity, which endured several decades, had nothing to do with Liszt and Brahms, at least not between 1853 when Liszt transcribed it, and 1868/9 when Brahms did. We know this because Liszt composed his work well before Brahms’ 1868 version, no. 9 from the Ungarische Tänze; and Brahms would not have known the allegro section from Liszt’s Ungarischer Romanzero no. 11, as the whole collection of Ungarischer Romanzero existed only in unpublished manuscripts until three years ago (2002): it was not this version, at any rate, that kept the melody in fashion still in 1868.\textsuperscript{63} Both composers definitely referred to a common and popular source rather than each other.

It is interesting to note in this light that both the Liszt and the Brahms setting follow the same ABCDAB structure, i.e. four successive and quite varied phrases. This, too, suggests

\textsuperscript{63} Liszt Ungarischer Romanzero, a collection of transcribed and freely-arranged Hungarian melodies in a style similar to the rhapsodies (although on the whole shorter and less technically demanding), remains comparatively unknown to this day. Liszt initially collaborated with the violinist Ede Reményi in creating this collection, but at some point he must have decided to abandon the project. The reason is not entirely clear, but as the MS shows, it may have something to do with the unequal quality of Reményi’s transcriptions. Be that as it may, these works languished in manuscriptural obscurity in the Richard Wagner Museum in Bayreuth for a century and a half until Géza Papp drew attention to them in 1987 (Géza Papp, ‘Unbekannte ‘Verbunkos’-Transcriptionen von Ferenc Liszt – ‘Ungarischer Romanzero’, Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 29 (1987), 181-218). Consequently, some fifteen years later, some of the more complete Romanzero, including no. 11 discussed here, were published in the New Liszt Edition (NLE II/10, 2002). The NLE omits several of the Romanzero that were deemed too incomplete for publication; however these have been recently reconstructed by the pianist and Liszt scholar Leslie Howard and are due to be published by the Liszt Society this year. I take this opportunity to thank Leslie Howard for providing me with a wealth of information, including the facsimile of both Liszt’s and Reményi’s transcriptions.
that the melody was continuously played throughout these years, and/or that it existed in several printed editions and widely circulated in this manner as well. Here we shall compare how the two composers reacted to the first two phrases. Liszt’s version is given in ex. 3.12, and the Brahms’ in ex. 3.13. We can initially observe what the two composers agree on, in order to bring into sharper relief the important differences. For this purpose, I have taken the liberty of reconstructing a melodic version that ‘averages’ the Liszt and Brahms versions, as a plausible, if completely imaginary, point of reference: ex. 3.14 therefore provides the basic melodic contour and figuration on which both composers more or less agree with some intervallic inflections in parenthesis and a few indications of slight divergences, as well as some rudimentary (and mostly cadential) harmonic points of agreement, indicated by Roman numerals.

This inferred ‘source’ suggests that both Liszt and Brahms drew their initial ideas from a quite straightforward melodic and harmonic structure. Each phrase is a self-enclosed tonal statement, beginning in the tonic, reaching the dominant in the middle, and concluding in the tonic. Both composers also seem to agree that the first phrase suggests a subdominant direction, as V is followed by IV in mid-phrase. They disagree most conspicuously, however, about the basic modality of the framing tonic chords: Brahms’ E minor agrees with the overall key, while Liszt’s F major seems to clash with an overall F minor key. It is possible that they heard different performances, read different sources, or were inspired in general by different performance practices. The latter possibility brings us to the main difference between their approaches, which lies in their differing aesthetic aims and the different compositional contexts of their settings. Liszt’s setting is not an independent work, but a section within a quasi-rhapsodic piece: it relates to the other parts through subtle melodic similarities, and through an overall lassan-to-friss form. The entire piece demands proficient piano playing (from a purely technical point of view this is especially evident in the final prestissimo section), and there are overall no concessions to the Viennese tradition. As phrases A and B show, the rough parallelisms, unusual dissonances, and the modal instability, evince a preference for a biting and even sarcastic character rather than a reassuringly ‘charming’ one. Brahms’ setting, on the other hand, could be described as style hongrois in the Viennese tradition brought to its most refined form. Brahms is not interested in teasing out ‘futuristic’ ideas from the melody; rather, he is interested in striking a fine balance between the rough edges of the melody and its
associated performance on the one hand, and the ‘high-cultured’, Western taste for rich
harmony, counterpoint and good voice-leading on the other. He achieves that aim with
matchless aplomb.64 We should examine in more detail what these general differences, and
most particularly differences in harmony, tell us about the idiom’s transcultural impact.

**Brahms: Ungarische Tänze, no. 9**

Brahms enriches the basic harmony that the melody suggests by taking every opportunity
to use mediant degrees that evoke modal colour, through a major-minor succession on IV
(ex. 3.13, bs. 5-6) sudden shifts to the minor (b. 10) and by creating a sequence of plagal
cadences for phrase B (bs. 9-12). All this harmonic richness is framed by a stable and
conventional tonal directionality. In the first phrase, A major in b. 5 turns to minor in b. 6,
but the phrase as a whole is heard in an unequivocal E minor, due to the stable tonic and
dominant. Even more tellingly, in the first half of the second phrase we hear a sequence of
plagal cadences, leading at its most daring point to a ‘capricious’ juxtaposition of E minor
and C minor between bs. 9 and 10. But here too, this sequence is framed by a tonal bass
arpeggiation (ex. 3.15; cf. ex. 3.13, bs. 9-12). It is possible that this is a specifically
Viennese tradition of style hongrois harmonisation or that, even more specifically, Brahms
is recalling a similar *topos* in Schubert’s *Divertissement à l’hongroise* (cf. the latter’s third
movement, bs. 27-42; not quoted).

Brahms, at any rate, creates quasi-parallelisms between the bass and melodic line: ex. 3.15
shows the main bass-melody arpeggiation in full beams, while dotted beams indicate the
analogous arpeggiation and more hidden parallelism in the middle voices. Thanks to the
plagal cadences, these parallelisms are never really heard on the surface. It is a more gentle
form of parallelism that mitigates ‘bad’ voice-leading for the added value of conspicuous
and more ‘high-art’ motivic connections. We could say that the canon-like imitations at the
registral extremes of the piano (cf. ex. 3.13), i.e. the overlapping E-G-B arpeggios in the
melody and bass, make this ‘cultural’ point rather emphatically.

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64 I should perhaps make it clear that my intention in this comparison is not to decide which is the ‘better’
version, or which version is more ‘authentic’ (they are both highly authentic and successful for what they set
out to achieve), but what these differing versions can tell us about how transculturation ‘works’ through
different cultural-aesthetic lenses.
Brahms creates a more tangible thematic coherence on the surface, by adding in phrase B another layer of middle voices (evoking perhaps the double-stop playing of the violin) that act as a ‘point of imitation’ in contrary motion to the main melody. This effectively intensifies the motivic development that is already inherent in ‘the original’ melody (cf. bs. 9-12 in ex. 3.14). But it seems that there is another purpose to this thickening of the texture. If the ‘original’ melody already created appoggiatura dissonances on its points of contact with the accompaniment, in bs. 9-12 these ‘points of discord’ become unrelenting through points of imitation, and thicker due to the idiomatic (i.e. fiddle-like) ‘double-stops’ texture in the secondo piano part. However, here too, the rougher side of style hongrois is balanced against classical conventions: in this case, the unrelenting barrage of upper and lower appoggiaturas in bs. 9-12 are all properly resolved. The harmonic texture may be saturated with dissonance, but it is dissonance of the familiar and treatable kind. On the other hand, the transcultural significance of style hongrois cannot be minimised here, since nineteenth-century music is not only about combining intense dissonance with chromaticism, but also about inventing new ways of colouring diatonically stable music with modal inflections and/or saturating it with dissonance. What style hongrois allows Brahms to do, in this respect, is to use certain topoi to create music that, for all its innocent and upbeat character, conventional treatment of dissonance and diatonism, is quite intensely coloured by swift chordal shifts and barbed with unrelenting and biting dissonances; it is a unique and immediately striking mixture.

**Liszt: Ungarischer Romanzero, no. 11 (Allegro)**

Liszt’s quite different understanding and interpretation of style hongrois dissonance and modality is evident in his own setting of the tune. The dissonances in the first phrase are based on the idea of melodic independence and de-synchronised part-writing. Liszt appears to savour rather than correct ostensibly crude ‘mistakes’ and ‘lack’ of dissonance control, since there is an altogether different quality of dissonance – a bimodal dissonance – that he is after. The melodic D♭ in b. 54, for example, would have been conventionally treated as a chromatic passing note between E♭ and D♭. Liszt, however, seems to free D♭ from the control of the B♭ minor chords. If Liszt had wanted to ‘control’ this clash, D♭ would have
simply been used as a passing chromatic tone within B₃ minor (ex. 3.16a; white notes represent consonances; small black notes represent chromatic passing/neighbour notes). Or, he could have stuck with the dorian-like mode suggested by the previous F major – C minor progression in bs. 49-54 and used B₃ major (ex. 3.16b), which would have made D⁷ ‘properly’ consonant. Liszt chose instead to treat the D⁷ as if it were a consonant resolution to the E₃, giving it a bimodal pungency (ex. 3.16c). There is more to this bimodal ‘topos’, therefore, than a representation of ‘crudeness’: there are un-Classical aesthetics of dissonance control involved, and it is this that interests Liszt as a ‘musician of the future’.

The cadences in Phrase B demonstrate Liszt’s unusual combination of the very common IV₅ topos (commonly used to harmonise the verbunkos minor scale) with a more daring bimodal and voice-leading practice. In bs. 63-4 we hear an authentic cadence in D minor (or D-ver), within which we hear a jarring contrary motion between the middle voice and the bass, i.e. B₃-B⁷-A against G⁷-A-A respectively (ex. 3.17b and d). It is obvious that the remarkable dissonances of b. 63 are a result of ‘de-synchronised’ voice-leading in the progression IV₅ – V₇, since we can see an analogous ‘synchronised’ version of the same progression in bs. 59-60 (ex. 3.17a and c), which ‘rhymes’ with 63-4 (cf. bs 59-64 in ex. 3.12).

Liszt’s textures in this piece are very light and transparent: quite unlike Brahms’. This is not only due to the difference between music for four hands and music for solo piano, as Liszt was quite capable of creating large and sonorous textures for the solo player. Rather, Liszt’s textural transparency causes the melodic-modal independence and resulting peculiar dissonances to stick out acoustically with greater poignancy. Similarly, rather than hiding or refining parallelisms, Liszt enhances them heterophonically right from the start, and in the repeat of Phrase A these are made even coarser by the lower register and sparser texture (ex. 3.18).

Liszt and Brahms seem to agree in principle that Phrase B should be characterised by textural parallelism and a very style hongrois ‘juxtaposition of distantly-related chords’: perhaps they both associated such harmonisation with Phrase B, because it was commonplace in the popular versions they heard or read. Be that as it may, they interpreted
this 'topos' very differently. While Brahms uses a rich harmonic palette of mediants, and lush textures governed by proper voice-leading, Liszt's harmony is mostly static, his chords are in root position and, in keeping with the style of Phrase A, he makes no attempts to mitigate parallelisms. He achieves harmonic richness through 'bimodal nuance' and through subtle structural relationships instead. Like Brahms, his 'juxtaposition of distantly-related keys' – D minor and F minor in Phrase B – is far from arbitrary. Yet it results from an altogether different tonal logic, which we need to read in the context of both phrases. In the Brahms version modal flexibility meant an occasional minorisation of the fourth and fifth degrees with a clear and coherent E minor tonality throughout. Liszt creates a more volatile sense of key area through his F major-minor-major modality, the C minor – B♭ minor exchange in phrase A (and the resulting stark cross-relations between B♭/B♭ and D♭/D♭), and the unprepared leaps overall between F major-minor-major (Phrase A), D minor and F minor-major (Phrase B). In some ways, the clash between the F minor/F major key areas in Phrase I have already prepared the clash between D minor (relative to F major) and F minor-major; the fact that the second phrase ends in F major, seems to make this point all too clearly. But the rationale for this harmony goes even deeper. As ex. 3.19 shows, the 'leap' into D minor is facilitated by the fact that we expect an F major key area to follow Phrase A. Secondly, modally-derived and enharmonic common pitches between D minor and F minor – C♯ = D♭ and G♯ = A♭ – create a smoother transition between them in bs. 59-64. Finally, ex. 3.19 shows that Liszt, like Brahms, perceived the motivic potential of the arpeggio motive in phrase B, but his 'motivic work' was much more in the background: the high melodic point in each phrase suggests an overarching arpeggio, F-A-C, which motivically binds the two phrases. It is not a 'motive' which is meant to be perceived and which gives the impression that style hongrois has been 'elevated' through a connection with high-art thematicism. What it does is bind together 'sharply-divided' phrases (which are ostensibly self-enclosed in their own key area, as the white notes suggest) into one continuous arch. Moreover, this subtle arpeggio shows most clearly how A♯ is not simply a capricious Picardy third, but an important and stable variant in the overall tonal-thematic design.

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65 At the repeat of Phrase B, F minor is similarly inflected as F-Ver after two bars. Yet it is not a straightforward transposition: the same B♭-B♭-A inner cadential line from the D minor phrase is repeated in the F minor phrase in absolute pitch (cf. bs. 63-4 and 71-2), creating a subtle motivic-enharmonic association with the previous tonal environment.
My greater attention to Liszt and to the relationship of the idiom to his modernism in the above analysis may have done Brahms some injustice, but it was not meant to belittle in any way Brahms’ Hungarian Dance, or to cast otherwise Brahms in an unflattering light. The purpose here was rather to highlight one example of how the verbunkos idiom affected their music and blended with their aesthetic in differing ways. The analysis showed that when ‘signifiers’ are compared in a compositional context, they lose their conceptual stability. They turn into something more individual and particular that can teach us much about cultural difference: not the cultural difference between ‘the West’ and its ‘others’ but different strands of transcultural influence within ‘the West’.

It would be wrong, however, to deduce too much from this one particular case I have presented. It does seem that cultural differences arise from personal taste, national identity, aesthetic ideologies, and personal attitude towards verbunkos and its adaptation in art music. But there seems to be also a wider cultural angle, perhaps different traditions of style hongrois to which Brahms and Liszt relate differently. Pending further research, only the most general hypotheses can be advanced here. Brahms, it seems to me, may well represent a culmination of the Viennese style hongrois, for all the reasons that were already suggested in the analyses. Liszt’s relationship to the Viennese style hongrois is interesting. He was closer to it in his 1828 Zwei Werbungstänze, but then seemed to have rebelled against it even before his great Hungarian project began in 1840: his ‘transcription’ of Schubert’s Divertissement à l’hongroise (1838; known as Mélodies hongroises d’après Schubert), full of improvisatory passages and idiomatic build-ups that foreshadow the Magyar Dalok, is indicative of a real desire to kick against the Viennese Hausmusik manner. It could very well be that Liszt had more common aesthetic, symbolic and ideological grounds with some of his Hungarian compatriots than with most Viennese composers: if so, this would have to be shown in at least the same level of detail as the

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66 Liszt’s reinterpretation of Schubert’s verbunkos idiom was discussed in detail in my upgrade paper “Master and Novice of the Verbunkos Idiom” (June 2003; unpublished).
above analysis, which means of course, many more case studies. This is, however, as far as we can go at present.

It would need, in general, a great deal of future research to conceptualise musical, geographical, chronological, political and perhaps other subcategories of *style hongrois*. Such a project would probably require a massive disciplinary expansion of what Bellman began in his book. From an embryonic narrative that is sympathetic to both *verbunkos* and the compositions based on it, ‘*style hongrois* studies’ may branch out into many interdisciplinary approaches that will tell us more about how *verbunkos* and Western music interacted, how *style hongrois* itself shaped Western composition (and alternatively how *verbunkos* was shaped by other European popular and art genres), how it varies in different traditions in different countries or according to different genres (e.g. piano music, opera); it might expand our knowledge about its extent and reception, a work which partly entails rediscovering forgotten compositions and amateur sheet music through long-term archival research. In this endeavour *style hongrois* studies may well derive their methodologies from ethnomusicology, and share methodologies and knowledge with research into nineteenth-century *verbunkos*.

One field that *style hongrois* studies cannot afford to ignore is music theory and analysis, for it is quite possible to miss the depth of transcultural influence without it. Furthermore, we should suspect that much of this transcultural influence lies ‘hidden’ due to our own inherited habits of musical-theoretical thinking, which are applied by default whenever ‘Western’ music is being considered. For this reason I have tried to draw attention in this chapter to the fallacy of underestimating the musical sensitivity of great composers. We should rather begin by assuming that they heard much more than our textbook theories tell us. We therefore leap over the discursive gap to view the problem from its other side.
Chapter 4:

Listening to Alternative Tonal Practices

I. Introduction

How deeply did the *verbunkos* idiom penetrate compositional ‘ideas’, processes and structures in Liszt’s works? The analyses that were offered in previous chapters have so far shown cases where Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom has penetrated the structuring of incomplete stretches of music, from individual phrases to lengthy passages. This chapter extends the analysis of such transcultural structures to complete movements and works. My working hypothesis is that ‘alternative tonal practices’ in Liszt’s works that relate in some way to the *verbunkos* idiom could result from a novel use of non-major-minor modes, a ‘non-functional’ approach to harmony in general and an avoidance of structural dominants in particular, and a tendency towards tonal pairing, where the relationship and hierarchy of the two keys is not predetermined but is subtly negotiated through a lengthy process. Furthermore, my general approach is to observe how these tonal practices are often reinforced by, or indeed depend on, non-pitch elements such as textures, dynamics, repetitions structures, and so on.

Although the analyses in the first three chapters were motivated by a response to discourses that denied both the modernist aesthetic and compositional significance of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom, to this point I have avoided confronting the biggest hurdle of all: tonal theories that overlook or ‘explain away’ nineteenth-century modality and transcultural tonal practices. These theories constitute fundamental truisms on which many musicological disciplines base their own theories, perspectives and critiques, even if they only touch upon harmony and tonality tangentially. The general perception that *formally*, the harmony associated with the *verbunkos* idiom is part of the greater major-minor system may have led to all sorts of conclusions ranging from a general lack of interest in or focus on the idiom’s harmonic aspect to the more negative preconception of inauthenticity.
I believe that mainstream tonal theories contribute to the marginalisation of transcultural genres by making these genres either unworthy of analysis or in some deeper way *unanlysable*. There are perhaps two major reasons for the theoretical uncertainty or ‘unanlysability’ of non-major-minor tonal practices in nineteenth-century composition: first, the obligations to ‘common practice’ theory and/or predetermined historicist narratives of ‘chromaticism’ that sideline ‘modality’. We shall explore these narratives and obligations here, as well as some common strategies that have been used to minimise the reading of transcultural influences. Secondly, we come back once more to the ‘institutionalised (disciplinary) habits’ discussed in the previous chapter. While music analysts explore in fine detail various formal aspects of music without paying much attention to cultural contexts (a habit which, one should add, seems to be gradually changing at present), style analysts are generally accustomed to observing modes and/or unusual tonal practices for their cultural associations. Their discipline, however, does not give them the ‘competence’ to show *how*, if at all, such phenomena relate to the compositional craft. They do not normally choose to resort to musical-analytical methodologies, since, in the case of many ‘folklorist’ or ‘exotic’ works in the nineteenth century, they would not be very well served by mainstream major-minor theories that are not particularly responsive to the kind of detail they examine. In fact, tonal analysis can only *confirm* the general understanding that analyses of transcultural styles will usually deal with surface signifiers, rich in cultural allusions but devoid of any syntactical, structural, or, in short, compositional significance. Another ‘institutionalised’ split that has rendered transculturation ‘unanlysable’ is the gap between tonal and post-tonal analysis: the subject matter and intense focus of the predominant analytical schools on both sides of the divide only reaffirms the obligations towards a narrative of evolving chromaticism within a closed system, rather than a narrative of transcultural influence.

In stating these preliminary problems I do not wish in any way to join the extreme position that denies the validity or legitimacy of music analysis and musical-theoretical knowledge — a discipline without which the present study would have been impossible. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to grapple with precisely those theoretical truisms that obviate a

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1 See Chapter 3, p. 139.
deeper structural reading of transcultural influence. As a direct outcome of this exposé, I shall explore ways in which music analysis can be modified or synthesised with style analysis to allow such readings after all, and the chapter will conclude with two case studies of how we can perceive in Liszt's music 'alternative' tonal practices derived from verbunkos. We shall begin by examining one of the most major hurdles to hearing such alternative practices: the musical-theoretical concealment of modality in the nineteenth century.

II. Modality in the Nineteenth Century and its Theoretical Subservience to the Grand Tonal Narrative

All major-minor tonal theories are derived from a deceptively neat perspective of tonality, which is driven by a will to reduce a plurality of styles to a universal, overarching and homogenous 'system'. The claims for the universality, and in some way the logical inevitability, of major-minor tonality are based on the perception of 'tonality' as an enclosed and circular system, based on 24 keys in major and minor which relate to each other most directly through diatonic connections, i.e. via the circle of fifths and relative-key relations, and more elaborately through chromatic and enharmonic relations. This bedrock of theoretical, pedagogical and practical knowledge has been reinforced, since the seventeenth century to this day, by notational traditions of key signatures and accidentals. Most classically-trained musicians and musicologists (including myself) have internalised this through a common musical education. We take it as a matter of basic competence to hear any stretch of Western art music ca. 1700-1900 'in' a major/minor key at any given time: such music has no other diatonic basis. Within this order, 'modality' is understood as an inflection of fixed 'diatonic' intervals, a transient coloration of basic major/minor keys, and thus a phenomenon that can be easily explained by tonal theory. Thus Walter Piston is able to formulate the meaning of post-1700 'tonality' in the following way, which, on the face of it, seems like plain common sense:

Tonality is the organized relationship of tones in music. This relationship, as far as the common practice of composers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is concerned, implies a central tone with all other tones supporting it or tending toward it, in one way or another ... Earlier systems, based on the modes, antedate the period we are studying.
Modality [in 18th- and nineteenth-century 'common practice tonality'] refers to the choice of the tones between which this relationship exists. Tonality is synonymous with key, modality with scale. In addition to major, minor, and chromatic scales, an extremely large number of modes can be constructed in any given tonality...\(^2\)

However, there is an underlying assumption here which makes the logic of this definition circular: given the 12 different semitones and octave equivalence in Western tuning, if keys are said to be based on diatonic major and minor modes (and that is the underlying assumption here, though not stated), and if there are only 24 possible keys, then that leaves no other possibility of describing tonal relationships. Is it possible, however, that, given the same Western tuning, certain Western compositions from the nineteenth century may exhibit keys and relationships between keys that are not predicated primarily on major and minor modes? Or are all instances of unusual relationships between chords and keys part of the nineteenth century’s taste for chromatic relationships and/or a superimposition of modal scales (as Piston suggests)? These questions touch on one of the major theoretical problems this thesis raises and deals with: is the inaudibility of transculturation a result of music-theoretical concealment, or vice versa, is the notion of ‘transculturation’ a conceptual illusion that does not bear musical-analytical scrutiny?

Before entering the theoretical debate, it is necessary to ask why the concept of tonality has traditionally been so exclusive and its theories so prohibitive when it came to certain histories. At the same time we should also ask why and how the idea of a ‘common practice’ came to enjoy such epistemic hegemony. The answers to these questions, I believe, lie in what had long ago consolidated into an unassailable ‘grand tonal narrative’, which runs along the following lines: common-practice tonality, based on major and minor keys and replacing the old Renaissance mode system, was born at some point in the early seventeenth century; this common practice achieved the height of clarity in the late eighteenth century, and began to lose its coherence through chromatic saturation in the latter half of the nineteenth century, until it finally gave way to total tonal entropy in the early twentieth century, leaving composers to their own individualistic devices. At this stage, composers had to decide for themselves how tonal space should be organised in the

pieces they wrote; by contrast, before the twentieth century, there was a background of ‘diatonic space’ to which all composers referred.

One hitch in this teleology is, of course, the lingering presence of tonality all through the twentieth century in various folk and popular genres and even in the harmonic practices of many ‘high art’ composers. Champions of atonal music have traditionally accepted its existence in popular or non-Western forms of music (this did not challenge their elitist teleology overmuch), and explained its endurance in art music as evidence of artistic laziness, cowardice, stupidity, and/or cynical commercialism. Although not altogether consensual, this twentieth-century addition to the nineteenth-century view of harmonic ‘progress’ had profound repercussions on how we came to perceive the history of music from the latter half of the nineteenth century. A benchmark has been set: it seemed only logical, from a tonal-theoretical perspective, to decide the relative modernism of works from that era according to how close they came to post-tonal twentieth-century harmony.

This traditional belief in a single arch of musical progress has decidedly sidelined other developments in art music or even disowned their contribution to ‘modernism’ – not least transcultural trends. But from where did this grand tonal narrative originate? Recent studies have comprehensively shown that it stemmed from a particularly Hegelian fashion in early nineteenth-century music theory which sought to rationalise Western (and particularly German) cultural superiority and find the hidden laws that governed the history of musical language. This became an especially pressing matter as European middle- and upper-class society became increasingly exposed to cultural relativity, i.e. an awareness of other musical cultures from the past, the social fringes and from faraway lands. ‘Tonality’ thus overtook some of the meaning of ‘harmony’, an old term which, for a historicist mindset, was too neutral and culturally non-specific, unable to address directly questions such as how Western music came to overtake other musical cultures in its beauty and rational

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3 Schoenberg was of course the main figurehead and spokesman for the inevitability of tonality’s decline and the artistic responsibility to acknowledge this through the search for a new tonal order; see for example ‘Problems of Harmony’ in: Style and Idea (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 268-87. This narrative dominated postwar musicological historiographies of tonality; see this chapter, p. 174.

organisation, how it reached a high point with the Viennese masters, and how music was likely to evolve in the future.\(^5\) What the new concept of ‘tonality’ inherited from harmonia, though, was a theoretical legacy of sets of universal and a-historical laws which supposedly derive from Nature herself, from the Pythagorean proportions to Rameau’s overtone series. Tonality, however, is a term that recontextualises the a-historical, universal, and determinist approach it inherited from previous music theories with a historicist Hegelian approach, which insists that culture and civilisation is in a constant flux of shifting ideas and beliefs, forever striving towards a higher ideal and never stable.

This presented an apparent contradiction between the old legacy of theorising an ideal and essentially unchanging musical practice on the one hand and finding the laws which govern the constant shifts in music styles on the other. But for early nineteenth-century theorists and their successors it was a paradox easily solved by identifying ‘classical’ Viennese harmony as the earthly embodiment of this abstract musical ideal and therefore, in effect, a historical triumph for humanity at large. But what could possibly come after such a triumph? One of the early and greatest propagators of tonal theory, who tried to address these questions, was François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871). His Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l’harmonie (1844) still informs traditional narratives of tonality and music history.\(^6\) Fétis believed, in accordance with Hegelian thinking, that modern tonality manifested the ‘necessary’ relationships between tones, as opposed to the sometimes pleasing, but not as logically directional combinations of modal musics.\(^7\) He conceived of tonalité moderne as a phenomenon of Nature that was discovered through a teleological

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\(^5\) It is one of the ironies of history that the ancient Greek word for tonality was harmonia. It literally meant ‘fitting together’ – pitches, in this case – in a way that made (common) sense. This word was many centuries later appropriated by Western theory to mean something slightly more specific to Western chordal music. Ever since Rameau, ‘harmony’ stood for the science of chord building and progression. The earlier, more general meaning of ‘harmony’ was thus lost, and a new word had to be invented in its place, a word that took into account the variability of different musical systems, in both time and place. It is thus a double paradox that both ‘tonality’ and ‘harmony’ proceeded to become hopelessly synonymous, and even more culturally-exclusive and restrictive, as concepts like ‘tonal harmony’ or ‘harmonic tonality’ became commonplace.

\(^6\) Fétis was expanding a concept and theory that was already proposed by Choron in 1810 (Hyer, ibid.). My description of Fétis’s theory is indebted to the sources cited in footnote 4.

\(^7\) Fétis defined tonality in his Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l’harmonie (1844) as the ‘necessary’ successive and simultaneous relationship between the scale notes. He distinguished between notes of ‘attraction’, 4 and 7, and those of ‘repose’, 3 and 1. The forces which governed tension and resolution were dubbed ‘les lois de tonalité’. The diminished fifth between 4 and 7 which he dubbed the ‘appellative minor fifth’ (as this interval ‘calls on’ the 3-1 resolution) constituted the heart of modern tonality, generating the wide-spread dominant seventh. See also Brian Hyer, ‘Tonality, §2: Rhetoric’, in op. cit.
process of human self-perfection. Fétis sought to reveal the laws which this process obeyed, i.e. describe in technical theoretical terms what marked modern tonality from ancient tonality, and how and why it achieved its apex in the classical era. He married these vast natural processes to the Hegelian notion of the genius, a man (invariably) whose superior perception compels him to lead the rest of society into higher truths. Fétis believed that the ‘discovery’ of the simultaneously-sounding dominant chord by Monteverdi was an enactment of natural law through genius. It ushered in a new ordre transtonique, where keys related to one another through ‘necessary’ dominant-tonic relationships, which made the previous modal relationships ineffectual by comparison. It is this tonal necessity and efficiency that predetermined the succession of stages (‘ordres’), and only the greatest composers could overcome the limitations of their day to move civilisation as a whole one stage further. It was therefore Mozart, according to Fétis, who discovered the enharmonic potential of diminished and lowered sixth chords; and this, in turn, ushered in a richer ordre pluritonique which allowed harmonic surprises, but at the same time enhanced and punctuated the main diatonic key. However, this process also led inevitably to an excess use of chromaticism and enharmony and a surfeit of modulations: this was the dreaded ordre omnitonique, a state of tonal disorientation and eventual chaos.

Fétis thus believed that he had discovered the ‘laws’ of music history. In this he was enormously influential: even if not all theorists shared his conservative pessimism or particular theoretical formulations of how tonality worked, they tended to share the grand narrative of tonal progress (modality – early tonality – height of ripeness during Viennese school – nineteenth-century chromaticism and tonal entropy), and they likewise tried to find the laws that regulated this history through tonal theory. ‘Tonality’ with a capital T was therefore never a simple matter of fashion or aesthetic regularities that could be summarised theoretically. There was much more at stake when ‘Tonality’ actually described in musical terms the rise of a higher and more refined state of human intelligence.

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\(^9\) From a Hegelian point of view, individual geniuses do not ‘invent’; their genius was to be the first to ‘discover’ and ‘realise’ what had always existed in the realm of perfect Platonic ideas, ready to be comprehended by humanity once humanity managed to elevate itself to a higher state of consciousness. They lived in sophisticated and advanced cultures that were prone to make this discovery. However, since their comprehension was ahead of its time, they became the agents of progress; through their awakened consciousness and resulting works, European civilisation entered new heights. (Christensen, op. cit., 41).
Furthermore, following early thinkers such as Fétis, most theorists, whether ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’, seemed to agree that the classical era displayed an exceptional clarity in its tonal language and that major-minor tonality was a definitive and positive move away from more primitive systems. To give a good example, almost a century after Fétis, Schenker and Schoenberg – who rarely agreed on aesthetic and theoretical matters – expressed remarkably similar views on the development of a unified tonality out of the plurality of church modes. Both reproduced the early nineteenth-century belief that major and minor were a practical and theoretical cost-effective reduction of the church-modes system. For Schoenberg, the church modes represented “previous attempts to find the true fundamental tone and its laws”, a process of trial and error, in the course of which the theoretically redundant modes were replaced by the more elegant system of keys. Likewise, Schenker saw the church modes as an archaic attempt to understand the natural laws governing tonality. Early in his career Schenker grappled in *Harmonielehre* (1906) with theorising exactly how church modes ‘gave way’ to the new tonal system. Like Fétis before him, he was attempting to uncover the ‘laws’ which underpinned the awakening of genius-composers’ tonal consciousness in the early seventeenth century.

