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Sanjay Aiyar April 1, 2025

Franz Liszt: Envisioning the Post-Romantic Era in the *Années de pèlerinage*, Première Année: Suisse

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Sanjay Aiyar

Franz Liszt (1811-86) is widely considered the greatest pianist of all time. While this almost mythical reputation is certainly warranted, it can mask his equally prolific abilities as a composer. Publishing around 1,000 works (mostly for piano), his output spanned around 70 years during the 19th century. Although he is considered one of the quintessential Romantic era composers, his music transcends the period and sets the foundation for musical genres and compositional styles we witness well into the 20th century. One of the earlier examples of Liszt's transformative compositions is the *Années de Pèlerinage*, Première Année: Suisse, a collection of 9 pieces published in 1855; scholars agree that Liszt had been working on the set for almost 20 years and many individual pieces were published much earlier. My hybrid (performance and research) honors thesis explores the visionary nature of the music with three main questions in mind: (1) how did Liszt explore different harmonies, textures, and imagery emblematic of music from later periods, (2) did he further explore any of these ideas in future works, and (3) how were future composers specifically influenced by these ideas? The methodology of this project is multifaceted, involving analyzing the music structurally and harmonically, carefully considering Liszt's indications, closely reading the literature associated with the cycle, and identifying later works/composers that were inspired by the set. Indeed, many pieces by the likes of Ravel, Debussy, and Tchaikovsky, and styles like impressionism and minimalism, can trace some origin in the Suisse Année. The cycle has even influenced some writers, like Murakami. Radical harmonies like diminished major seventh chords, striking cluster chords, lucidly proto-impressionist textures depicting water, and early uses of thematic transformation are just some of the innovative ideas Liszt presents. These findings definitively affirm Liszt's legacy as a revolutionary in music history.

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Introduction

Franz Liszt (1811-86) is one of the titans of music history. He was the foremost virtuoso pianist of his time, achieving an inconceivable level of fame for the time; so much so that the German poet Heinrich Heine described the frenzy and hysteria as "Listomania" (Salmi 2020, 3). A prolific composer publishing in excess of one thousand works, impeccable sight reader and improvisor, highly regarded pedagogue, and innovative conductor, Liszt truly is one of the most important figures in music history. Liszt's greatest contribution to music, however, is his progressive and avant-garde ideas that show themselves decades later in the 20th century. While his later works like *Via Crucis* (1879), *Nuages Gris* (1881), and *Bagatelle sans tonalite* (1885) are recognized as revolutionary, many of his earlier compositions, while lauded as great works, are not often considered as innovative. The *Années de pèlerinage* is a large set of 26 total compositions divided into three cycles, or years. There is the Première année: Suisse (1855), Deuxième année: Italie (1858), and Troisième année (1883). This thesis will focus on the Première année, and consider the visionary nature of the cycle, which has many ideas that would become emblematic of styles in the twentieth century.

As a teenager and in his early twenties during the early-to-mid 1800s, Franz Liszt toured around Europe and became acquainted with the prominent musical, literary, and religious figures of the time. A few important events would profoundly affect Liszt's life. Firstly, was the death of his father, Adam, in 1827. This, and Liszt suffering from a terrible illness of his own, led to a period of reflection and introspection. Secondly, his relationship with Countess Marie d'Agoult, beginning in 1833. d'Agoult was six years Liszt's senior and married to a French aristocrat, although the pair were living separately at the time. Due to the inevitable scandal that would have occurred, Liszt and d'Agoult moved to Geneva, Switzerland, two years after their relationship began. The two traveled around Switzerland from 1835-36 and then Italy from 1837-39. Here is Liszt's own description of this period:

> Having recently travelled to many new countries, through different settings and places consecrated by history and poetry; having felt that the phenomena of nature and their attendant sights did not pass before my eyes as pointless images but stirred deep emotions in my soul, and that between us a vague but immediate relationship had established itself, an undefined but real rapport, an inexplicable but undeniable communication, I have tried to portray in music a few of my strongest sensations and most lively impressions. (Jost 2020, V)

Liszt presents many great places around Switzerland, from the *Tellskapelle* on Lake Lucerne, Lake Walenstadt, and the city of Geneva. However, Liszt was not just inspired by the new places he visited. *Années de pèlerinage* is a reference to the novel *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years* by the influential German writer, Johann Goethe. The basic narrative is of Wilhelm Meister's quest to find a more fulfilling life, as we follow his journey of self-realization, introspection, disillusionment, and self-discovery. These themes are immediately apparent when considering the other literature that Liszt provides with some of the pieces. Regarding the Première année, seven of the nine pieces were originally published as part of a large set entitled *Album d'un voyageur* (1842). Interestingly, the title of this set also references a literary work, that of *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1837) by George Sand, whom Liszt was acquainted with personally. Only *Orage* and *Églogue* were not published in this earlier set. Of the pieces that were published in *Album d'un voyageur*, some underwent very radical revisions (like *Vallée d'Obermann*) while others remained strikingly unchanged (like *Au lac du Wallenstadt*). Many of the revisions represent a maturation in Liszt's compositional style and abilities and will be discussed. Moving back to the Première année, there is an interesting observation on the keys of all the pieces. The first piece, *Chapelle de Guillame Tell*, is in C major. The next seven pieces are all in chromatic mediants of the previous piece (if you consider enharmonic equivalents). Starting in C major, we move to A ♭ major, then E major, A ♭ major, C minor, E minor, A ♭ major, and E minor. The last piece, *Les cloches de Genève*, is in B major, which departs from this trend, but makes more sense when considering the Deuxième année. As mentioned, the eighth piece in the Première année is in E minor. The first piece of the Deuxième année,

Sposalizio, is in E major, so it can be reasoned that B major (the dominant of both E major and minor) functions as a sort of bridge between the two years. Furthermore, the chromatic mediant relationship perpetuates through the Deuxième année. Starting in E major, we move to C# minor, A major, D ♭ major, E major, and A ♭ major. The last piece, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata*, is in D minor, and like *Les cloches de Genève*, departs from the trend. However, the change to a tritone relationship makes narrative sense when considering the subject of the piece – Dante's *Inferno*! The *Venezia e Napoli* suite (supplement to the Deuxième année) continues the chromatic mediant relationship from D minor, with F# major, E ♭ minor, and G minor. Liszt's choice of the harmonic relationship between keys may have influenced other composers who wrote music about travel. For example, the *Java Suite* (*Phonoramas. Tonal journeys for the pianoforte*) by Leopold Godowsky, published in 1925, shares the chromatic mediant scheme.

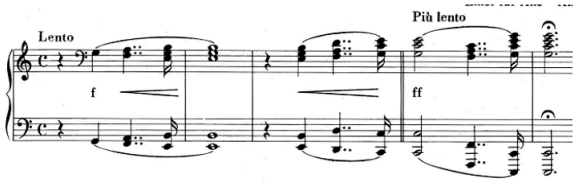
All nine pieces of the Première année are important to get the full picture Liszt is trying to portray. Each work will be characterized with reference to the following questions: (1) how Liszt explored different harmonies, textures, and imagery emblematic of music from later periods, (2) did he further explore any of these ideas in future works, and (3) how future composers were specifically influenced by these ideas.

1. Chapelle de Guillame Tell

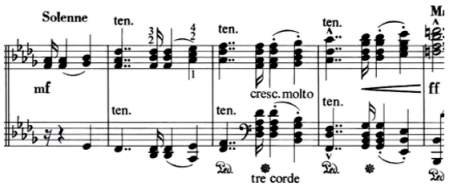
The first piece in the set, *Chapelle de Guillame Tell* (Wilhelm Tell's Chapel), is a multifaceted work. As with many Liszt compositions, it is inherently programmatic, drawing inspiration from the legend of the namesake Swiss folk hero. There are numerous depictions of Tell's exploits, but the one that Liszt was likely the most familiar with is the play *William Tell* (1804) by Friedrich Schiller (Schiller and Mainland 1973). Liszt was highly acquainted with Schiller, setting three songs from his play to music in a lieder cycle called *Drei Lieder aus Schiller's Wilhelm Tell* (1855), and including a quote from Schiller with *Au bord d'une source*. Liszt must have been truly fascinated by the Tell's legend, transcribing the famous *William Tell* Overture (1829) by Gioachino Rossini (essentially a French adaptation to Schiller's German original) for solo piano. Written around 1803, Schiller's incarnation is set in the early 1300s, and presents the outsider Wilhelm Tell coming to the town of Altdorf (just south of Lake Lucerne). At this time, the region was overseen by the Hapsburg bailiff, Albrecht Gessler, who decried that all people bow before his hat atop a pole in the town square. Tell refused and was punished by being forced to shoot an apple off of his own son's head. An expert marksman, Tell succeeded but exclaimed "if my first arrow had my dear child struck, the second arrow would not have missed its mark", mocking Gessler (Schiller and Mainland 1973, 89). As a result, Tell was arrested and sent to a dungeon in the town of Küssnacht across Lake Lucerne. During the journey across the lake, a ferocious storm began, and the guards gave control of the boat to Tell, for he was well known for his boating prowess. However, Tell led the boat to the rocky shore and leapt to his freedom, thrusting the boat of his captors into the waves. He would go on and kill Gessler, erupting the region into rebellion against the tyrannical rulers and leading to the establishment of the Old Swiss Confederacy. To commemorate Tell's heroics, *Tellskapelle* (Tell's Chapel) was constructed on the shores of Lake Lucerne.

This story serves as the core programmatic structure for Liszt's composition, although it is reductionist to say the piece is strictly programmatic. Having actually visited the chapel, Liszt presents his experiences musically and incorporates emotional ideas into his composition. Liszt, as is the case with all but two of the nine pieces in this set (*Pastorale* and *Le Mal du Pays*), includes some literary references as well. For this piece, it is the German phrase "Einer für Alle – Alle für einen" (one for all – all for one). The Latin translation of the saying was adopted as the unofficial motto of Switzerland. The piece starts out with a short bold horn-call introduction, which leads into the main theme of the piece. This introduction features a striking double dotted rhythm, embodying a militaristic character – perhaps fanfare for an important political or military official, or even calls to rally people towards a cause. A possible instrumental inspiration is given in the earlier version of this piece, although Liszt omitted the indication in the final version. The alphorn is a lip-reed wind instrument commonly found in rural mountainous communities throughout Europe, particularly in the Alps. It has a characteristic sound that is both tender (like woodwinds) and resonant (like brass). This gives the motive a nationalistic and political character. During Liszt's travels, the "Regeneration" period (1830-1848) of Swiss history was ongoing, after the French July Revolution of 1830. It is reasonable to think that Liszt supported the struggle of the masses, foreshadowing his later political stances in Hungary.

Interestingly, Liszt almost directly quotes this theme in the first of his two legends, *St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds* (1863), which could suggest an additional religious quality that Liszt associated with this theme, as shown in examples 1 and 2.



Example 1: Franz Liszt, *Chapelle de Guillame Tell* (1855)



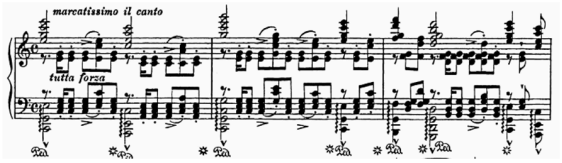
Example 2: Franz Liszt, *St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds* (1863)

Following the brief introduction is the main theme (A) in C Major. When listening to the piece, it is hard not to hear the first part of theme A as the part of the introduction – however, Liszt provides multiple indications (the double bar lines and new tempi/dynamic marking) that this is not the case (ex. Theme A is characterized by a long, drawn-out brass orchestral texture. I have assigned this theme as "Arriving at the Chapel", considering the sense of grandeur and nobility as if the listener is approaching the *Tellskapelle* with its majestic backdrop onto the lake and mountains. The dramatic emphasis on iii (E minor) gives the overwhelming feeling one might have admiring the towering heights and stately architecture of the chapel. This could also be interpreted as the moment where Tell shoots his arrow at the apple on his son's head, and the apprehensiveness amongst the onlookers – did Tell succeed? As Liszt tells us musically with a beautiful transitory passage - cleverly using an Amin7(add6) to bridge from E minor to G7(sus 6-5) and get back to C major, burying the melody within dense chords - Tell was indeed successful. A delicate restatement of the main theme, which is only marked *dolce* in the final version. However, an earlier version of the piece in the Album d'un voyageur shows a very similar passage with more specific indications, including *religioso*. This obviously makes sense considering the chapel scene, but also gives a clue as to Liszt's personal development during this period. A striking, but brief cadence on III (E major) serves to harmonically foreshadow the next section. Some nice modal color is used to get back to V (G major): G♯ (part of the E major chord) is reinterpreted as A ♭ , and we get A ♭ major – E ♭ major – G minor – D7 – G major.

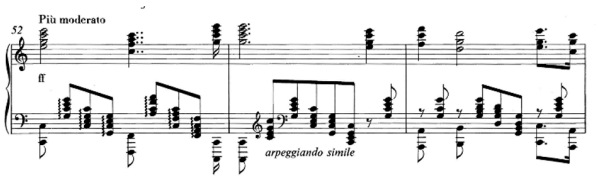
The next section (m. 21) introduces theme B, which I called "Prisoner and Storm." This section strongly invokes the scene of Tell being transported by boat to the dungeon, the storm, and the valiant escape. The double dotted horn-call motive returns and the B theme appears to have harmonic instability. The left-hand tremolos begin with a diminished 7 chord, using chromaticism to eventually cadence on E major (foreshadowed

by the end of the first section). These tremolos, which invoke a string orchestral sonority, serve a few interpretive functions. There is a growing tension with the tremolos, created by the gradual rise in both register and dynamic. This depicts the increasingly violent nature of the waves, brutal power of the storm, and generally precarious situation faced by Tell – along with being in the storm, he was facing life in a dungeon after all. The sharp horn-call motive contrasts with the long, drawn-out melody that follows which perhaps represents the exclamations from the guards pleading for Tell to save them. This drawn-out melody serves as an interesting connection to theme A, which shares that same quality. Liszt makes ingenious use of dynamics and pedal techniques to achieve a three-dimensional character, representing the horn-calls being drowned out by the storm and the boat going further from land. Liszt indicates *vibrato* on the double dotted horn-call; a deliberate choice as earlier in this section, the same motive was instead expressively marked *marcato*. Obviously, vibrato is impossible on piano, but this can be seen as an early version of the "laissez vibrer" markings often employed by Ravel and Debussy. The music continues to build in tension and harmonic restlessness (after cadencing on E major, we go through D ♭ major – B ♭ minor – F minor) to the next section, the "Escape." Sharp, articulated octaves rise dramatically followed by chromatic octave ascents and descents. The double dotted rhythm is once again strongly emphasized here. One final double dotted rhythm motive descends down the keyboard with the last one signifying the point where the boat crashes into the rocks. An ascending scale built on G (V in C major) presents Tell's valiant escape, leaping from the boat and building up to the huge, cathartic recapitulation of theme A. This ascending scale has a somewhat unconventional rhythmic structure, using triplets and off-beat starts of the scale. The recapitulation of theme A (m. 52), which I have called "The Victorious Tell", is truly an orchestral spectacle to be heard. Huge, arpeggiated chords span the whole keyboard accompanying the main theme. The final version of the work shows a much more refined and restrained representation in figuration. The original has unnecessary complex inner chords that have an almost "bouncy" quality, which detract from the more orchestral and resonant sound that Liszt is imitating, as shown in examples 3 and 4. Figural revisions

like this are plentiful not just in this piece, but throughout the whole set, and represent Liszt's maturation as a composer.



Example 3: Franz Liszt, *La Chapelle de Guillame Tell* (1842)



Example 4: Franz Liszt, *Chapelle de Guillame Tell* (1855)

A sextuplet octave motive (ascending and descending in the right-hand and left-hand respectively) could signify Tell inspiring the masses to rise up and rebel against their tyrannical rulers. The cadence on E minor (like in the first section) could be interpreted as the moment Tell assassinates Gessler, and we get a moment of shock and uncertainty amongst the onlookers – did Tell succeed? Indeed, he was, and Liszt uses a more filled-out and dramatic version of the transitory passage found in the first section to get back to the tonic.

The next section (m. 61), "Recounting the Story" is another restatement of theme A, but in a sublimely distinct texture. The first major harmonic change to the main theme occurs here, with substitution of iv (F minor) for IV (F major) giving a more nostalgic sensation. This could also represent the inherent malleability of folklore and Tell's story, with the story changing slightly with each telling. Reinforced diminished 7 chords interrupt the thematic progression representing a similar idea, and propel us through some gorgeous tonal movement. The progression goes as follows: C major and A minor part of theme A, then E°7 – E ♭ major – C minor – G°7 – G ♭ major – E ♭ minor – D ♭ major – D ♭ 7 – D°7 – A minor, gracefully resolving back to C major. The movement from D ♭ major to A minor is particularly moving and sells the idea of closing the book on a long folktale.

The coda (m. 76), "Reminiscing" uses material that was presented earlier in the piece, namely the "Horn Call Introduction" and "Prisoner and Storm." Considering this coda was not present in the earlier versions of the piece, it is reasonable to think that Liszt composed this as a musical expression of him looking back on his travels. There is also the idea of reminiscing on Tell's legacy, and what that meant for Liszt. At the time of writing the coda and publishing the final version, Liszt would have the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 in mind. He was deeply impacted by the uprising, composing works including *Funérailles* (No. 7 from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*) and *Hungaria* (a symphonic poem) in 1849 and 1854 respectively. Tell's legacy would have resonated with him in this way, as he yearned for the liberation of Hungary. Additionally, Tell's legacy is emblematic of new beginnings, which is truly what Liszt was searching for during his travels. The opening horn-call motive is presented in E ♭ major, using G as a common tone to get back to C major both times. The piece ends with the interweaving of the two aforementioned themes, with dense and filled-out chords giving a sense of a fuller picture, contrasting with the opening sections which were sparser and more open.

It is worth mentioning that the Italian-American author, André Aciman, briefly mentions *Chapelle de Guillame Tell* in the second section (Cadenza) of his 2019 novel, *Find Me* (Aciman 2019). The section focuses on Elio, a piano teacher by trade, visiting the childhood home of Michel, who he met at a concert. It is possible that Aciman was inspired by Liszt's musical expression of visiting a place that represented important principles for him.

2. Au lac du Wallenstadt

... Thy contrasted lake

With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing

Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake

Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring

Byron

The second piece, *Au lac du Wallenstadt* (At the Lake of Walenstadt), is a sublime musical depiction of the serene namesake Swiss lake. The literary reference Liszt provides is an excerpt from narrative poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) by Lord Byron, adding another facade to the piece. Byron's famous poem concerns the introspections of a man during his travels to quench his dissolution and aimlessness in life – a narrative that Liszt certainly resonated with (Byron 1829). Lake Walenstadt must have truly captivated Liszt, where according to Countess Marie d'Agoult, "Franz composed for me a melancholy harmony, imitative of the sighing of the waves and the rhythm of the oars, which I have never been able to hear without weeping" (Jost 2020, VI). It is important to remember that by the time the final version of this piece was published, Liszt had formally separated with d'Agoult and thus removed many references to their relationship. Nonetheless, d'Agoult's description of the composition is certainly accurate.

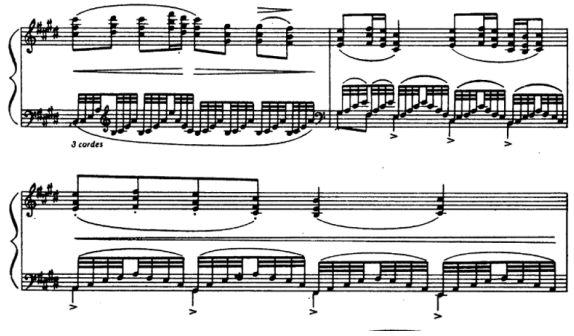
Unlike many of the other pieces in the set and many of Liszt's compositions in general, *Au lac du Wallenstadt* did not have much revision between the different versions. The principles of minimalism, a musical style that gained traction in the 1960s, can be directly applied here. The influential American musicologist, H. Wiley Hitchcock, presents some characteristic elements to explore (Shelley 2013, 65). Repetitive patterns and drones are a prominent feature in Liszt's composition, with the constant ostinato left-hand figure remaining nearly unchanged for the entire piece. Near the end, Liszt occasionally alters the figuration, eliminating the

triplet semiquaver motive before it dissipates completely into a tranquil arpeggiated chord. This creates a sense of stillness, as if time has stopped, as if we have "become portion of that around me" (this quote is from Lord Byron, and is included with the final piece of the set, *Les cloches de Genève*). Additionally, a low A ♭ as part of the ostinato left-hand figure sounds in every measure functioning as essentially a drone sound. The pacing is also remarkably still, with almost no expressive indications of rubato or larger speed changes. Similarly, the volume and timbre are almost exclusively in the *dolce* range, with only a short climax indicating *più forte la mano destra*. There are hardly any modulatory harmonies, and the harmonies that are present are largely euphonious. We are squarely in A ♭ major for the vast majority of the piece, mostly oscillating between tonic and dominant over an A ♭ pedal point (the drone). Pedal points become an important musical way of depicting calm, still water, particularly with the music of Ravel and Debussy. For the first 36 measures, the V^7 (E ♭ 7) lacks the leading tone, G, dampening the resolution to the tonic. Also, as this is constantly repeated throughout the piece, the resolution gradually loses its effect. Thomas Hoi-Ning Lee presents a fascinating interpretation of this idea, asserting that the fundamental concept underscoring tonality – the tonic-dominant relationship – mirrors the unsettled waters in nature. Liszt's harmonic choices and pacing in this piece make it so the tonic and dominant "can actually be said to be in harmony", invoking the tranquil waters that Liszt experienced (Lee 2016, 39). There is a brief emphasis of both IV (D ♭ major) and iv (D ♭ minor) in the middle of the piece, before there is a short modulation to E major (although Liszt does not indicate a key change). After this modulation, the last 67 measures are firmly in A ♭ major.