Schenker’s solution was in the best tradition of musical-theoretical elegance. He represented major and minor as two scalar antipodes that between them allow all kinds of scalar mixtures. This explained many ‘foreign’ notes within the major and minor systems, but above all, it purported to explain how, after a long struggle of artistic intuition vs. false theory of modes, the artist finally triumphed: it was ‘discovered’ that by adhering to only two ‘systems’ (major and minor) and mixing them, one could not only occasionally get a modal flavour, but also other flavours, hitherto unauthorised by modal theory, but which are part of the ‘modern’ tonality. In other words, the major and minor scales functioned as two modal antipodes that between them produce almost all modal mixtures known in modern music, effectively consigning six-mode theory and composition to extinction (ex. 4.1). This model not only reflects the historic origins of melodic and harmonic minor, as

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9 Schoenberg, ‘Problems of Harmony,’ 272.
well as other phenomena in modern harmony (like a major key with minorised IV, etc.), it even allows two former church-modes, the dorian and mixolydian, as fully-operational mixtures in modern tonality. It excludes the phrygian and lydian, since these modes have been even further reduced to passing chromatic tones to the tonic (phrygian 2\textsubscript{5}) and dominant (lydian 4\#). However, one suspects the real reason for his exclusion of the lydian and phrygian is the fact that they could not be subsumed within the major-minor system in a way that was wholly consistent with his ‘bipodal’ model. In fact, they both lie just beyond the two extremes of major and minor, suggesting rather heretically a possible continuum between the two most tonally-‘illogical’ modes. Ex. 4.1 adds these forbidden modes to Schenker’s schema; the dotted lines represent the borders of tonal-theoretical legitimacy.

Nevertheless, for Schenker such a scheme was not a theoretical conceit, but a genuine attempt to describe the logical outcome of a process led by the ‘world spirit’ of tonality. Great artists, of course, had no choice but to follow this process. Why should they compose in limited modes, that cover only ‘specific situations’ once they had realised both the naturalness and possibilities of the tonal system?\textsuperscript{11} Artists of genius could never ‘go back’ to primitive musical thinking once they started on a route to a higher truth:

\[ \ldots \text{For a correct understanding of the artist's intention it should be noted that what is natural takes precedence over what is less natural, i.e., what is particular, or individual or special ... Hence the artists, preferring what is natural to what is special, have come to prefer those systems which insured to them the possibility of natural development ... Thus the conclusion is justified that the other systems, covering only specific situations, could not, in the long run, persist independently.}\textsuperscript{12} \\

Schenker did not dismiss nineteenth-century music which sounded modal, as long as it was theoretically viable, part of the rich possibilities of modern tonality. To make a point, he produced in \textit{Harmonielehre} three examples of a 2\textsubscript{5}/2\textsubscript{5} inflection from Chopin’s \textit{Mazurka in}

\begin{equation}
\end{equation}

\begin{itemize}
\item[] \textsuperscript{11} With regard to Renaissance modal theory, Schenker had nothing but words of regret: “It is the sad lot of theory in general that so often it is occupied with itself than following art in a spirit of sympathy. Thus the artist was left alone, guided only by his instinct and experience, in accomplishing the reduction of these many systems to only two.” (Ibid., 45). Schenker seems to be saying that modal theory had retarded the rise of the more superior major-minor tonality/theory (there is no clear division, in this respect, between practice and theory in Schenker’s treatise). By contrast, a modern theorist like himself who “follows art in a spirit of sympathy” is aware that tonality was formed through a process of self-perfection and, having uncovered the laws that govern this progress, he can bestow upon future composers a boon that their unfortunate forebears were denied.
\item[] \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 57.
\end{itemize}
C# minor, op. 51/1, Brahms’ Die Müllerin, op. 44/5, and Wagner’s Die Walküre, Act II, Scene I. For Schenker, these are all examples of a similar chromatic inflection. However, on closer inspection, the Brahms is an example of a truly classical (‘Neapolitan’) II₆, the Wagner is an example of inflected repetition (B-phryg scale followed by a B major scale), and the Chopin raises the real possibility of stable modality. This latter example, which consists of the opening bars of the piece, is given in ex. 4.2.

Despite the theoretical possibility of subsuming the passage from Chopin’s mazurka within common practice tonality, it really raises a question: is the D natural indicative of a ‘common practice’ II₆, or is it a hybrid of common practice tonality and a non-Western mode? On the one hand, the key signature suggests that it is not a stable diatonic tone, and the 6 chord harmonisation of D屾 is commensurable with tradition. On the other hand, the ‘common practice’ is that a Neapolitan chord, which functions as subdominant, should be resolved to the tonic, preferably through a dominant (II₆-V-I). The melodic scale step should in any case descend to the tonic. That is definitely not the case here: I suspect that the reason many would intuitively hear this passage as ‘modal’ is that D屾 is stable throughout, it leads to E rather than to C♯, and there is no dominant chord with a ‘corrective’ D♯ that would assert the normative minor mode. Of course, such a ‘modal hearing’ is enhanced through a historical knowledge of Chopin’s mazurka genre, where we would expect to find such transcultural influences. What analysts can observe in such cases, is to what extent the passage corresponds to common-practice tonality, and conversely, in what way it departs from the ‘classical’ tonal style.

But the grand tonal narrative and the theoretical ethos of unity and systematisation cannot tolerate the notion of ‘hybridic tonal styles’, since they depend on a worldview of closed and self-contained musical-theoretical syntax, where the background forever belongs to the ‘common practice’, where there are no hybridic forms of tonality, no meetings of cultural worlds, no combinations of major-minor harmonic style with other tonal systems, no possibilities of borrowing from other cultures’ ‘foreign’ pitch collections that change perceptions of interval steps and diatonism. What the grand tonal narrative rejects, above all, is that modern tonality can ever ‘go back’ to or be seriously transformed by a
‘primitive’ modal order, since it has moved away from or evolved out of this early state of organising pitches. For the early tonal theorists it was inconceivable that modality could permeate and tarnish a system that had reached a higher state of existence. In fact, the concept of tonality was from its inception, as Brian Hyer points out, not only fraught with fears that one day a perfect system would be lost through enharmonic and chromatic saturation, but with the need to assert cultural-racial superiority.

Tonalité was in fact the site of a remarkable number of cultural anxieties about the future of music, and also (perhaps surprisingly) about race ... Fétis asserted that ‘primitive’ (non-Western) societies were limited to simpler scales because of their simpler brain structures, while the more complex psychological organization of Indo-Europeans permitted them to realize, over historical time, the full musical potential of tonalité; his theories were similar in their biological determinism to the racial theories of Gobineau ... His accounts of non-Western music, which he collected in the Histoire générale de la musique (1869-76), thus conceal emotive assertions within the neutral language of factual description ... While the essentialization of race in terms of pitch repertories has since been discredited, the practice remains part of the genealogical heritage of tonality.¹⁴

This race-based rationale for the ‘evolution’ of tonalité suggests to me a fear of cultural impurity and degradation, and a need to create the sharpest possible distinction between ‘progressive’ and ‘backward’ musical cultures, whether those ‘other’ cultures are separated in time, geography, ethnicity or class from a collective ‘us’ which the theorists purported to represent. But the existence of a grand tonal narrative, even in a ‘cleaner’ and more politically-correct version, is not devoid of such assumptions, however diluted they may have become. As Hyer aptly argued in the quote above, although the supremacist rhetoric of theorists from the nineteenth and early twentieth century is gone, homeopathic doses of this thinking are still traceable in general textbook accounts of tonality to this day. Moreover, rhetoric aside, these accounts are just as effective in describing a homogenous tonal system that is never really in any danger of metamorphosing into a separate or sub-practice due to influences from the outside, an outside that, one can infer, is simply too primitive and incompatible to cause any ‘systemic’ changes in the common practice. An example of such softer rhetoric but equal denial, can be found in Carl Dahlhaus’ dismissive

Since the 19th century there has been an alternative to chromatic harmony as a means of extending tonality, namely modal harmony. It arose as part of a general interest in the past, in folk music and in oriental music and served to introduce ‘foreign’ elements into tonal harmony by drawing from other historical and cultural areas. It was not so much a system of harmony in itself as a way of deviating from the normal functions of tonal harmony to achieve particular effects. It was unlike the modality of the 16th century in that it was the relationships between chords, rather than melodic considerations, that determined the key centre. In the 19th century the modes came to be thought of as variants of major and minor, and this is implied by phrases such as ‘Mixolydian 7th’ and ‘Dorian 6th’ [sic]. The Mixolydian 7th, with the chords of D minor and F major, for example, in the key of G major, is not ‘modal in character’ in the medieval and Renaissance modal system (where the 3rd and 4th were just as much determinants of the modal centre as was the 7th); only against the background of major and minor did it become significant. Modal harmony, for all its apparent dependence on the past, was thus a 19th-century innovation. 15

The language is subtle but the implications are clear: Western music changes only according to its own internal laws and not through external influence. Although Dahlhaus acknowledges composers’ interest in contemporary ‘foreign’ musics, he does so briefly and then moves swiftly on to more neutral, historicist argument of the grand tonal narrative to assert the impossibility of reading these influences as something other than ‘extended’ common-practice tonality. While it is possible to argue with the circularity of Dahlhaus’ logic (using terms like ‘dorian sixth’ taken from a tonal-theoretical perspective is not a proper way of proving that a modal perspective is impossible), and point to a dismissive rhetoric (composers indulged in tonality to create ‘particular effects’ – as opposed to more ‘natural’ procedures?), the ‘racialist genealogy’ which Hyer refers to is admittedly thin on the ground here. Furthermore, despite the clear implications, it is difficult to read into this description a deliberate attempt to deny transcultural influence. Indeed, Dahlhaus might simply be making a ‘neutral’ theoretical argument, reproducing a shared musicological belief in Tonality while avoiding the historical racialism and elitism of tonalité. However, I would argue that the subliminal message which is encoded here is that ‘modality’ properly belongs to a regressive or lower order of musical thinking. Accordingly, composers who really understood where tonal evolution was heading knew that they should be the agents or prophets of the main narrative rather than waste time on a redundant subplot. which

15 Carl Dahlhaus. ‘Harmony; §3: Historical Development: (IV) Early Twentieth Century’, www.groveonline.com – accessed February, 2005; my italics; mode names are capitalised in the original.
merely amounted to a limited extension of the ‘common practice’ and was inspired by retro-fashions ('neo-modality'), sentimental nationalism, or sensuous exoticisms. Dahlhaus' more ideological motive for the diminishment of nineteenth-century modal phenomena becomes all too clear when we compare the above quote with what he writes on Schoenberg and the evolution of tonality in the twentieth century:

The emancipation of the dissonance was something that Schoenberg resolved upon in the years 1906-7 – not in any spirit of iconoclasm, in fact rather reluctantly but with a sense of inner inevitability ... Inherent in the techniques that provide a solution to the problem of emancipation is the change to dodecaphony: complementarity tends towards the 12-note principle; equivalence of horizontal and vertical is a basic feature of serial technique ... [Dahlhaus continues with a proportionately lengthy discussion of Schoenberg's harmony, and concludes:] ... Harmonic tonality, which broke down about 1910, had dominated the scene for three centuries. It had been a universal system of reference, marking out the boundaries within which a composition had to move in order to correspond with the European concept of what music was. In contrast, none of the systems projected in the early 20th century, apart from the 12-note technique as such, extended beyond specific validity for any individual composer. [Here Dahlhaus continues with a comparatively brief description of the harmonic ‘systems’ of Scriabin, Stravinsky, Bartók and Hindemith.] 16

Dahlhaus, then, accepts without reservation Schoenberg’s appropriation of the grand tonal narrative. Echoing the story of how tonality itself began as a monumental departure from Renaissance harmony, Schoenberg is described here as a kind of twentieth-century Monteverdi, a composer who is present at a crucial moment in history, who obeys the Hegelian ‘world spirit’ and through whom humanity makes a quantum leap into a new tonal order. Schoenberg’s compositional technique is not simply a motivic technique superimposed on an entropic state of tonality; it is a technique which is inherent in and arises from the ‘new tonal order’, just as the use of dominant sevenths became a necessary condition for tonalité moderne in the seventeenth century. To present Schoenberg as simply the inventor of a new ‘practice’ is too coy for such a narrative: Schoenberg had launched the final destiny of tonal evolution itself. By contrast, other composers have never founded ‘practices’ that extended beyond themselves, since their harmonic language was not guided by the main teleological line of development, i.e. the development which led to Schoenberg’s twelve-tone ‘system’. Behind this soft-rhetoric insistence on a dichotomy between central and peripheral developments in music history lie the more raw claims for

16 Ibid.
German musical hegemony, and at times, as for example we can see in Schoenberg’s own writings, a vitriolic dismissal of cultural alternatives.¹⁷

Thus the analogies and cross-references between twentieth and nineteenth centuries are clear. If Schoenberg constitutes the endpoint of a main tradition, then compositional styles and methods from outside his Viennese school are just splinters from the new tonal order, which he represents in its purest form. This, in turn, reflects on how the nineteenth century is interpreted: modal harmony is seen as a mere left-over chip off an old practice which has meanwhile evolved into a new tonal order. Even later descriptions, such as Dahlhaus’, contain a polite but veiled dismissal of the kind of lamentably retarded ‘exotic’ or ‘nationalist’ European music which refuses to follow tonalité’s unstoppable forward march towards higher mental faculties and cultural horizons. Since this was a mainstream view in the early and middle twentieth century, when the field of music analysis saw its greatest growth (and a view which many I suspect continue to hold today), it is little wonder that little musical-analytical attention has been given to vernacular idioms, to the possibility that transcultural tonal practices could challenge received theoretical models of tonality, or indeed to the possibility that alternative tonal practices may require alternative analytical tools. Of course, the unshakable belief that a universal major-minor ‘system’ subsumed all modal phenomena in the nineteenth century sealed this state of neglect.

However, against all the foregoing critique, one may well raise some legitimate and genuine objections. Firstly, even if the concept, theory and overarching narrative of a single tonality is implicated in an unpleasant history and erstwhile supremacist thinking and rhetoric, does it mean that we should altogether reject the technical basis of a theory that works really well in practice? The short answer to this is that we do not have to ‘reject’ anything altogether, or put together an alternative ‘theory’, but only revise some of our shared analytical tools to allow them to respond to the music in a way that was impossible in the past. This might raise a second objection: in case traditional theories do fail to describe certain harmonic styles in the nineteenth century, just what exactly are we missing? Are these ‘practices’ so theoretically challenging, historically significant, and compositionally ‘alternative’ that we really need to revise our analytical tools? To put it

¹⁷ See Chapter 3, pp. 131-132.
bluntly, is the effort worth it? The answer to this question, I hope, was already suggested in the previous analyses, and will become even more evident in this chapter and the next: the ‘effort’ is an effective means of interpreting transcultural influence – and therefore the history of nineteenth-century composition in general. It might show us in great detail how European music has been shaped and reshaped through cultural interactions, against widespread and inimical assumptions to the contrary. However, this may leave one final objection: is Dahlhaus not right, after all, in saying that composers in the nineteenth century composed ‘modality’ against a single and ‘universal system of reference’? Is it not anachronistic to theorise about ‘alternative tonal practices’ or ‘alternative perceptions’ of diatonism and chromaticism, when such concepts and ideas did not exist at the time? Does not such an ahistorical approach defeat the purpose of uncovering an ‘unacknowledged’ historical strand? I shall presently address this latter objection through a hypothetical exercise in perception. This will lead us to more practical analysis that would also show what can be selected and rejected from received theories, and why the effort is worthwhile.

**III. Perception of Modality vs. Music Theory**

The short answer to that charge of anachronism is that in the absence of mind-reading and time machines we will never know what Liszt and his contemporaries ‘actually’ heard: all we have is theory, composition, and a few letters and eyewitness accounts. But there are good reasons to suspect the idea that contemporaneous theories necessarily embody the collective perception of their day when, as would be the case today, a ‘collective perception’ breaks down to individual tastes, musical abilities and variations in schoolings and indoctrinations into various theories. As William Thomson reminds us, children and unschooled adults achieve competence in harmonic perception “without the foggiest conceptual grasp of chords or harmonic roots or interval inversion, of tonics or tonality”.18 On that evidence, as well as evidence from different cultures around the world, “not having a word for something is not proof that something does not exist.”19 By the same token, the

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19 Ibid., 72; Thomson is quoting the anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake. Of course, to invert Dissanayake’s assertion, *having* a word for something is not a proof that that something does exist, which, where tonal
fact that music theory as a discipline never seriously engaged with the possibility of modal-diatonic structures in the nineteenth century, does not necessarily prove that modal structures were not perceived by contemporaries, or that it is not for us today to speculate that they were.

We not only have the ‘right’ but should speculate about alternative tonal practices, particularly if past theorists were reluctant to make such speculation as much on ideological grounds as on theoretical ones. Against the historical reality of interpenetrating musical cultures, it is naïvely positivist to assume that only tonal ears, sanctioned by tonal theory, could have existed at the time. There could very well be some discrepancy between what composers heard and did and the way theorists described their works. Theory, after all, is a branch of knowledge with its own traditions and conventions, some of which – e.g. the basis of tonality in the fabled overtones series – originated in metaphysics and persist with little relevance to practical composition. Theory is also notoriously (but understandably) slow in following practice, and sometimes takes decades and even centuries to refine its tools, allowing fresh, and at time better, analysis of repertoires that are long in the past. 20 What seems to me most unsustainable, leaving aside the issue of the tonal perceptions of musically-illiterate listeners, is the assumption that when nineteenth-century composers wrote neo-Renaissance or folk-like modality they heard such harmony exclusively against a ‘major-minor’ system. The very fact that composers such as Liszt immersed themselves in these musics should strongly suggest that at the very least they ‘exposed’ their ears to other systems/styles of organising tones. I would argue that when we hear, for example, the first movement from Liszt’s Via Crucis, we hear in fact a polystylistic hybrid which should be understood both against harmonic trends in 1879 and the antique harmony on which Liszt’s ‘neo-Renaissance’ harmony is modelled. It seems too simple, at any rate, to view it as a mere ‘extension’ of common-practice tonality, as Dahlhaus would have it. Likewise, the assumption that a collective post-Renaissance ‘us’ could not possibly hear with ‘innocent

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20 The fact that Beethoven wrote music in the early nineteenth century does not mean we must de jure prefer the more contemporaneous insights of Gottfried Weber to those of Schenker. And as Richard Cohn argued, the fact that Riemann stuck to a three-function harmonic world in his schematic representation of tonal space (known as Tonnetz), does not mean that other, non-functional relationships between chords, that better describe certain voice-leading and progression patterns in late nineteenth-century chromatic harmony, could not be derived from the same model.
modal ears' music based on non-major-minor modes, after having tasted from the apple of
tonal knowledge circa 1600, is itself naïve or dogmatic, in view of all the non-major-minor-
based harmony that existed before, during and after the so-called common-practice tonality.
It is not composers but rather nineteenth-century tonal theories which have created a kind
of all-Western musical world that is so perfect and impenetrable (or capable of converting
alien influences) it veritably glows with paradisiacal innocence. Against this, the real,
fallible and far messier world of composition shows every sign of transcultural
interpenetrations.

Unfortunately, theories of music perception from the nineteenth century are not particularly
helpful in this respect either. The two most prominent models of perception by Carl Stumpf
and Hermann von Helmholtz assume a common background of hearing which, for
example, always judges dissonance and consonance according to common-practice
precepts and the long-held theoretical belief that consonance is directly derived from the
acoustic properties of intervals, i.e. from Nature, with a capital N, rather than from cultural
conditioning.\footnote{Burdette Green and David Butler, 'From acoustics to Tonpsychologie', in: \textit{The Cambridge History of
Western Music Theory}, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 265-6.}
Today, however, definitions of dissonance and consonance are not self-evident, and these complicate or even render obsolete the psychological (Stumpf) and
physiological (Helmholtz) models of perception from the nineteenth century.

This is particularly true of twentieth-century music, which manifests no common
perception of consonance/dissonance, and by extension, no common perception of tonality.
When it comes to consonance and dissonance, context is all important. It is possible to
argue, for example, that where non-diatonic scales rule, listeners (or at least \textit{some} listeners)
will readjust their perception of harmonic tension/resolution according to the harmonic
environment. In ‘Shedding Scales: Understanding Intervals in Different Musical Contexts’
Andrew Mead has argued that this phenomenon should allow theorists to conceive of the
perception of analogous ‘major’, ‘minor’, ‘perfect’, ‘augmented’ and ‘diminished’ intervals
in non-diatonic scales.\footnote{Andrew Mead, ‘Shedding Scales: Understanding Intervals in Different Musical Contexts’, in: \textit{Theory and
Practice}, 22-3 (1997/8), 73-94.} So for example, in pentatonic music an interval of a whole tone
would be heard as the smallest scale-step, or a ‘minor second’, while that of three
semitones would be heard as a 'major second'. Conversely, in an octatonic environment, the tritone would be a stable 'perfect' fifth, thirds will likewise always be 'perfect', while fourths will alternate between 'major' and 'minor' (e.g. in the scale C-D-E♭-F-F♯-G♭-A-B, C-F would describe a 'minor' fourth, while D-F♯ would be a 'major' fourth). Arguably, a long octatonic passage will cease after a while to sound dissonant, because within its own parameters, there are only perfect and major/minor intervals. Only against diatonic or other asymmetric scales will its intervals sound diminished (e.g. G♯-C in C major) or augmented (E♭-F♯ in C minor). So the perception of intervals is also a question of 'tonal environment', the stability of that environment and the ostensibly ever-present common-practice tonality beyond that environment. It is not unreasonable to hypothesise, therefore, that it was precisely the stability of lengthy chunks of music that could not be explained through common-practice theories which destabilised the monolithic perception of major-minor diatonism in the nineteenth century, particularly in its latter half. Although it is possible to subsume such passages within an overarching perception of common-practice tonality, the wisdom of such an exercise is stretched when these 'passages' become the main harmonic language of the piece, and when they demonstrate a different principle of coherence.

This phenomenon does not only apply to the shifting perception of consonances and dissonances, but could extend to the shifting perceptions of diatonism and chromaticism. In other words, a stable and coherent modal environment that exceeds the 'common practice' confines of major and minor could have altered 'even' nineteenth-century perceptions of stable/unstable tones, and likewise perceptions of how triads relate to each other and whether the relationship is stable (diatonic) or unstable (chromatic). As I have hinted already in Chapter 1, such perceptions (as well as our own today) may have been challenged and/or recalibrated by the intervallic content of particular verbunkos modes, and the unusual tones they shared, which made the transition between 'chromatic keys' much smoother. In theory (or as an exercise in aural perception) we can imagine that such relationships are logical, if 'alternative' modal tone-rows, in effect 'keys' not especially

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23 Ibid., 75-8. This will also change our perception of complementary intervals. In an octatonic scale, the complementary interval of a third is a seventh, not a sixth, which is why sevenths will always be 'perfect' (always measuring 9 semitones) like their complementary thirds (which always measure 3 semitones). Sixths will be either major or minor, like their complementary fourths; and so on.

24 See Chapter 1, p. 48 and ex. 1.3.
predicated on major or minor modes, share many common tones between them. This is not so fanciful a theoretical suggestion, to judge by recent thinking on nineteenth-century triadic harmony. ‘Common tone retention’ leading to smooth voice-leading between chromatically-related chords is, in fact, an area which has been extensively explored by the so-called ‘Neo-Riemannian’ or ‘transformation’ theory.\(^{25}\) Here I would like only to point out one of the most basic tenets of this theory: chords that are maximally-smooth may form progression patterns that cut across or suspend diatonic relationships and create a different but consistent tonal logic in their place.\(^{26}\) If we extend this principle to modes, we may look at how non-major-minor (‘alternative’) common-tone retentions create relationships that are analogous to major-minor diatonic ones, but not quite the same.\(^{27}\)

The principle is simple enough: the more common tones two keys share the smoother the transition between them sounds. In common-practice tonality, relative keys which share all seven tones map themselves onto each other effortlessly. Next in order of smoothness are the dominant, subdominant and next-relative keys, which share all tones but one, and so on. The commonality of tones becomes a slightly more complex story when we take into


\(^{26}\) The progression between any two triads is ‘maximally-smooth’ if two tones are ‘retained’ while one voice moves a step or half step up or down. This leaves us with three possible relationships between triads which are defined in neo-Riemannian theory as parallel, leading and relative, or PLR (see below).

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
P \text{ (parallel)} & L \text{ (leading)} & R \text{ (Relative)} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textbf{\Si}} \\
\end{array} & b & b^\# & b^\flat \\
\end{array}
\]

From a purely chordal point of view, L- and P-relationships are smoother than the R-relationship, since they entail only half a step (Cohn, op. cit., 1997, 1-2). However, this only shows relationships between chords; in common-practice tonality, relative keys will be more smoothly connected through the retention of seven common diatonic tones. Similarly, in an ‘alternative tonal practice’ based on modes, all modal-diatonic tones (and not only chords) may play a part in smoothly connecting key areas, only that, as we shall presently see, ‘alternative’ (i.e. modal) diatonic tones create new relationships between keys.

\(^{27}\) In the following discussion, I will not resort to the post-tonal numeric representation of intervals, common in pitch-class-set and Neo-Riemannian theories, since I am interested in exploring alternative diatonic spaces, i.e. relationships between key areas and chords which could be perceived as diatonic, though not predicated on conventional major or minor modes. These relationships are much more readily perceived and are therefore best represented in traditional notation.
account the variants of the minor mode, and when we begin to extend the principle to other modes as well. Thus as an exercise in aural imagination, ex. 4.3 shows how common-tone relationships in the minor mode may compare with similar relationships in one of the most familiar of verbunkos modes, the verbunkos minor (G-A-B♭-C♯-D-E♭-F♯).

The comparison with the normative minor mode is apposite, since that mode is inherently unstable, and since its instability has long been accepted and theorised. The natural minor variant of the normative minor could be defined as the ‘primary mode’, as it has the greatest potential to lead smoothly, through common-tone retention, to its relative major (in G minor, B♭ major), next relative (E♭ major), dominant (D minor) and subdominant (C minor). This phenomenon also explains the key signature bias: if we were to fix F♯ in the key signature there would simply be no circle-of-fifths correlation to the relative major. It is the natural variant, then, that determines the closeness of G minor to other keys, in terms of common tones. On the other hand, the two ‘internal’ variant modes, the harmonic and melodic minor, can be simply described as ‘variant sets’ of ♯6♭-7♭ (harmonic) and 6♭-7♭ (melodic) that have the function of reasserting the tonic: the progression I-IV-V-I would be impossible without the harmonic variant, and the melodic variant also tends to reinforce the tonic. The fact that in common-practice tonality these internal variants are supposed to come in rigid sets explains perhaps why G minor, for example, cannot simply dissolve into D minor as smoothly as it would into its relative major, B♭. In D minor, E♭ is permanently replaced by E♭, and there is no set of modal variables in G minor that would prepare for E♭-F♭; therefore D minor shares only six tones with G minor. It is perhaps a shade closer to G minor than C minor and E♭ major, which also share six tones with G minor, but introduces a new note, A♭, that is foreign to G minor.

Common-tone relationships in verbunkos modes operate on a similar principle, with one all-important difference: there is no theory or practice that binds them to a common system or formally predefines their modal variability. In fact, the representation in ex. 4.3b is overly schematic in its comparison with a normative minor mode in that it does not take into account the possibility of other inbuilt modal instabilities, for example on the second
and third degrees. But keeping the comparison intentionally simple, we can see that there are several similarities and inevitable differences in the way common-tone retention works between the tonic and the other degrees. First, the key signature, which is intentionally meant to emphasise the diatonic stability of G-ver, shows us a possible diatonic relationship between D major (V) and Bb major (III), i.e. that within a G-ver environment, the relationship and transition between these two keys could be potentially smoothened or ‘diatonised’. We shall even see a real example of that later on which is, incidentally, why I picked G-ver as the tonic in this presentation.

In the absence of a common ‘modal system’ analogous to ‘common practice’ tonality, a mode like G-ver needs to be fairly pervasive and consistent before it can change the perception of diatonic space. This can happen if it is maintained, almost statically (as in ex. 4.7), or even more convincingly if it becomes the focal point of other verbunkos modes that relate to it through its diatonic scale degrees. Imagine a music that is saturated with the modal environment of ex. 4.3b: the variability of #4, #6 and #7, can generate different modes on all scale degrees (including the tonic), and these modes in turn present us with new diatonic variables, and therefore inexhaustible new ‘diatonic’ relationships. To simplify matters, I have only presented in my examples the modes that would most likely relate to G-ver.

We can begin noticing some important differences between such a hypothetical environment (where the normative major-minor ‘system’ has been temporarily suspended) and the normative minor. First of all, this mode can be reinforced simply through transposition; and in verbunkos-related practices, this is usually to IV or V. Unlike the

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28 This is partly why this ongoing presentation should be seen as an ‘exercise in aural imagination’ whose purpose is to suggest possibilities of hearing and analysing rather than constitute a serious attempt at an ‘alternative’ tonal theory. Another reason for caution is that there are numerous compositions where non-major-minor modes are superficially grafted on tonal harmony and cannot be perceived at all to generate alternative diatonic relationships. Analysts will always be on precarious theoretical grounds when examining transcultural influences, and it would always be their interpretative prerogative to decide, in my opinion, whether a mode matters harmonically or not, as well as whether other transcultural elements matter compositionally in any way.

29 I am referring to both analyses in Parts IV and V. In the first, the middle section of RH3 is G-ver, which seems to renegotiate a ‘chromatic’ relationship between B minor and G minor. In the second (i.e. in Part V), B major and D-har major seem to be linked through a modal key area that might have had two flats and two sharps in its key signature (see p. 200 in particular).
normative minor, where a transition between G minor and C minor requires only the change of A₇ to A₇, the shift from G-Ver to C-Ver is a transposition that necessitates changing C♯ to C♯. However, this modal variability does not necessarily threaten the perception of G-Ver as the primary mode. On the contrary: we hear the same mode a fourth up, there are still five common tones between G-Ver and C-Ver and the defining E₇-F♯ set is mapped effortlessly into the new key as tones 3 and 4: C-D-E♭-F♯-G. The lack of common tones (five instead of six; cf. in minor I-IV) is compensated by modal similarity. In an environment where there are possibly a dozen or more modal variants, ‘modal similarity’, especially when motivically reinforced (e.g. when similar scalar materials are repeated on IV), is not to be underrated. So if C-Ver follows G-Ver, we may hear a close diatonic connection, despite having ‘only’ five common tones.

Another surprising difference between the normative minor and verbunkos-minor tonal environments is that III can no longer function as a relative key, in the sense that the new ‘tonic’ would have an augmented tonic chord (B♭-D-F♯). This is a desired effect in certain circumstances (especially for Liszt who was fond of augmented-chord sonorities), but the new mode would need a perfect fifth to create its own diatonic relationships, and it would could not easily exist with a C♯ that might suggest D as the real tonic. This leaves us with three main possibilities, all of which share only five common tones with G-Ver. First, the normative B♭ major: this might possibly weaken the primacy of G-Ver by bringing into this modal world the more dominant major-minor ‘system’, i.e. by suggesting a strong diatonic relationship between G minor and B♭ major, where G-Ver is only a colourful variant of I. On the other hand, if III were to be realised as ‘verbunkos lydian’ (B♭-Ver/lyd, B♭-C♯-D-E♭-F♯-G-A), a mode that shares five tones with G-Ver (plus two diatonic variables, E♭ and F♯) and which moreover retains G-Ver’s defining lower pentachord (G-A-B♭-C♯-D), G-Ver’s primacy would be reinforced. Another reinforcing option is the realisation of III as ‘harmonic major’ (B♭-har/maj B♭-C♯-D-E♭-F♯-G♯-A). The intervallic content of this mode’s upper tetrachord (F♯-G♯-A-B♭) creates a ‘colour’ association with that of G-Ver (D-E♭-F♯-G), although it does not contain G itself (for which reason it might be less ‘diatonically-related’ to G-Ver than its variant, B♭-Ver/lyd).