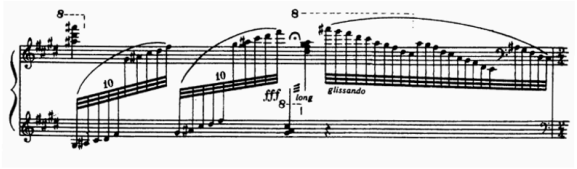
Hitchcock indicates that minimalistic music has little use of dramatic devices. For example, tension and resolution are not really present, with the most we get beyond the simple tonic-dominant being brief alterations between major and minor (D ♭ major and minor) in the fragmented version of the main theme from measures 36-44. However, these are just direct chord modulations, so the resolution isn't much of a release of tension. It is

up to the listener if the work has a climax (if one is heard, it likely starts at measure 62). I would say this passage has climactic elements, a more energized recapitulation of the main theme with more complex figuration, but I think it still fits into the concept of minimalistic music. The left-hand figure remains exactly the same, and the embellished right-hand figure has the melody now in semiquavers. The piece is also very simple structurally, having the main theme introduced and repeated (measures 1-36), fragmented version of the same theme in a closely related key (measures 36-44), a new fragmented version of the theme in a more distant key (measures 44-53), a short transitory passage (measures 53-62), a figural variation of the main theme (62-78), a similar repetition of the fragmented theme with some modal color and dominant-tonic resolutions (78-103), and a short coda using the same figure from the figural variation (103-112).

The piece is monothematic, with all of the motivic material coming from the simple theme introduced in the first few bars. This theme is pentatonic (using pitches A ♭ , B ♭ , C, E ♭ , F), with the right-hand only using these five pitch classes for the first 36 measures of the piece. Liszt's association of the pentatonic scale with water foreshadows many later pieces. For example, Ravel makes extensive use of pentatonic melodies in his *Jeux d'eau* (1901) – see the accented lowest voice in example 5 and the scalar figures in example 6.



Example 5: Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau* (1901)



Example 6: Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau* (1901)

Similarly, the left-hand only uses diatonic pitch classes from A ♭ major (A ♭ , B ♭ , C, D ♭ , E ♭ , F), with the leading tone (G) being omitted. The use of perfect fourths and perfect fifths contributes to the sense of

openness and stillness that Liszt is searching for. The long pedal indications, even through tonic-dominant harmonic movement, also contribute to this feeling. The rhythmic nature of both the waves and oars can easily be heard with the left-hand ostinato. The main theme has a rising and falling quality, but consistently and gradually like the calm waters of the lake (these are not the turbulent waters heard in the middle section of *Chapelle de Guillame Tell*). As Lord Byron described, this is the "purer spring" scene. As Countess Marie d'Agoult indicated, there is a philosophical character to the motive, which perhaps underscores that Liszt's experience at the lake was not one of a tourist, but rather a journey of self-discovery. After repeating this main theme in octaves, Liszt slightly develops it in fragmented form. Essentially, Liszt uses half the theme and moves one note an octave down. As stated earlier, there is some harmonic exploration of IV (D ♭ major) and iv (D ♭ minor), but it is not very drastic. The brief instances of iv could represent brief cloud covers, momentarily darkening the "purer spring", or perhaps a single noticeably rough ripple. The next E major section (m. 45) is another fragmented version of the main theme, and is similarly repeated in octaves. The pedal point idea is retained here with D♯, which Liszt will respell to E ♭ to get back to the tonic, A ♭ major. Thus, this passage is almost like an illusion, as if we see something on the horizon that isn't actually there. The transitory passage (measures 53-62) that follows may best exemplify the melancholic feeling. Liszt arrives back on A ♭ from the E major modulation in measure 53, with the chromatic transitory passage not really establishing A ♭ major much more. In this way, it may seem like an unnecessary addition; however, it serves an important expressive function. It is marked *perdendosi*, meaning "getting lost", explicitly spelling out the feelings of aimlessness Liszt had at the time. This passage also evokes a sense of wonder, as if someone is looking out to the horizon squinting to see far in the distance.

The next passage (m. 62) is a semi-climactic restatement of the theme, with two main alterations. Firstly, the melody is syncopated (by a semiquaver). Secondly, there is a more elaborate semiquaver note falling

figuration embellishing the melody. The embellishment is fairly simple, just adding extra tones of the A ♭ major triad to the pentatonic melody, but has the effect of water droplets sprinkling onto the boat. What follows is a passage similar to the first fragmentation of the melody, but emphasizing the German augmented 6^{th} chord (E7). Instead of traditionally resolving to V (E ♭ major), Liszt directly resolves it to the tonic (A ♭ major). After this, the dominant-tonic resolutions return, and a melody based on the A ♭ major scale is presented. Notice where Liszt buries the melody line within more dense chords in measures 88, 90, 92, 94, and 96-97. Large, playful leaps in the right-hand allow the music to gradually simmer down, taking us to a short coda which combines the main theme with the embellished falling figure from earlier. The music slowly fades out, with the A ♭ pedal point returning. The last 5 measures only use A ♭ major chords in the left-hand, leaving out the quality of resolution – the boat has simply reached the shore, and the ostinato rowing has subsided.

3. Pastorale

The third piece, *Pastorale* (Pastoral), is really a partner piece to *Au lac du Wallenstadt*. It depicts the peaceful Swiss countryside and lifestyle, which is something that Liszt was certainly yearning for at that time. Liszt does not provide any literary references here; however, the music and title speak for themselves. The piece is by far the shortest in the set at just 48 measures long, lasting only one and a half minutes.

Interestingly, the piece is quite a bit different from its earlier conceptions. Even though the two themes that are presented in the final version are also present in the earlier versions, Liszt changes the key from G major to E major (now retaining the chromatic mediant relationship that was posited earlier). He also completely removes two other themes, reducing the final revised version to a very simple rounded binary (ABAB). It is important to note that the "sections" are really each just brief episodes, presenting a theme. An A theme is stated in E major and repeated once verbatim; in fact, the A theme is never altered once except for the commonly missed *ppp* for the fourth repeat (all others are marked *pp*). Following the two statements of the A theme is the B theme, which is also repeated twice. The A theme is presented again and repeated twice. Lastly, the B theme is presented in a slightly embellished form before the piece ends somewhat abruptly. The left-hand is entirely ostinato and drone-like figures for the whole piece. In fact, the left-hand only uses two simple motives for the whole piece. The right-hand presents two melodies that get no harmonic development, and very little figural development. The pacing and volume are very consistent, contributing to the scene that Liszt is trying to convey that of an observer in the peaceful countryside. The same sense of stillness and stopping of time that was achieved in *Au lac du Wallenstadt* is again present here. As such, the harmonic language is very euphonious and there is no modulation. Although the B theme is in B major (instead of E major, like theme A), it is not approached by a specific chord – the A theme just ends without substantial resolution, and the music jumps right into B major. *Pastorale* also lacks dramatic devices that Hitchcock describes. The two themes are similar in tone, character, and

rhythm, and there is little contrast throughout the work. Additionally, there is no climax in the piece. These elements combined with the simple structure make *Pastorale* even more minimalistic than *Au lac du Wallenstadt*. Despite this apparent simplicity, *Pastorale* poses important questions on the relationship between humans and nature. Additionally, Humphrey Searle describes how *Pastorale* "has all the freshness and spontaneity of Bartok's folk song arrangements of Hungarian folk songs" (Searle 2012, 26). Both melodies in *Pastorale* are similar to the *Kühreigen* shepherd melodies from the Appenzell region of Switzerland, and Liszt, like Bartok, uses these melodies to invoke a particular scene (Pesce and Todd 2004, 359).

The first theme (A) of *Pastorale* is very simple, being constructed around an E major triad. The left-hand has a steady, ostinato motive, which functions more like a drone than the ostinato in *Au lac du Wallenstadt*. An E pedal point is present throughout the entire theme and there is not much in the realm of harmonic color. The pedal point creates a sense of stillness, like an observer out in the countryside enjoying the peaceful scene. For one and a half measures before theme A proper, there is a short pickup of the left-hand ostinato, as if something in the distance has grabbed the attention of the observer. Theme A has two separate parts, almost like a call and response. The statement is just that – a statement – and presents little tension or argument. It is basically a descending scale (D♯ – C♯ – B – A – G♯ – E – B – E) over an E major pedal point. This is not the only time Liszt conceives of melodies that are essentially just descending scales – the sixth piece in this set, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1855), and seventh piece in the Italian *Année*, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* (1858). The response acts like an acknowledgement of the statement rather than an answer, with the theme (G♯ – F♯ – G♯ – A – G♯ – F♯ – G♯ – E). A resolution is implied by the left-hand notes dancing around E (D – C♯ – D♯ – E), but they are over an E pedal point, which obscures a more obvious release of tension. Afterwards, theme A is repeated verbatim. As mentioned, theme A is similar to the *Kühreigen* melodies, which Liszt pairs with the ostinato that invokes a swinging, rustic dance rhythm. There is a sense of serenity, as

an observer has noticed a distant village with festive dances. Theme B (m. 11) is also similar to the *Kühreigen* melodies, but with a different accompanying texture. The more angular, direct ostinato texture invokes "droning fifths of bagpipes", and contrasts with the more lilting ostinato with theme A (Lee 2016, 50). These open perfect fifths create a more uniform and harmonious texture. Worth mentioning are the quadruplets as part of the melody in the right hand, which Liszt introduces to temporarily interrupt the monotony. It is important to consider that while theme B is much livelier, the dynamic level does not change, but rather the expression becomes more marked. Perhaps the observer is more focused on the distant sounds, which is why they are more emphasized. Theme B follows the same statement and response form as theme A, with them essentially being a less obvious dominant-tonic relationship. Theme A returns (m. 24) twice, verbatim, with the small exception of a *ppp* indication on the second repeat, underscoring Liszt's insistence on the character. After this, theme B returns, slightly embellished (m. 34). The left-hand ostinato is the same, while the original quadruplet fragment of the melody is now six semiquavers. Throughout this last section, Liszt indicates an extremely gradual decrease in sound, through the many long decrescendo markings and expressive markings (*diminuendo*, *smorzando*, and *ritenuto*). Keeping in mind, we technically are still in the *ppp* dynamic here, Liszt is not afraid of this more extreme dynamic sonority. Theme B and the piece slowly fades out, rather than stops. The music that was observed at a distance did not stop, but rather our attention shifted elsewhere (perhaps to a certain spring, with the next piece) or the music has just become part of the pastoral scene. Paul Merrick describes how "the composer seems here to be watching the dancing peasants as an outsider, perhaps because they are happy. In the Obermann sense, they are not real people, only part of the scenery" (Merrick 1998, 380).