If we were to draw a crude analogy, based on common-note retention, between the major-minor world, and this verbunkos modal world, we could say that the retention of five tones
would constitute the minimum requirement for a perception of diatonic relationship between keys. Thus in a G-ver environment, III would usually fall into the category of a more distant diatonic relationship. A key based on G-ver’s VI (E₅), on the other hand, would have a closer diatonic relationship with the primary mode: like III it will also tend to materialise as verbunkos lydian (E₃-ver/lyd, E₃-F♯-G-A-B₆-Cb-D₇), retaining six tones and reinforcing G-ver’s upper tetrachord (D-E₆-F♯-G), while changing only the highly variable C♯/C₆.

By the same token, the kalindra mode on V is G-ver’s ‘relative’ (marked in ex. 4.3 with ‘R’), besides having a tonic-dominant relationship with G-ver. When G-ver ‘progresses’ to D-kal, all seven tones are retained (cf. ex. 1.1a). This means that in certain instances the tonic may shift effortlessly and imperceptibly between I and V. In some cases, as in the Csárdás macabre we shall analyse in Chapter 5, it is impossible to determine whether the ambivalence is indeed between the tonic and its subdominant (A-kal and D-ver in that piece) or between the tonic and its dominant (i.e. where D-kal is the tonic key and A-kal the dominant).³⁰

To round off this theoretical survey of hypothetical non-major-minor diatonic relationships, we could consider kalindra as a relative key that generates its own ‘alternative’ relationships. We can take for example A as the tonic (Liszt’s favourite choice) and observe that A-kal has a diatonic relationship with B₇-ver/lyd, as these two keys share 6 tones between them (B₆, C♯, D, E, F♯, A♭) and are further connected by the highly variable C♯/C₆. In a sustained kalindra environment, this means that what would normally be taken to be a semitonal chromatic relationship between A major and Bb major is here decidedly diatonic, as there is no semitonal transposition of the mode when we move between D-kal and E-ver/lyd (ex. 4.4a). Even the ‘monotertial relationship’ between the A major tonic triad and a Bb minor triad (‘monotertial’ since they share the same C♯/D♭ third)³¹ has a

³⁰ See Chapter 5/IV, pp. 240-244. See also the general discussion on ‘tonal ambivalence between V/I or I/IV’ on p. 148. In contrast to this ‘maximally-smooth’ relationship, the modal-diatonic relationship between verbunkos minor modes on both the first and fifth degrees (e.g. G-ver and D-ver) is less smooth in terms of common tones – only six rather than the full set of seven – but on the other hand, it is strengthened qualitatively through modal colour, not unlike how C-ver reinforces G-ver as its IV.

³¹ Monotertial pertains to ‘chord or keys linked by a major third’, as in this case, A major and Bb minor. See Peter Van der Merwe, Roots of the Classical, 213-4 and 496, from which I quote; For the origins of this term
diatonic basis if the ‘B♭ minor’ is derived from the kalindra’s 2-3-6 (B♭-C♯-F♭). Equally remarkable is the way kalindra may transform ‘chromatic third’ relationships into ‘diatonic thirds’. We can see in ex. 4.4b how A-kal can be mapped on to C♯ and F (i.e. to A-kal’s III and VI degree) so that both C♯-kal and F-kal share five common tones with A-kal. Although one of these tones is enharmonic (F♯ A-kal = E♯ C♯, kal and C♯ A-kal = D♯ F♯, a1) this meets the minimum five common-tones requirement for an analogous perception of diatonic relationships. By comparison, A minor will share only three common tones with C♯ minor (A, B, E), and A major only three tones with C♯ major (C♯, F♯, G♯).

In practice, Liszt takes advantage of this recalibration of chromatic/diatonic space in the opening of his Sunt lacrymae rerum (1872/82) (ex. 4.5). A familiarity with and due immersion in the intervallic content of the kalindra mode makes it quite possible to hear A-kal’s monotertial relationship with the implied B♭-ver mode in bs. 1-3 (F♯, E♯, C♯, D♯, B♭) as diatonic; similarly, the relationship between A-kal and the C♯ minor arpeggio in bs. 4 and 6 is diatonic: we accept that implicitly since this is also familiar from the normative major. What is less familiar is the way a slight shift of emphasis can really disorientate the placement of the tonic. Yet at any point C♯ minor can become C♯ major and, as an enharmonic C♯-F♯-G♯, that chord could potentially bend the enharmonic/diatonic space and relate more ‘diatonically’ to A-kal, just as B♭-C♯-F♭ has in the beginning of the piece. As we find later in the piece, the relationship between A-kal and C♯ major attains a particular structural significance.32

Theoretically speaking, if this passage had continued to map kalindra to the next major third (F-kal), it would have effectively divided the octave symmetrically into 4:4:4 (cf. ex. 4.4b). Thus even the perception of a symmetrical division of the octave, so emblematic of

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32 C♯ minor/major consistently acts as a tonally disorienting agent throughout the piece. In bs. 15-24 it acquires the status of a secondary tonic, but it then becomes possible to hear it as the subdominant of G♯ major, though this is not entirely certain, in the best tradition of the idiom’s equivocal directionality. In bs. 53-6 it functions as the dominant of F♯ major, but that tonal pull is thwarted by a stealthy return to A major. From that point on, roughly the second (and longer) half of the piece, both A and C♯ major pull towards their subdominants, as Liszt establishes C♯ and A as rival pedal points. The piece ends on a C♯ pedal point with final A major chords interchanging with F♯ major. Throughout the piece, then, there are subtle tonal shifts to and away from A, rather than modulations, especially through the (literally) mediation of C♯ minor/major; and this is already announced by intoning the mode in the first eight bars of the piece.
the reportedly historical transition from the diatonic to the chromatic, could be, at least hypothetically, redesigned as a diatonic cycle, by innocent, exotic and colourful \textit{verbunkos} modes. This, however, is really where theory and hypothesis ought to stop and analysis should begin. After all, there is no practical need to exhaust the theoretical possibilities \textit{verbunkos} modes pose for the perception of tonality: in actual historical and transcultural contexts, there is no sense in which one such ‘primary mode’ forms a closed system that holds true across a vast repertoire of works and excludes traditional tonality. Rather, common major-minor practice, new chromatic techniques \textit{and} alternative diatonic practices intermingle and coalesce. Nevertheless, we can always hypothesise how the phenomenon of common-tone retention between non-major-minor modes could have altered and/or challenged the theoretically-conditioned perception of major-minor chromaticism and diatonism. We should examine the possible effects of this phenomenon in real music.

IV. ‘Alternative’ Modal-Diatonic Connections in Hungarian Rhapsody no. 3

Many listeners would undoubtedly describe the overall harmonic style of the third \textit{Hungarian Rhapsody} (RH3) as ‘modal’. In the opening \textit{andante} section (ex. 4.6), a B₅ minor phrase progresses to E₅ major and then back to B₅ minor where the melody makes a special point of accentuating notes characteristic of the \textit{verbunkos} dorian (E₅-F-G₂-A₅). Although the phrase (henceforth Theme I) begins and ends in the normative minor, a modal ear would hear the ‘self-enclosed’ (and ‘sharply divided’) E₅ major subphrase in bs. 11-12 as an extension of the same B₅-\textit{veridor} mode (B₅-C-D₅-E₅-F-G₂-A₅), as the fourth degree will always be variable in I-IV progressions.\textsuperscript{33} If the modal ‘primacy’ of this \textit{verbunkos} dorian is not obvious (and it might very well be that most listeners would not be even able to identify this mode) the G-ver of the \textit{allegretto} section is palpable enough (ex. 4.7; the two themes are correspondingly labelled Theme II and III). The repeat of the first section also reiterates the \textit{verbunkos} modes we heard both in the \textit{andante} and the \textit{allegretto}. Do

\textsuperscript{33} The IV-I progression in bs. 11-13 reinforces this impression in particular. The very ‘common practice’ V₅/IV \rightarrow IV in bs.10.4-12 could also be heard as an idiomatic prolongation of harmonically ‘self-enclosed’ subphrases – provided, of course, one is familiar with the harmonic topics.
these stylistic observations have any bearing at all on the harmonic ‘syntax’? Do these modes create alternative tonal connections that renegotiate the diatonic/chromatic space?

We could well begin by pondering the meaning of the B₆ major key signature. The piece ends in a major mode (which major mode is a different matter), the B₆ minor phrases always end with major chords, and the middle section is in ‘G minor’, the relative of ‘B₆ major’. Furthermore, this slow piece used to be paired in its previous incarnation as MD11 (published 1843) with a fast movement in B₆ major – in fact, the very same allegro that we shall encounter in Part V. Yet all of these explanations fall short of truly explaining the key signature: why would Liszt ask us to listen to the whole piece, as it were, as if it were inflected to the minor from major? Is this also an ‘alternative’ tonal thinking? Is it related to an ‘idiomatic’ tonality/modality?

The mystery unravels when we look at the way Liszt uses themes and modes throughout the piece. Although I have previously been critical of the effects of Hegelian thinking on music history and analysis, it seems opportune to borrow here Hegelian dialectics to describe the tonality of this piece which, I believe, is perceived in full only at the very end, after a complete process, rather than at its beginning through a predetermined structure, system, or set of functions. This tonal thinking, in fact, is a product of a very Romantic tradition of associating two opposed musical ideas with two distinct keys, bringing them into conflict, and resolving the conflict through some sort of resolution in the end: either a capricious or glorious triumph of one key and its associated theme (as, for example, the D₆ major conclusion of Chopin’s B₆-minor Scherzo no. 2, op. 31), or a cathartic synthesis of themes and keys (e.g. the coda in Chopin’s Ballade no. 2, op. 38, which reconciles the A minor key with the theme and character of the F-major opening section). A constant wavering from one key to the other, tonal open-endedness, ambiguity of ‘main’ key or progressions which constantly undermine the main key, are phenomena in Romantic composition that have given rise to speculation about ‘tonal pairing’, i.e. a condition where the tonality of a piece is controlled by two keys rather than one, and often a third apart.³⁴

Tonal pairing, however, is also a *verbunkos* idiomatic phenomenon *par excellence*. Yet, despite the sharp juxtaposition of contrasting themes and their corresponding contrasting keys, ‘tonal pairing’ does not fully explain the B♭ major key signature. It is possible that the jagged juxtaposition of keys is also part of a ‘dialectic’ tonal process that is made possible through a unique use of *verbunkos* modes: by the end of this process, thanks to these modes, both keys become interlocked, with one of them enjoying undisputed primacy. This imaginative and novel process is summarised in ex. 4.8 and in the accompanying description below. For the purpose of this presentation, the *andante* will be referred to henceforth as ‘Section A’ and the *allegretto* as ‘section B’.

**Thesis: Section A, bs. 1-16:** The overall ‘B♭ minor’ consists of two main modes, *verbunkos* dorian and the more normative harmonic minor. This section ends in the Picardy third, but at the repeat of Theme I (bs. 9-16) the overall minor-type modality reasserts itself (cf. ex. 4.6).

**Antithesis, stage 1: Section B, bs. 17-38:** At the end of Section A we expect D♭ to revert back to D♭ (the expectation is denoted by a question mark in the example). Instead, as G-ver Theme II enters in b. 17, D♭ is reasserted as the stable note, while D♭ is enharmonically recalibrated as a passing C♯, i.e. ^♮4 of G-ver. Arguably, the D/D♭ diatonic exchange in bs. 8 and 16 means that it is possible to perceive 6 common tones between the ending of Section A (G-min/.har with Picardy third ending) and the beginning of Section B (G-ver). Moreover, from the perspective of efficient voice-leading between structural triads, the ‘Picardy third’ at the end of Section A ensures a smoother transition to the opening G minor chord of Section B. However, Theme B’s contrasting melody, mode, texture and register, dynamics and articulation create, against this, a thematic and rhetorical antithesis. Perhaps this would lead some listeners at this stage to perceive G-ver as a self-enclosed tonal area, disconnected from the previous, or having some kind of chromatic relationship to it, despite their shared diatonic tones. This open question of chromaticism/diatonism aside, the appearance of a new key constitutes an ‘antithesis’ in itself. It sets the dialectic process in motion by challenging the supposed tonic; for how exactly is this new key *subordinate* to the tonal area we have heard in section A?
**Antithesis, stage 2: Section A', bs. 39-53:** It would be far too soon to think of the return of the B₉ minor theme in b. 39 as a tonal closure, let alone the point where the tonal process reaches ‘synthesis’. On the contrary: after a fully-fledged G-major cadence in bs. 37.3-38, Section A intensifies the antithetical juxtaposition of B₇/G, firstly due to the comparative lack of common tones between G major and B₉ minor (only G, A and C, which decidedly makes for a chromatic relationship). Secondly the antithesis is heightened by an even greater rhetorical discontinuity: a long pause is followed by the unprepared return of a chromatically-related theme (there is no modal or pivot-chord preparation), and this time Liszt indicates ‘*forte pesante*’ and doubles the melody at the lowest register of the piano to create the greatest possible contrast with the delicate textures and dynamics of the preceding themes. This startling reprise ends, as expected, in B₉ major chords (b. 46). The second iteration of Theme I, begins, accordingly in the same minor-type modes. But just when we expect another B₉-major closure in b. 54, something wonderful happens instead.

**Synthesis, stage 1: Section A’B’, bs. 54-61:** Instead of the expected major-key cadence, Theme I’s cadence motive appears in the minor, while at the same time the scale motive from Theme II enters in counterpoint, transforming the mode from B₉-min/har to B₇-ver (see ex. 4.9, which quotes the repeat of Section A’B’ in bs. 58-61). The transformation into B₇-ver is easily achieved as a smooth modal-diatonic fluctuation, and this constitutes the first moment in which the formerly contrasting modes, keys and themes have been synthesised.

The repetition of this synthetic Theme I/II in E₇-ver (bs. 55 and 59) recaptures the modal B₉-E₉ progression from Theme I, creating further modal/tonal associations between the previously antithetical sections. But even more significantly, it gives us C₇ and prepares for a smooth transition to the next chord, a ‘verbunkos’ IV₇ (in E₇-ver: E₇-G₇-A₇-C₇), now given prominence and extended to full passages in bs. 56-7 and bs. 60-61 (ex. 4.9). This chord and passage, in turn, create an immediate association with the IV₇ of the original G-ver Theme II (cf. b. 29 in ex. 4.7). However, unlike Theme II, this Hungarian chord motive is not really a IV₇ in a verbunkos minor mode, as there is a sustained pedal on B₉ and no real modulation to an E₇-ver key; rather this chord is a VII₇ in B₇-kal, where C₇...
emphatically leads to the tonic. Overall, we hear a ‘plagal’ progression, I-IV-VII₃-I in a B, whose modal primacy shifts between verbunkos minor and kalindra.

Adding one last touch of dialectic thinking to this passage, Liszt spells the scale-motive from Theme II over this chord as E major (ex. 4.9, bs. 60-61). In a mock bi-tonal standoff, which recalls the previous tonal gap between Section B and Section A’ (the G major ending in b. 38 and B₃ minor beginning in b. 39), Liszt creates a clash between the held B₆ pedal point and the ‘E major’ passage. Similarly, the ‘verbunkos chord’ motive (the E₃-G₆-♯A-C₆ chord against the B₃ pedal), while belonging to the B₃-minor world, is also the enharmonic equivalent of a dominant V in an E major key area (D♯-F♯-♯A-B♭₃). This visual but inaudible synthesis of keys is obviously a message from the composer to the performer and reader rather than the listener, perhaps a kind of musica reservata for the discerning. Liszt’s spelling masks the way in which, if spelled ‘correctly’ (as I do in ex. 4.8), the scale is in perfect accordance with the VII₃ chord. On the other hand, this spelling gives us E♭ and C♯, both of which will be retained for the final stage of the work’s thematic-tonal synthesis.

**Synthesis, completed: Codetta, bs. 62-66:** At this stage the dialectic process reaches its high point: ‘B₃ major’ is revealed as the closing key. Is it merely an associative extension of the previous Picardy-third closures? Arguably, it is more than that: the retention of E♭ and C♯ (=D₃) creates a strong affinity with B₃-ver, while the C♯-B₃ step creates an immediate affinity with G-ver. In fact, B₃-ver/lyd is diatonically-related to G-ver, B₃-ver and the original B₃-ver/dor, creating retro-audible connections with all of them. This, I believe, is the deepest meaning of the title ‘in B₃ major’; it is ‘in’ a major key only in the sense of a dialectic process throughout the piece that leads through modal transformations to the emergence of B₃-ver/lyd, a major-type mode. Ex. 4.10 shows this process in summary. Dotted slurs, which indicate long-distance connection between tones, should be read backwards, from right to left. Arguably, when we have reached the codetta, the D-C♯-B₃ trichord not only evokes the G-ver passage both diatonically and thematically, it also reasserts the final transformation of D₃ into C♯, a shift which first took place in bs. 38-9, between section A and B, and then again before the codetta in bs. 56-7 and 60-61. D₃, which in Theme I appeared only as a transient Picardy third, is asserted as the ‘primary’ modal tone only very gradually and through a series of modal transformations of Theme II: first in G-ver (Section B), then as part of B₃-kal (Section A’B’) and finally in the codetta’s
Bb-lyd. When in the final two bars of the piece, the bokázó cadence from Theme 1 yields to this modal transformation, the tonal-thematic synthesis is complete. The idiomatic Bb major chords that concluded Theme 1 have been transformed into a structural resolution, through the constant reinterpretation of D♭/C# and D, and through the final modal shifts in Section A' B'. This is the tonal-thematic logic that makes the belated arrival of 'Bb major' at the end of the piece so satisfying.

Conventional analysis would read the harmony of this work simply in terms of major-minor tonality, peppered by chromatic relationships and surface modal scales. I hear a tonal process that is much more subtle than this description. There is a novel syntax at work here, I believe, that demands our attention at every stage of this work: an 'emerging' diatonic background that is constantly reshaped to the extent that, when we have finally reached the codetta, the final Bb-lyd subsumes and retro-audibly transforms relationships that were previously heard as chromatic. Still, a healthy dose of formalist scepticism should remain a welcome challenge to such a reading. We should continue to ask: can one really perceive Bb-lyd as the 'controlling tonality' of the piece. Would such a 'key', if it is a key, really create an alternative diatonic space to which all the other keys belong? Is such an analysis viable against the existence of a greater common practice beyond this piece? In the end, the question for each listener boils down to this: does one hear fixed diatonic relationships between G minor and Bb major/minor, where tones such as C# are forever chromatic inflections, or, do the modes which Liszt used have a more permanent existence that effects changes in the perception of diatonism and chromaticism? To my mind, it would be absurd to ignore the notion of a 'common practice' major-minor tonality altogether. Yet, at the same time, it is equally absurd to assume that there ever was a system so stable and neat that it could contain and explain all possibilities of tonal organisation with equal success.

Above all, a transcultural perspective cannot shy away from engaging with conventional theories' built-in resistance to the possibility of deep transculturation. Here we had to imagine 'modal systems' analogous to the well-established 'tonal' ones in order to explore the possibility that non-major-minor modes can reshuffle our perception of common

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35 From this structural vantage point, the initial tonic Bb minor chord can be heard as an enharmonic B-lyd. There is a wider context to this hearing: very often in Liszt's music (especially from later years) this chord will appear in its modal spelling (i.e. ^1-^2-^5 or ^2-^3-^6 in a kalindra context). It is a chord that can offer the illusion of a stable triadic tonic, but in fact demands a resolution in the short or long run (cf. ex. 4.5). We shall see one more example of this in the Csárdás macabre (Chapter 5/IV).
diatonic tones, and therefore destabilise and transform major-minor tonality. There are many other Lisztian forms of ‘transcultural tonality’, however, not all of which are necessarily or centrally about modes. Analysis must follow suit. We shall therefore take a different analytical approach in the next case study that concludes this chapter, one which retains the ‘modal-diatonic’ perspective, yet looks more broadly at the relationship between verbunkos idiom, tonality and structure.

V. Beyond ‘Scales’: The extraordinary finale from Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6

The men … started again with furious impulse the spurred rhythms of their Frischka [sic], which soon rose to a frenzy of exaltation reaching delirium, and which finally appeared to reproduce that vertiginous, convulsive and breathless whirling, that is the high point of the dervish’s ecstasy.

- Franz Liszt [probably], recalling his first visit to a Romani encampment in 1840

The structure of the fourth and last movement of Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 (RH6, 1851/3) is very possibly a composed-out impression of a performance practice like the one described in the above quote. On the face of it, this movement is almost brutal in its simplicity and far too ‘naïve’ to be considered as a Zukunftswerk, i.e. as a work that was seriously intended to show new compositional possibilities. However, this first impression may change once the obligatory criteria of chromaticism, Teutonic expression and other preconceptions are put aside, and once one looks at how this structure truly challenges contemporaneous tonal practices. In fact, this finale, whose first version dates back

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36 My translation from Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie (1859), 167:

« Les hommes ... recommençaient avec une furie d'entrainement les rythmes éperonnés de leurs Frischka, qui bientôt montaient à une frénésie d'exaltation, arrivaient au délire, et semblaient enfin reproduire ce tournoiement vertigineux, convulsif, anhéleux, qui est le point culminant de l'extase du derviche. »
probably to 1840, could be described as vintage 1840s *verbunkos* idiom at its most minimalist and primitivist.  

At a most intuitive level we hear the same melody repeated *eleven* times in two keys, $B_\flat$ major and $D_{-har/maj}$, and intensified through a continuous textural, rhythmic and dynamic crescendo till it reaches a boiling point that ends the piece. An overview of how this overall 'idiomatic crescendo' runs through the eleven repetitions is given in Figure 4.1 on p. 194. The phrases, which are numbered 1-11, are grouped into four sections: S1, S2, S3 and S4. Each one of the first three sections (S1, S2 and S3) consist of three iterations of the phrase, twice in $B_\flat$ and once in D. Section 4 (S4) consists only of two phrases in $B_\flat$, the last of which is elided with a concluding section. Keys are indicated in Figure 4.1 by the colour shadings around the running numbers of the eleven phrases; green indicates $B_\flat$ and yellow D.

Under this circular or spiral tonal structure runs a continuous idiomatic intensification, part of which is directly communicated by the markings in the score, quoted in Figure 4.1 on the left (e.g. *sempre dolce*, *più animato*, etc.). What we hear, in the first place, is a gradual widening of the registral range of both melody and accompaniment, within each section and throughout the movement. This is shown in the figure by the horizontal lines (light brown lines for melody and dark brown for accompaniment) which initially cover the middle register of the piano, from $B_\flat3$ to $F5$ (where middle C = C4), and gradually widen until they cover almost its entire gamut, from $E1$ to $F7/G_b7$. Besides this process of expanding range, rhythmic diminution (indicated in the figure below by the diffused line) and a slow and steady accelerando intensify throughout the movement from the fourth phrase (P4) on. A third parameter of development is dynamics: a long-range increase from *pp* to *fff* stretches from the introduction to phrase 1 to the conclusion of phrase 11. Fourth, the texture becomes increasingly thicker and rhythmically more intensive through octave doubling in Phrase 2 (P2), diminution (P4), addition of chords to the melodic line (P7),

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37 The movement was originally the fast-tempo *finale* from the *Magyar Dalok* no. 11 (MD11; probably composed in 1840 and published in 1843), where, as I mentioned before, it followed an *andante sostenuto* movement which later became RH3 (see p. 187). The same finale became a few years later part of a multi-movement work known as *Ungarische Nationalmelodien* (S243, published 1843 and 1846; this work is associated with but not part of the *Magyar Dalok* collection). The new 'suite' recycled MD nos. 5, 4 and 11, in that order, from no. 11 Liszt only took the aforementioned *finale*. Liszt later recomposed this suite into the more familiar Rhapsody no. 6, first published in 1851.
arpeggios and bass octaves and chords (P9), full-textured accompaniment (P10), double-octave unison (P11, which recalls for a moment the initial registral range), and the climatic conclusion that fills the entire E1-G67 gamut with octaves and chords.

![Figure 4.1: A representation of the finale's ‘idiomatic crescendo’](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-103</td>
<td>Allegro, piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104-111</td>
<td>sempre dolce, leggermente a sordino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112-119</td>
<td>piano dolce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-126</td>
<td>(\text{vacillating cadence: poco calando} / \text{smorzando})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127-135</td>
<td>(\text{poco a poco} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136-142</td>
<td>(\text{più animato, piano} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143-150</td>
<td>(\text{crescendo on repeated notes})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-163</td>
<td>(\text{vacillating cadence: cresc. / più cresc. / rinforzando molto})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164-171</td>
<td>forte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172-179</td>
<td>(\text{thicker bass and chords})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-187</td>
<td>(\text{arpeggios, further diminution (triplets)})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188-194</td>
<td>(\text{melody in bass, diminution})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195-202</td>
<td>(\text{forte, sempre f} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203-208</td>
<td>(\text{melody in double octaves (unisons)})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**
- **Bb major** upper part, rhythmic diminution (with syncopated accents)
- **D harmonic major** lower part
It could be argued, then, that the overall compositional process or ‘idea’ consists of an overarching idiomatic crescendo, a static thematic repetition, and a non-functional and ‘pendular’ B♭/D-major tonal structure. Although such a compositional idea may appear familiar today through knowledge of such pieces as Bolero, certain movements from the Rites of Spring and later techniques of minimalism, for its own time it displays a fresh, fascinating and provocative compositional thought that foreshadows primitivist fashions in the twentieth century. And there is very little doubt that here this kind of modernism is heavily influenced by Romani music making.

A closer reading of the score will reveal that the transcultural influence on the content and structure of the movement amounts to more than just a general impression of a certain performance practice. Ex. 4.11, which quotes in summary a representative slice of the piece from S1, allows us to see at least eight verbunkos elements in this work that are readily perceived on its surface: (1) characteristic short-long-short rhythms, (2) percussive imitation of the cimbalom, (3) basso ostinato – in effect perpetual pedal points – in both B♭ and D key areas, (4) characteristic melodic turns that embellish three structural-melodic notes in both B♭ and D, and (5) idiomatic modal intervals in the D major area, right from the beginning of P3 (highlighted below). Moreover, throughout this section and the rest of the movement we can see (6) repetition at every level, which defines the ‘minimalist’ content of the movement: section, phrase, subphrase (e.g. odd-numbered bars rhyme with each other, as do even-numbered bars), motive (decorative scales and turns), and even single notes (e.g. the syncopated reiteration of D in bs. 119-126). There are also several repetitions of the closing cadences from b. 119 on, which break in b. 124 into a constant vacillation between B minor and B♭ major on every beat. This (7) ‘vacillating’ cadence with its (8) gruff parallel-fifth drones projects the deeper structure of the ‘pendular’ B♭-D tonal structure; it performs an important structural link between the keys, as we shall soon see, and it is also an important point of idiomatic intensification in every section, as Figure 4.1 shows (see text on the right-hand side column).

However, beyond these general observations of idiomatic features, the question is whether anything can be said about the structure and its relationship to the verbunkos idiom from a harmonic perspective. Is the constant vacillation between keys a simple case of unprepared modulations between equal tonal centres, constantly vying for control, or is there a deeper
tonal process that establishes B♭ as the sole tonic key? I believe that despite the constant pendular motion and lack of functional or conventional progressions between these keys, most listeners would intuitively hear B♭ as the controlling tonic. The explanation could go further than a simple matter of B♭ major’s strategic placement at the beginning of each section and the close of the entire movement. I hear a deeper, longer-range and indeed, fascinating tonal process that asserts the subservience of D in stages, through the various repetitions of the four sections. This tonal process, moreover, runs parallel to the idiomatic crescendo outlined in Figure 4.1 and completely relies on some of the topoi mentioned before. It is, in other words, part of the greater structure and compositional idea.

Can conventional tonal theory help in illustrating such a structure? How exactly does ‘D major’, or rather D-har/maj, become subsumed in B♭ in stages? How does this process of subsumption then follow the idiomatic crescendo? An initial methodological problem arises from these questions: just as conventional style analysis would not go much into a close reading of ‘the structure’, conventional tonal analysis would not stray much into the transcultural unknown. Moreover, we may not get a very good picture of what is actually interesting about this harmony. An analysis of function, for example, would simply show that, first, within their own tonal boundaries, the progressions in B♭ major and D major are quite ‘elementary’. To use the common nomenclature of functional theory, they comprise of a T-D-T exchange in B♭, underpinned by tonic pedal point; and a ‘classical’ T-SD-D-T cycle (i.e. an authentic cadence in D major: I − II♭ − V7 − I), underpinned by a dominant pedal point. Secondly, the relationship between the two keys would be shown to be quite straightforward. ‘D major’ would be III♭ of B♭ and functions as a substitute tonic, in effect as a chromatic extension of the tonic B♭, where the note F is displaced by F♯. A functional reading of the ‘vacillating cadence’ will reveal that in the B minor – B♭ minor chordal exchange, the B minor is an enharmonic pivot chord, VI of D = Ⅶ♭ of B♭, i.e. the equivalent of a C♭ minor chord which finally leads to the B♭ major resolution. This shows us that there is no real dominant function that leads back to the tonic key, and gives the impression of a somewhat static harmony, deficient, overall, in a structural dominant drive.

There are important details missing from this ‘functional’ perspective. The sudden transition from B♭ to D, for example, is a typical style hongrois transposition operation: it is not mediated by a pivot chord or any preparatory progression (see ex. 4.11, bs. 111-113).
Nevertheless, it is not a 'transposition operation' in the conventional sense of the word: B♭ major does not map itself into D major but into D-har/maj which means five common tones retained between the keys instead of four, as the primary sixth degree of D-har/maj is B♭ rather than B♮. In addition, the moment of transition (bs. 111.4-113, highlighted in ex. 4.11) gives us F♮ and E♭ in the melody, which, for a fugitive moment, creates six common tones between the keys, i.e. an exceedingly smooth transition between the first and third degrees. Does the 'D major' tonal area, then, relate to B♭ diatonically? Taking into consideration the smooth transition and retention of tones between the keys, and the fact that the only appearance of III is in the form of a D-major chord, the answer depends on what one wishes to perceive. Unless one is truly committed to hearing music through a theory that only recognises common-practice diatonism/chromaticism, there is scope for an alternative hearing.

We should consider, in this respect, what Schenkerian theory can reveal or conceal, since that theory has had the greatest influence on the field of tonal analysis in the past three decades. A Schenkerian analysis of this movement was actually offered by David Allan Damschroder, as part of his reading of the entire rhapsody. Interestingly, Damschroder goes against Schenker in bringing Liszt's 'Music of the Future' into the fold, and even showing that it is based on firm structural-diatonic principles (from a Schenkerian point of view). He also goes against the received wisdom of excluding the rhapsodies from serious analytical consideration. His analysis, to make a very brief summary, shows that the I-III♯-V-I movement reflects the (truncated) iIII-V-I structure of the rhapsody as a whole, and that in the finale, a structural melodic F♭ note (which binds the entire rhapsody) is occasionally displaced by F♯, thus making the relationship between B♭ and D major possible. This is a valid reading. Yet, as it is inherently unresponsive to vernacular styles and alternative tonal practices, I do not think that Schenkerian theory can do much, or at least enough justice to the truly innovative aspect of this movement. Applying a I-III♯-V-I Ursatz to this movement does not flatter Liszt. Judge it against something like Beethoven's piano sonata in C major op. 53 ('Waldstein'): the Ursatz is the same, yet it branches out through a complex harmony and texture that puts Liszt's 'naïve' finale to shame. There

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really is nothing much beyond I and III, one melody, two keys, simple textures (mostly) and 'countless' (actually eleven) repetitions. Moreover, since I-III# was already a standard procedure for Beethoven and Schubert, the finale itself (never mind its more sophisticated relationship with the other movements) can hardly be called 'innovative' or claim a place in Liszt's Zukunftsmusik pantheon. That said, Schenkerian analytical techniques can provide us with many insights, if we are not too much bound by articles of faith about 'tonality'. I would like to demonstrate both these insights and problems in my own Schenkerian reading of the movement, which partly follows Damschroder's (ex. 4.12).

Ex. 4.12 intentionally concentrates on some events in S1, yet presents in summary all the repetitions as they appear. Ps represent phrases, thus P1 stands for 'phrase 1'. The first modulation occurs in P3: it is, according to Schenkerian reading, a classic $V_4^{5}$, i.e. a prolongation of V, where the minor chord G-B, -D-Eb against the bass A, will be simply read as passing tones between the 5 neighbour notes and the main dominant chord. In other words, this dissonant '9th chord' is the most decorative of all the chords in the D major phrase: it may be a beautiful surface feature (that is a matter of taste), but it is structurally redundant (that is a fact). This reading also reveals that the cadence which vacillates between Bb and D major at the end of P3 is quite sophisticated: Liszt inverts an inner cadential line, 6-66-5, to the bass, and then enharmonically reinterprets Bb-F# as the lower second degree of C6-G6 so that we slip back into that key by the time S2 begins. The keys are all this time connected by an overarching $^3$. Several repetitions ensue, in which the $^3$ is prolonged. The bass is divided into a repeated I-III, and the Ursatz as a whole comes to its logical conclusion only when in bs. 209-12 a structural V leads to I. This particular model is called third partitions: I progresses to III, after which the same progression can be repeated or varied as many times as the composer wishes; however at some point a structural V will bring the entire movement or work to a tonal closure, and so the whole Ursatz is predetermined by a dominant-tonic drive. Note that this reading is not responsive to repetitions or idiomatic development: Liszt could repeat his phrases three or thirty times with countless figurative elaborations, and the basic tonal structure would still be the same.

Although this reading has its own logic, I would like to argue next that this 'logic', which may be perfect for many works of a certain kind, rather misses the point in this one. That
this kind of reading denudes the work of its ‘cultural depth’ goes without saying. The point I would like to raise, though, is that this lack of depth also suppresses a fascinating transcultural tonality. This is a case where a theoretical approach that was designed to read a very different kind of ‘depth’ within a significantly different kind of cultural and musical context, actually flattens the temporal depth of this movement’s tonality, and more specifically, completely misses the becoming rather than being of Bb major as the tonic. Furthermore, its exclusive focus on pitch means that it can never show us how this becoming corresponds to the ‘idiomatic crescendo’. There are different aspects to this suppression: presuppositions about the hierarchy of neighbour and passing notes may actually obscure other kinds of subtle tonal connections; or, the default disregard for the idiomatic build up in the piece; or finally, presuppositions about what keys are, how they ‘unfold’, and how they relate to each other against an immutable and eternal diatonic background.

Even before we examine the verbunkos idiom’s role more closely (although I shall return to allude to ‘D major’ as D-har/maj), it is possible to say that the tonal hierarchy between the two keys is in a constant flux, even if all Liszt does, apparently, is repeat the themes. This is observable even at the very beginning. After an initially clear Bb major tonic in P1 and P2, a strong dominant drive towards D-har/maj, enhanced by the pedal bass A, may momentarily destabilise Bb major’s control: when we get to the end of P3, and hear the repeated 6-6s-5 cadential line in bs. 120-21, we may well ask whether the Bb major melody we heard was actually a prolonged VI that led to the tonic key, D-har/maj (ex. 4.13). This hearing is enhanced by the fact that in D-har/maj Bb major would be the prolonged diatonic VI (the F#/F♯ is a diatonic-modal variant in this constellation). Ex. 4.13 represents a possible perception through time. Therefore white notes are used to indicate the perception of D as the tonic only towards the end of P3 (from b. 119). The seemingly capricious and

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39 Where D-har/maj is the primary mode, F♯ would be an inbuilt modal variant for its VI, Bb-D-F, in order to avoid an augmented chord and make possible its prolongation and function as submediant. This is analogous, as I have argued in Part III, to how variants are built into the minor mode to achieve different functions (the relative major would require the natural minor, the dominant would require the harmonic variant, etc.).

40 This is a possible interpretation rather than a universal prescription, yet it is not arbitrary or lacking in historical context. Liszt liked to begin works on the sixth degree, especially in verbunkos-idiomatic contexts (the succession of modal scales on G in the B minor piano sonata is a famous example); or indeed begin a rhapsodic movement on one of the subdominant degrees (see for example how the final A minor movement in RH13 begins with a prolonged D minor vivace passage, bs. 103-26).
unprepared reappearance of B₆ in S2 (b. 127) overturns this perception, however: therefore, another white note indicates B₇-major’s emergent tonal significance. Within this limited context it is possible to argue for a ‘double-tonic’ reading or ‘tonal pairing’.

There is something altogether strange about the supposed primacy of B₇ major: while D-har/maj major is secured through clear progressions and two emphatic cadences, B₆ major seems to materialise very tenuously and quite improbably ‘out of’ D-har/maj. It will be recalled from ex. 4.12, that a segment of the inner cadential line – B₇-B₆ – is texturally inverted so that these notes appear in the bass. The ‘stylistic’ raison d’être for this odd textural projection is that we get to hear gruff drones in parallel fifths (B₇-F♯/B₆-F♯), especially in the ‘vacillating cadence’ (bs. 124-26) where these fifths fail to resolve in D, yet procrastinate before reaching B₇, as if through caprice.

We should look at this ‘caprice’ a little more closely. Beyond mere idiomatic ‘repetitiveness’ and a sonorous imitation of drones, there could be a compositional reason for the number of times this cadence repeats, and a compositional purpose for its parallel fifths. The notes which play a part in the vacillating cadence, A, B₃, B₇, D, F₇, F#, form a hexachord which can be tonally interpreted both in D and in B₇ (ex. 4.14a). The fact that this hexachord is constructed almost symmetrically around D is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it is another instance of a monotertial relationship, which in Liszt’s music often has a kalindra context, as it does here. The B minor – B₇ major cadence is therefore a bold transcultural reinterpretation of the cliché 6-6₃-5 cadential line: it ‘becomes’ a verbunkos cadence through a kalindra-based relationship between 1-3-5 (B₇ major) and 2-3-6, enharmonically spelled as a B minor chord. The enharmonic spelling is suggestive of a modal fusion of two ‘common practice’ key areas: B₇ major with two flats, and D major with two sharps. It is, in fact one manifestation of the hypothetical and ‘hybridic’ key signature which I presented in Part III (cf. ex. 4.3b). The vacillating cadence, then, strategically bridges the keys by neutralising their tonal pull on the one hand (the tonal

41 The D-har/maj melody has, moreover, a prominent G-B₇-D-E chord against the A bass which modally links it with the B₇ major key. This is part of the overall modality of the movement that creates subtle connections between the keys and which even helps to settle their respective hierarchy. From this point of view, it is questionable whether this chord is structurally so redundant after all (see p. 198 and the way this decorative acciaccatura (G minor chord against A-E fifth) is marginalised in the Schenkerian reading in ex. 4.12; cf. the prominence it is given in ex. 4.16).
resolution can go both ways, or the cadence can continue revolving around itself), and by merging them together through common tones. It even suggests that we can hear a descending 6-66-5 line in both keys, especially when we start hearing, after one or more repetitions, F#-Fý as 6-5 in Bb major. Yet there is one crucial difference (ex. 4.14b). In D, the last note of the cadential line is never reached (represented in ex. 4.14b as 6-66-' or 'Bb-Bb-'), which keeps the whole key at bay, while in Bb only the beginning will be truncated (-6b-5 or /-G-F) which still allows a comfortable resolution in Bb major. This, despite the apparent tonal symmetry, inevitably tips the balance in favour of Bb major.

This is also where the ostensibly ‘crude’ texture of parallel fifths assumes its paramount compositional importance, since its constant touching on Bb in the bass prompts the eventual emergence of a tonic Bb by virtue of ‘being there’: we realise it has been there all along, an enigmatic spectre within D, even while D was asserting its primacy in its closing cadences in bs. 120-23. The question is: when does one stop hearing this truncated line in D and start hearing it in Bb (ex. 4.14b)? This question itself raises the compositional significance of the (precisely) three repetitions of the vacillating cadence. Perhaps at first we are still in D (b. 124), but after Bb returns in b. 127, we retro-audibly perceive the last sounding of this cadence (b. 126) to be in Bb. It is also possible that somewhere in the middle (b. 125) the tonal orientation is completely undetermined. I have accordingly spelled the notes of this cadence according to their tonal affiliation, retaining Liszt’s ambiguous ‘trans-tonal’ spelling for the undecided middle vacillation. Of course, this is only a very schematic interpretation, but it also shows how this particular number of repetitions is conducive to a perfect ambivalence. That there is nevertheless no definite answer to when the shift actually occurs in the perception of individual listeners is precisely what makes the vacillating cadence such a fascinating detail and the whole tonal process it engenders exquisitely subtle.

After this delicate tipping point, Bb major resumes its tonic status in S2, yet its claim for overall primacy is still not altogether safe. In P6 the same pedal point on A pulls us back to D-har/maj, and the closing cadences in D celebrate its arrival through a radical expansion of the piano register (ex. 4.15a; cf. P6 in Figure 4.1). Moreover, the vacillating cadence has now tripled its length – or more, if one is inclined to prolong b. 163 bis a piacere (see bs. 155-163) – and it stalls the return of Bb, as if D were, after all, our tonal goal. The tonal
ambiguity is over, however, in b. 162, as the vacillating cadence shrinks to trill-like double octaves which oscillate between F♯ and F♭, reinforcing the 6-6-5 line in B♭.

After a lengthy vacillation and rising temperatures in dynamics, texture and tempo, S3 brings back the B♭ tonic with a vengeance. By now D is no longer heard as a serious contender for tonal hegemony. As my final graphs in ex. 4.16 shows, this changed position is caused by several factors. First, this being the third section, we fully expect a return to B♭, and the arrival and passing of D sounds relatively ‘accelerated’. It is also literally and rhetorically accelerated through rhythmic diminution (indicated by tremolo signs), crescendo, and finally stringendo in the vacillating cadence. Second, in P9 the texture is inverted: the melody is projected to the deep bass and we no longer hear the same sustained dominant drive over a pedal point. Third, the vacillating cadence this time is very curt – only three repetitions in a much faster tempo (cf. ex. 4.15b). Unlike the two previous occurrences of this cadence, the controlling tonality is not in doubt at any stage here, which is why the arrows in my graph point with certainty to the final reassertion of B♭ in P10 (S4). Section 4 now closes the entire tonal structure in a frenzied presto forward motion, with one final and telling comment on the vacillating cadence in bs. 213-16: the full 6-6-6-5 cadential line now re-emerges complete and in the ‘correct’ tonal spelling, F-G♭-F-G♭-F (cf. ex. 4.15c).

The vacillating cadence, then, amounts to much more than a recurring foreground event in the movement. With each of its appearances it defines the structure. Its first modest appearance in S1 and subsequent idiomatic intensification in S2 through S4, tallies with the idiomatic crescendo. But most tellingly of all, it plays a defining role in the gradual subsumption of D, from serving as an ambivalent pivot in S1 that leads to B♭ in a surprising way, through a prolonged tonal ambiguity in S2 that threatens to undermine B♭’s primacy once more, to a clearer B♭ directionality in S3 and a triumphant transformation into a B♭ event in S4. Thus by taking into consideration its four appearances and their changing contexts, one can see how these crude parallel fifths resonate structurally with the entire tonal process and compositional idea.

Ex. 4.16 suggests a dynamic background where an overarching ‘idiomatic crescendo’ grows in tandem with the gradual subsumption of D and assertion of B♭, and where all this
linear development is overlaid with motivic, idiomatic and tonal cycles. It is a background, moreover, that is impossible to perceive without a certain awareness of the verbunkos idiom, namely the role of pedal points, the modally-based common tones, the pendular motion between keys, the (kalindra-based and monotertial) vacillating cadences (!), the parallel fifths, the profuse repetitions and lastly, the overarching 'idiomatic crescendo'.

**VI. Analysis in Pursuit of an Unacknowledged Past**

One cannot be too careful about exaggerating the importance of 'transcultural influence' in analysis, especially where transcultural elements interact with Western practices in ways that blur cultural distinctions, as, clearly, in the case of harmony, form, counterpoint, thematic work, and other 'formal' aspects. Any lack of discrimination or familiarity with the insights and restrictions of both analytical disciplines and culture studies can lead to rash and false conclusions. It is likely I have occasionally overstepped the mark myself. Nevertheless, against the danger of inflating superficial exoticisms as important 'transcultural influence', or confusing 'Western' practices with verbunkos ones, it would still be worthwhile to look for ways in which Western thinking has been shaped from the 'outside' rather than fall back on convenient 'systemic' thinking, especially when musical instincts and cultural knowledge militate against such conveniences.

Thus while it could be argued, for example, that the all-important and subtle voice-leading in the sixth rhapsody's finale is not something Liszt learned from Roma musicians, it should also be noted that this voice-leading capitalises on textures (parallelisms and drones) taken directly from verbunkos practices and that, moreover, it serves a structural idea that is taken directly from the world of verbunkos. Would Liszt have arrived at the same tonal effect his voice-leading generates without this transcultural influence? Similarly, the whole concept of the piece would be unthinkable without verbunkos, as would be its particular sonic quality, the quality of transition between keys which is predicated on their common modal tones, and indeed, the overall tonal process. By this I am not proposing (rather absurdly, I should think) that Liszt's composition has become non-Western, or that the verbunkos idiom replaces or overtakes what we perceive as
‘Western’ nineteenth-century composition; but sometimes the overall compositional result is sufficiently out of the ordinary to warrant special attention – cultural, historical and analytical. Pendular tonality and unprepared key shifts, heated virtuosity and repetitiveness are mixed with a calculated, precise and overarching process: they form a unique mixture that will not be found either in the original verbunkos or in other contemporaneous styles in Western music, and that surely is part of what makes this hybridic music interesting, innovative and unique.

The fact that works such as RH3 and RH6 can be explained by Schenkerian and other tonal theories may be the reason why the tonal aspect is not even considered to be part of the verbunkos idiom. I can only suggest here that in the pursuit of this unacknowledged strand of modernism and transculturation in Liszt’s music, a perspective that selects, combines and modifies style analysis and music analysis methodologies may add insights that were hitherto impossible due to discursive and disciplinary divides. Nevertheless, this chapter did not advocate or aim for an alternative theory. Such a ‘theory’ of transcultural music may prove to be counterproductive in an area where the verbunkos idiom may have impacted on composers’ works in different ways (as, for example, my comparative analysis in Chapter 3/V has shown), where there are many other transcultural influences, and where almost each work poses a new question for analysts. Therefore, the onus of showing what ‘transculturation’ or ‘alternative practices’ mean, and the manner of showing it, would always be on the analyst.

I have so far concentrated on works with a prominent verbunkos idiom and consciously avoided dealing with cases where its traces are not so obvious. That can be a challenge for a separate study. In the final chapter of this thesis, however, we should look more closely at one more aspect of the idiom’s exclusion from grand narratives of ‘modernism’: namely, how this exclusion becomes even more acute when these narratives are applied, both in historiography and analysis, to Liszt’s works from the 1870 onwards; or in other words, how the reputation of these ‘late works’ for post-tonal harmony excludes the idiom from readings of their interesting ‘tonality’ and ‘modernism’. On the evidence of what we have seen so far, we should suspect that the old Liszt, like the young, did not make such differentiations and exclusions.
Chapter 5:

The Verbunkos Idiom in Liszt's Late Works

I. Introduction

Making sense of the verbunkos idiom in the last phase of Liszt's creativity, the period of his fabled 'late works' (ca. 1870-86) is a fraught matter – particularly when trying to understand its historical and compositional significance. To start with, the imposing idea of 'late works' that are 'ahead of their time' and the expectations raised by research that highlights their modernism do not invite this kind of investigation. Inasmuch as the verbunkos idiom, for all the reasons discussed so far, is not often connected with modernist trends in the nineteenth century, it becomes especially difficult to make such connections in music that is famous for presaging the twentieth century. In more concrete terms, the existing body of research into Liszt's late works pulls us away from such questions into other analytical issues and, in some cases at least, writers have even explicitly argued against making such stylistic-analytical connections.¹

These discursive problems, which I shall discuss in more detail in the second part of this chapter, are only the initial hurdles. Once one gets past them, i.e. when it becomes clear that the reasons against researching in this direction are not good enough despite their weight of scholarly authority, there is the question of methodology. Understanding the connection between Liszt's modernism and the verbunkos idiom chiefly through his use of exotic scales is a legacy of Hungarian Liszt scholarship that should be re-examined for both the opportunities it offers (some of which were missed) and the limitations, on the

¹ See Alan Forte's argument, in this chapter, pp. 213-214.
other hand, it imposes. Other topoi have to be examined, and perhaps redefined if the music demands it, and their relationship to characteristic stylistic detail in Liszt’s late works has to be clarified. And a musical-analytical perspective into the matter would require a special focus on harmonic and structural topoi and their interaction with Liszt’s late harmonic practices. This preliminary theoretical examination of the ‘late’ verbunkos idiom (which in this chapter forms Part III) prepares us for the analytical fourth part, where I will take one of Liszt’s last large-form works, the Csárdás macabre, and explore its verbunkos idiom, with particular emphasis on its interaction with the compositional design and the tonal process. And in the Part VI I will offer conclusions, some strong and some tentative, as well as suggestions for future research.

II. Dissonant Histories: style hongrois, the ‘late works’ ethos, and the idea of ‘avant-garde’

It will be recalled from Chapter 1 that Zoltán Gárdonyi had already given us a glimpse of the extent of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom back in his foundational Die ungarischen Stileigentümlichkeiten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts (1931). Not only did he discuss many works that were hardly known at the time, and are still quite unfamiliar today, he also laid down the general principle that would guide all subsequent research into the connection between the idiom and Liszt’s modernism: namely, that the idiom had lost its concrete affinity to verbunkos and became abstracted. According to Gárdonyi, Liszt found, around the 1870s, that a token representation of Hungarianisms was an artistic dead-end, and therefore he turned to abstraction, concentrating most of all on drawing innovative chords and chromatic and enharmonic relationships from the verbunkos minor. Crucially, treating the scale as a collection of pitches devoid of fixed hierarchy meant that the mode lost its intervallic ‘ethos’; its characteristic augmented seconds became equivalent to minor thirds. Thus ‘progress’ was inextricable from a departure from a more ‘public’ verbunkos idiom into a private one, which is to say, from

2 See Chapter 1/III.
a more commonplace and narrowly nationalist style to a highly artistic and universal one. This narrative of development from tradition to modernism, from nationalism to the universal, and from the public sphere to the private, and its corresponding focus on Liszt’s treatment of the verbunkos minor (and sometimes, though rarely, other scales), caught the imagination of Gärdonyi’s contemporaries in Hungary. It spawned further research into modernist and ‘universal’ aspects of Liszt’s verbunkos idiom, which either focused on Liszt’s unusual use of verbunkos-related pitch collections and/or tried to minimise the verbunkos element in his verbunkos idiom (notably Szabolcsi’s reinvention of Liszt as an ‘East European’ composer).

It is an interesting narrative, and there are plenty of works from Liszt’s last fifteen years that show how he manipulates verbunkos modes. It is perhaps too narrow in that it does not acknowledge that all these forms of abstraction were already nascent in the Magyar Dalok and Rhapsodies. And it separates the ‘abstract’ from the ‘concrete’ rather rigidly, whereas there are plenty of works up to Liszt’s final year that happily synthesise the concrete and the abstract, the old and the new – as we shall see. This narrative, then, does not consider that for Liszt the ‘development’ of the verbunkos idiom took many different routes, only one of which was towards tonal ambiguity and greater dissonance. Ultimately, it is a story that caters to a widespread understanding of what ‘modernism’ in music means from a defensive position (a position familiar to many Lisztians, one should add): it pre-empts knee-jerk rejections of the idiom’s modernist aspects by claiming that it has transcended the traditional and the concrete to become compatible with the particularly harmonic subtleties and complexities of modern music. But despite this careful alignment with dominant narratives of modernism, on the whole, the case for Liszt’s verbunkos idiom in his late works has failed.

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3 Gärdonyi, Le style Hongrois, 106-7.
4 See Chapter 1/IV.
By ‘failed’ I mean, of course, that it never became an influential perspective outside of Hungary, and even in Hungary it gradually waned.\(^5\) To understand why this marginalisation took place in the context of the late works in particular, we have to consider the intellectual climate created by the two main phases of analytical research into this oeuvre. The first phase, which was mainly concerned with highlighting particular stylistic details, came in the 1950s, when more late Liszt works were being published for the first time, or being republished after having long sunk into oblivion. This happened against the ascendency of Darmstadt, serialism and the aesthetics and ideology of the avant-garde, and so it was with understandable enthusiasm that prominent Lisztians such as Humphrey Searle, Zoltán Gárdonyi, Serge Gut and Alan Walker pointed to certain features in these works as a kind of vindication of Liszt’s true historical stature.\(^6\) The music seemed to justify the title ‘late works’ in an especially resonant and meaningful way. As Carl Dahlhaus reminds us, ‘late works’, of the kind written by Bach Beethoven and Liszt,

... do not belong, in terms of either cultural or musical history, to the era in which chronology placed them, yet they do not find spiritual homes in other eras... The correlative of the chronological ‘homelessness’ of late works is an anticipatory modernity. Yet they do not establish a direct tradition, of which they could be said to be the earliest examples, hence they are not progressive in the usual sense of the word ... the form their influence takes is not so much that they lay a foundation for later works, as that they are validated by later developments which they have done little or nothing to directly generate.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) By 1981, for example, it was possible for Sándor Kovács to criticise Bárdos, Gárdonyi and Szabolcsi for their attention to modernist detail, and attack the fascination with the ‘so-called Gypsy scale’ in particular as a methodological error and a misreading of history. See Sándor Kovács, ‘Formalprinzipien und Ungarische Stileigentümlichkeiten in den Spätwerken von Liszt,’ in: Liszt-Studien 2, ed. Serge Gut (Musikverlag Emil Katzbichler, 1981), 114-22.


And this fits perfectly with the idea of an enlightened posterity which Liszt himself longed for in his late years:

Perhaps [prejudices, ineptitudes and conservatism] will gradually diminish, and perhaps, too, I shall then find my public. I am not seeking it, and have little time to wait for it.

- Liszt, 1867

My sole musical ambition has been, and will be, to hurl my spear into the undefined void of the future ... So long as this spear be of good quality and fall not back to the earth, the rest matters not in the least!

- Liszt, 1874

... the time will indeed come when my works will be appreciated. For me, however, it will be too late – for I shall no longer be amongst you.

- Liszt, 1885, quoted by his student August Stradal

It would seem from all of this that a mythology of ‘late works’ would have sprung up in any case. The music, of course, makes it all the more potent. It is indeed an imaginative and powerful narrative, almost biblical in its suggestion of prophecy, sacrifice and resurrection. It has inspired analyses, performances and even compositions (e.g. John Adams’ ‘Black Gondola’, based on Liszt’s La lagubre gondola). Yet from a strictly historical point of view this narrative comes dangerously close to simplifying the diversity and complexity of this oeuvre by its ‘futurism’, i.e. by directing us to those aspects that were supposedly ‘validated by later developments’ in composition. When one looks at the first phase of Liszt studies dedicated to this oeuvre, which I nicknamed ‘the 1950s approach’, one clearly sees the influence of these ‘validating’ future developments on how Liszt’s music is presented. If the master-narrative of modernism at

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8 Williams, A Portrait of Liszt, 416
9 In a letter to Princess Carolyne (February 9, 1874); quoted in ibid., 505.
10 Ibid., 675
the time instructed us that modernism equals the end of tonality, the decline of triadic sonorities, the reign of dissonance, and a certain dryness or terseness of expression (this would particularly fit into generally anti-Romantic and more specifically neo-classical aesthetics), then it was precisely these aspects of Liszt's music that were put on display, while others were ignored. For example, Searle quotes the beginning of *Ossa Arida* with its impressive sonority of stacked-up thirds, but there is no mention of the fact that the rest of the piece is harmonically rather more 'conventional' nor any attempt to explain how this beginning relates to the rest of the work. This can only be because from an 1850s perspective such things appeared to be irreconcilable, a heterogeneous mixture of convention and avant-garde that had to be somewhat concealed in order to sustain Liszt's 'modernist rehabilitation'.

It is interesting to note that Liszt's dance music from this period, rhythmically vital, energetic in character and often (but not always) tonally clearer, although not wholly neglected from these accounts, is overshadowed by a core repertoire of works and passages that, like *Ossa Arida*, are slow-moving, atmospheric, rhythmically and tonally abstract. It is as if a 'late work' ethos demanded a fitting musical portrait. Of course, against the prevailing artistic and academic climate of the mid-twentieth century, the verbunkos idiom did seem an odd presence. How could the late works, that rarefied realm of personal agony and transcendence, of artistic isolation and clairvoyance, be rudely intruded upon by something so unsophisticated and vulgar? It was incompatible with the avant-garde chic of the late works that Lisztians sought to emphasise. The Hungarian scholarly solution—a harmony based on abstracted verbunkos scales—was still too close to earthy traditions for comfort. Even Lajos Bárdos who, it will be recalled, was the first to point towards a concrete connection between these scales and Liszt's harmony (in "Liszt's Folk Music Scales", 1968), retracted the 'Hungarian' perspective eight years later, when he published a book that sought to compound all the features which made Liszt a Zukunftsmusiker. Outside Hungary, the tradition of presenting the late works as

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11 I am referring to the studies cited in footnote 6.

a collection of isolated modernist features had very little room for the *verbunkos* idiom—it would always be a suspect modernist feature, and if the idea of an abstracted scale got a mention, it was usually in passing.\(^{13}\)

But in the first phase of musicological studies there was at least some discussion of the *verbunkos* idiom, however marginal. The second, formalist phase, which started in the mid-1970s, was primarily interested in cracking the tonal-syntactical code of the late works using state-of-the-art structural analysis.\(^{14}\) This new structural focus did something to rescue Liszt’s works from the fragmented (and at worst, sensationalist) way in which they were presented to illustrate a modernist or late-style narrative. However, by making ‘pitch-orientated’ structural analysis a dominant discourse in the study of Liszt’s late works, it had effectively taken attention away from rhythmic, textural, motivic/thematic and other non-‘pitch’ aspects that not only characterised these works, but may have had a determining role in their structure. Moreover, by mainly focusing on the manner in which Liszt’s harmony seems to ‘suspend’ or ‘expand’ normal tonality, the new scholarly phase was, no less than the old, indebted to master narratives of late style and modernism. It also inherited a marked preference for a certain select repertoire of ‘elegiac’ late works, despite the fact that the character of the piece had no explicit bearing on the analysis.\(^{15}\)


\(^{15}\) The repertoire chosen to represent Liszt’s late works in the publications cited in the previous footnote almost invariably comprises of a few small-scale piano works from the 1880s—*Schlaflos, Unstern!, La gondola lugubre I and II, Nuages Gris*, the two *Richard Wagner* elegies, and the *bagatelle sans tonalité*—
And these works also show a preference for tonal ambiguity that is married to chromaticism and/or high dissonance, although 'abstract' tonality need not be associated with these – and there are plenty of examples in Liszt's late works where it is not.16

Thus structural analysis of Liszt works has also been infused with a modernist ideology and a legacy of a 'late works' ethos, and more than any other discourse, it has helped to consolidate this ethos by conferring on it a kind of positivist respectability. With the advent of post-tonal analysis in particular, the idea of a 'late' harmonic idiom that is distinctly pre-twentieth century (and so chronologically dislodged from normal history) was demonstrated in clear terms as never before. In the most extreme instances – such as Alan Forte's pitch-class-set analysis (1987) or Robert Morgan's "dissonant prolongations" approach (1976) – Liszt's music is read as if completely outside tonal tradition (see footnote 14). These are thought-provoking articles, inasmuch as they show that Liszt's works can be read post-tonally (Morgan's analysis of the Bagatelle sans tonalité is particularly convincing in that respect), and thus should demonstrate, in a precise technical language, that the 'late works' are to Zukunftsmusik what twentieth-century avant-garde is to nineteenth-century 'progress' – a break from humanist traditions of shared culture and history into extreme individualism and ahistorical and supposedly 'rootless' artistic techniques.17 However, as James Baker has so convincingly shown in direct response to Forte's article, truly atonal works are very few (he cites only one – R.W. Venezia), and even in these few works, it is doubtful whether tonal references can be really avoided.18 Baker, however, like Forte, does not consider alternatives beyond

as well as certain movements from the vocal work Via Crucis. This preference cannot be entirely explained by the fact that these works are tonally abstract; they all seem to have a slow tempo and an elegiac and plaintive expression, with the exception of the Bagatelle sans tonalité.

16 For example, the relatively unknown Hungarian Rhapsody no. 17 is tonally more ambiguous than Nuages Gris. But the euphonious, triadic sonorities of the former complicate a narrative of modernism that wishes to remain simple. And its strange evocation of Hungarian elements grates against the modernist mystique of the 'late works'.


one common practice or its lack, and orders the examples in his article according to their level of tonal ambiguity (regardless of chronology), thus reinforcing the Grand Tonal Narrative. Moreover, his last ‘atonal’ example leads to an evaluation of Liszt’s historical importance that centres on one achievement: his pre-atonal harmony. ¹⁹

The ‘second phase’ has done much to appropriate Liszt’s late works to hegemonic narratives of the twenty-first-century avant-garde. At the same time it has left many other aspects of Liszt’s late harmonic language (and late style in general) largely unexplored. The justification for that partly arises from an active criticism of previous analytically imprecise and methodologically incoherent approaches that, by resorting to multiple and inconsistent explanations, did not give a coherent description of Liszt’s language. To put it another way, these inefficient explanations did not live up to the musical-analytical disciplinary ideal of Occam’s Razor. The underlying assumption of this critique is that good music analysis would avoid a morass of stylistic detail and offer one coherent and technically-elegant perspective, and that this would best and most accurately describe how Liszt’s music approached or crossed the borders of tonality. The verbunkos idiom, from this point of view, is just another such superfluous factor; it has no compositional significance and is thus not really part of a history of composition. That it appears in the literature about the late works in such misleading contexts has more to do with the nationalist ideologies and wishful thinking of the writers and their equally woolly methodologies, than with a true quest to capture with analytical rigour Liszt’s importance to the twentieth century. This is precisely what Alan Forte argues in his Liszt article (1987):

... although many authors assert that the music has atonal characteristics, they do not pursue the technical implications of such an assertion. In the worst cases, the studies are desultory, impressionistic, and based upon models that are demonstrably inappropriate in that they do not produce substantive analytical results. Prime examples of the latter are the recent Hungarian writings [the article was written in 1987] based upon “scalar approach”, a literature also burdened with political and ethnic platitudes. Of greater significance, however, is the general disregard of the concept of structural levels ... that goes along with a seeming preoccupation with the identification of easily recognized entities, notably, the

¹⁹ Ibid, 170-72.
"augmented triad," the "diminished seventh chord," the "whole-tone scale" and the "Hungarian" scale. Once these components have been identified, no conclusions ensue.\(^{20}\)

Forte is right to complain about the sometimes ‘impressionistic’ approach of his predecessors and, with regard to Hungarian scholarship, the tendency to appropriate Liszt’s music to cultural-political causes with very vague substantiation from the musical text (Forte’s citation in a footnote of Szabolcsi’s *The Twilight of Ferenc Liszt* is spot on). But his advice to analysts to throw away redundant stylistic observations in favour of pitch-class-set-analysis (PCSA) seems to be an overconfident *credo in unum theoria* that professes a belief in a history of composition that is synonymous with the Grand Tonal Narrative. From here it is a short way to foisting the internal systemic perfection of a single theory on music that may be ‘syntactically’ a mixture of many tonal practices. It is ironic that despite the ‘holistic’ ideal that underlies Forte’s argument and analytical technique, he encourages us to read many passages out of their tonal and compositional contexts, and whole works as atonal from start to finish. The emphasis on dissonant sonorities and their vertical prolongation does not always describe ‘the syntax’ in the passages he quotes in the best possible way. This applies not only (and most obviously) to tonal passages such as the opening of *Vallee d’Obermann*, but also to the more abstract (and particularly Lisztiain) tonality of works such as *Nuages Gris*. Furthermore, this exclusive focus on ‘atonal’ aspects of Liszt’s music ignores not only their ‘implicit tonality’ (as James Baker pointed out) but also specific intertextual references to more explicit Lisztiain tonal practices.\(^{21}\)

That is not to say that PCSA, or any other post-tonal perspective, should be rejected out of hand, only to argue against the idea that all previous attempts to describe Liszt’s music are superfluous and expendable since they are anyway contained within these post-tonal theories. In my own experience I found that post-tonal theories can be occasionally helpful in Liszt’s oeuvre not so much in describing novel tonal syntaxes as in capturing in

\(^{20}\) Forte, 211.