4. Au bord d'une source

In säuselnder Kühle

Beginnen die Spiele

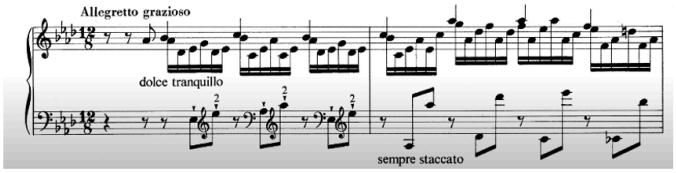
Der jungen Natur

Schiller

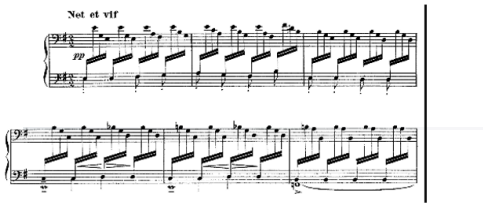
The fourth piece, *Au bord d'une source* (Beside a Spring) is both a textural and lyrical marvel, furthering the trends towards impressionism Liszt fascinated with. The piece has several obvious connections with *Au lac du Wallenstadt*, including the subject matter of water and the key (A ♭ major). However, a major difference is the musical treatment of water – water was still and tranquil in *Au lac du Wallenstadt*, but active and lively in *Au bord d'une source*. Elements here foreshadow some of Liszt's later compositions, including *Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* from the third *Année* (1877), and pave the way for later pieces by Ravel and Debussy. Debussy in particular has an interesting connection to *Au bord d'une source*. Liszt and Debussy actually met in Rome, when Debussy was a *Prix de Rome* scholar. Liszt performed a few pieces, including *Au bord d'une source*, for the students. Debussy would later describe Liszt's masterful pedaling a kind of "breathing" (Lesure and Nichols 1987, 301).

The main theme (A) presents most of the thematic material of the work and has contrapuntal elements. There are four motives here. Firstly, is the main melody in quarter notes (A ♭ – B ♭ – C – B ♭ – C – A ♭ – A ♭ –F – F ♭). Secondly, is the inner watery semiquaver note figure, which has a wave-like quality. Thirdly, is the "sigh" motive that is emphasized with the first and fourth notes of the semiquaver note figure. This "sigh" motive, a second, connects this piece to *Vallée d'Obermann*. Fourthly, are the frisky left-hand jumps from bass to treble over the melody. Importantly, the treble part of these jumps can be heard as part of the melody. All of these elements combine to form a wonderful active texture and permeate individually throughout the rest of the

piece. Kinga Renata Krupa presents how this theme is like an impressionist painting, that "reveals its sense to the spectator only when viewed from afar" (Krupa 2023, 36). All of the elements of the theme need to be heard for it to make sense. Krupa also notes the similarities between *Au bord d'une source* and Debussy's *Jardins sous la pluie* (No. 3 from *Estampes*), published in 1903, as shown in examples 7 and 8. Both hands are intertwined with a melody line emerging out of a dense texture of semiquavers.

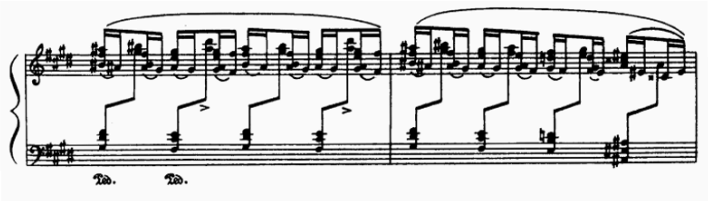


Example 7: Franz Liszt, *Au bord d'une source* (1855)



Example 8: Claude Debussy, *Jardins souse la pluie* (1903)

Lee presents another key idea, of the "clashing seconds", which are technically dissonant seconds. Despite their traditional resolution (down a third), it is inappropriate to evaluate them with the tension-release dialectic, considering they constantly reappear and have fleeting resolutions. As such, the dissonant seconds are really ephemeral physical sensations and "mercurial coloristic devices." (Lee 2016, 43). The idea of a dissonant second mimicking the active nature of water can also be seen with the first piece from Debussy's *Estampes*, *Pagodes* (1903), and Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (1901).



Example 9: Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau* (1901)

Theme A is presented and repeated once, but Liszt changes the harmonic color midway through to iv (D ♭ minor) and uses a A♯°7 – F♯7(add ♭ 9) to modulate to B major in the next section. This next section, theme B, has an expansion on the "sigh" motive, with the melody invoking many possible interpretations: for example, a deep breath in and out or the sinusoidal pattern of a water wave. I will call this theme "B" for clarity, but understand that it uses material presented in theme A. Liszt states this expansion and then cleverly uses a E ♭ min(add 6) – F7(add ♭ 9) to directly move into B ♭ major, repeating it again. This harmonic relation again emphasizes the "sigh" motive. The character to this point has been laminar and playful, but now the music turns more harmonically turbulent, signifying a disruption of the water flow. Liszt alternates between two embellished dominant 7th chords, D ♭ 7(add9) and B ♭ 7(add ♭ 9), segueing into a brilliant sparkly cadenza based on an embellished B ♭ 7. It should be evident that *Au bord d'une source* is much more modulatory and harmonically fluid than *Au lac du Wallenstadt*, invoking the spirited and playful depiction of water Liszt wants to achieve.

An elaboration of the contrapuntal texture of theme A follows (m. 13), with more emphasis on the fourth element, now in arpeggiated octaves, which invokes sensations of water splashing whimsically. Similarly to the first iteration of theme A, iv (D ♭ minor) is emphasized but instead of moving to B major with an embellished secondary dominant, Liszt uses a F♯°7 (with the "sigh" motive, E-D♯, inside) and B7 to modulate to E major. This brings up an important point about the structure of the piece, which loosely resembles a set of variations. Liszt departs from the more traditional and rigid variation structure, really using thematic transformation. This idea will be discussed later, with *Vallée d'Obermann*.

The next section (m. 17) is a Ravel-esque elaboration of theme B. The character and texture of this section is reminiscent of Ravel's *Une Barque sur l'Ocean* (No. 3 from *Miroirs*) published in 1905. Liszt overlays theme B on an E pedal point and keeps a similar semiquaver note wave-like figuration. The arpeggiated octave motive from the previous section is used, but instead in filled-out arpeggiated chords outlining B major – C♯

minor – B7 – E major. Earlier, Liszt modulated from B major to B ♭ major, and he does a similar modulation here from E major to E ♭ major (again, harmonically emphasizing the "sigh" motive) using new chords (E7 – B ♭ 7) to do so. A transitory passage (m. 21), still built on the "sigh" motive, using modal mixture – ♭ VI (C ♭ major) and iv (A ♭ minor) borrowed from E ♭ minor - goes into a luminous descending cadenza (contrasting with the earlier ascending cadenza). The cadenza outlines a first inversion half-diminished 7th chord moving down chromatically to a root position minor chord (so the progression goes C^{ø}7 – D minor – B ♭ ^{ø}7 – C minor, and so on). It continues into sparkling rising and falling figure using the notes E ♭ and B ♭ (functioning as V to lead back into A ♭ major). Next is a peaceful textural variation of theme A (m. 28), with some subtle alterations. Here, five contrapuntal elements can be argued: (1) the quarter-note melody line, (2) inner semiquaver figure, (3) "sigh" motive in the right-hand, (4) "sigh" motive in the left hand, (5) bass-treble "leap." The fifth element is similar to the fourth element from earlier, except the right-hand takes the treble note. This variation ends with an unresolved dissonant interval (E ♭ -D) and a rising scalar cadenza (a chromatically embellished B ♭ 7).

The next section (m. 31) combines theme A and the "sigh" motive. The left-hand presents theme A, whereas the right-hand presents two versions of the "sigh" motive. Firstly, is the descending harmonic progression in parallel sixths: D ♭ major – C minor – B ♭ minor – A ♭ major – G°– F minor. Secondly, is the descending semiquaver scalar figure which also interestingly functions to obscure the harmonies (for example, D ♭ major becomes F minor, C minor becomes E ♭ major and so on). Similarly to the first transition between theme A and B, Liszt goes from iv (D ♭ minor) to B major, using G°7 – F♯7. This section is essentially just an embellished variation of the first statement of theme B, conserving the same harmonic structure. The descending semiquaver figure that was just heard in the previous section comprises the inner voice of the right-hand, with the melody from theme B as the outer voice. The left-hand also has two voices, a trill with scale degrees five and six (F♯ and G♯), and a lower B pedal point. Liszt uses a B7(add ♭ 5) to move to B ♭ major, and

then does a similar build-in passage to a cadenza. The cadenza is constructed around ascending dominant 7^{th} chords and uses a rising parallel minor third figure that contrasts with the descending minor thirds figure in the second cadenza. The cadenza cadences on a reinforced B ♭ 7(add ♭ 9) tremolo before the climax of the piece. The climax (m. 40) is a brilliant, glistening variation on theme A, with the arpeggiated octave figure broken into triplet semiquavers. Liszt adds some harmonic color, with the descending progression A ♭ 7 – F°7 – B ♭ ᵒ7 – A ♭ major, culminating in a beautiful, lustrous stacked chord (E ♭ 7 and F minor). Quartal and quintal figural flourishes ascend on the keyboard reaching a proper E ♭ 7, where descending perfect fourths and fifths within the E ♭ major pentatonic mode (E ♭ – F – G – B ♭ – C) prolonging an ethereal V^7-I resolution.

A repeat of the Ravel-esque elaboration of theme B is presented again, now transposed to A ♭ major, and the transitory "sigh" motive passage that emphasized modal mixture with ♭ VI and iv (F ♭ major and D ♭ minor borrowed from A ♭ minor) brings us to a pseudo-recapitulation of theme A (m. 55). Theme A appears to return verbatim, but Liszt modifies it in the midway through embellishing the progression V^7/vi (C7) - vi (F minor) – V (E ♭ 7) beneath the melody line of G – A ♭ – G – A ♭ . The same passage is repeated again, this time borrowing the figuration from variation that had five contrapuntal elements. Worth mentioning is the deliberate articulation marking Liszt indicates on the third member of each left-hand grouping, which implies it may be a bass register addition to the "sigh" motive. The coda (m. 59) begins with a textural passage containing previously used harmonic language and figural ideas. The "sigh" motive hides within the wave-like semiquaver figuration as the harmony alternates between I (A ♭ major) and IV (D ♭ major), with a brief usage of iv (D ♭ minor) that has been foreshadowed throughout the piece. The music seems to be gradually slowing and quieting down, before Liszt presents one final magical cadenza-like flourish. This cadenza is built over a prolonged IV (D ♭ major) harmony and retains the "sigh" motive (E ♭ -D ♭ , G-F, B ♭ -A ♭)as the texture ascends up the keyboard. Finally, Liszt recalls the right-hand material from the passage that followed the chromatically

embellished B ♭ 7. This passage is wholly based on the "sigh" motive, overlayed on a tonic (A ♭ major) pedal point. Now, Liszt provides two endings to the piece – one lasting two measures, and the alternative lasting nine measures. The alternative ending, written in 1863, was made by Liszt for his student Giovanni Sgambati. The underlying progression is similar to the ending of *Au Lac du Wallenstadt* with oscillating I-V harmonies over an A ♭ (tonic) pedal point. Ideas from throughout the piece, most prominently the "sigh" motive constitute this alternative ending. The published ending has a harmonic progression that Liszt has used throughout the work and one last emphasis of the "sigh" motive: F minor – B ♭ ø7 – E ♭ 7 (A ♭ -G "sigh" suspension) – A ♭ major.