\(^{21}\) See Baker, op. cit. 116; Liszt’s ‘intertextual references’ can be gleaned, for example, from similar inflected repetitions in the *Csárdás Obstinée* and *Bagatelle sans tonalité* (exx. 5.7 and 5.8 respectively); see also p. 228.
fine detail certain sonorities, where they seem to be the whole point of a passage (rather than the ‘key’ or any normative syntax). To take PCSA as an example again, towards the end of *Sunt Lacrymae Rerum*, there is a passage where it is possible to integrate modal and PCSA readings (ex. 5.1a). We can hear in the passage both A-kal, a mode which dominates the entire piece, and the characteristic intervallic sonority 3-3 (014 or its inversion 034), ringing both horizontally and vertically in different transpositions (T) and inversions (I). As the example shows, we can describe the succession of sonorities as $T_4I$, $T_0$, $T_8I$, and $T_7$.

We can observe that the transpositions are on 7 (a fifth away), 4 (major third up) and 8 (major third down). In other words, this PCSA merely gives us another description of the kalindra’s symmetric and intervallic properties, and shows the potential of this scale for semitonal and third-related transposition. The vertical chords that result from contrapuntal movement (ex. 5.1b) describe Liszt’s predilection for dissonant acciaccaturas, they are also derived from the kalindra, and at the same time, as Forte shows in his article, they are tetrachordal sonorities with atonal potential. Overall, PCSA in such instances could be useful but it is not a description of music that justifies the formal dismissal of the concept ‘kalindra’ and the resulting oversight of its transcultural impact.

Indeed, there are ‘experimental’ moments in Liszt’s music where it would seem to be the wrong tool to use, as in the opening bars of the same piece (bs. 1-8, quoted in ex. 4.5). Forte observes that “the ‘Hungarian scale’, 7-22, does not appear in its entirety at the beginning of the music, but is represented by one of its subsets, 6-z44, in an order that presents the characteristic interval patterns associated with the complete scale”. To be fair, it is a casual observation made in a footnote that does not form part of his analyses, but nevertheless it is intended to give yet another example, by the way, of how we may more rigorously conceive of the verbunkos minor. But what does PCSA actually tell us here? 6-z44 is, in this case, G♯-A-B♭-C♯-E-F♭, i.e. a scale that is ‘included’ in 7-22.

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22 Quoted from Forte, 223. footnote 37.
Whether PCSA actually helps or hinders the immediate perception of this inclusion is one issue, but a far weightier one is that 7-22 does not explain ‘the syntax’, i.e. the playful or subversive dislocation of the tonic from B♭ to A and then to G#/C# and back again, all achieved through tetrachordal rotations, and made possible by the symmetric properties of the kalindra. From this point of view, Forte’s Occam Razor seems to be a little blunt: its a priori assumption that all ‘scalar’ description can be effectively subsumed within PCS theory would only lead, at least in this case, to a superfluous and hardly illuminating description of the ‘syntax’.

In summary, I would argue that the ‘late works’, with everything that the concept implies, seized the musicological imagination from the 1950s on to such an extent, that it was forgotten that Liszt asked that his ‘spear’ of the future be appreciated for its quality as well as the distance of its flight (see quote on p. 209). I should nevertheless qualify that in some ways Liszt did anticipate music that was composed decades after his death, and that some of the music is truly astonishing in that respect; therefore, I believe musicologists were quite right to observe this aspect of his music and highlight it. Moreover, many of the stylistic features which we shall explore in this chapter will also suggest a ‘futuristic’ narrative. My exposé, however, meant to draw attention to how a widespread narrative of Liszt’s posterity and his modernism worked in general against a sensitive response to his verbunkos idiom. Secondly, it should be recalled from Chapter 1 and 2, in this respect, that when the verbunkos idiom was studied in a modernist context, writers would somehow be on the defensive, always trying to prove its modernist credentials by focusing mainly on Liszt’s post-tonal manipulation of verbunkos scales. This lack of confidence in the verbunkos idiom’s legitimate existence in the late works often manifested itself in a reductive and narrowly-‘modernist’ approach to the music.

Thirdly, the analytical discourse that concentrated on chromaticism and post-tonality in the late works – while revealing in fine detail many interesting facets of Liszt’s music – has also foreclosed any further understanding of the verbunkos idiom in the late works as

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23 See Chapter 4, pp. 184-186.
24 See this thesis, pp. 31, 42, 43-50 and 54.
well as other interesting aspects of the music that were highlighted by the earlier studies, albeit in general and at times inexact terms. Arguably, at the present time, when linear historiographies of tonality have lost their discursive omnipotence, and when the meaning of 'modernism' itself is subject to both enlargement and destabilisation, there is little reason to feel discomfited by Liszt's irreverent manner of interlacing an 'experimental' idiom with a 'traditional' one. We can even question the usefulness of such strict dichotomies. In my view this oeuvre is all the more interesting for its remarkable heterogeneity, its unique mixtures of neo-archaic, classical and progressive musical styles and syntaxes - including the verbunkos idiom. Structural analysis, I believe, can only be enriched by taking into account all these cultural and stylistic contexts, rather than presenting a monochrome picture of post-tonality.

Fortunately, there are some positive indications that the discourse of Liszt's late works is changing once more in a way that espouses structural analysis but finally acknowledges its descriptive limits, the richness of Liszt's music, and the need for a multiplicity of perspectives. In his insightful article 'Conceptualising Expressive Chromaticism in Liszt's Music' Ramon Satyendra succinctly summarises the dilemma that both phases of Liszt research pose for today's analyst:

25 To take the point even further, there are moments in this oeuvre when a purely 'syntactic' reading could collapse or run into absurd difficulties by ignoring other 'non-pitch' factors or an extra-musical framework that holds stylistically-diverse passages together. In *Via Crucis* (1879), for example, the heterogeneous syntaxes relate to each other through a programmatic and poetic structure. In one particularly breathtaking movement (Station VI) a tonally abstract monodic passage played by the piano is followed by a quote from Bach's famous chorale *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* which the piano joins in the second phrase. When the chorale ends, the piano continues solo and slips back to a 'progressive' language again. From a positivist-syntactical and traditionally modernist perspective this makes little sense. What is the analyst to do when the chorale enters with its blatant, tonal, figured-bass harmony? From a more flexible and sympathetic perspective, we see a different kind of 'historicist' modernism, one that is self-conscious about the history of music and the poetic potential of expressing chronological dislocation in music, the same kind of artistic approach we hear in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri* (1897) when suddenly Mozart's *Requiem* is quoted in the midst of Rimsky's own music, or indeed when Luciano Berio quotes the Scherzo from Mahler's second symphony in his *Sinfonia* (1967). I mention these two compositions not to suggest that Liszt foreshadows them (although perhaps he does), but to say that the stylistic complexity of Liszt's late works deserves matching 'heterogeneous' and open-ended contexts. Rather than shunning this kind of 'impure' modernism, the challenges it poses for structural analysis should be faced head on, as this can only enrich our understanding of Liszt's music.
While taking structure to be the *explanadum* of surface has given us important new insights, it does downplay the notion of 'unusual surface detail' that guided the first wave of studies. So a problem raised by the early studies remains to be addressed: how can the intuition that unusual surface detail is stylistically and theoretically significant be explicited analytically in a satisfying way?26

Satyendra's own interest, which he is careful to delimit as a 'specific type of expressive detail', is in a kind of semitonal transformation through segmental repetition which he calls 'inflected repetition'. His solution is to take the insights and intuition of the 'first wave', the preoccupation with Liszt's so-called *alternative-chroma*, or 'successive polymodality' (Lajos Zeke's term, which he acknowledges), and incorporate it within structural analysis. Satyendra, then, shows us how the previous 'failure' of Hungarian scholars had more to do with the style of their analytical presentation than the acuity of their musical insights, and that we are now in a position to rethink 'satisfying ways' of exploring these intuitions. In another break with rigid analytical traditions, David Carson Berry in 'The Meaning(s) of 'Without': An Exploration of Liszt's *Bagatelle ohne Tonart* (2004) takes an overview of post-tonal readings of the work and its motivic similarities to Liszt's other *Mephisto* works, and proceeds to interpret it through the historical context of Gottfried Weber's *Mehrdeutigkeit* ('multiple meaning'), which in harmonic terms mean the potential of certain chords or temporary keys to be interpreted in various harmonic contexts, according to what has been just heard (as opposed to a predetermined and a-temporal 'structural hearing'). Berry makes the interesting case that Weber's 'multiple meaning' would have been much closer to how Liszt's contemporaries would have perceived the work as having unfulfilled 'tonal innuendos throughout', i.e. an extreme manifestation of a nineteenth-century, and a particularly *Zukunftsmusik* tradition.27

There is scope to similarly extricate the *verbunkos* idiom from the limitations of traditional structural analysis and its obligations to the 'late works' ethos: working out a way of reading the connections between its surface appearance and the structure, reading

26 Satyendra, op. cit., 219.
27 Berry, op. cit., 239-61.
the way in which it impacted on compositional innovations in the late works, understanding some of its specific late-nineteenth-century contexts and occasionally referring to the "Zukunftsmusik" verbunkos idiom of the 1850s. Like Satyendra, I do not claim exclusivity for one particular perspective: despite its ubiquity in Liszt's late oeuvre, it is only one strand in his musical language, and perhaps not even the most important. It is sufficient to follow a hunch that its compositional significance grew towards the end; that alone merits the reopening of an inquiry that stopped dead in its track almost four decades ago. And like Berry, I seek historical contexts for the idiom. Yet my context and reference will not be the theories of the time – as these theories do not recognise the importance of the idiom or the possibility of alternative or transcultural tonal practices – but Liszt's own oeuvre which is replete with tonal and thematic intertextual allusions. I shall also endeavour to keep an open mind about what the 'late' verbunkos idiom consists of. There could well be instances when idioms from ostensibly different eras dare to co-exist, despite expectations to the contrary created by linear narratives of 'progress' or 'development'. It could be very rewarding, I believe, to explore what such heterogeneous mixes create overall, rather than recoil in embarrassment whenever one encounters sudden 'lapses' into 'tradition'. 28 My working assumption is that the new verbunkos idiom, whether mixed with the old or not, nestles comfortably within Liszt's notion of 'progressive' music and that, when it is mixed, the result has a coherent and an equally modernist compositional purpose which can and should be interpreted. We shall see exactly what that means in the analysis of a complete composition in Part IV. But first we need to recognise individual elements or topoi that make up the idiom during the 1870s and 80s, and although in some respects this was done in the past and I have already covered some ground in Chapter 3, it will emerge that a great deal remains speculative, unknown and far from obvious.

28 See also in this connection footnote 25.
III. The ‘Late’ Verbunkos Idiom: a stylistic perspective

Most of what musicological literature tells us about the verbunkos idiom in Liszt’s late years revolves around the premise that the idiom retreated from being extrovert, public and representational of nationalism (or exoticism), to being introvert, modernist and very loosely attached to the original popular-folkloristic inspiration. This approach, as mentioned earlier, was first established by Gárdonyi (1931). Gárdonyi mentions Liszt’s crossing of generic boundaries as well as his specific abstraction of the verbunkos minor scale, topical rhythms and idiomatic effects (most notably abstract impressions of the cimbalom and the bokázo cadence). Here, part of my survey is intended as a clarification and elaboration of Gárdonyi’s chapter on Liszt’s ‘late’ verbunkos idiom (still today the most comprehensive of its kind), while another relates to aspects of the idiom, particularly harmonic ones, which, as far as I am aware of, have not been explored to date. Since the kind of ‘classical’ style hongrois topoi discussed in Chapter 3/IV and Appendix I makes regular appearances in Liszt late years in concrete form, there is no need to repeat their description here. Rather, I shall mention only those ‘classical’ features that characterise the late idiom in particular, and the same or other features that were in some way abstracted or transformed.

But this manner of presentation warrants a strong qualification. While there is some justification in observing a continuing process of abstraction in Liszt’s oeuvre, as an overriding narrative it is too simple and misleading for two reasons. First, Liszt ‘abstracted’ his generic materials from the very beginning. The way he uses verbunkos modes to create subtle transitions between keys in the finale of the sixth rhapsody, discussed in the previous chapter, is one example among many. If there are

30 Despite his general narrative, Gárdonyi conscientiously mentions Liszt’s renewed interest in the Rákóczi March, in the popular csárdás genre and even developments he clearly dislikes, such as vocal compositions for the dalárda, the traditional male choir whose repertoire and musical style Gárdonyi considered beneath Liszt’s artistry. Gárdonyi, like his mentor Kodály, considered the German-style songs these choirs sang, and particularly the insensitive way they treated the Hungarian language, as an insult to Hungarian culture as well as nothing better than crude entertainment. But obviously, it was also a ‘development’ that did not fit the trajectory of his narrative.
developments, from the 1870s on, that are related to the idiom and are genuinely distinct, the difference to their past incarnation needs to be clearly defined: is it a question of genuine musical difference or perhaps merely the fact that they seem to occur with greater frequency during the late period? Secondly, a stylistic survey of ‘late’ features of the *verbunkos* idiom does not mean that we should ignore more ‘classical’ features in actual analysis. If anything, Liszt’s continued fascination with quite traditional rhythmic, idiomatic and textural aspects of the idiom proves that we should try to conceptualise Liszt’s late *verbunkos* idiom as it was, even when that does not always suit a narrative of ‘development’ or ‘abstraction’.

*Rhythm*

Rhythmic *topoi* continue to serve, on the whole, as fixed and easily-recognisable signifiers of the idiom. However, there is an increasing tendency to use rhythms as significant motives in several ways. Most characteristically, Liszt will repeat a rhythmic pattern as part of a repeated melodic motive. There is nothing new in itself about this repetitiveness, except that in various late works such as the seven movements of the *Historische ungarische Bildnisse* (1885) or the single-movement *Csárdás obstinée*, these repetitions can stretch over the whole of the work, giving it its unique stamp. Secondly, Liszt’s renewed interest in what we can call here the ‘storm march’ genre led to a characteristic use of long accented notes as an opening ‘motto’ of many Hungarian works from the 1870s and 80s (exx. 5.2a, b and c; see also ex. 5.11 and bs. 3-10 and 35-46 in ex. 5.12). Another way that Liszt transformed the usual signification of rhythmic *topoi*, is by abstractedly altering other aspects like tempo or even ‘character’ with which they may be usually associated. A good example of this is the way Liszt reinterprets the typical short-long-short syncopation at the opening of the seventeenth *Hungarian Rhapsody* (ex. 5.2d). The rhythmic topic here moves at an uncharacteristically slow pace. The chords in the middle register are heavy and resonant and the bass clangs at the extreme register of

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31 I use this term after Liszt’s own title to one of these marches, namely the *Ungarischer Sturmmarsch*, a.k.a. *Seconde marche hongroise* (1876; first version dating back to 1844). This type of fast marches with military and somewhat aggressive character may consciously allude to the famous *Rákóczi March*. 
the piano, creating all together a macabre spectacle that is quite atypical of the lightness and folkloristic verve that is usually associated with this rhythm. And as the insistent and poignant bokázó figure at the top of the texture shows us, the same kind of character transformation of folkloristic topics can also affect ornaments and other types of idiomatic topoi; which brings us to the next category:

Ornaments and melodic types

Melodic topoi, too, are often used motivically due to Liszt’s tendency to build whole sections or even works on tight repetitions. Thus ‘insignificant’ ornaments like the spiky acciaccaturas in Mephisto Waltz no. 3 and Mephisto Polka (exx. 5.3a and 5.5a respectively) become rhythmically ordered, e.g. a predictable acciaccatura on every beat or every second beat, giving long stretches of music a defining and recognisable profile. The bokrizó figure in general and a florid variant of it in particular also become increasingly dominant in the late works. Interestingly, both spiky acciaccaturas and the florid bokázó-type figures constitute much of the methodically repetitious melodic substance of Liszt’s 1880s Mephisto works, where very long phrases are built on numerous, repetitive and very short sub-phrases, and where the overall staccato articulation and iridescent textures give the works a distinctive sarcastic or daemonic character (exx. 5.3, 5.5 and 5.8).

Ex. 5.3b, which quotes the beginning of the famous Bagatelle sans tonalité, is suffused with such repeated verbunkos melodic gestures. Some are concrete, like the acciaccaturas in bs. 1, 3, 5 and 7, but others are more abstract in a way that makes any association to a verbunkos musical culture debatable. Note, for example, the Fb/F# inflections in bs. 13-16: I would argue that Liszt transferred here the idiomatic practice of a ‘pendular’ major-

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32 Here too, I do not mean to argue that such abstractions and character transformations are entirely new. They just appear to be more extreme in the late works. In Part VI we shall encounter similar ‘macabre’ transformations of folkloristic signifiers in the Csárdás macabre (1881).

33 Intense motivic, phrase and sectional repetitions are a topos in itself, which I shall focus on a little later.
minor exchange to a novel harmonic environment. Secondly, I read the figure in bs. 10-12, the trichord C#-D-E that rises to F (an accented melodic note in the opening) as an abstracted and rhythmically augmented verbunkos anacrusis figure. Traditionally, this figure would consist of usually three notes, rapidly ascending to an accented note. True, it could be objected that the ascending C#-D-E → F♯ motto in the bagatelle has very little or nothing at all to do with the traditional embellishment. However, there are many intertextual clues that such a relationship does exist. Liszt's Mephisto genre itself is replete with the more concrete, rapid kind of verbunkos anacrusis figures, starting with the first Mephisto Waltz (e.g. bs. 30-34; not quoted). The second Mephisto Waltz introduces a melodic ascent that is almost identical to the bagatelle's, though preserving the characteristic swiftness of this figure (B♭-C♯-D-E-F♯, ex. 5.3c), and there are more connections in the Mephisto Polka. However, these intertextual clues are not confined to the Mephisto genre: a similar rhythmically-augmented melodic figure serves as an opening motto in the Hungarian Rhapsody no. 19 from the same year (1885, ex. 5.3d). If this reading is plausible, then it is yet another instance of Liszt's structural and abstract use of common signifiers. As in Mephisto Waltz no. 2, where the rapidly rising figure becomes the dominant motive throughout the first theme, so in the Bagatelle sans tonalité the ornamental figure attains motivic-structural significance throughout the piece.

34 There are many ways to conceptualise this exchange, e.g. as a minor/major third of D mixed with G major (the IV degree) or simply as an unstable seventh degree of G, where traditionally the major/minor fluctuations would be on the third or sixth. This F♯/F♮ exchange is therefore comparable to a similar exchange in a more traditional D minor/major setting in Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 (the 'vacillating cadence' discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 200-202) and no. 14 (ex. 2.3a, bs. 225-32). In the late works, such modal oscillations can sound deceptively like an exchange between two different scale degrees in a different key; e.g. in Csárdás macabre, a supposedly fluctuating third degree in D – once more, F♯/F♮ – sounds in bs. 45-8 like G♭/F in either B♭ or F minor, and in bs. 49-60 like F♯/E♭ in a non-triadic F ♯ key (see ex. 5.13). We shall explore the compositional significance of this deception in Part VI of this chapter that deals specifically with the Csárdás macabre. In this part of the chapter, we shall later discuss modal fluctuations in the context of phrase repetitions (see p. 227).

35 An even closer relative to the opening Bagatelle sans tonalité is the 16-bar opening of the Mephisto Polka (not quoted) where the same C♯-D-E ascending embellishment is amalgamated with a florid bokázó. Unlike the measured crotchets in the bagatelle, however, this figure is appropriately swift – which is another clue to hearing the figure in the bagatelle as an abstraction of a Hungarian anacrusis figure.

36 For example, the anacrusis figure in the opening of Mephisto Waltz no. 2 (c) will become the main motive in the first section.

37 The intervallic space C♯-F defines the chromatic ascent in bs. 57-85 and bs. 150-76. In the second half of the piece, a simple 'mapping' of C♯-D-E-F to E-F-G♯-A, initiates the transposition of the first theme a minor third up (bs. 91-95). In the quasi-cadenza of b. 86 the C♯-D-E-F motive is transformed into rapid 'octatonic'
Finally, the swaying and 'pendular' melodic figures in bs. 5-8 of the bagatelle (ex. 5.3b) are reminiscent of similar style hongrois gestures. In traditional verbunkos and style hongrois the most recognisable of these gestures is the 'Kuruc fourth', a pendular melodic fourth that evokes a call to arms and patriotism in general. How could this possibly relate to passages such as these? On the one hand, such a hearing could be dismissed on the grounds that concrete cultural connotations (such as the evocation of Hungarian patriotism) depend on the topoi being equally concrete, and so changing the intervals of the Kuruc fourth destroys the precise 'cultural affect'. On the other hand, it is not far-fetched to hear a general Hungarian melodic character in such abstractions despite this loss of the precise evocation: this is how I hear the pendular motion in bs. 1-8, its entrenchment in the twirling figures that follow (see arrows in the example), and the persistent to-and-fro motion between E and A that follows in the next 16 bars (not quoted). I believe that such a hearing is valid, moreover, since there are other examples of this abstract treatment of the 'Kuruc fourth' (or related melodic genres). One of the best is another iconic quote in the 'late works' literature: the opening of the Mephisto Waltz no. 3 (ex. 5.3e). Usually quoted for the suggestion of a post-tonal 'fourths' chord (a misleading interpretation as the passage clearly relates to A# minor), not for its verbunkos-idiomatic melodic turns. But these are present in both concrete and abstract form. The top interval of the melody is a repetitive pendular fourth, and the interval of the fourth itself becomes the main substance of this passage: the ultimate abstraction of one of the commonest of signifiers. Again, it could be objected that such examples cannot scales that prolong a B♭ diminished chord, and in the closing bars (177-86) it is transformed into rising chromatic chords that prolong the same diminished chord.

38 See Appendix 1a.

39 See bs. 17-32 (not quoted): this melodic fourth is filled by chromatic steps, but in the overall context of the piece, the abstraction can be well associated to the pendular intervals of the opening bars.

40 I do not mean by this that the verbunkos idiom is an exclusive context (generic, cultural or other), and for the sake of balance I should also add that this opening motto is derived from at least two other contexts. First, Liszt harks back to Mephisto Waltz no. 1 which opens in a fanfare of stacked-up open fifths and undulating melodic fourths and fifths (see opening 110 bars). It is interesting, however, that this passage too is imbued with Hungarian signifiers. Secondly, the opening of the third Mephisto Waltz alludes to melodic-generic traditions of the waltz, namely the repetitive ascending and descending arpeggio figure, and the accentuation of the sixth, in this case an 'abstract' $6 - D\sharp$ -within an (abstract) F♯ major that sounds more like A♭ minor. A more tonally-concrete manifestation of the same melodic idea and style in the same
amount to a positive proof of the influence of Hungarian musical culture. This might be true of individual and disconnected examples, and of course the number of examples presented here is necessarily restricted, and therefore may not amount to a critical body of evidence. However, each of these examples has a compositional context which throws more light on its Hungarian-idiomatic background. If one is not convinced, for example, that the opening passage from Mephisto Waltz no. 3 is imbued with the Kuruc fourth, perhaps the last bars of the piece (252-76, not quoted), based on the same music material, would provide a more blatant cultural association. In other words, isolated examples of idiomatic abstractions do not prove anything on their own, but taken as a whole, the intertextual connections to the verbunkos idiom are hard to ignore.

Texture

The aesthetic of two voices moving in parallel thirds and sixths and thickened by octaves that emphasise their harsh resonance and keening quality is expanded in at least three senses. Firstly, in one famous instance, the Csárdás macabre that will be discussed in the next part, Liszt applied this melodic aesthetic to parallel fifths. Secondly, this practice is literally expanded over long stretches of music. Perhaps the best example of this is in the Ungarisch (ca. 1874-6; no. 11 from the Weihnachtsbaum cycle), where Liszt avoids root-position chords throughout the piece, and for the most part there are unison and parallel sixths. Thirdly, the potential of parallel motion to subtly subvert the perception of where the tonic lies is increasingly exploited. This manipulation is not new in itself: we saw an example of it in Chapter 4, in Liszt’s deft use of RH6’s ‘vacillating cadence’ to shift imperceptibly the tonic from D to Bb. But in the late works Liszt mostly dispenses with a triadic framework and the relationship of this topos to the tradition of 6-chord parallelisms, where the lower voices are subordinate to the melodic upper part. Unlike this faux bourdon, in Liszt’s two-part parallel textures (usually in sixths) the equality of key can be found in the main theme of the Premiere Valse Oubliée (1881, i.e. two years before the composition of the third Mephisto Waltz). Liszt, then, might have freely derived his ideas from several roots which interconnected in his musical imagination.

41 See ex. 5.13b. Parallel fifths in themselves are not a novelty, only their structural melodic use.
42 See Chapter 4, pp. 200-202.
the voices really comes into its own, and with it the wobbly perception of where the tonic lies. Later in this chapter, we shall see an example of this in the *Csárdás macabre*, but perhaps the most striking example of this comes from the closing section of the *Csárdás obstinée* (ex. 5.4). This is ‘faux bourdon’ where the ‘false bass’ is as true as the upper part, and potentially, as in this instance, even more important.

Another important textural *topos* is Liszt’s use of pedal points, a favourite device that becomes more frequent and thorough, to the extent that it dominates whole works, e.g. *Csárdás obstinée, Sursum Corda* (1877, from the *Années de Pèlerinage* III), and *Nuages Gris*. Typically for the *verbunkos* idiom, the pedal would be either on the tonic or the dominant, and would be partly responsible for a certain tonal ambivalence between I and IV or V and I. This is true of *Csárdás obstinée* and *Sursum Corda*, although the connection of the latter to the *verbunkos* idiom in general is more tenuous. Works like *Nuages Gris, Mephisto Polka, Sunt Lacrymae Rerum* and *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 17*, apply this ‘classical’ *style hongrois* practice to the third degree. Where the original practice was part of what I described in the Chapter 3 as ‘subdominant directionality’, in these cases Liszt capitalises on the ambiguity of III to create many possible tonal meanings. In *Sunt Lacrymae Rerum*, C♯ is a weak bass for A major (one of the modal variants based on the tonic A) but it also pulls us towards (the enharmonic) D♭ and later to its subdominant F♯ major, which is why Liszt ended the work by juxtaposing F♯ major and A major chords against a C♯ bass. In RH17, it is once more a C♯ bass that suggests in turn C♯ major, the dominant of F♯ minor (this would be the more traditional I-IV ambiguity), and a weak third in A♯ minor. Even more loosely, it suggests a leading note in D minor, the ostensible tonic of the work which is never realised.

In works like *Nuages Gris* and *Mephisto Polka*, remarkable dissonances result from surface chromatic-parallel movement against a weak third-degree bass. These works are tonally less abstract (*Nuages Gris* could be described more accurately as *melodically*

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43 See p. 251 and ex. 5.22b.
44 See Chapter 3, p. 148.
abstract), but the sense of tonic is undermined through the weak pedal point. The feisty *Mephisto Polka* clearly shows the transcultural roots of this practice: an A bass is held down from b. 17 to 80, irrespective of the sequential progressions from F♯ minor to A♯ minor, to the extent that A♯ minor is never fully reached (ex. 5.5a). In fact, Liszt’s insistence on spelling the leading tone G♯ as A♭ in bs. 45-8 asks us to continue to hear the ‘A♯ minor’ key area as a modal extension of F♯ minor.

Example b shows how the pungent dissonances in this passage are a result of Liszt’s projection of the descending tetrachord motive A-G♯-F♯-E♯ (marked with β) to the middleground, as the lowest voice in a slowly unfolding 6-chord parallel descent. The harmony of the passage is therefore, in essence, a very slow tetrachordal descent in parallel 6ths against an unwavering bass. The only place where the bass temporarily disappears is bs. 43-8, i.e. the same place where we have supposedly arrived in A♯ minor and which has the curious spelling which suggests we have not. What Liszt seems to be communicating in his *musica reservata* spelling, is that the bass A♭ ‘dissolves’ into the alto voice, where it alternates with A♯, in a curious – but very idiomatic – major/minor fluctuation. The tonic, though elusive, should be heard as F♯ throughout, and this is confirmed when the bass emerges again out of the alto for the repeat in b. 49 (see dotted beam in ex. 5.5b).

**Repetitions and intervallic inflections**

The example from the *Mephisto Polka* demonstrates another salient idiomatic feature: the overall tendency of the late works to repeat each phrase, and generally repeat melodic patterns over very long stretches of music. This lends the music a certain static quality. Against this stasis, however, Liszt creates a steady harmonic progression through the technique which Ramon Satyendra has conceptualised as ‘inflected repetition’.

Satyendra mentions that this musical phenomenon may have its roots in early nineteenth-century operatic conventions of repeating phrases with one inflected pitch (usually to

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‘majorise’ or ‘minorise’ a phrase), and was thereafter adopted as a universal Romantic convention.\(^{46}\) There seems to be a particular ‘subspecies’ of this phenomenon, however, which may have its roots in *style hongrois*: pendular inflected repetitions, i.e. the persistent vacillation between major and minor, or more abstractly, between major and minor variants of any given scale-step. We have already seen some examples of this type of vacillation in Liszt’s classical *verbunkos* idiom, for example the constant fluctuation of the third (F♯/F♮) in one passage from RH14 (ex. 2.3a, bs. 225-32). In Liszt’s late years pendular inflected repetitions are typically applied to all scale degrees, even in works where the tonic cannot be determined with certainty. Although the practice is endemic in explicitly ‘Hungarian’ works, it is by no means confined to such generic boundaries (see ex. 5.6b, and from the *Bagatelle sans tonalité*, exx. 5.8a and 5.3b).

Sometimes the purpose of the repetition is purely or chiefly a matter of coloration (ex. 5.6), and in other instances it serves to form long-range harmonic progressions (exx. 5.7 and 5.8). But the fact that these repetitions are pendular means that even the ‘progressional’ variety moves at a slow harmonic pace, and that a structural hearing of the voice-leading becomes increasingly stretched, while local prolongations may sound as significant new keys. Both ex. 5.7 and 5.8 show how pendular repetitions slow down the pace of inflected repetitions, creating a perception of prolonged ‘distant’ keys: compare the C major/minor of the csárdás (bs. 65-9, prolonging a distant ‘G minor’) with the more tonally abstract C/C♯-E♭/F♯-A♭/A♯ exchange in the bagatelle (45-56).