There is one last point to be made that illuminates Liszt's maturation as a composer. Even though the revised version is less technically difficult, only a pianist and composer with genius of Liszt could have conceived and demanded "such creative physical approaches of piano-playing—not for the sake of technique itself—but for the purpose of drawing refreshing, novel sonorities out of the instrument" (Lee 2016, 49).

5. Orage

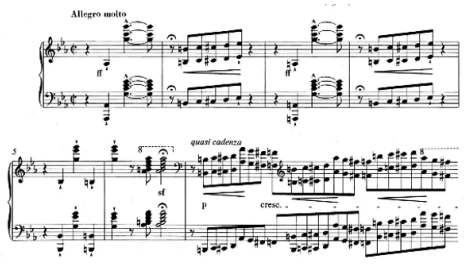
But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal?

Are ye like those within the human breast?

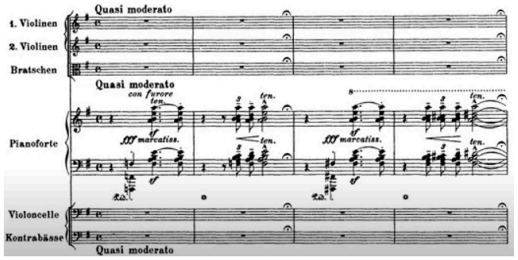
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

Byron

The fifth piece, *Orage* (Thunderstorm), presents with a powerful and introspective character piece for both nature and mankind. Interestingly, the piece was only included in the complete set and not in the earlier Album d'un voyageur. However, elements from the piece can be found in some of Liszt's earlier works. For instance, the opening motive is strikingly similar to the opening from the somewhat obscure *Concerto for Piano and Strings* (1833) that Liszt left officially untitled, but named the opening motive "Malédiction," as shown in examples 10 and 11. This gives us a clue that *Orage* is not simply a depiction of voracious thunderstorms that Liszt observed and lived through in Switzerland, but also a study of the human psyche. Liszt includes another excerpt from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) which confirms this idea.



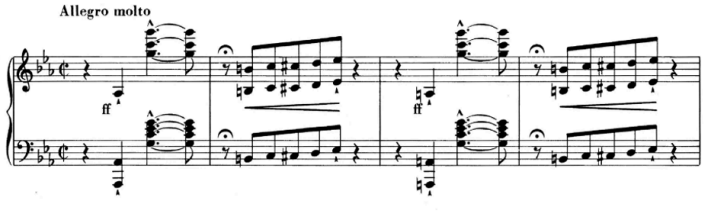
Example 10: Franz Liszt, *Orage* (1855)



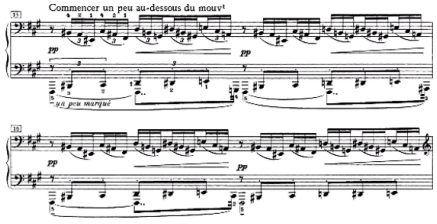
Example 11: Franz Liszt, *Concerto for Piano and Strings* (1833)

Orage is extremely carefully crafted and marvelously taut. The opening A ♭ s serve to connect the previous *Au bord d'une source*, and Liszt moves the harmony chromatically from: A ♭ maj7 – A^{ø}7 – E ♭ major –

B augmented– A ♭ °7. Liszt's notation of the high chords is intriguing, as he could have easily notated a half note instead of the tied dotted-quarter and eighth note. Even though there are no staccatos indicated, it is reasonable to think that this is what Liszt preferred (and was how the motive originally appeared in "Malédiction"). It can be thought of as a way of notating tenuto musically. This opening may catch the audience off-guard, as if suddenly, after a peaceful day (think of the character of the first four pieces), striking claps of thunder penetrate through the countryside. Paul Roberts presents how Debussy quotes the truncated octave motif in *Orage* (measure 2 in example 12) in his *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, No. 7 from *Préludes* Book I (1909), with the "rising-storm motif" in measure 15 (Roberts 1996, 195), as shown example 13.

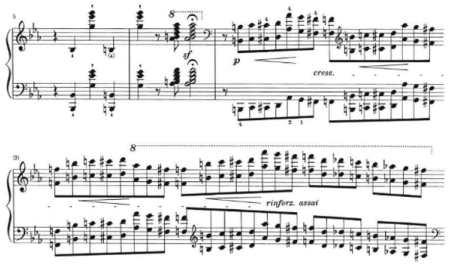


Example 12: Franz Liszt, *Orage* (1855)

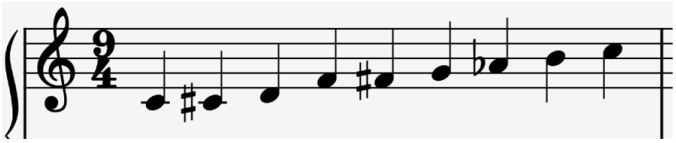


Example 13: Claude Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (1909)

A huge swelling and cascading of octaves follows where Liszt uses a scale that would become one of Olivier Messiaen's *Modes of Limited Transposition*. Messiaen was an important composer in the 20th century who created a list of modes which have limited transposition: either they don't have (1) twelve different transpositions or (2) an equal number of notes and modes. The first two of these modes are more commonly known as the whole-tone and octatonic scales, but the other five do not have names like that. Messiaen's fourth mode consists of the following intervals: semitone – semitone – minor third – semitone – semitone – semitone – minor third – semitone (example 15). Liszt follows this mode, only rearranged: B – C – C♯ – D – A ♭ – G – F♯ – F (example 14).

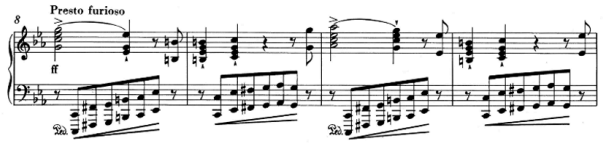


Example 14: Franz Liszt, *Orage* (1855)

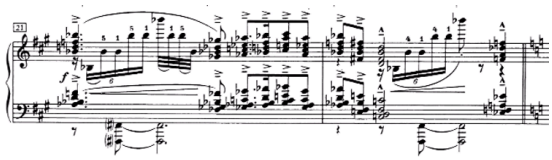


Example 15: Olivier Messiaen, Fourth *Mode of Limited Transposition*, starting from C

After this introduction, Liszt introduces the main theme of the work in C minor (m. 8). Liszt holds no reservations here, nor throughout the work – the technical complication is extremely high, but it is all in service to the music. Theme A, marked *Presto furioso*, has a few key components, and two secondary ideas. The main melody is characterized by its rhythmic sharpness and use of augmented harmony (B augmented going to the tonic, C minor). The chordal idea of theme A would also influence Debussy, once again in his *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (Roberts 1996, 195), as shown in examples 16 and 17.



Example 16: Franz Liszt, *Orage* (1855)



Example 17: Claude Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (1909)

Liszt modifies the harmonic structure of theme A throughout the work, but the rhythm remains consistent. In this way, *Orage* is similar in structure to *Au bord d'une source*, in that both loosely resemble a set of variations, but more accurately thematic transformation. There is a rising octave motive in the left-hand, rising in both register and dynamic, conjuring the howling stormy winds. The second part to theme A is highly chromatic (E ♭ – D – D ♭ – G – G ♭ – F – B ♭ – A – A ♭ – E ♭) and uses common tones to control the harmonic progression (mainly with D ♭). This culminates in two powerful ideas: a cataclysmic chromatic

cascade of octaves and a throbbing, berating chord cluster (6 notes – C, D, F, A ♭ , B, C). It is worth noting that this chord cluster can be considered a diatonic tone cluster (B-C-D) with a diminished 7^{th} chord, but it serves a more aesthetic purpose rather than a functional one. After restating theme A in both parts, the same culmination returns but in a different harmony (a third inversion D ♭ 7). One last thing to ponder on is Liszt's longer pedal markings, which produce an unconventional but very powerful sound. Unfortunately, these markings are seldom observed in performance.

The next section (m. 28) is a development with theme A, and is harmonically restless. We begin in G ♭ major, (remember the D ♭ 7 that led us here), a very distantly related key to C minor. Liszt moves through G ♭ major, F minor, and A minor. The left-hand rising octave motive continues throughout this section. Finally, we cadence on E major and get further development of some of the ideas within theme A, namely the chromatic octaves and cluster chords (m. 38). The chromatic octaves now swell up the keyboard, contrasting with the earlier cascade but expanding upon the left-hand rising octave motive. An additional idea of double major thirds (in both hands) is introduced, retaining the chromatic character. These double thirds create full major chords which rise and fall chromatically. This is repeated up a tritone, in B ♭ major. Before modulating, Liszt resolved the Amin(add6) to the tonic (E major). However, to modulate to B ♭ major, Liszt resolves it to an F7 to achieve this. We do not stay in B ♭ major for too long, as Liszt uses the harmonic progression (now in A♯ major (enharmonic equivalent of B ♭ major): Bmaj7– B7 – B°7 – G7(add ♭ 5) to modulate to F♯ major.

This section (m. 55) is another development on theme A, now in F♯ major, retaining rhythmic structure. Perhaps, the chromatic left-hand octaves and sharp marcato right-hand rhythm represent the rumble of thunder and clap of lightning respectively. F♯ major is a tritone away from C minor, which explores human spirituality, with Paul Merrick interpreting this section as the "high nest" from the epigraph at the start of the piece (Merrick 1998, 379). Indeed, Liszt associated F♯ major with divinity; two notable examples being the

Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude, No. 3 from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1853), and the empyrean middle section beginning on measure 157 of the *Dante* Sonata (1858).

Liszt's long pedal markings were introduced earlier, and they are even more prominent here. The pedal is marked to hold for five measures, creating a powerful onslaught of torrential sound. Liszt states this, and uses a transitory passage to modulate to E major. The transitory passage has fierce tremolos in the right-hand over a rising octave motive of G♯-G-F♯, D♯-D-C♯, and uses the tritone of a B7 harmony to modulate to E major. Alongside F♯ major, E major was a key that Liszt associated with divinity. Some notable examples include the first and last pieces from the third *Année* (1883), *Angélus*! *Prière aux anges gardiens* and *Sursum Corda*, and *L'hymne du Pape* (1864). As such, these key choices are very deliberate. Interestingly, left-hand octaves have an abnormal rhythmic feel – they are syncopated, and also can easily be heard as groups of three despite just being normal eighth notes. Now in E major, the development is repeated, just transposed, and Liszt uses the same transition passage with a rising octave motive of F♯-F-E, C♯-C-B, and uses the tritone of an A7 harmony to move to D major. The energy of the music continues with *strepitoso* octaves, tumbling down the keyboard (m. 74). The chords D major, G minor, G major, and C minor are emphasized with the marked dotted rhythm recalling theme A. This builds into a striking passage of interlocking octaves and a progression of diminished 7th chords. Notice the chromatic line that Liszt presents (A ♭ – A – B ♭ – B – C – D ♭ – D – E ♭ – E – F) within the diminished 7th harmonic progression. When following Liszt's careful expressive markings, like the specific crescendo and *rinforzando* markings, the result is a captivating depiction of a violent wind swirl throwing rain across the scene. The music seems to briefly cadence on B major, in a similar passage to the introduction. However, Liszt continues the chromatic line subtly (F♯ – G) and ends on a G augmented chord.

The next section (m. 93) is another development of theme A, retaining the rhythmic structure like the developments in F♯ major and E major. Liszt marks it *Cadenza ad libitum*, however there are no performances

that I could find which followed this marking. The theme is stated three times in diminished harmonies moving up a half-step each time, culminating with D ♭ diminished The huge rising and falling scalar arpeggios in the right-hand conjure up more feelings of vicious storms of relentless intensity. The first note of the left-hand melody, A ♭ , also continues the chromatic line (from G). D ♭ diminished is used to move towards D ♭ major as a tonal center, which it seems like the music has climaxed on. But Liszt uses some more chromaticism, with B as a common tone to get to the true climax of a B°7: D ♭ 7 – B°– B major – E minor – B°7. These chords are syncopated and have a stabbing, violent character as if we are just being berated by brute force. Additionally, the common tone progression idea used in the second part of theme A is reused.

Next, the introductory octave passage in Messiaen's fourth mode returns, and we get a restatement of theme A (m. 116). After this first restatement, the music calms down for the first time. Everything is dropped down to a lower register and the texture gradually dissipates into the familiar cascade of octaves; however, they have a different character, as if the storm or anger is subsiding temporarily. Worth mentioning is how the octaves stop abruptly without any resolution. What follows is a variation on the first development of theme A, in a more sincere yet solemn character. This perhaps represents reflecting on one's experiences during the storm or emotional episode. The left-hand emphasizes the following line: A ♭ – G – F – E – E ♭ – D – D ♭ , which could imply F minor. This is supported by the alternating VI (D ♭ major) and V (C major) harmonies which move into a proper statement of an F minor chord. This brief sense of a possible closure moves right into an A ♭ diminished chord followed by ominous, deep octaves (E ♭ -D-D ♭ , G-G ♭ -F, B ♭ -A-A ♭) reminiscent of the rising octave motive heard earlier. Just like how the cascading octaves stopped abruptly on C♯ before this section, this octave motive does as well (on the enharmonic equivalent of C♯, D ♭).

The coda (m. 151) is essentially a variation on the introduction. It retains the same rhythmic structure, but importantly, Liszt omits the fermatas – a detail that is sometimes ignored. We get alternating ♭ II (D ♭

major) and i (C minor) harmonies, which were foreshadowed by the alternating D ♭ major and C major harmonies in the previous section. Liszt gives us one final octave passage, which uses the following scale: C – D ♭ – D – E ♭ – F♯ – G – A ♭ – B. The scale could be interpreted as a slightly modified C Hungarian minor scale (with an added ♭ II, D ♭) – evidently, D ♭ is a reoccurring note throughout the piece as has been discussed. Regardless, during the descent of octaves, the D ♭ is omitted, and the C Hungarian minor scale of a tone – semitone – augmented tone – semitone – semitone – augmented tone – semitone. In the classical tradition, Liszt pioneered the use of the Hungarian minor scale in Western Classical music, and *Orage* is his earliest usage of the scale properly, before extensively using it in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and other compositions like *Csárdás macabre* (1881-82).

6. Vallée d'Obermann

The sixth piece in the set, *Vallée d'Obermann* (Obermann's Valley), is not only the most important and substantial piece of this set, but arguably of Liszt's entire compositional output. The piece is extremely autobiographical for Liszt, and is the first major compositional statement that Liszt made in his life. Probably the most important thing to consider is that the "valley" does not refer to a physical valley, but rather is an homage to the French Romantic Étienne Pivert de Senancour's epistolary novel, *Obermann* (1804). The novel was somewhat obscure, but did enjoy some increased popularity in the 1830s. Obermann, aimless, plagued by self-doubt, and unsatisfied with his current place in life, leaves for the Jura Mountains of Switzerland for a journey of introspection and self-discovery. He longs for the solitary, pastoral lifestyle, and chronicles his experiences and thoughts in letters to a friend (epistolary novel). However, despite the brief episodes of sublime spirituality that he experiences, he discovers that he does not belong here either (Senancour 1804). Liszt has provided a few epigraphs from the novel to inform our perspective.

Étienne Pivert de Senancour, *Obermann*, Letter 4 (excerpt):

> Unutterable sensitivity, charm and torment of our empty
> Years: immense awareness of a nature that everywhere
> Overwhelms and is impenetrable; all-embracing passion,
> Indifference, advanced wisdom, voluptuous freedom; all
> the needs and deep sorrows that a mortal heart can hold,
> I felt, I suffered in that memorable night. I took a dark
> step towards the age of weakness; I swallowed up ten
> years of my life.

Étienne Pivert de Senancour, *Obermann*, Letter 53 (excerpt):

> What do I want? What am I? What should I ask of nature?
> … Every cause is invisible, every end is deceptive; every
> form changes, every time-span works itself out: … I feel,
> I exist in order to be consumed by ungovernable desires,
> to drink in the seductiveness of a fantastical world,
> to stand aghast at its voluptuous error

Liszt also includes an excerpt from Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812). The work is a narrative poem that deals with similar themes as *Obermann*. This narrative was discussed in the context of *Au lac du Wallenstadt*, but the general premise is of Childe Harold's introspections during his travels to end his aimless life and find fulfillment (Byron 1829).

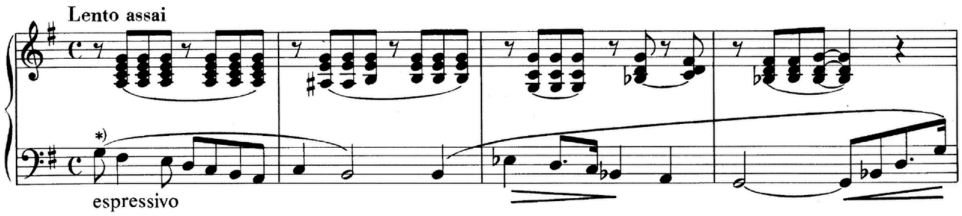
Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto 3, verse 97 (excerpt):

> Could I embody and unbosom now
> That which is most within me, - could I wreak
> My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
> Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
> All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
> Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe – into *one* word,
> And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

Vallée d'Obermann, structurally, is like an early example of a tone poem (or symphonic poem), and makes extensive use of thematic transformation which would be a technique that Liszt would realize and expand upon in later works like - the *B minor* (1854) and *Dante* (1858) Sonatas, *Ballade No. 2* (1853), and *Fantasy and*

Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H (1855). The theme is treated almost like a protagonist in a novel, undergoing what is essentially musical character development.

The piece starts in E minor, with dreary, bare scalar descent in the left-hand. Theme A is composed of three principal motives that will form the basis of the whole piece. Motive 1 is a descending despondent scalar line (G – F♯ – E – D – C – B – A, as it first appears). Motive 2 is an appoggiatura that invokes a "sigh" (C – B), which is similar to the "sigh" motive in *Au bord d'une source*. Motive 3 bridges the two together and involves a leap and fall (A – C – B). In the earlier version of the piece in Album d'un voyageur, the theme is marked *con un profundo sentimento di tristessa* (with a profound feeling of sadness). The right-hand accompaniment, marked by its monotonous and trudging nature, represents "the monochord of the relentless solitude of human pain" that Liszt himself described Obermann as. The harmonic language daring and radical, and goes as follows: F♯ø7(add ♭ 9) – Amin7 – C7 – E minor – C minor – G minor – D7 – Gø7 – G minor. This is then repeated in G minor, going to B ♭ minor. The restless harmonic language portrays the feelings of aimlessness and doubt that both Obermann and Liszt experienced. In fact, despite being in E minor (by key signature), we do not get a proper establishment of E minor as a tonal center until measure 67, almost seven minutes into the piece. Theme A, with its characteristic harmonic language and rhythmic pulse, bears some similarity to the opening of Liszt's *Sonata in B minor* (1854). Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky may have also been inspired by theme A, with Leslie Howard noting that Tchaikovsky highly admired Liszt's piece and "appropriated" theme A in his opera *Eugene Onegin* (1879), with Lenski's aria (Banciu 2018, 20), as shown in examples 18 and 19.. Intriguingly, the connection between the two works does not stop there. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) influenced both *Vallée d'Obermann* and the main literary inspiration for Tchaikovsky's opera, *Eugene Onegin*, *A Novel in Verse* (1837) by Alexander Pushkin. Interestingly, possibly flattered by the move, Liszt actually transcribed the Polonaise from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* for solo piano in the late 1870s.



Example 18: Franz Liszt, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1855)

Example 19: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin* (1879), *Lenski's aria* (act II, scene 17, mm. 58-61)

Another aspect of *Vallée d'Obermann* is its orchestral character. In fact, Hungarian pianist and composer Zoltán Kocsis orchestrated the work, which premiered in 2006. Moreover, in 1880 Belgian-Danish composer Eduard Lassen, who was a close friend of Liszt's, arranged the piece for piano trio. Liszt appreciated the gesture so much that he made multiple of his own arrangements for piano trio, including one titled *Tristia* (1880). Both the orchestral and piano trio versions of the piece are valuable perspectives into thinking about *Vallée d'Obermann* more holistically. Additionally, the name *Tristia* may have been in reference to the Augustan poet Ovid's set of poems by the same name. These poems bear many similarities to the novel *Obermann*.