In fact, a comparison of the harmonic language of these extracts is illuminating for how the more tonally-concrete *Csárdás obstinée* relates intertextually to the more tonally-abstract *Bagatelle sans tonalité*. The same ♭A-G-F♯-E tetrachord, and a V-I progression in B minor, that serves as the motto of the csárdás (bs. 16-24), appears in b. 37 of the bagatelle in ornate and tonally abstract form. The ‘minor/major’ oscillations in bs. 45-52 of the bagatelle have their counterpart in 65-69 of the csárdás, and in both cases the purpose of these passages is to suspend the main key. The question of which key that

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 220.
might be in the Bagatelle sans tonalité is open, of course, to many interpretations, but it is undeniable that the ‘B minor’ key and ‘dominant’ C# chord, whatever one calls them, are important tonal points of arrivals in that piece.\(^{47}\) Despite its abstraction, and as even a limited comparison with the Csárdás obstinée shows, the Bagatelle sans tonalité evinces close affinity to a harmonic world that is related to the verbunkos idiom – not least through its constant pendular inflected repetitions.

**Modes and Modality**

As we have seen in the previous chapters, using verbunkos modes to redefine chromatic relationships as quasi-diatonic, and exploiting some of the intervallic symmetries inherent in those scales (and particularly in the kalindra variant) was a practice Liszt had honed in the 1840s and 1850s. Alongside these innovations, more straightforward and simple use of modes is also evident, and this is also true of the ‘late’ works. Here, however, I am concerned with discussing some developments particular to the late period. First, Liszt pushed his exploration of the symmetric properties of verbunkos modes – just how far can be garnered from Unstern! (1881). At the risk of momentarily capitulating to ‘late works’ rhetoric, I would cite one passage in particular that always strikes me as ‘Bartókian’ (exx. 5.9a and b).\(^{48}\) The symmetrical distribution of intervals around a single pedal point, and the ensuing third-sonorities are not too far from, for example, Bartók’s From the Island of Bali (ex. 5.9c). But there are important differences too. The passage from Liszt has clear associations with his nineteenth-century verbunkos idiom. This is most conspicuously suggested by the poignant dotted rhythm and an underlying tonal-

\(^{47}\) It is possible that Liszt was thinking in terms of a subliminal tonal structure, where one progresses from IV to V in an obscure F# minor tonality that is never fully realised, and where the tonic is never reached. Further and more elaborate intertextual analysis is certainly needed to reinforce this interpretation. Here I will only mention that the same C# dominant chord (albeit spelled ‘correctly’) appears in Csárdás (no. 1) at a similar structural point, i.e. at the end of a long progression of inflected repetitions (see bs. 55-80, not quoted in this thesis). In that piece the tonal framework is less ambiguously F# minor. In the bagatelle, however, the perception of tonic is further complicated by the constant suggestion of a loose D minor framework, not unlike how the implicit D minor (or D-ver) and more perceptible F# minor areas vie for tonal control in Rhapsody no. 17. Intriguingly, at the beginning of the second half of the bagatelle, D-ver (bs. 95-99) and F# major (107-110) appear in close succession.

\(^{48}\) Of course I should say for the sake of historical propriety that if anything in Liszt reminds one of Bartók it is because Bartók employs, whether consciously or not, Lisztian devices.
modal tension in the harmony. There is no one certain way of reading this harmony. In one sense, we hear an ostensibly ‘atonal’ C-E-G♯ chord unfolding. In quite another, which is of greater interest to us, we hear A-har, where the leading note G♯ ‘refuses’ for a long time to resolve; when it finally does, the tonal meaning of the resolution to A immediately shifts as A itself becomes a leading note to B-min/har (ex. 5.9b). Compare this procedure with the more ‘restive’ unfolding of the octatonic collection in the Bartók passage (ex. 5.9d), and it will become evident that Liszt is grounded in tonal-modal thinking and that the verbunkos idiom is never really that far away.

A second major development was the use of the sixth degree of the verbunkos minor as an alternative tonic. As usual, there is precedence to this practice from the 1840s and 1850s. For example, the whole middle section of the seventh Hungarian Rhapsody progresses from G major to E minor/major, through many repetitions but with no conclusive return to G (see bs. 105-84). G is, however, only the tonic of the middle part of the rhapsody, and the progression from G to E is justified by the broader tonal context of D minor/major, where IV (G) progresses to II (E) and then on to V (A) in the concluding part. If, however, Liszt was trying to reconcile a folkloristic practice of tonal pairing with the conventions of Western harmony in the rhapsody, in later works he seems to be much more content to allow these conventions to be dropped in favour of a bolder transcultural tonal practice. For example, the Ungarische from Weihnachtsbaum (1874-6) and the Hungarian Rhapsody no. 17 (1884) both end in a unison passage that prolongs the sixth degree. In both works, this is the finalis; whether or not one hears this tonal ending as the ‘tonic’ is an interesting theoretical question that has no positive perceptual answer.49

49 Although in traditional tonal analysis two either/or tonal readings are possible in cases of tonal pairings, in the case of Weihnachtsbaum we can simply accept that the finalis shifts from F to D, and that this is part of the verbunkos minor’s modal behaviour, at least as far as it is practised by Liszt. Rhapsody no. 17, however, is much more tonally complex, since there are shifts from an implicit D-ver/min minor (that sounds on the surface as C-maj/har) to an implicit D major (that on the surface is ‘in’ F minor, alternating with A minor/B♭ minor) – and back to a D-ver/min represented by its VI. For a more detailed discussion of the tonality/modality of the piece see Shay Loya, The Exotic Transformed to Avant-Garde: The Role of Mode Hongrois in the Development of Liszt’s Experimental Harmony, MA thesis, Tel-Aviv University (2001), 42-50. Lastly, I would mention that this kind of abstraction is not exclusively confined to a structural sixth degree. For example, in one curious case, Teleki László from Historische ungarische Bildnisse, Liszt employs essentially the same prolongational technique to end the work on the ‘wrong’
Finally, Liszt also derived special chords from his *verbunkos* modes often to renegotiate diatonic/chromatic space, for example in the famous *Nuages Gris* (1881), where the F♯-B♭-E♭ chord and the successive F♯-B♭-D chord in bs. 9-12 are both extracted from G-ver (ex. 5.10). The spelling of these chords asks us to change our tonally-conditioned perceptions of the diatonic and the chromatic, and to hear this progression as a melodic movement within a diatonic, tonic chord. Another speciality of Liszt was to reinvent the sound and function of the IV₇ chord, a classical *style hongrois* harmonisation of the *verbunkos* minor scale.⁵⁰ For example, in Széchenyi István from *Historische ungarische Bildnisse* (1885), we find B♭-C♯-E-G♯, a chord that could be technically described as V₁₁₂ in D-ver, juxtaposed against the tonic (ex. 5.11). What is important, however, is not the technical designation of the chord (which is confounded when in the ensuing key, E♭-ver, Liszt chooses to spell it enharmonically – see bs. 52 and 54) but the fact that the bass note is on the sixth degree. It is this note that belatedly functions as a melodic dominant to the ensuing E♭-ver. This bass allows Liszt to play on another tradition: the classical and post-classical practice of using IV₇ or II₇ chords to generate chromatic (or modal) relationships.⁵¹ However, here it is the scale which functions as the ‘pivot’ to the ensuing E♭-ver rather than the chord, and against the classical tradition of subtle transitions, bs. 43-80 of Széchenyi are dominated by an aesthetic of blunt transpositions.

A rather more subtle operation is evident in the *Magyar gyors induló* (1870-1) where the tonal context of the ‘VI’ is contested, both aurally and through its intentionally bimodal spelling (ex. 5.12, bs. 23-6, repeated bs. 31-4). How can we understand the combination of G♯-C♯-F♯ and the F-ver or C-kal mode in the melody? If the chord is intentionally misspelled, then what we hear, taking the emphatic melodic B♭ into account, is A♭-(B♭)-

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⁵⁰ Cf. Chapter 3, p. 151.

⁵¹ Examples of this practice, especially in the early nineteenth century, are legion. Schubert was particularly fond of it: for example, at the beginning of the famous ‘Trout’ quintet (D667) the tonic A major is first succeeded by an abrupt transposition to F major, and then recaptured when this ‘F major’ turns out to be a IVₒ₇ on the minorised VI degree of A (see bs. 10-26).
D♭-F♯, i.e. either IV₂ in F-ver or II⁰ in C-kal. In fact, this way of re-spelling the chord is so compatible with the melody that for a moment, at least in bs. 23-5 it sounds as if we are heading in the direction of C or F. But we never get there: in bs. 26-7 it becomes obvious that it is rather E that has been prolonged, and this is confirmed by the repeat of bs. 19-26 in bs. 27-34. The logic of this progression can be easily understood from the overall structure of the entire passage (bs. 1-46), which is based on a basic I-III-V-I arpeggiation. When we get to b. 19 the structural bass has already moved to V, and so in bs. 19-35 structural logic prevails, and we remain in V of A: F♯ is resolved to E and C♯ to B (see bs. 26-7 and 34-5 in ex. 5.12).

Why, then, is it so easy to hear the ‘VI’ in bs. 23-6 and 31-4 as belonging to F minor (or F-ver or C-kal) rather than to A minor, and why did Liszt resort to this curious bimodal spelling? One explanation could be given in terms of motivic but somewhat loose inflected repetitions: the F-E-D♭-C-B pentachord of bs. 23-4 is a deliberate inflection of the preceding repetitive E-D♯-C♯-B, and it is there to remind us of the F♯-E-D-C tetrachord of b. 12. Harmonically, however, the suggestive ‘VI of F’ moment seems to be part of a larger modal-tonal scheme that is evident throughout bs. 1-46 and which, primarily, seeks to complicate and even turn upside-down some conventions of tonal temporality and directionality. Consider, for example, how from A minor we get to C major via C-ver, rather than the other way around (bs. 11-16), and that once there (b. 16), C major is never fully established before a ‘structural V’ is (almost prematurely) suggested in bs. 18-19. However, we do not return to A minor: instead, we are delayed by a most unusual prolongation of E major in bs. 19-34 that effectively thwarts the dominant function. What it does, instead, is to occasionally suggest (in bs. 23-5 and 31-3) F-ver or C-kal, as if the previous structural III continues to exert a harmonic pull after the point where the structural progression was supposed to have moved on to V. So through his bimodal spelling Liszt is ‘explaining’ the fracturing of structural levels: on the surface, and more intuitively, we hear the suggested return to C or F, but in b. 35 we can finally be sure that the ‘inappropriate’ but stubborn E major we kept returning to has indeed become the structural V. Thus the borders between III and V and between V as prolonged key and V as dominant become porous and blurred; we somehow move forward
according to familiar tonal goalposts, but surface progressions inspired by modal flexibility challenge our sense of tonal orientation. We even doubt the appearance of a familiar VI degree when the key it belongs to becomes uncertain.

Such inspired subversion gives us but a taste of Liszt's mastery of verbunkos modes in his late years, and his particular penchant for using them to turn the most prosaic harmonic formulas into strange, if not utterly unpredictable, structures. We shall presently see another spectacular example of this in the Csárdás macabre. The Csárdás macabre commends our attention not only for its modality but also for many other Hungarian-idiomatic features, some of which were covered in this short survey, and all of which are relevant to Liszt's modernist aesthetic and compositional craft. Furthermore, the fact that this piece bristles with energy and pianistic verve, that its harmony constitutes an unusual reinvention of familiar schemes and that it is imbued with the ostensibly 'old-fashioned' thematic technique, tonal frameworks and dramatic spirit of sonata form, all reveal an artistic inclination that is at odds with what Liszt's 'late works' are supposed to be like, what they are famous for. This only makes it all the more interesting.
IV. Hungarian Sonata: Csárdás macabre

This piece is nothing but, in essence, a Hungarian sonata in one movement, where rhythm and certain motives betray the influence of csárdás music.

- Zoltán Gárdonyi

What is a ‘Hungarian sonata’? How, exactly, does the verbunkos idiom relate to the form of the Csárdás macabre, and how do the hybridic contents and form relate to Liszt’s aesthetics at this point in history (1881)? Within his 63-page survey of works with a prominent verbunkos idiom, Gárdonyi has given this csárdás and these questions a very respectable space of almost three pages. He explains that both the morbid portrayal of death and the classical formalism of the work alludes to Liszt’s Totentanz, only that whereas Totentanz is based on variations on the Dies Irae plainchant, the Csárdás is organised by the principle of a ‘dynamic’ sonata form. For Gárdonyi, this principle is basically thematic in the way the first group of themes is characterised by csárdás rhythms, while the second group abounds with csárdás melodies, either archetypical or concrete quotes. The relationship between verbunkos idiom and form rests therefore on the fact that a ‘classical’ thematic contrast between rhythmic/melodic groups derives its substance from the idiom. Beyond that, there are style hongrois features, such as the parallel fifths at the beginning of the first group of themes (bs. 49-88, ex. 5.13b). As for the historical significance of the piece, Gárdonyi contends that Liszt’s abstract use of Hungarian motives, and especially certain particularities of the harmony, anticipate Bartók – an argument that


3 Gárdonyi, op. cit., 109-110. One of the themes in the second group quotes the popular csárdás Ég a kanyhol ropog a nád (see ex. 5.17). Gárdonyi’s description of two opposing rhythmic/melodic groups, however, oversimplifies a much more intricate process of thematic transformations that is charged with drama and extra-musical significance, as we shall see.

4 Gárdonyi is careful to reject the notion that these parallelisms stem from the pianistic tradition of colouristic parallel chord progressions in piano cadenzas (ibid., 110). There is a subtext of anxiety here, since this denial comes after he mentions the parallel seventh-chord passage (quoted in ex. 5.20b) which actually seems to suggest such a connection to the virtuoso tradition.
anticipates by a few pages his robust defence of the idiom against the Bartókian culture politics that deny its historical relevance to contemporary composition.\(^5\)

As part of a general survey, Gárdonyi's account is understandably short and sometimes vague (he never really explains what makes Liszt's harmony pre-Bartókian), but it raises some interesting points in relation to the themes and the 'dynamic principle' of sonata form. I would like to pursue and expand these issues here, since they shed important light on Liszt's late verbunkos idiom and its place in his 'late works'. As a first step, and sidestepping the issue of modernism for a while, I will make some broad observations about what makes this piece both a csárdás and a sonata, and then follow up Liszt's compositional idea of combining these two quite unrelated genres within a single piece through a detailed thematic-tonal analysis. It will emerge that the verbunkos idiom permeates every level of this work – surface, structure, and even extra-musical – and that this interpretation of its role is conducive to a new approach to Liszt's late works and a new understanding of his modernism.

**Csárdás and Sonata Forms**

A fast-moving csárdás (or the fast section of a csárdás) would usually have one binding tune, and if this tune happens to alternate with others than it will function as a reprise or 'curtain' theme that gives the csárdás its definitive stamp. In a good csárdás that curtain theme would be instantly recognisable and very catchy. Liszt's (henceforth capitalised) Curtain Theme of parallel fifths is perhaps not a melodious 'tune', but it is certainly memorable and without question gives the work its most immediate imprint (ex. 5.13b). We shall also see that it arrives at important structural intersections of the work's sonata form, e.g. at the beginning of the exposition, recapitulation and coda. Another tradition of the csárdás, inherited from verbunkos and particularly the friss (the fast movements of a verbunkos suite), is the tendency to build up virtuosity and frenzy as the csárdás proceeds. Liszt follows that idea in a rather abstract way by varying his repeats with brilliant tremolo figures that suggest, rather understatedly, idiomatic impression of cimbalom playing, e.g. in

\(^5\) Ibid., 111.
the repeat of the F-major theme, quoted in ex. 5.17. Finally, a traditional csárdás need not follow any prescribed tonal formula, but in the Csárdás macabre Liszt follows a verbunkos-inherited tradition of moving from minor to major keys, and more specifically, repeating previously-heard minor-key themes in the major mode, usually the parallel major. He follows the same general principle in his two other csárdás. And although Liszt stylises and complicates this basic tonal scheme with an intricate foreground and middleground, the background is not different from the one underlying popular tunes like the ‘Monti’ Csárdás.

Unlike the thematic and tonal simplicity that supposedly characterises a csárdás, the term ‘sonata form’ suggests an ongoing and dynamic tonal-thematic development, where both tonality and themes are the subjects of an unfolding musical drama of contrast and resolution. Bearing in mind Liszt’s own history as an innovator of the form, we would expect classical models to be complicated or distorted by the Romantic imagination, and themes to transform themselves into new themes. Perhaps these themes will have an extra-musical significance, and their transformation may even produce an extra-musical (as well as musical) narrative. Some of these expectations will be met, but not all. Significantly, the Csárdás macabre has none of the expansive dimensions or formal complexity of equivalent Weimar period works like the Sonata in B minor for piano. And while its themes are undoubtedly loaded with spiritual (and perhaps profane) signification, which we shall explore, Liszt shows no inclination to distort formal requirements through obligations to extra-musical narratives. On the contrary: as Figure 5.1 shows, the csárdás is written in a curious bi-partite form that foregoes a development section in favour of strict sectional and sub-sectional repetitions.

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6 By ‘understated’ I mean that Liszt is not pulling all the pianistic stops, as it were, to create a very palpable imitation of the cimbalom, in the manner of the Hungarian Rhapsodies. However, to my mind, the tremolo textures that dominate long stretches of the music were intended to produce a ‘Hungarian’ idiomatic sound, and this becomes especially pronounced toward the end of the piece in bs. 509-80. Bs. 525-32 in particular (not quoted in the musical examples) bring to the fore, albeit briefly, a cimbalom effect that is as idiomatically-concrete as anything found in the rhapsodies.

7 Csárdás no. 1’s tonality is quite enigmatic, although it can be said to begin in A minor, progress to A major and F♯ major and then end in F♯ minor (or B-ver). The ending is an unusual postlude, after the major key has been reached, and it was probably intended to lead next to the Csárdás obstinée. The Csárdás obstinée itself is much less ambiguously in B minor, concluding in an animato B major.
Yet the work has recognisable sonata-form characteristics. Themes are contrasted and developed through the ‘transformation’ technique; and to compensate for the lack of development section, there are idiomatic and harmonic ‘developments’ within each of the main sections, i.e. in both sections, the first and second groups (G1 and G2 in Figure 5.1) are repeated in varied forms (G1’ and G2’ respectively). Thematically, this divides the exposition and recapitulation into roughly equal and repeated halves. Tonally, the themes are grouped together according to an abstract key scheme of a sonata ‘in D minor’. Thus bs. 49-162 supposedly establish the tonic, D minor, while bs. 163-304 are nominally in the secondary key, F major. Likewise, in the recapitulation, the first group is an exact ‘D minor’ repetition of its counterpart in the exposition, while the second group is recapitulated in the parallel ‘D major’. Comparatively speaking, a more tangible ‘D major’ reasserts the tonic in the coda.

This would explain the relationship of the form to the tonality of a traditional minor-key sonata, except that, as my inverted commas suggest, the major-minor vocabulary of sonata-form theory is hardly adequate in this case. The main keys exist more through inference than through concrete tonal representation, except at some strategic moments (e.g. the beginning of themes) that announce the key. On first impression, it is as if there is more tonal rhetoric than actual syntax. On the other hand, one can also immediately perceive an exact tonal ratio between the ‘F major’ of the exposition and ‘D major’ of the recapitulation: the latter is an exact repetition of the former a minor third below. The strict
repetitions and tonal ratios suggest a classical/modern thinking that is at odds with the aesthetic of a free Romantic sonata. Yet within individual sections, and for quite lengthy stretches, ‘keys’ appear to be undefined or in a high state of flux. Does this justify a ‘post-tonal’ approach? Not really: there are also long stretches of stable diatonism (though curiously not in one of the main keys), and one cannot ignore the relationship between themes and the main tonal goalposts. How, then, can one describe this form? How does its thematic-tonal structure actually ‘work’?

I believe it works quite ingeniously through the verbunkos idiom: verbunkos modes most of all, but also transcultural harmonic practices (subdominant directionality and tonic/dominant ambiguity), parallelisms, repetitions, and even impressions of performance practice that affect the structure. The verbunkos idiom here is not only confined to a formal or tonal dimension: it is also evocative, symbolic and has important relationships with the poetic content of the work. Keys and their corresponding themes may also allude to other works, creating more layers of meaning, which shows us that the poetic content, in turn, may have an interesting relationship with the form. Indeed, the macabre genre may suggest a ‘programme’ (however loose or abstract) which corresponds to the form and to the sonata-form drama. Liszt chose to create all this through his verbunkos idiom: we shall presently see how.

**Introduction and Exposition**

The introduction in bs. 1-48 gives us a preliminary and texturally bare version of the themes of the first group. It draws in abstract and suggestive lines the harmonic style and tonality/modality of the piece (ex. 5.13). We hear the first version of the Curtain Theme, initially a monody in the extreme bass that begins by prolonging a single note – F – through an abstract bokázó figure (henceforth ‘bokázó motive’). This ‘macabre’ transformation of Hungarian elements refers back to funeral pieces such as Funéreilles (1849), *Sunt Lacrymae Rerum* (1872-8) and *Marche funèbre* (1867), and also forwards to *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 17*, where innocuous and innocent signifiers such as the bokázó figure and short-long-short accompaniment rhythms are transformed in its opening into ringing sepulchral utterances (cf. ex. 5.2d). This theme achieves its first definitive and memorable form in b. 49, in ‘keening’ parallel fifths that open the exposition and the first
group of themes (ex. 5.13b). The association to style hongrois parallelism and bokázó cadence is very abstract, though arguably there.

More immediately, however, we hear a morbid impression of archaic chanting and/or playing, that harks to a history of death carnivals and processions in Catholic communities, celebrating the triumph and inevitability of death, a tradition that has roots in the late middle ages (hence, one suspects, the quasi-‘Gregorianness’ of Liszt’s theme). More specifically the Csárdás macabre forms part of a nineteenth-century literary-musical tradition, which Liszt himself had helped to establish. Indeed, it is not altogether fanciful to hear several allusions here (ex. 5.14): the Dies Irae (and Gregorian chant in general) from Liszt’s Totentanz, the long empty fifths and their diminution that opens Saint-Saëns’ Danse macabre, a work that owes its influence to Liszt and which Liszt in turn masterfully transcribed in 1876; and his own Mephisto Waltz from 1856 (not quoted). But with Liszt the grim, grotesque and supernatural is often tinged with the verbunkos idiom. One can speculate that the reason for this is that in Goethe’s poem ‘Totentanz’, which inspired Liszt’s eponymous piece, Death is portrayed as a fiddler, and Liszt (as well as others) easily associated daemonic fiddle playing with Gypsy violin playing and the verbunkos tradition. We shall see that at least one of the themes in this piece – a reworking of the Curtain Theme – stems directly from this association.8

As well as relating to the poetic essence of the work, the verbunkos idiom relates to its most important compositional aspects. It forms the substance of the themes, and allows Liszt to create uncanny tonal structures, a ‘spectral’ form of sonata form if you like. Keys, from the very beginning of the piece, are not what they seem, undermining any sense of tonal familiarity and security in a way that aesthetically resonates with the poetic content of the work. The tonality does relate, however, to verbunkos modes and Liszt’s special manner of working with them, and so our growing familiarity with Liszt’s verbunkos modality may go a long way in disentangling the complexities and oddities of the composition. In order to follow the surprising turns this work takes, we will observe how the thematic, harmonic and other aspects unravel linearly, without foreknowledge of the structure beyond the basic outline given in Figure 5.1. I will begin, however, by making

8 See p. 247 and ex. 5.20b.
one advance argument. The vagueness of a tonic ‘D minor’ (or rather D-ver) in the introduction and first part of the exposition (G1) is not so much a result of the tonic D being absent as much as being indirectly represented by the ‘relative’ A-kal key. To understand this, we need to go back to the very beginning.

If we take A to be the tonic, then the prolonged F of the first 16 bars is the sixth degree that leads to it in one easy step (F-G♯-A in b. 16): a VI-I progression is a normal procedure for Liszt at the beginning of works, not least through the employment of kalindra modes. We can recognise A-kal from the block chords that follow in bs. 21-39. They give us all the ‘shifty’ manifestations of the kalindra mode on (specifically) A, which we have encountered in Sunt Lacrymae Rerum: C♯ minor and ‘B, minor’ alternate with an implicit tonic A major triad which is avoided through the retention of F (cf. ex. 4.5). The retention of F is an important link to the F that opened the work, and it may suggest already that this is a structural melodic tone. But how could ^6 in A-kal be ‘structural’? Could this be, conversely a ^3 in D-ver, heard against a constant V (A) in the bass? Or are we dealing with an augmented (‘post-tonal’) tonic triad, A-C♯-Fb, where it is impossible to perceive which of its notes is the tonic? The latter option, at least, becomes less likely the more we progress in the work: A continues to establish itself as the bass, likewise Fb as the main melodic tone, while C♯, which serves as a pedal point in bs. 21-39 (again, a comparison with the opening of Sunt Lacrymae Rerum is very instructive), is a tense tone that Liszt will eventually resolve to D in Theme I. This resolution, however, will only be melodic, while the full harmonic resolution will remain unfulfilled for hundreds of bars, until a triumphant point of arrival in the coda. Yet at this stage, i.e. after b. 39, Liszt keeps the meaning of C♯ hanging in the air; what follows is truly baffling, and more than just from a tonal viewpoint.

9 The ease with which Liszt can slide into a suggestion of an F tonic is also another demonstration of the suppleness of the kalindra mode (in this case F-kal and A-kal), and in particular the exploitation of its symmetry to create seamless major-third relationships (see also Chapter 4, pp. 184-186). The most famous example of Liszt’s deceptive use of the kalindra mode on VI is in the B minor piano sonata which prolongs G through modal variants. But there is an even more exact analogy in the way Liszt starts the second version of his Ungarischer Sturmmarsch (1876): C-ver leads to E minor when its minor third degree (E♭) is enharmonically reinterpreted as the leading note D♭. Liszt does not need a VI-V-I progression in this case as in the Csárdás macabre. The symmetrical properties of the kalindra, allow a very smooth transition between keys that are a major third apart. We will see how this mapping of F onto A is reflected in the end in the mapping of B♭ onto D.

10 See this chapter, p. 252.
In bs. 41-8 (final eight bars of ex. 5.13a), we hear a short and edgy theme whose suddenly clear verbunkos modality, light monodic texture and ‘impish’ scherzo character create a sarcastic moment that rips through the overall ponderous atmosphere and vague tonality of bs. 1-88. Its immediate thematic purpose is to introduce a three-note motive (abbreviated as ‘3NM’ wherever it appears in the music examples) and a rhythmic pattern that foreshadows Theme I of the Exposition (cf. ex. 5.13c); I shall therefore refer to it in my music examples as Theme I-gl, the lowercase ‘gl’ denoting its association with the first group of themes in the introduction. The scherzo style of this theme is appropriately ‘macabre’, yet there seems to be an altogether more sinister purpose for this diablerie, one that goes beyond playing up to generic expectations. Its sudden and all too brief presence will haunt our memories, like a flash picture of something rather disturbing which we see for a moment but do not yet understand. We hear the sarcasm, the bare texture and crisp articulation, but have little time to register that the abrupt tonal clarity is equally ironic and a carefully-crafted illusion. What sounds like two successive tetrachords that tonicise F and B♭ respectively, lead us, strangely enough, to the open fifths of the Curtain Theme that ‘centre’ on F²-C♯ (henceforth the ‘centric F²-C♯’). Fortunately for music analysts, Liszt’s spelling of these tetrachords clarifies matters. It reveals that the D♭ and G♭ we hear in F-kal (or B♭-ver) are actually C♯ and F♯, respectively. Liszt literally spells out the motivic link: the successive F♯/F♯ and C♯/C♯ pendular alterations in the ‘sarcastic’ theme are condensed into the fluctuating F♯/F♯-C♯/C♯ parallel fifths of the following Curtain Theme. Is Liszt’s hybridic spelling enharmonically preparing F♯ major, or are we meant to hear this connection as purely motivic, undermining and, in a sense, replacing tonal hierarchies? Neither possibility turns out to be right when the initially stable F♯-C♯ moves in parallel fifths to B♭-F♯, which brings us back to the opening’s ambiguous A-kal environment (bs. 76-88). But are we ‘back’ in A-kal, or is it possible that we never left it? The consistent spelling throughout bs. 1-88 rather implies (in retrospect) a continuity of that mode: bs. 41-8 merely introduce a new element of instability of the third and sixth degrees that is given

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11 This is the local explanation. However, there is an even deeper premonition here of the strange unravelling of this work, one which we shall be able to understand better when we have gone through the entire work (see in that respect footnote 35 on p. 256).

12 And it is deeper than can be fully explained here. Suffice it to say that the centric F²-C♯ forms a kind of ‘shadow’ tonality that undermines the primacy of D minor/A-kal. See also pp. 255-257.
in deceitful surface forms that would fool tonal ears. If this sounds counterintuitive, I believe Liszt meant it to be so: he turns our tonal intuitions against us, but by bs. 76-88, any perception of an F♯ tonic we might have harboured must eventually give way to the realisation that we are ‘back’ (and perhaps never left) A-kal.

Thus explicit but ‘wrong’ keys (namely the F-kal followed by the C♯-F♯ centric fifth) serve to reinforce the more abstract, structural – and in the end ‘real’ – verbunkos modality of A-kal. The deceptive reflection of structure on the surface amounts to much more than technical wizardry: it is, I believe, an extremely subtle enactment of the poetic idea of the work, which may involve listeners (particularly the more sensitive ones) in a process of tentative tonal realities and misapprehensions. The poetic theme of the work stems from the pictorial-dramatic ‘macabre’ tradition that depicts the deceptions of Life against the certainty of Death. The wrong keys are perhaps the equivalents of the material objects one finds scattered in vanitas paintings. Like those objects, they warn us against accepting the surface appearance of things at face value, and shed an ironic light on the petty objects we desire, which really conceal much deeper truths. It seems that Liszt chose verbunkos modality to play the part of a hidden ‘truth’ while his concealment device, ‘the surface appearance of things’, is a play on common-practice perceptions of major and minor keys.

There is yet another layer of deception created by tonal, and more specifically, sonata-form expectations. The Curtain Theme that re-enters in b. 49 turns out to be the definitive version of this theme, the abstracted ‘csárdás reprise’ that will be repeated at the most important junctions in the piece. If we hear the piece for the first time there is no way of telling that b. 49 is also the beginning of a sonata-form exposition, as there is no sign of the expected ‘D minor’ on the surface. The obligatory flat in the key signature appears only in b. 89, i.e. when we hear what sounds like a properly energetic and resolute ‘Theme I’ (ex. 5.13c). We might even think at this juncture that bs. 49-88 are not integral to the exposition, something that we will be forced to revise as we hear this theme repeated at the beginning of both the recapitulation and coda. But what is even more confusing, in a sonata-form context, is that even as the energetic Theme I enters in b. 89, and even as a sense of an overarching tonality/modality clarifies, the actual location of the tonic continues to mystify: once more we must ask, is it D or A? We expect the answer to be D, and this is supported at least melodically: we hear a prototypical ^3-^2-^1 melodic descent
(the ‘three-note motive’), which at long last resolves the much-emphasised C# pedal point of the Curtain Theme. Furthermore, the emphatic note at the end of each phrase, alternatively E₆ and E₇, suggests an unstable II₆/₇ in D rather than the less likely unstable V in A.¹³ On the other hand, the same passage could also be interpreted as a prolongation of a fluctuating II (B₉/E₇) of a highly unstable A-kal. The fact that we never even hear a clear tonic or dominant chord makes any equivocal assertion purely subjective.¹⁴

From a modal perspective, at least, the possibility of a fluid and bifocal A-D tonic is not as radical as it sounds: as the primary mode, A-kal has the potential to transform itself imperceptibly into its ‘relative’ D-ver (and vice versa); the location of the tonic could be highly ambivalent and transferable, subject to a nuance of emphasis. Liszt augments this ambivalence by avoiding the first and fifth degrees of both A and D. Overall, however, A-kal maintains a certain consistent primacy from the very beginning of the work, where D is absent, to the first phrase of Theme I, where D is hinted at (bs. 89-98). The tipping point is the inflected repetition of bs. 107-8: by changing A-kal to A-ver there can be no more suggestion of an alternative D tonic (ex. 5.13c). Instead, as my harmonic reduction in ex. 5.15 shows, from b. 109 we are heading towards A minor, the mode ‘between’ A-kal and A-ver; we are, in fact, at the beginning of the ‘bridge’ section which will lead us to ‘F major’. During the bridge, the structural A bass will be prolonged, but will no longer refer to an absent D tonic, which is why I have represented ‘A’ in the bass as a black note in b. 125.¹⁵

¹³ We will see that the E₅/E₇ alteration is also motivic.

¹⁴ Note that Liszt harmonises his melodic D on the A-kal II (or D-ver VI) degree. This portends the important role this degree will play throughout the piece. He also uses diminished chords (‘VII’ of A minor) to blur a clear sense of D minor. Yet these diminished chords are not mere prosaic devices of tonal evasion; they also signify the macabre and specifically allude to the opening of the Totentanz (cf. a).

¹⁵ There is also a more conventional explanation of the harmony: we modulate to A minor before the bridge, following a half close in bs. 89-99. I would not deny, particularly as this is the bridge, that the strong bass movement towards A minor has all the decisive rhetoric of a modulation (the closing B in bs. 108-9 progresses to E (V/A) and A at the beginning of the bridge). Yet this modulation from D minor to A minor cannot be a complete explanation of the harmony, since the point of departure is so unclear (is it really D minor?). Furthermore, it is not clear whether bs. 89-99 are indeed a ‘half close’ or the continuation of an overarching presence of A-kal that subtly shifts its tonal emphasis in a subdominant direction. I therefore think that rather than invalidating the A-kal perspective, the conventional tonal perspective actually helps to highlight Liszt’s skilful and highly original synthesis of verbunkos modality with sonata-form conventions.
Through a parallel progression of sixth chords, which is thematically derived from the Curtain Theme (ex. 5.16), the A minor ‘unfolds’ to C major. Overall we progress from A minor to F major, the structural bass moves from A to C, but quite significantly, there is no progression in the bass from C to F (see white notes in ex. 5.15). Instead, the idiomatic I₆ inversion continues to dominate Liszt’s harmonic vocabulary: in bs. 163-78 F major is supported by C in the bass, just as previously A-kal and a prolonged A in the bass ‘stood for’ D. The fundamental I – III bass progression is replaced by V/I – V/III. Although one could argue that the fundamental bass exists as a ‘shadow’ reference, it never actually materialises. This, in turn, allows Liszt to keep any notion of key suggestive rather than explicit. The all-pervasive verbunkos idiom, as we are beginning to see, plays a vital role in the reinvention of the old classical form.¹⁶

The second group of themes is where Liszt’s use of verbunkos modality is at its most ingenious. Instead of defining this group explicitly ‘in F major’ he creates complex modal relationships around an implicit tonic F, through two main themes in two different keys. The group opens with Theme II where, it will be recalled, F major is first established through a typical Hungarian I₆:₄ progression, i.e. where the bass is held on the dominant throughout the V₇–I exchange; in this case it never resolves to I (ex. 5.17).¹⁷ Instead, the mode changes to F-har/maj (F-G-A-Bb-C-Db-E) and from the dominant/tonic we progress to the subdominant degrees, IV and II (ex. 5.18a). Liszt now takes the idiomatic subdominant directionality to an extreme: instead of closing the harmonic sentence with a dominant and a tonic, he procrastinates on the second degree, inflects G₃ to G₆, and finally settles on a new theme in G₆-verllyd that spans 26 bars (191-216). This key will also close the second group. What, then, is its structural significance? Is it structurally equivalent to F or is it subservient to F? The question bears directly on our perception of the form, and inevitably on our perception of the modality of the harmony.

¹⁶ Ex. 5.15 also reinforces the possibility of a structural melodic F (^3), ‘structural’ only in the sense that it reappears as the main melodic tone at important moments yet never fully realised as ^3 within a D minor triad. We will leave that speculation aside for the moment, as it requires a fuller perspective of the piece.

¹⁷ It is also interesting to compare this passage with other Hungarian-type melodies with simple verbunkos I₆ progressions in F major, an example of which we have already seen in Chapter 2, in the vivace of the fourteenth Hungarian Rhapsody (ex. 2.3a, bs. 217-24). Another example can be found in the prestissimo finale of Ungarischer Romanzero no. 11 (not quoted).
A modal-structural hearing would encourage us to perceive G\textsubscript{6}-\textit{verlyd} as subservient to F. The ‘F’ in question, however, is a group of major-type \textit{verbunkos} modes, i.e. modes that relate to an F-major tonic triad. They are, in succession, F-major, F-\textit{har/maj}, and finally G\textsubscript{6}-\textit{verlyd}, which is II of F-\textit{aeollkal} (F-G\textsubscript{6}-A-B\textsubscript{3}-C-D\textsubscript{3}-E\textsubscript{3}), another major-type chord.\textsuperscript{18} The unfolding of subdominant degrees is reinforced motivically by the D\textsubscript{6}-B\textsubscript{6}-G\textsubscript{b}/G\textsubscript{b} bass arpeggiation and the thirds sequence in the upper voices, A-F/F-D\textsubscript{6}/D\textsubscript{b}-B\textsubscript{b} → D\textsubscript{6}-B\textsubscript{6}-G\textsubscript{b}. And in bs. 187-90 the familiar \textit{bokázo} motive of the Curtain Theme enters in the bass, emphasising the transition from G\textsubscript{b} to G\textsubscript{6}. A comparison with the equivalent passage in the recapitulation could further make the case for hearing G\textsubscript{b}-\textit{verlyd} as II of F-\textit{aeollkal} (bs. 419-47, ex. 5.18b), since there the structural weight of the (equivalent) D major is reinforced by the fact that we have just heard the ‘D minor’ of G\textsubscript{1}, and that the same structural A in the bass supports both sections. By analogy, and in retrospect, it becomes easier to perceive the G\textsubscript{b}/G\textsubscript{6} transition in bs. 187-90 of the exposition as a modal transition of II of F, and to hear F itself as structurally prolonged through its subdominant/supertonic degree.

At the same time a tonal hearing cannot be denied here, least of all as Liszt’s choice of keys throughout the piece so far – ‘D minor’ and ‘F major’ – has been inextricable from the poetic content of his themes. The sombre ‘D minor’ melody recalled Liszt’s \textit{Totentanz}, and the key reflected a traditional and common choice for ‘Hungarian’ music. Theme II’s F major had the character and a ‘\textit{verbunkos}’ pedal point that was reminiscent of similar Hungarian-type melodies in that key.\textsuperscript{19} Its optimism and vitality was thrown into question, however, when F major darkened through the change of mode and the unfolding of its minor subdominant degrees. Now, with the appearance of a fresh theme in static G\textsubscript{6}-\textit{verlyd} the pace of harmony has come to a standstill, literally creating a static harmonic space for reflection, staving off the darkened mood (ex. 5.19a). This ‘luminous’ theme transforms both Theme I and the Curtain Theme: the urgent rhythms settle into long notes underpinned by a tremolo V bass (this is the first time Liszt introduces his cimbalom-like textures) and the harsh sonorities of the Curtain Theme are mitigated by consonant intervals, light textures and the \textit{dolce amoroso} character of the \textit{verbunkos lydian}, a mode Liszt often uses

\textsuperscript{18} This is one case where it becomes almost impossible to theorise which of the F-modes is ‘primary’.

\textsuperscript{19} See footnote 17.
to convey forays into the fantastic.\textsuperscript{20} Crucially, the verbunkos lydian mode is here on G\textsubscript{b}, thus evoking what Alan Walker called Liszt's 'beatific F\textsubscript{#} major', a key associated with the ethereal, spiritual and/or religious.\textsuperscript{21} Could we read a 'spiritual' or 'religious' significance to the choice of G\textsubscript{b}-ver/lyd? I believe that a significant clue comes from Les Jeux d'Eau à la Villa d'Este, whose main theme in F\textsubscript{#} major has similar character, melodic contour, radiant sonorities and spare and vibrating textures (ex. 5.19b). The religious association of the Jeux d'Eau's theme is beyond doubt as later in the piece (in b. 144) Liszt attaches to it Jesus' words from John 4:14, "but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life".\textsuperscript{22} Here 'water' is a metaphor for spiritual purity, true faith, and the immortality of the soul, which is contrasted with the plain water Jesus was offered earlier, symbolic of the material world and all its limited certainties. Likewise, in Jeux d'eau Liszt's depiction of 'water' has a spiritual resonance that goes beyond the material and prosaic 'play of water'. If the allusion in Csárdás macabre to this pictorial-religious theme in Jeux d'Eau was not a conscious one, the musical resemblance between the themes suggests that at the very least it was subconscious. Liszt must have had in mind a mood contrast to the predominant macabre tone, one with a religious meaning – perhaps vitam aeternam against the sting and certainty of Death.

There is no clash or incommensurability between this poetic reading and a structural-modal hearing. On the contrary, if one perceives the G\textsubscript{b}-ver/lyd passage to be II of F, than one can appreciate all the more how this passage temporarily 'transcends' the prosaic demands of tonal directionality, and thus seems to be stepping 'outside' the normal course of the piece,

\textsuperscript{20} See RH3, bs. 62-6 (ex. 4.9) and RH13, bs. 39-45 (ex. 1.3). The mode in these two examples is specifically on B\textsubscript{b}, which seems to be the tonic of choice for the verbunkos lydian, despite the different tonal contexts (B\textsubscript{b} minor/major for RH3 and A major for RH13. This may partly explain Liszt's instinct to bring back the 'luminous' theme towards the end of the Csárdás macabre on a B\textsubscript{b} tonic (see ex. 5.22, passage beginning in b. 577). The emerging tonal context here is, by contrast, D major (kalindra interchanging with harmonic major).

\textsuperscript{21} See Walker, Liszt, 2, 154, footnote 49. Walker cites as examples Liszt's Bénédictions de Dieu dans la Solitude, St. François d'Assise : la prédiction aux oiseaux, Les Jeux d'Eau à la Villa d'Este (which I shall presently discuss) and from the Dante sonata (passage beginning in b. 136, not quoted). The latter example is particularly interesting because its contrasting keys of D minor and F\textsubscript{#} major (cf. the Csárdás macabre's 'D minor' and G\textsubscript{b}-ver/lyd) depict corresponding images of hell and heaven. To Walker's examples we can also add the 'beatific' F\textsubscript{#} major moments at the heart of the B minor sonata (see bs. 231-459) as well as, in a specifically verbunkos lydian context, the ethereal F\textsubscript{#}-ver/lyd moment in the middle of Sunt Lacrymae Rerum (marked 'dolce', bs. 72-6). All this cultural baggage makes it hard to imagine that Liszt's choice of keys in the Csárdás macabre is coincidental or purely formalist.

\textsuperscript{22} The quote appears in Latin: "sed aqua, quam ego dabo ei, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam".
just as the character of the theme and sweetness of the mode seem to suspend all traces of the macabre. At the same time, we know that this escapist key and mode, or irrational prolongation of the II, cannot last; and neither can its associative mode/mood of redemption, at least not in a piece such as this one.

Sure enough, after the ‘luminous’ theme dims into its last flickers, it receives a sharp and rude retort that pulls us unceremoniously back into the macabre. The exposition has effectively ended, and its written-out repeat begins with macabre variants of previous themes (ex. 5.20). Most appropriately, it opens with the ‘sarcastic’ theme from the introduction (cf. 5.13a, bs. 41-8), which now cruelly parodies the previous theme by perversely quoting its opening melodic line (D6-C-B6-A6-B6, cf. ex. 5.19a) while transforming it through spiky articulation and a shift from G7-ver/lyd to a diminished chord, B6-D6/G-C#. What follows is equally perverse. We hear a double transformation (ex. 5.20b): the transformed theme is in the first place a ‘corruption’ of the previous G7-ver/lyd key and a ‘corrupt’ version of a corresponding passage in the bridge (cf. ex. 5.16). Secondly, and being derived from the bridge, it can be construed as a ‘corrupt’ version of the statelier and more dignified Curtain Theme. Unlike the reserved and abstract Curtain Theme, its depiction of ricochet and double-stop violin playing brings a more full-blooded and earthly verbunkos idiom to the fore, that also seems to allude intentionally to Saint-Saëns’ Danse macabre (cf. b). This is not so much pianistic virtuosity as a (rather abstract) impression of a daemonic violin cadenza, played, perhaps, by an inspired or possessed leader of a verbunkos band, going out on a limb and keeping everyone guessing where the music will go next.

I use the words ‘rather abstract’ since compositionally it is not a free cadenza at all, but rather a section that is integral to the structure of the piece. Its repetitions are methodic, its derivation from the thematic material of the bridge is exact, and its thematic role is

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23 Just to make sure that we do not miss this connection, Liszt added an ossia (included in ex. 5.20b) that demonstrates more clearly how bs. 229-44 relate to bs. 132-49 from the bridge.

24 This is not a coincidence, of course. Liszt admired the Saint-Saëns’ work, which he transcribed (S), and at one point even intended to dedicate the work to him. However, the publication of the csárdás was thwarted and Liszt eventually dedicated the (unpublished) work to Sándor Teleky. See Dezső Legány, Liszt and his Country: 1874-1886, Budapest: Occidental Press, 1992, 155 and 192. Legány also discusses this work in some detail in pp. 192-4.
analogous to that of the bridge, i.e. to prepare the return of the second group of themes. Unlike the first group, G2' is a more precise repeat of G2, essentially adding idiomatic cimbalom-like tremolando to the original texture.\(^{25}\) But underneath this simple repetition there is something restless and almost desperate. It feels as if we are going round in circles, trapped in a loop — and harmonically-speaking, we are. The F major $\rightarrow$ G\(_{b}\)-ver/lyd progression has remained, tonally-speaking, incomplete. The diminished and seventh chords of G1' merely prolonged this irresolution. Their centric chord was C#/D\(_{b}\)-E-G-B, which technically (as VII of F major) connected the G\(_{b}\) major triad (II) of the ‘luminous’ theme with F major triad (I) of the repeated Theme II through the dominant (V). Schematically, therefore, one could argue that the progression from the ‘luminous’ theme to the repeated Theme II is (I)II-VII-V\(_{7}\)-I progression. Yet it does not feel right because it does not take into account the sheer prolongation of the ‘wrong’ degrees and the comparative weakness of the V\(_{7}\)-I ‘resolution’. The II is prolonged and self-enclosed like an independent key, the ‘VII’ could go anywhere (including finally to D minor or major) and the ‘V\(_{7}\)-I’ that opens Theme II is neutralised and undermined by, respectively, the same kind of ‘verbunkos I’, and unfolding subdominant directionality. In other words, we barely touch on the ‘proper’ F tonic, before being dragged back to G\(_{b}\)-ver/lyd (II), ostensibly a subsidiary degree. So which is the main and which is the subsidiary degree after all? Or do the vying F major/G\(_{b}\)-ver/lyd keys enharmonically project on a grand scale the vacillating F\(_{b}\)-C#/F\(_{b}\)-C\(_{b}\) fifths of the Curtain Theme?

These questions loom larger when we get to the end of the exposition (ex. 5.21). The repeat of the ‘luminous’ theme, like the whole of G2', has a greater sense of urgency and unrest. There is no escape: we have reached the outer limits of register, texture and key.\(^{26}\) The theme burns brightly for a brief moment before it starts descending inexorably to an ever darkening register, until the murky remains of G\(_{b}\)-ver/lyd metamorphose into the cold sonorities of the F\(_{b}\)-C\(_{b}\) centric fifth of the Curtain Theme. It is nothing short of a descent to the abyss of hopelessness, and it is this fall that brings us to the stark realisation that Theme

\(^{25}\) See ossia stave in ex. 5.17, which quotes the right-hand part of this varied repeat.

\(^{26}\) The repeat of this theme is rhythmically punctuated by three recurring quavers (a kind of rhythmic three-note motive which enhances its sense of urgency). It is even more ‘iridescent’ here than in its first appearance (cf. ex. 5.19b) due to the high register and somewhat harsher and brighter texture (the former triadic sonority is replaced by an idiomatic doubling of octaves and sixths).
II, an oasis of luminosity and hope in the piece, has been uncannily close to hopelessness all along. In more formal terms, as G\(_b\)-ver/llyd easily merges with the Curtain Theme’s F\#-C\(_\sharp\), we realise that the sonata-form ‘point of furthest remove’ is, in fact, the point of return. Notwithstanding all the frantic movement from one ‘key’ to another and the striving towards transcendence, no modulation took place and it does not seem we have actually moved anywhere. Thus the harmonic effect enhances the thematic dissolution of the ‘luminous’ into the ‘deathly’ Curtain Theme; and the verbunkos idiom itself generates a sense of utter futility and entrapment that serves a higher compositional and poetic purpose. We will now briefly explore the equivalent moments of fleeting hope, strife and defeat in the recapitulation and coda, and discover how these poetic moments give us a unique insight into the structure. They will ultimately lead us to a few conclusions about the special relationship between verbunkos idiom, sonata form and modernism in this work.

**Recapitulation and Coda**

The Curtain Theme returns in its definitive version in b. 305, signalling the beginning of the recapitulation. Yet tonally the arrival of a ‘key’ that is dubious and familiar at the same time has the effect of being both right and wrong, and therefore uncanny and disorientating. There is little sense that ‘D minor’ has been regained, while it is easy to perceive the centric F\#-C\(_\sharp\) fifth of as a proper tonic: we remember it opened the exposition, and it seems to be the right point of arrival, especially as it emerges so seamlessly out of the previous G\(_b\)-ver/llyd tonality. We may even begin to doubt at this stage previous tonal hierarchies. Perhaps G\(_b\)-ver/llyd was the end goal of the whole progression in G\(_2\), rather than an escapist digression from the main key; perhaps the emerging F\# at the beginning of the recapitulation is the real tonic, despite all previous ploys (including key signatures) to convince us otherwise.\(^{27}\) But the gradual establishment of A-\(k\alpha l\) and entrance of the ‘D minor’ Theme I, removes this potential illusion: A becomes once more the structural bass, and the tonic resumes its ambivalent position between A and D (bs. 305-63, same as bs. 49-108 in ex. 5.13). Although A seems to emerge once more (it is the clear tonic of the repeated A minor bridge), Theme II’s entrance in b. 419 corrects the initial ambivalence by sounding for the first time an unambiguous D major. To be more exact, it is an

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\(^{27}\) I shall return to and elaborate on the possibility of a ‘shadow’ F\(_\sharp\) tonality more fully in pp. 255-257.
unambiguous D major tonic triad (in the form of a verbunkos $V$) rather than a common practice D major key. Like its ‘F major’ counterpart from the exposition, the ‘D major’ key comprises a group of successive modal major modes that progress in a subdominant direction, leading to the ‘luminous’ theme and the prolongation of II (ex. 5.18b).

The ‘luminous’ theme now intones $E_{b}-v/lyd$ (E$_{b}$-F$_{b}$-G-A-B$_{b}$-C-D). At phrase level its relationship to the tonic D is equivalent to the relationship between G$_{b}$-v/lyd and F in the exposition. At a more structural level those two events are not equal, since D has been established as the tonic and pulls a much greater weight than F major ever did, and so, if the piece is to obey its own tonal logic and process, E$_{b}$-v/lyd must progress back to D at some point. Indeed, towards the end of the recapitulation, amid the inevitable descent of the ‘luminous’ theme into the deep register of the piano, it is just about possible to hear an overall melodic progression towards a D major triad (ex. 5.22a). In contrast, then, to the ‘disrupted’ or incomplete progression in F major in the exposition, we can already expect a more tonally satisfying progression back to D major towards the end of the ‘luminous theme’. This long-awaited D major could imply a dramatic build up of momentum, perhaps even a triumphant rhetoric. Yet, quite incongruously, we also expect a repeat of the ‘luminous’ theme’s defeat and its dissolution into the cold gloom of the Curtain Theme, especially as so far the recapitulation followed the exposition’s themes almost to the letter.28 Faced with these choices, the triumph of the macabre or the luminous, the return to F$_{b}$-C$_{b}$ and tonal ambiguity or the fulfilment of a long-awaited tonal resolution, Liszt opts for both.

The Curtain Theme will return as expected, yet E$_{b}$-v/lyd cannot simply ‘dissolve’ into F$_{b}$-C$_{b}$. Within a (still somewhat loose) D major context, the progression from one theme to the other amounts to $(\flat)$II $\rightarrow$ III, a quasi-deceptive cadence in need of a satisfying completion (ex. 5.22a, b. 601). This frustrating progression rather heightens the tension towards a tonal resolution. From a corresponding thematic and dramatic point of view, there is no halt in

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28 Liszt reinforces the latter expectation when in the middle of the recapitulation the ‘luminous’ theme is followed once more by the ‘sarcastic’ and ‘daemonic’ themes of G1’ (bs. 473-508). We hear the same music from the exposition (cf. ex. 5.20) transposed a minor third down, a transposition that creates an additional (and quite eerie) sense of déjà vu, since all the diminished chords in this passage (and particularly the prolonged A#/B$_{b}$-C$_{b}$-E-G) are inversions of their counterparts from the exposition, i.e they sound very much the same.
the energy and momentum built up by the ‘luminous’ theme. Instead of the long and ponderous notes, the Curtain Theme is now animated and overtaken by the previous theme’s tremolo figures, and it does not dwell long on F#-C#. As if touched by the same optimism, the descent into the deep is now countered by an upward surge in parallel chromatic motion. It reaches an ecstatic tonal-thematic fusion in b. 577: we hear the ‘luminous theme’ in the distinctive verbunkos lydian and tremolos; but at the same time it is also Theme I, once more harmonised by B♭ (cf. ex. 5.13c), and, most surprisingly, the melody itself is closest to the ‘sarcastic’ variant of Theme I (cf. bs. 41-48). If previously the ‘luminous’ theme was overwhelmed by the macabre, now it seems the tables have turned.

The moment B♭-ver/lyd bursts to the surface brings us very close to the definitive arrival of D major. With hindsight we could hear the beginning of D-har/maj (D-E-F♯-G-A-B♭-C♯), with a prominent VI degree. Even before this theme, it was already prepared by the ascending chromatic parallelisms of the Curtain Theme, which subtly articulate F♯-C♯ (b. 661), B♭-F♯ (b. 569), D-A (b. 575) and finally B♭-F♯ (b. 577), i.e. III, VI, I and VI respectively in D-har/maj. Furthermore, the motivic ‘F♯-B♭ space’ (i.e. the chromatic parallelisms between F♯-C♯ and B♭-F♯) is now complemented by parallelisms between B♭ and D that suggest more strongly than before that we are moving towards a clear D-tonic. By contrast, there is no structural A bass or A-kal mode that subverts the impending arrival of the tonic.

This long build-up increases our anticipation of climactic tonic resolution. Liszt will satisfy this expectation, not through the convention of a dominant drive, but rather, in keeping with the harmonic style of the piece, through an unusual modal metamorphosis that intentionally blurs the tonal orientation of scale degrees. Two bars into the last repeat of the B♭-ver/lyd phrase, Liszt equivocates the tonality of the phrase through a bimodal mixture (bs. 581-8, ex. 5.22b). B♭-ver/lyd in the treble voices is pitted against D-ver/lyd in the bass. Most ingeniously, Liszt uses a symmetrical hexachord, D-E♯-F♯-A-B♭-C♯, a 1:3 ‘mode of limited transposition’, which allows B♭-ver/lyd and D-ver/lyd to map onto each other within

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29 I do not mean by this that D-har/maj is the primary mode; that judgement needs to be suspended until we have an opportunity to view the entire recapitulation and coda.
the space of a major third.\textsuperscript{30} The two voices are truly equal in importance and perfectly balanced. Texturally, this is an extreme realisation of a \textit{verbunkos} idiom of equal parallel voices, an example of which we saw previously in this chapter in the \textit{Csárdás obstinée}. And as in the \textit{Csárdás obstinée}, the controlling key emerges from the lower voice, overturning our perception of the key.\textsuperscript{31} Here Liszt uses a simple but effective psychological device: we are conditioned at this point (bs. 581-8) to hear a repeat of B\textsubscript{b}-\textit{verlyd}, and therefore may be well inclined to place the hexachord's tonic on B\textsubscript{b}. We would hardly notice the very clever tipping point: the F#-F\textsubscript{b} motive from the Curtain Theme is heard in diminution in the lower voice, and is now spelled as F\textsubscript{b}-E\textsuperscript{b}. We are already in D before we know it. E\textsuperscript{b} will resolve to the structural melodic \textsuperscript{3} (F\textsuperscript{#}) in b. 589 (ex. 5.22c). Likewise, the recurring C\textsuperscript{#}s in bs. 581-8, reminiscent of the insistent and frustratingly unfulfilled C\textsuperscript{#} pedal points from the Curtain Theme and Theme I, will resolve in the same bar. For the first time in the piece, this resolution does not digress to VI, but rather fulfils a long-anticipated move from VI to I (ex. 5.22c; cf. ex. 5.13).\textsuperscript{32}

At this final stage formerly tonally abstract themes appear in a more concrete D major form, and this leads to a somewhat weird or (to use the more obvious word) macabre apotheosis. The tonality of the ‘apotheosis’ is based on a group of \textit{verbunkos} major modes that share a D tonic. Liszt seems to be following the harmonic rules he had laid down for this piece, since the modes and their order of succession are analogous to the ones he used in Theme II: an opening in the normative major (ex. 5.22c, bs. 589-96) followed by harmonic major and \textit{kalindra} variants (from b. 597 on). The main difference is that here all these modal fluctuations of scale degrees occur on the tonic itself, with no subdominant digressions disguised as modulations to new keys. Another small but important difference is that Liszt uses D-\textit{kal} rather than D-\textit{aeol/kal}, i.e. he keeps C\textsuperscript{#} as the leading tone. This raises the common tones to 6, the two modes differing only in their second degree: E\textsubscript{b} in D-

\textsuperscript{30} To be more exact, Liszt’s \textit{‘verbunkos lydian} mode here is a ‘harmonic’ variant with a lowered sixth degree, which increases the number of common tones to six, as the two modes can now share B\textsubscript{b} (lowered sixth degree in D-\textit{verlyd}) and F\textsubscript{b} (enharmonic G\textsubscript{b}, the lowered sixth of B\textsubscript{b}-\textit{verlyd}). Furthermore, he is able to perfectly map the two modes onto each other by precluding their respective fourth degree, i.e. B\textsubscript{b}-C\textsubscript{#}-D-\textit{E\#}\textsuperscript{F} (=E\textsubscript{b})-G\textsubscript{b} (=F\textsubscript{b})-A and D-\textsuperscript{E\#}F\textsubscript{b}-G\textsubscript{b}-\textit{A\#}-B\textsubscript{b}-C\textsubscript{#}.

\textsuperscript{31} See p. 225 and ex. 5.4. It is also interesting that in the sixth \textit{Hungarian Rhapsody} Liszt uses very similar devices to blur the tonal boundaries between, specifically, D and B\textsubscript{b} (see Chapter 4, pp. 200-201). So, in fact, this ‘modernist’ technique dates back to 1840.

\textsuperscript{32} See p. 240.
kal and Eb in D-har/maj. And so the vacillation from one mode to the other throughout the coda is effectively a middleground expansion of the foreground motivic standoff of E♭ and E♭ from Theme I (cf. ex. 5.13c). Yet in contrast to Theme I, the D tonic is no longer represented by its A-kal relative, and this is emphasised by reversing the order of the E♭/E♭ exchange: now E♭ is the more temporary inflection, while E♭ emerges as the more permanent second degree. The first time D major is established in the piece ends, therefore, in D-kal (most conspicuously in bs. 603-9, see ex. 5.22c), and it is this mode that continues unambiguously until b. 632.

In b. 633, the apotheosis in D-kal is interrupted by a rather startling fortissimo entrance of the Curtain Theme (ex. 5.23). But here, too, the Curtain Theme does not break the momentum or even delay much the impending tonal resolution. Moreover, it is much more clearly under the control of a D tonic. The parallel fifths have become parallel 6 chords, and through the chromatic voice-leading one can more readily discern III₆ progressing to IV₆ and then (in b. 657) to subdominant chords on a D pedal point (not quoted). The Curtain Theme will bring the piece to a close in a fateful descent to the deepest register, echoing the same gesture that ended the exposition and recapitulation (ex. 5.24). In the end there is no struggle between light and dark, no ‘luminous theme’ that gently sinks into despondency and defeat, but a final, resolute, one could even say possessed Curtain Theme. The ghoulish procession has become a mad stampede towards doom. True to its csár dés spirit, the piece ends in a high state of frenzy that somehow oversteps the decorous confines of an apotheosis.

**The substance that gives shape to the form**

It remains for us to summarise the truly unique tonal process and structure of the piece, and highlight how it is generated by different idiomatic features, from modes and subdominant directionality to textural parallelisms and repetitions. The two graphs in ex. 5.25 present us with an outline of this tonal process, as well as a summary of the main themes, motives, voice-leading and modes involved in the gradual unravelling of this work’s elusive
tonality. To start from the simplest observation, there is little doubt that the work is indeed tonal, despite the temporarily unclear introduction, the ambivalent pairing of A and D in the A-kal passages and the few dissonant prolongations in the G1’ passages. And although the tonic is initially ambivalent, by the end of the piece we do not doubt that that tonic is D, not only for the obvious fact that the piece ends in D major (which ‘D major’ is a different matter), but also due to a coherent sonata-form framework. That framework overrides local ambiguities of tonality and strongly suggests a bipartite division into exposition (I-III) / recapitulation (I-I). This simple division is complicated, however, by a tonal process that for the most part articulates subsidiary degrees instead of structural ones (most notably, there is no articulation of the tonic), conspicuously lacks a dominant drive, yet seems to have clear goals and to work mysteriously through almost obsessive repetitions.

We might have expected from a sonata form that so clearly alludes to a tight Classical design (rather than an expansive Romantic one), that it would clinch the main tonal goalposts with a V-I progression. This, however, is not something Liszt generally did in his late works, and moreover, it is the subdominant directionality derived from the verbunkos idiom that interests him here. Therefore, there is no dominant preparation for Theme II, neither in the exposition (i.e. no V/III → III) nor the recapitulation (no V → I); it is lacking before the recapitulation (no V → I after the prolonged II of the ‘luminous’ theme) and, correspondingly, it is nowhere to be found before D reasserts itself in the coda. In fact, there is no structural V in the piece at all. Instead, Theme II avoids strong tonic articulations through evasive ‘subdominant’ progressions to the supertonic, and in the coda the main degree that prepares I is VI. Liszt further softens any suggestion of a dominant function in the middleground by frequently using the ‘verbunkos Iq’ instead of a classical V\(^{\text{II}}\), especially in the ‘luminous’ theme, Theme I, and the beginning of Theme II (see bass line in ex. 5.25b). This gives the impression of a transient or ‘floating tonic’ on the one

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33 Themes and motives are given in acronyms (see legend in the example). The ‘sarcastic’ and ‘daemonic’ themes are included in larger sections, namely in the introduction and the G1’ (varied first group of themes) passages.
hand (the melodic tonic is always heard against a dominant pedal point), but on the other hand it never provides a dominant drive towards a tonic solution.\textsuperscript{34}

The most complicated aspect of the syntax is the existence of a ‘shadow tonality’, a discreet counter-process that asserts the centricity of the $F#-C#$ of the Curtain Theme at the expense of our perception of the overarching and largely referential D minor/F major framework. In b. 49 the centric $F#-C#$ assumes the function of a temporary tonic for the first time, but it is also possible with hindsight to hypothetically hear it as $III_6$, as if the A bass continued from the previous section, as this bass re-emerges just before Theme I and dominates Theme I throughout. More to the point, this bass actually materialises in b. 633 of the coda (cf. ex. 5.23), where the Curtain Theme’s main progression becomes $III_6 \rightarrow IV_v^6$ within a clear D major (harmonic) context. How is it, then, that from a strong perception of $F#-C#$ as the tonic and only a very thin suggestion of a controlling A-kal/D-ver we got to the point where it became compellingly subsumed by D major?