What follows theme A and the cadence on B ♭ minor is a development section on motive C, which begins in F♯ minor. Liszt respells D ♭ (which was part of the B ♭ minor chord) to C♯, allowing for an amazingly seamless transition between very distant keys. The first phrase uses an idea introduced in theme A with the "sigh motive" (E♯-F♯) in the inner voice. Whereas theme A was a string sonority, this passage is more of a woodwind texture – perhaps an oboe. Right as we seem to be moving along in F♯ minor, the music directly modulates to a new, somewhat ambiguous tonal center (likely A ♭ major). Motive 1 is presented in the right-hand starting on A ♭ and repeated on B ♭ (albeit slightly altered in the middle). The end of the phrase emphasizes the "sigh" motive (now A ♭ -G). This is stated over two G pedal points, which obscures the A ♭ °7 –

A ♭ major harmonies. This passage invokes another woodwind sonority, perhaps a bassoon. Next, the music starts to build in texture and intensity, directly modulating from A ♭ major (?) to E minor – although, again, we don't get a firm establishment of it. Theme A is stated, now in octaves, building to a mini-climax. The harmonic progression remains restless: F♯°7 – A minor – D♯°7 – A minor – B7 - F♯ø7(add ♭ 9) – Aø7(add9). The music climaxes on an Aø7 which resolves to a proper A°7 chord with the "sigh" motive. The texture starts to thin, and we get a descending E minor scale. However, the monophonic sound, off-start and finish of the scale (starts on G, ends on C-D♯), and non-chord tones (D♮) obscures the E minor tonal center. This last phrase invokes the wails of a person desperate to escape from their monotonous struggle. Similarly to how Liszt used an underlying chromatic line in *Orage*, one is present in this section, albeit harder to discern. Starting with B ♭ on the cadence of theme A's second statement, we get B ♭ – A – G♯ - G – F♯ - E – D♯ - C – B. To this point, *Vallée d'Obermann* bears some striking similarities with Liszt's famous third symphonic poem, *Les préludes* (1854). Theme A in both pieces are scalar in nature and contain a prominent "sigh" motive. The tonal ambiguity that plagued *Vallée d'Obermann* is also present in the first section of *Les préludes*. The melody is in the aeolian mode and seems to imply both C major and A minor, before eventually cadencing on A major. Like with *Vallée d'Obermann*, theme A is restated again in a different key and the music moves on into a harmonically restless development section.

The next section (m. 25) continues the harmonically restless and ambiguous character, expanding on motive 3. There is a pensive and questioning character, searching for answers yet being left without them. Although the harmonies are suspended, they are long and drawn out and thus the dissonance is emphasized, particularly with the last resolution: C ♭ 7 – E ♭ minor – A ♭ ø7 – A ♭ °7 – G ♭ +maj7 – E ♭ minor. The augmented major 7 is a striking chord, and Liszt doesn't even resolve it (even though the resolution is not much anyway) in the typical way – usually, it would go to vi (or VI) which would be B major, but instead goes to i

(E ♭ minor). This phrase is repeated up a tritone, cadencing on an C+maj7 – A minor. A minor is used to move to a B7 ♭ 9(add ♭ 11) – B7(add ♭ 9), bringing us back to E minor (but remember, E minor is not formally established). Some more things to note about this passage is the continuation of the descending line (no longer chromatic) with C ♭ – B ♭ – A ♭ – G ♭ – F – E – D – C – B, which is essentially a whole tone scale on C with a tritone (B-F) added. Additionally, consider the long pauses and silences between phrases representing the debilitating self-doubt.

Theme A returns with a few small changes (m. 34). A bass-line beneath the melody in the lower register provides more of a harmonic grounding. Nonetheless, the same broad tonal movement of E minor – G minor – B ♭ minor is repeated. The first development of theme 3 that was presented earlier returns here, but we stay in B ♭ minor instead of going to F♯ minor. Another development of theme 3 occurs, now in octaves and in E minor. Liszt again makes use of the augmented major 7 chord, with a G+maj7 resolving to i (E minor). A descending chromatic line (E – D♯ – D – C♯ – C – B – A♯ – A –G♯ – G) over a Cmaj♯11 (C – E – F♯). This leads to an unconventional, but strikingly beautiful resolution to E ♭ major, in what is the first glimpse of ecstasy we have gotten so far. Motive 1 returns, stated twice in a continuous line from treble to bass each time. The same idea is repeated in a direct modulation to B major. A single note is altered in the final descending motive 1 in B major giving an augmented second, which ends the brief moment of bliss. The pensive, long suspended-chord development of theme 3 returns here, stated once in B ♭ minor and repeated in F minor. We then get three lonely chords, C minor – F°7 – B7, which lead into E minor, and the first proper root-position E minor chord (m. 67). However, Liszt actually leads us into E Neapolitan minor (E – F – G – A – B – C – D♯), a very unconventional mode for the time. Motive 1 returns, for three statements, each time descending into lower registers, representing the agonizing descent down into a valley. The last statement ends with a heavy Amin7

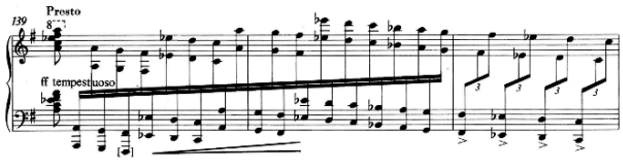
resolving to E minor, not so satisfyingly. Three lonely E minor chords sound, overtaken by a long silence before the next section.

The next section (m. 75) is an angelic and celestial development of theme A, strongly contrasting with the entire piece thus far. For clarity, I will notate it as "B", but understand that it is just an elaboration on theme A. These are the brief times of sublime spirituality Obermann experienced, and can be paralleled to Liszt's own experiences of happiness during his time in Switzerland. The sonority invokes the tender and luminous sound of a flute. In the C major and high register, the progression goes as follows: C major – A minor – F♯°7 – Gmaj7 – G major – A♯ major – A♯7 – B°7 – G7. Despite the drastic shift in character, the thematic material is essentially just the three main motives, rearranged slightly. In the second statement of this phrase, the melody seems to tail off, with a B7 – B7(add ♭ 5) – Amin(add ♭ 3). Then, Liszt uses a magical ascending progression with polychords to get back to C major: B7(add ♭ 5) – Dmaj(add6) – D7 – D7 / Gmaj(add9) – F# major / G minor – D major / G7 – D♯°– G7 – C major. The phrase is restated, now in octaves and an outpouring of ecstasy. Once again, the music trails off with the B7 – B7(add ♭ 5), but resolves to a huge A major chord in a moment of bliss. Liszt buries the right-hand melody within a dense five note chord, and the music moves into another development on theme A. This next development section (m. 95) has a more reflective character, as if we are reflecting on our brief sublime experience. To highlight the instrumental and sonorous differences between the two hands, the melody and accompaniment are both played by the left-hand to start before the right-hand takes the melody line. Theme B is developed once in A major cadencing on C♯ minor. This idea is repeated again, but in a more restless harmonic structure, with a descending chromatic bass-line (A – G♯ – G – F♯ – F). There is dissonance in the inner voices using polychords and, and the music grows increasingly tense and desperate. The hands, originally close together, are now moving further apart from each other. The passage climaxes in B ♭ major (which was approached by a D major chord common tone modulation) for another statement of motive

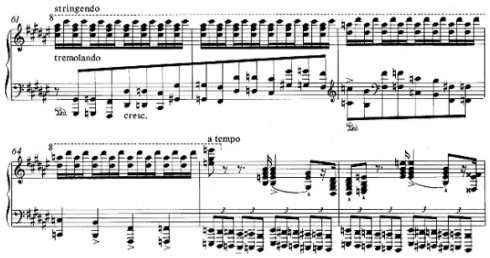
1, which is then repeated in D ♭ major. Consider the contrasting statements of theme 1 in the treble and bass, as a call and response to continue building tension. A *quasi cadenza* ends the section, with a descending embellished version of theme 1 plunging down into the deepest depth of the valley.

The Recitativo section (m. 119) represents the physical struggle that Obermann faces. Tremolos roar in the left-hand invoking timpani and strings. I interpret the passage as a timpani slowly building in texture and volume. The right-hand melody, in the style of an operatic recitative, is based primarily on motive 1. We start with a G♯°7 tremolos in the left-hand and a truncated form of motive 1 (E♯ – D♯ – C♯), which then leads into an octave flourish. This idea is repeated again, with the harmony changing: A7 – A♯°7 – E minor – A minor – C♯°7, with the bass-line moving up chromatically. An elaboration of the E minor octave development of theme A from earlier is presented next. The music grows increasingly strained and apprehensive, gaining speed and dynamic. The harmonic progression goes as follows: G major – Eø7 – D major – B major – E minor – G7 – C minor – F°7 – B major – F♯7 – F♯7(add ♭ 9) – F♯7 – B major. The culmination of the passage is a temporary climax on B major, which leads to an outpouring of emotion. Tremolos ring in the right-hand middle register, while a battle breaks out between the left-hand in the bass and treble. The truncated form of motive 1 roars sharply in the lower register, while a shrieking form of theme B in the higher register. The harmonic restlessness continues with dominant 7th and diminished 7th harmonies sounding in rapid succession.

The music climaxes (m. 139) on a series of diminished 7 chords, shrieking through a whirlwind of sound. Liszt uses the Ukrainian Dorian (or Dorian ♯4) scale three times, once in C (C – D – E ♭ – F♯ – G – A – B ♭), then D and E. The third repeat switches to ascending diminished 7 octaves midway through. This passage bears striking similarity to a transitory passage in *Orage*, with the rhythm, three note group descent, and accented last few notes, as seen in examples 20 and 21.

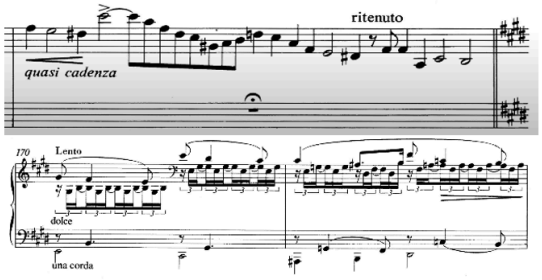


Example 20: Franz Liszt, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1855)

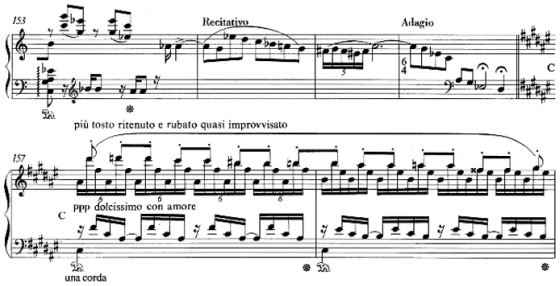


Example 21: Franz Liszt, *Orage* (1855)

This all reaches a huge torrent of pain, with screaming diminished 7 tremolos in the right-hand and a huge cadenza of octaves in the left-hand. Everything comes to a screeching halt on a powerful F minor chord (m. 160), which was prepared by: descending diminished 7 chords – B ♭ °7 – B ♭ 7 – E ♭ minor – B ♭ 7 – B ♭ °7 – C7 – F minor. Notice the parallel tritones in the right hand. Lonely, faint single notes call out the truncated motive 1. This is answered by chords: F minor – C minor – F♯°7, then by F♯°7 – C major 6 – D♯°7. Hidden within these chords is motive 3. Another *quasi cadenza* statement of theme A is presented in a very long phrase, as we are left still pondering about the nightmare we just experienced, ending on a drawn-out statement of motive 3. However, Liszt gives us another sublime and tender experience. Interestingly, Liszt would use a similar transition to a texturally similar section of the *Dante* Sonata (1856), as shown in examples 22 and 23.