This question already points to the possibility that both ‘referential’ sonata form and shadow tonality interact to give us the unique form of the piece. Up to the second part of the recapitulation, the centric $F#-C#$ fifth appears in the most crucial junctions of the form while D minor is not sufficiently articulated. It is entirely possible to perceive, without the benefit of hindsight, that the $F#-C#$ that opens the recapitulation is the tonic. It is only much later in the work – perhaps only from b. 589 in the coda – that one can be certain that D has been the tonal goal all along. Thus the Curtain Theme’s gradual strengthening at first and then gradual subsumption by D major inversely reflects the tonal weakening of D, and its gradual strengthening in the recapitulation and coda.

Thematic repeats between and within the exposition and recapitulation (i.e. at sectional and subsectional levels in the work) play a crucial role in this intricate tonal process. In the exposition, they weaken D and strengthen $F#-C#$; in the recapitulation \textit{the same thematic repetitions} have the opposite effect. How so? It will be recalled that the exposition began

\textsuperscript{34} Even if there is a V\textsubscript{7} chord at the beginning of Theme II, it turns out to be part of a \textit{verbunkos} I\textsuperscript{6} that (unlike the \textit{style hongrois} norm) \textit{never} resolves to I. The structural bass progression between Theme II and the ‘luminous’ theme is C-D\textsubscript{b} (or A-B\textsubscript{b} in the recapitulation), i.e. a succession of two ostensibly ‘unresolved’, but in fact stable, \textit{verbunkos} I\textsuperscript{6}, chords.
with a firm F♯-C♯ centric fifth (b. 49) as opposed to a weak 'D minor', and moreover that this D minor was never established with certainty before a clear A minor took over in the bridge in b. 109. G2 then touched on F major but mainly centred on G♯-ver/lyd. To this point, the D minor/F major framework is extremely tenuous, while the 'shadow tonality' of F♯-C♯/G♯-ver/lyd has been perceptually more concrete. The entrance of the 'sarcastic' theme in b. 218 (beginning of G1'), constitutes the first subsectional repeat. G1' is not simply a written-out variegated repeat of G1: tonally (and according to a classical sonata form) this is the very place where 'D minor' should have been articulated, but instead G1' weakens the control of D even further by extending the already over-prolonged F♯/G♯ tonic, and undermining any sense of its being (ι)II of an overarching F (or II of F-aeol/kal). The result is that we may well hear G♯-ver/lyd as an independent key, perhaps another manifestation of the shadowy F♯-C♯, and moreover a key that, at this juncture, easily vies with 'D minor' for a tonic status. The next subsectional repeat, that of Theme II in b. 252, opens once more with a short-lived F major triad (ι of F), and thus makes it just about possible to hear the second prolongation of G♯-ver/lyd as II of F (b. 282). On the other hand, at this stage 'D minor' itself is at its weakest point, as it was never properly established in the first place before being succeeded by this extended (weak) F major modal key area. Therefore, when the 'luminous' theme's (twice-) prolonged G♭-major triad dissolves into the F♯-C♯ centricity at the beginning of recapitulation (b. 305), the possibility of hearing the Curtain Theme's centric fifth as the actual tonic sonority is at its high point.35

Conversely, from this point on, repeats work to strengthen D. Theme II of the recapitulation is the first strong manifestation of D.36 The evasive subdominant directionality is checked by a second repeat of D major (b. 509). The reiteration of the 'luminous theme' (b. 537) will not undermine D in the same way G♭-ver/lyd had, because it

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35 To my mind this is also the point where in retrospect we may understand better the uncanny tonal quality of the 'sarcastic' theme in bs. 41-8 (see p. 241). These bars make it very possible to perceive the C♯ pedal point that preceded b. 41 as the fifth of F♯, and enharmonically translate bs. 41-8 to a V-I progression in F♯-ver/lyd. F♯-ver/lyd is, of course, the enharmonic G-Ver/lyd, the mode that is to become so prominent in the F major section of the work. It is as if we can see in a flashligh of premonition what is about to happen: the dissolution of the 'luminous' theme into F♯-C♯, and the perception of that key as the tonic. We can later note that both events happen at equivalent structural moments, i.e. the beginning of the exposition and recapitulation, and that both are there to deceive us and portray the triumph of Death — yet one more intriguing example of how tonal play is integral to Liszt's poetic aesthetics.

36 Tellingly, this is D major, an important fact to which I will presently return.
cannot form the same tonal relationship with the Curtain Theme, and by the end of this passage it is possible to hear a progression back to D. This progression is delayed by the Curtain Theme at the beginning of the coda, but thanks to the repetitions in the recapitulation and the strengthening of D, by this stage the palpable harmonic context of the Curtain Theme is an overall progression from III to VI in D-har/maj. 37 It remains for D to finally emerge in b. 589-90, when not only the melody (three-note motive, F#-E-D) but also the bass resolve to D (I) for the first time, after an extremely long preparation. 38

That three-note motive brings us to the connection between motives and modes, and how this connection relates to the structure. Two verbunkos modes emerge as highly significant in the work: firstly the kalindra (including its ‘aeolian’ variant in G2; see ex. 5.18) and secondly the verbunkos lydian modes (mainly associated with the ‘luminous’ theme). Both modes are thematically articulated by the three-note motive, and pervade much of the work, but it is the kalindra that is both more pervasive and more structural. Its aeolian variants in Theme II generate the Gb-verllyd key of the exposition and E6-verllyd key of the recapitulation. In addition, D-kal pervades the recapitulation and much of the coda. But above all, this mode provides the entire context of ‘D minor’ of Theme I in both exposition and recapitulation. Its diatonic VI triad is F#-A-C#, the initial (bs. 1-39) and eventual (bs. 76-88) centric triad of the Curtain Theme, and it is this triad that becomes in b. 49 the centric F#-C#, a kind of minimalist #III. That ‘#III’, in turn, is essentially a fluctuating F#/F- C#/C# motive, i.e. a destabilised manifestation of the F#-A-C# chord on the one hand, but also one which centres decisively on F# and therefore anticipates on a higher structural level an overall shift from D minor to major.

To understand how, we should first note three of the Curtain Theme’s motives that stem from the verbunkos idiom and largely determine the structure: the parallel fifths (or CPM,
`chromatic parallel motion', in general), the pendular motion between scale degrees, and above all, the structural fluctuation of F♯/F♭. The rough parallel fifths at the lower register gave this work its ‘trademark’ modernism in the musicological literature. Structurally, however, this parallelism is all on the surface, a pendular chromatic motion between specific scale degrees. As ex. 5.25a shows, the parallel motion between F♯-C♯ to B♭-F♯ engenders a registral transfer between the lower F♯ and upper F♭, i.e. it expands to phrase-level the motivic F♯/F♭ fluctuation. The same happens, of course, in bs. 305-31 of the recapitulation, and at a more structural level in bs. 561-89 of the coda. But while in the above passages of the exposition and the recapitulation the Curtain Theme gradually allows F♯ to reassert itself, the coda finally tilts towards F♭. This is because a decisive modal shift from F♯ to F♭ has already taken place at the background level, between the first and second part of the recapitulation (see ‘3♯/♭: structural shift’ between bs. 345 and 419 in ex. 5.25b). It is the shift between A-kal of Theme I and bridge, the same A-kal that stood for ‘D minor’, and the emerging D major of the rest of the work. Yet the D major of the coda continues to be saturated by the F♯/F♭ exchange, notably through the inclusion of B♭-verlyd (and the (♭)VI degree in general) and the last entrance of the Curtain Theme in b. 633. In addition, Theme I’s phrase-level modal fluctuation of E♭/♯ is transformed into a more structural unstable ♮2 in the coda, essentially an alteration between D-kal and D-har/min. The work ends in a climactic melodic descent that masterfully integrates the motivic fluctuations of F♯/F♭ and E♭/♯ with the chromatic parallel motion and the (chromatically-partitioned) three-note motive (ex. 5.25a, bs. 685-93).

Finally, we should consider how the three-note motive reflects the structural resolution of a fluctuating and enormously stretched F♯/♭. For most of the csárdás this fluctuating note has been supported by A, i.e. a verbunkos I♭. It is only in bs. 589-90 that we hear a full tonic resolution (see ‘emphatic cadence’ in white notes and octaves). Yet this resolution is not generated by a ‘structural dominant’. It is rather generated by a long and cumulative process that is underpinned by thematic and modal logic: the culmination of three-note

39 The F♯/♭ fluctuation is enhanced by the ‘pendularity’ of the Curtain Theme, constantly moving from the F♭ in the bass to the F♭ in the melody (not shown in ex. 5.25, but cf. ex. 5.13b). It is this motivic pendularity, in fact, that is largely responsible for confusing our perception of the tonic: is it F♭ or are we still in A-kal?

40 See p. 252.
motives, and the logical conclusion of a subdominant progression from B♭-verlyd (to which the F♯ inflection belongs) and D major (likewise, F♯).

This is a csárdás, after all, and it is in the manner of a csárdás to reach an explosive conclusion through a hypnotic and repetitive intensification. But Liszt wanted more than that in this piece: he wanted to involve such a process in the intricate design of a sonata, and incorporate in the design his own manner of spinning verbunkos modes. Instead of forcing Hungarian-idiomatic materials and harmonic practices into a classical format to artificially raise the cultural kudos of Hungarian music (as a lesser composer might have done) Liszt allows the verbunkos idiom to transform the old sonata-form principles. In the Csárdás macabre the verbunkos idiom is much more than a decorative detail in a 'late work'; it is the very substance that gives the form its unique shape. This is why the Csárdás macabre is a 'Hungarian sonata' in the deepest possible sense.

\section*{V. Conclusions}

... may one write or listen to such a thing?\footnote{Quoted in Walker, Liszt, 3, 453.}

- Liszt's handwritten question on the manuscript of the Csárdás macabre

Today the Csárdás macabre is not especially known for its verbunkos idiom or structure; rather, it is the rough, low-register double-parallel fifths of the Curtain Theme which are often cited as an example of Liszt's modernist textures. Liszt's tantalising words in the manuscript, "may one write or listen to such a thing?", have been understood to relate directly to these parallel fifths. Both musical and verbal quotes merged in 'late works' narratology into one powerful and palpable symbol of progress and modernism.\footnote{Walker rightly dismisses the sensationalist and rather cheap idea that Liszt wrote this passage (and the entire work, by inference) to annoy Hanslick, an idea that demotes the artistic value of this work to that of a practical joke, the product of a somewhat senile prankster; see Walker, ibid.} But can we be sure what Liszt meant? Is it not possible that he was not only reflecting on the sonorities of parallel fifths but also on the intricate way in which they complicate the
tonality of the piece? Is it possible that he wonders whether anyone will understand why the ‘macabre’ has to be a csárdás in sonata form? Or is it just possible that he is wondering whether the Hungarian element in the piece will be either missed or, if perceived, rejected for its extreme Zukunftsmusik expression? Of course all of this is possible, and no, we cannot be sure what Liszt meant: that ‘thing’ which one dares write or listen to at one’s own risk is wide open to interpretation. It is a small anecdote, but one that is symptomatic of the whole reception problem I have surveyed in this chapter: the Csárdás macabre may well be acknowledged as a ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Hungarian-Gypsy’ work (not hugely surprising, given the title), but its ‘astonishing’ features are only ever part of an abstract ‘late works’ modernism.

I hope that the foregoing case studies in Part III and IV of this chapter have demonstrated that, far from being culturally-rootless or a meta-historical phenomenon, Liszt’s late works are intimately tied to several traditions and cultural contexts, the verbunkos idiom being one important and much neglected strand. More detailed studies of other works with a prominent verbunkos idiom would doubtlessly help in refining our view of its importance and prevalence in Liszt’s art. Nevertheless, on the strength of the evidence so far, it seems that a ‘transcultural’ perspective of the idiom opens an important window into the musical world Liszt inhabited in his late years, a world which, for all its apparent popularity in musicology, remains terra incognita.

Liszt’s decades of engagement with Hungarian popular culture culminated in a verbunkos idiom that never ceased to look back as much as it looked forward. Although it has been beyond the scope of this work to present a continuous, decade-by-decade development of this transcultural influence, the few examples presented in this chapter already suggest that abstract and concrete elements derived from the verbunkos idiom happily coexist at every level, from the smallest motives (e.g. the abstract anacrusis and traditional bokázó figures in ex. 5.3d) to large-scale forms like the Csárdás macabre. This extends to a continuity of alternative tonal practices. One tonal practice in particular, a repetitive and sometimes quasi-minimalist manner of asserting the tonic through gradation, has underlined the finales of Hungarian Rhapsodies nos. 14 and 6 (see Chapters 2/VI and 4/V, respectively), and more elaborately, the tonal process of the Csárdás macabre. It remains for future studies to refine the conceptualisation of this and other practices, establish how widespread these
practices are in Liszt's (and others') oeuvre, and — to complete the transcultural angle (as I have been able to do here only to a limited extent) — define with clarity their relationship to verbunkos.

At bottom, I have tried to show that the meeting place between Liszt's verbunkos idiom and his modernism is deep transculturation, the penetration of verbunkos materials and harmonic practices into the culture of Zukunftsmusik (Figure 5.2, overleaf). This meant innovation at every level, poetic, formal and syntactical. There may be, of course, many other transcultural harmonic practices that I have missed. And undoubtedly, other approaches are needed to complement my particular focus on 'alternative tonal practices'. However, I believe that this focus was specifically aimed at closing the discursive gap between structural analysis and the cultural-historical disciplines. This, in my opinion, was the most effective means of engaging with the causes of the verbunkos idiom's going 'below the radar' of musicology, as far as composition was concerned. This is a legacy that began with a powerful narratology of Zukunftsmusik and 'progress'. Further reinforced by music theory, Bartókian authenticity politics and deep-seated cultural/ethnic prejudices, it pushed important compositional innovations in the nineteenth century outside the official storyline of 'progress'. Yet the political and cultural climate that bred these exclusions is today a distant memory, and we now face challenges that are more methodological than ideological. The problem is not so much recognising the previously unacknowledged importance of transculturation, but to find effective ways of describing it.

If Peter Van der Merwe is right, and what he terms the 'Eastern Fringe' is the collective cradle of much of what we know as 'classical music', then Liszt's story becomes a drop in the ocean and the question of methodology becomes even greater and more urgent. It is only by the accumulation of many disciplinary perspectives — and above all through the accumulation of detailed case studies of particular idioms, composers and works — that we can approach some enlightenment about how much of the 'West' was also 'East'. Liszt may be a small part of this project, but it would take more than one person's lifetime to understand the way transculturation works in his immense and versatile repertoire. At any rate, verbunkos and style hongrois seem like two areas with immense potential for further

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discovery, and whatever we discover in the future could have repercussion for a much more far-reaching understanding of transculturation. In this particular area I cannot think of a composer more important or exciting than Liszt: the story of his *verbunkos* idiom is the largely untold and unacknowledged history of European music.

**Figure 5.2**: The meeting points of Liszt’s *verbunkos* idiom and modernism; cf. Figure 1 on p. 14
Appendix 1a:

Glossary of Terms (in alphabetical order)

bokázó (figure/cadence): see Jonathan Bellman’s discussion of both rhythmic and melodic aspects of the bokázó figure in Appendix 1b.

cimbalom: A horizontal stringed instrument struck with mallets; common in verbunkos and related genres; its technique, sound and typical gestures (inc. glissandi and repetitive notes) inspired some of Liszt’s innovative piano effects, as well as some harmonic ideas; See ‘keyboard-based polychordal and bimodal effects’ on p. 152.

csárdás: A fast Hungarian dance in 2/4 which grew out of the traditional verbunkos friss. See Chapter 5/IV.

Gypsy band: An extremely loose term that generally means, in the context of nineteenth-century Hungarian popular music, a band comprised of Hungarian Roma. However this band could comprise of other ethnicities (or of a mixture of ethnicities). The music played is often verbunkos-related, but not always or sometimes not even predominantly, for which reason the term ‘Gypsy band music’ is close to meaningless. As far as instrumentation, the band most often comprises of a leader (usually a fiddler) and supporting strings. The cimbalom and clarinet (or more traditionally the tárogató, a Hungarian flute) were also popular but not indispensable, and some bands were partly or wholly based on brass instruments. For a detailed account of nineteenth-century Gypsy bands in Hungary see Bálint Sárosi (1978), 120-141.

hallgató: literally, ‘to be listened (rather than danced) to.’ Hallgató is a slow instrumental movement, often based on songs or dance tunes, but exhibiting a rhapsodic, improvisatory playing that treats the melodic line as an abstract cantus firmus. The florid
playing of the leader (a violinist usually, but other instruments and other players can occasionally take the lead too) is sometimes supported by perfectly synchronised slow chords and/or by the timely entrance of the ensemble at the end of the cadenza. The hallgató style adapted to Western concert music usually entails an evocative orchestration, an idiomatic impression of the solo playing (sometimes evoking playing styles that are specific to certain instruments), and an impression of the ‘spontaneous’ rapport between the soloist and the sympathetic, responsive ensemble.

**Kuruc fourth**: a repetitive melodic fourth, evoking a rousing battle call, and connoting the Hungarian war of independence of 1703-11, and its leaders Imre Thököly and Ferenc Rákóczi. Rákóczi had a famous song and march composed in his memory in the early nineteenth century. Liszt’s arrangements of the Rákóczi Song (MD10) and Rákóczi March (RHI5) are also replete with evocative Kuruc fourths, but they also appear in other works and in more elaborate and/or abstract forms (e.g. in Ungarischer Romanzero no. 11 and Mephisto Waltz no. 3, exx. 3.12 and 5.3e respectively.

**magyar nöta (pl. noták)**: Literally ‘Hungarian song(s)’; a genre of quasi-folksongs, partly derived from verbunkos and usually (but not exclusively) composed by the Hungarian lower gentry. For a comprehensive discussion and numerous examples of this genre, see Bálnint Sárosi, Gypsy Music, Corvina Press (1978), 151-96.

**style hongrois**: Jonathan Bellman’s and the current musicological term for the pan-European style based on verbunkos; synonymous with my designation, the ‘verbunkos idiom’ (see below).

Verbunkos I: A texture typical of the verbunkos idiom (and Liszt’s verbunkos idiom in particular) whereby the pedal on V is retained to the extent that we can begin to hear the inversion as a stable tonic rather than as dissonant upper notes that require melodic resolution to.

**verbunkos idiom**: a musical style, manner of playing and/or composing that borrows generic materials and performance practices from verbunkos.
**verbunkos scales:** A group of scales derived from *verbunkos* modes; theoretical constructs that help us conceptualise how intervallic contents and inflections common in *verbunkos* modality affected Western harmony. See Appendix 2.

**verbunkos triplet or anacrusis:** A stepwise and rapidly-ascending group of notes (most typically a triplet) leading to the strong beat.

**verbunkos:** (literally ‘recruiting’, from the Magyarised German *Werbung*): despite its etymology which points to the Austrian army’s underhand recruiting techniques in Hungary, the genre itself has many origins in Hungarian folk and popular music. It is characterised by certain musical features (some of which are given in this appendix), playing techniques and instrumentation (see ‘Gypsy band’). See also Chapter 1/II.
Appendix 1b:

A summary of Bellman’s Lexicon of style hongrois

This list is taken from The Style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 93-130. This list follows Bellman’s order of presentation as well as his division of style hongrois topoi into four groups or categories. References to examples in this thesis are given wherever possible.

1. Idiomatic imitations of instruments and performance gestures

violin/fiddle: coarse double-stop playing, ubiquitous use of snappy appoggiaturas and pizzicato techniques (light staccato in piano adaptations), rhythmic and diminution formulas in varying a tune.

cimbalom: tremolo and percussive/martellato effects.

(bagpipe-derived) drones: imitation of long pedal points, originally derived from bagpipes; limited-range and circular melodies supported by such pedal points; see exx. 3.5 and 3.6.

‘voice’, ‘singing’, and rough textures: The inverted commas imply that this is an impression of the verbunkos instrumental rendering of the human voice rather than a direct impression of singing. The ‘singing’ idiom comprises of two main topoi: (1) ‘voice breaking’ grace notes, some of which are a fifth above the principal note; (2) parallel thirds and sixths ‘crying’ style. The texture is thick, and the sonority has a ‘rough keening quality’ (Bellman, 111) due to the equal importance of the voices. Liszt (and other composers) sometimes doubles the principal two notes to accentuate the harshness of the parallelism. See exx. 5.4 and 5.13b.

hallgató: See Appendix 1a.
2. Rhythmic figures

alla zoppa ('limping') rhythm: a syncopation of short-long-short (⊙ — ⊙) familiar enough in other styles. In style hongrois though, a consistency of this rhythm in the accompaniment produces a recognisable and “highly infectious and kinetic [Hungarian-Gypsy] dance rhythm”. (Bellman, 115); alla zoppa rhythms are also common in the melodic line. In this thesis I use the more technical term ‘short-long-short syncopation’.

long accented notes: These usually punctuate the beginnings or ends of phrases. Bellman singles out the spondee (— —, a group of two longs), but we often find groups of threes (which Liszt seemed to favour) and fours as well.

lombard: short-long (⊙ —); these can come most characteristically as a string of ‘Lombard’ feet, and when they are particularly snappy they can be associated with the appoggiatura-playing of the fiddle, discussed in the previous category.

anapest: short-short-long (— — ⊙); a characteristic rhythm, though not something that on its own could be identified as style hongrois.

iambus (dotted rhythm, ↓ ) and decorative triplets: of all the rhythmic characteristics of style hongrois, these are the most non-specific to the style, and sometimes indistinguishable from a general march style; however they are as ubiquitous and characteristic as the more ‘exclusive’ elements.

choriambus: long-short-short-long (— ⊙ ⊙ —); sometimes the first short note is longer than the second, a rhythmic inflection that can be represented in notation as follows: ↓ ↓ ↓

bokázo rhythm: literally ‘capering’, as this rhythm is derived from a clicking of the heels in traditional Hungarian dances. The rhythmic formula consists of ↓ ↓ ↓ and its variants. It
is better to think of ‘bokázo’ in both melodic and rhythmic terms, since this rhythm is closely associated with a typical melodic turn (see below).

3. Melodic gestures

*bokázo cadence*: a melodic turn around a single note involving the lower neighbour or both upper and lower neighbours.

*Hungarian-Gypsy scale* (and derivative intervalllic inflections): this scale, and its fifth mode (known in Hungarian scholarship as *kalindra*), are the ones most identified with *style hongrois* (ex. a). The preferred term in this thesis is *verbunkos minor* (see Appendix 2).

*Kuruc fourth*: See Appendix 1a.

4. Harmony

*tonal ambivalence* between the first and fifth degree

*juxtaposition of distantly-related chords* and *unprepared key changes*

*non-functional and modal* (or modally-inflected) *harmony*. 
Appendix 2: Verbunkos Scales

The following is based on Lajos Bárdos, ‘Die volkmusikalischen Tonleitern bei Liszt’, in: *Franz Liszt: Beiträge von ungarischen Autoren*, ed. Klára Hamburger, Budapest: Corvina, 1978), 168-96. Throughout this thesis Generic terms are preferred to traditional ethnic attributes. *Verbunkos* scales and/or keys are abbreviated in the following manner: D-ver = D-verbunkos/minor, D-ver/aoel = D-verbunkos/aeolian, etc. The grouping of these scales into minor, phrygian and minor is Bárdos'; I refrain from this melody-orientated classification in the thesis, since it can be misleading in harmonic contexts (e.g. it misrepresents the fact that *kalindra* has a major tonic triad).

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>gypsy minor (Hungarian)</td>
<td><em>verbunkos</em> minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aeolian with augmented fourth</td>
<td><em>verbunkos</em> aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>dorian with augmented fourth</td>
<td><em>verbunkos</em> dorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>melodic gypsy minor</td>
<td>melodic <em>verbunkos</em> (minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Phrygian with a major third" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Harmonic phrygian; neapolitan minor" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phrygian with a major third</td>
<td>harmonic phrygian; neapolitan minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harmonic phrygian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aeolian kalindra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aeol/kal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3:

Liszt Works with a prominent *verbunkos* idiom

3a: Works in chronological order, extracted from Gárdonyi’s *Die ungarischen Stileigentümlichkeiten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts* (1931). ‘P’ is used to indicate works for piano, and ‘SP’ means ‘symphonic poem’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Zum Andenken: Zwei ungarische Werbungstänze von László Fáy und János</em></td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bihari [P]</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mélodies hongroises d’après Schubert [P]</em></td>
<td>425</td>
<td>1838-9,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are 7 (!) versions for the second movement (a.k.a. <em>March hongroise</em>)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1840, 1846,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rákóczi March</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For piano 2 or 4 hands (S242 and S244), also orch. version (S117, 1863-1867); a.k.a. <em>Hungarian Rhapsody no. 15</em>; both late orchestral and piano versions were published in 1871</td>
<td></td>
<td>1839, 1856-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Heroischer Marsch in ungarischem Styl [P]</em></td>
<td>231</td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Magyar Dalok [P]</em></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>1840-1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gaudeamus igitur [P trans.]</em></td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ungarischer Sturmmarsch [P, orch.]</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1844, 1875-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Isten veled</em> ['Farewell'] [song]; text by P. Horvath</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ungaria-Kantate (Aus Osten aus der Sonne Tor)</em>; text by F. von Schober</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Funéreilles</em> ('October 1849') [P] (no. 7 from the second version of the <em>Harmonies poétiques et religieuses</em>)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 I have provided the S catalogue number, which was not current in Gárdonyi’s time, and the year of the piece as established today. A few still unknown or debatable dates are followed by a question mark Otherwise, all dates are based on Alan Walker’s catalogue in *Grove 7* (2001), except the date for the *Csárdás and Csárdás obstinée* which we now know to be 1885 rather than 1884 (my thanks to Leslie Howard for pointing this out to me).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Opus/Year</th>
<th>Composition Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Héroide funèbre [SP]</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1849-50, 1854-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasie über ungarische Volkmelodien [P  and orch.; based on RH14]</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1849-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Rhapsodies hongroises [P; referred to as 'Hungarian Rhapsodies' in this thesis]</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1851-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazeppa [SP after V. Hugo]</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1851-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonata in B minor [P]</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1852-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungaria [SP]</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy und Fuge über das Thema B-A-C-H [org. and P versions]</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1855, 1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missa solemnis zur Einweihung der Basilika in Gran [or 'Gran' Mass; a.k.a 'Esztergom' Mass and as Missa Solemnis]</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1855-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 13 [choir and orch. [two versions]</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1855-8, 1859-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlet [SP]</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>János (Janká, der ungarische Rosshirt) [unfinished opera]</td>
<td></td>
<td>1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunnenschlacht [SP]; after paintings by W. von Kaulbach</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth [Oratorio]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1857-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die drei Zigeuner [song]; text by Lenau (two versions)</td>
<td>320, 374</td>
<td>1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trois Odes Funèbres : no. 2, La Notte</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1860-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christus [Oratorio]</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1862-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungarische Krönungsmesse [Mass]</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1866-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Etienne roi d'Hongrie [Oratorio]; abandoned work</td>
<td></td>
<td>1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungarischer Marsch zur Krönungsfeier in Ofen-Pest am 8. Juni 1867 [Orch. and P trans.]</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosonyis Grabgeleit [P]</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magyar gyors induló (Ungarischer Geschwindmarsch) [P]</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lelkesedés dala [choir.] ('The Song of Enthusiasm' to text by K. Ábrányi the younger)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1871, 1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puszta Wehmut [P] (arr. of song by L. Gizycka on a poem by N. Lenau)</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epithalem zu Eduard Reményis Vermählungsfeier [P]</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevezetés és magyar induló (Einleitung und Ungarischer Marsch) [P]</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunt lacrymae rerum (en mode hongrois) [P]; no. 5 from the Années de Pèlerinage: Troisième Année</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1872-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A holt költő szerelme ['Love of a departed poet']; melodrama based on text</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
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</table>
by M. Jokai, for piano and recitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ungarisch (no. 11 from Weihnachtsbaum)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1874-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem Andenken Petőfis</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Magyarok Istene; orig. version for bar. solo and choir., S339; also in piano and organ versions</td>
<td>339, 543, 674</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Csárdás macabre [P]</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1881-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhapsodies hongroises 16-19</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1882-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magyar király-dal (orig. song to text by K. Ábrányi, S340); exists in several instrumental versions</td>
<td>340, 544, 626, 93</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historische ungarische Bildnisse [P]</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauervorspiel und Trauermarsch [morning prelude and funereal march] [P]</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3b: More works with a notable verbunkos idiom, not included in Gárdonyi’s survey; this table is partly indebted to Klára Hamburger (1997).^2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totentanz [P and orch.; P solo]</td>
<td>126, 525</td>
<td>1839-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réminiscences de Don Juan [P paraph.]; verbunkos elements added in the 1875 version</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>1841, 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March hongroise [P]</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le forgeron [choir.]; text by Lamennais</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galop in A minor [P]</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missa quattuor vocum ad aequales [choir]</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>1846-7, 1869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schwanengesang und Marsch aus Hunyadi László [P trans. of F. Erkel’s overture]</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La célèbre Zigeunerpolka [P; trans. of A. Conradi’s orch. work]</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grosses Konzertsolo[P]</td>
<td>1849-50</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungarischer Romanzero [P]</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 137: An den Wassern zu Babylon [choir]</td>
<td>1859-62</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto no. 1 in E♭ major [final version]</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mephisto Waltz no. 1 [P and orch. versions]</td>
<td>1856-61</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungarischer Marsch in B♭ major [P]</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>229a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano concerto no. 2 in A major [final version]</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die heiligen Drei Könige [P trans. from the Christus oratorio]</td>
<td>1862-6</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantaisie sur l’opéra hongroise Szép Ilonka (Mosonyi) [P paraph.]</td>
<td>1865-79</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus der Ungarischen Krönungmesse:</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiem (Messe des morts) [choir]</td>
<td>1869-85</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Legende vom heiligen Stanislaus [unfinished oratorio]</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fünf ungarische Volkslieder [P]; based on K. Ábrányi the elder</td>
<td>1877-82</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Années de pèlerinage, troisième année, nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. [no. 5 was mentioned in the previous list]</td>
<td>1878-9</td>
<td>534, 503, 504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Crucis [three versions: choir. (S534), P 4-hands and P solo]</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revive Szegedin, marche hongroise de Szabady [P trans.]</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstern! Sinistre, disastro [P]</td>
<td>1882-3</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mephisto Polka [P]</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mephisto Waltz no. 3 [P]</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>216a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gebet (E. Geibel) [org.]</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 129: De Profundis [Choir]</td>
<td>1883-6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagatelle sans tonalité [bagatelle without key] [P]</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>216a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mephisto Waltz no. 4 [P]</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
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