Example 22: Franz Liszt, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1855)



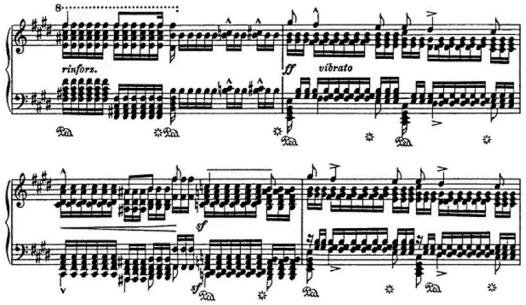
Example 23: Franz Liszt, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* (1858)

The next section (m. 170) is a recapitulation of theme B, now in E major. The repeated accompaniment has been transformed into an oscillating sextuplet semiquaver accompaniment, although the repeated note

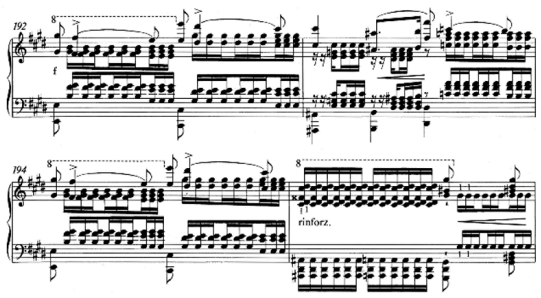
motive will return for the finale. As discussed in *Orage*, E major was a key that held particular religious significance for Liszt, so this could be thought of as spiritual reconciliation following a very dark period. Similarly to when theme B was introduced, it is stated once with the melody in single notes and repeated in octaves. Liszt introduces some nice harmonic color to the theme, substituting in ♭ VII (D major) for vii^{o} (D♯°). If we recall, theme B originally tailed off from C major into VI (A major), so the expectation might be to go from E major to VI (C♯ major). However, Liszt instead uses a D♯7 ♭ 5 to go to A ♭ major (III). The A ♭ major arpeggio figure is stated once, rising and falling, then repeated again ascending and dissipating into thin air. The next section is an inversion of theme B (now G♯ – A – B – C♯ – C♯ – D♯ – E – F♯ – G♯ – A – B – B). The underlying harmonic progression in E major goes: ii (F♯ minor) – vi (C♯ minor) – iv6 (Amin6) – V^7 (B7) – I (E major). The right-hand adds additional harmonization to the melody as well. The right-hand rolled chords and left-hand large-range figure create a tender atmosphere. The passage is restated again, but Liszt changes it in the middle using a C7♯11 resolving to B major. Interestingly, Liszt writes a lengthy ossia passage from this passage until the finale of the piece (measures 181-187). It is actually one of the longer ossias Liszt wrote, alongside the extended cadenza ossia in *Réminiscences de Don Juan* (1841) that precedes the *Champagne Aria* "Fin ch'han dal vino". The first part of the ossia is fairly similar to the published passage that was just discussed, but the second part is drastically different. The first part changes the second presentation of the inverted theme B, using the E major from the cadence of the first statement to move to a transposed repeat of the passage ending on G major. Going back to the published version, the next passage uses a combination of the inverted theme B with motive 2, with broken octaves (B) in the high register. The left-hand melody descends gradually down the keyboard, concluding with the original presentation of theme B. The ossia presents ideas that will be reused in the finale, with a descending theme B in octaves accompanied by arpeggios spanning the whole keyboard. The harmonic progression picks up after a G major arpeggio and goes to: E ♭ major – G major – G major – B major – A minor – F major – D major – B major. The F major arpeggio was foreshadowed by the use of E Neapolitan minor

earlier in the piece, and will also return later. Although the ossia is seldom performed, I would reason that it should be played over the published passage. When Liszt arranged *Vallée d'Obermann* for piano trio, he actually used the ossia passage leading into the finale. Regardless, both passages culminate in a series of repeated Bs which will become the repeated accompaniment to the theme.

The finale of the piece, marked *sempre animando sin' al fine*, is the culmination of Obermann's story– a rhapsodic, seemingly triumphant episode. Theme B is primarily used here, with E major being the chosen key. The original version in Album d'un voyageur had even more filled-out chords, creating an extremely dense and overbearing texture. Liszt refines the texture, without losing much of the effect in the final version, as shown in examples 24 and 25.



Example 24: Franz Liszt, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1842)



Example 25: Franz Liszt, *Vallée d'Obermann* (1855)

Listening to an orchestral transcription of the work (the Kocsis arrangement), one may notice textures and sonorities similar to some of Wagner's operatic and orchestral works. After theme B is presented a total of four times, each time increasing in intensity, Liszt brings back the inverted theme B. The inverted theme B harmonic progression remains the same, with Liszt changing one of the right-hand chords from diminished to augmented. The repeated accompaniment continues and gives the feeling of "climbing to a mountaintop." Minor iv (A minor) is used to bridge the two statements of the inverted theme B together (first in E major, then in G major) together. Liszt is not afraid of using difficult techniques – constant repeated chords, rapid octave passagework,

and difficult chord voicing – that are all critical to conveying the narrative and effect. The idea from the *ossia* comes back here, with the original arpeggiated accompaniment now a chordal accompaniment. Worth mentioning is how the melody alternates between the lower and higher registers, connected by a six-octave broken leap. Another development of theme B follows, with the left-hand taking the theme with huge chords. The right-hand gives a sweeping, rhapsodic octave flourish. A series of diminished 7 chords lead into a huge, full sounding passage leading to the climax with the harmonic progression: C♯7(add ♭ 5) – F♯7 – F♯7(add ♭ 5) – B7 – B augmented – E major. The whole piece, and cycle for that matter, climaxes on a *fff* statement of in E major in the high register, beginning the coda (m. 207). It seems like Obermann has reached his high point, but Liszt shows us that it might be a mirage. Theme B is stated in the high register, but Liszt uses E major – E°7 – C major instead of the usual E major – C♯ minor. Next, theme B descends to the lower register (contrasting with the structure of the recapitulated ossia passage earlier in the finale), with the progression again departing from the usual E major – C♯ minor to F major – D♯°7 – B7. Again, F major was foreshadowed by uses of E Neapolitan minor earlier. Theme B comes back in a higher register (but one octave lower than the first time), now using E major – E°7 – C7. Theme B then descends to a lower register, using F minor – D♯°7 – B7, where it will stay for the remainder of the piece. The music begins to grow agitated with alternating E minor and E°7 harmonies. The truncated theme B descends to the lowest register, culminating in a heroic and valiant ascent of E major octaves which, as a first-time listener, sounds like an amazingly triumphant ending. However, Liszt writes two more measures, calling back to theme A one last time (m. 215). The harmonic language here is dissonant and unsettling, where Liszt brings back E Neapolitan minor and finishes the piece on an augmented triad (E augmented) slightly resolving to the tonic (E major). This short ending is a powerful statement. If the piece were to end jubilantly on the E major octave arpeggios, it would say that Obermann succeeded in his endeavors. However, the self-doubt and mirage of success is underscored with the augmented harmony at the end of the piece. It is worth noting that this ending was not present in the original version, which ended more

exultantly. This revision of a triumphant, grand ending to a more contemplative, pensive ending would not be the first time Liszt would make such a change. In both the *Ballade No. 2* (1853) *Piano Sonata in B minor* (1854), Liszt revises earlier endings from grandiose and exciting to reflective and thoughtful, although both passages are much longer than the one in *Vallée d'Obermann*. Krupa presents that Debussy may have been influenced by the structural conceptions in *Vallée d'Obermann* in his symphonic poem, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894). The tonal and harmonic restlessness, using different keys and timbres (actually different instruments for Debussy), and sense of programmatic narrative are all striking similarities between the two compositions (Krupa 2023, 42).

7. Églogue

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,

With breath all increase, and with check all bloom,

Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn

And living as if earth contained no tomb! - - -

Byron

The seventh piece, *Églogue* (Eclogue), is a reawakening and relief (both naturally and philosophically) after the experiences in the previous two pieces (*Orage* and *Vallée d'Obermann*). Eclogues are poems that focus on pastoral ideas, which seems to be a recurring theme in this set for Liszt. As posited earlier, it is reasonable to think that Liszt yearned for this way of living. This piece was actually originally published separately, but similarly to *Orage*, most scholars believe it was composed or at least considered by Liszt during his travels. Liszt includes another quotation from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), which actually directly follows the excerpt provided in *Vallée d'Obermann*.

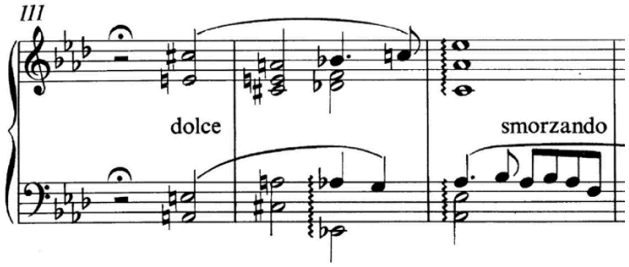
Églogue is free and light-hearted, and essentially has three principal motives that come together to form a theme: the prominent upbeat, the eighth-note figure, and the dotted rhythm. The introduction presents an idea in A ♭ major, which is then restated in E ♭ major, with the motives being interspersed. The tonic and dominant oscillate between one another playfully, accompanying a lyrical bell-like melody. The pedal point idea returns here, with both A ♭ and E ♭ pedal points emphasized. The eighth-note melody ends up becoming the accompaniment for theme A, which is characterized by the prominent upbeat and dotted rhythm. Notice how the music does not really give a resolution to the E ♭ 7(add9), which just fades away as the eighth-note figure comes down the keyboard. Theme A has key articulation markings. The upbeat note has a marcato, the dotted

rhythm is tied, and two notes have staccatos on them. The melody is in E ♭ major pentatonic: C – B ♭ – F – F – G – E ♭ . As such, there is some tonal ambiguity which contributes to the moist and damp atmosphere. This leads into the next section, which is an expansion on the upbeat and dotted rhythm motives, following the progression vi – V^7 / V and vi7 – V^7, stated first in A ♭ major and repeated in D ♭ major. The double dotted rhythms, demisemiquaver inner voices, and alternating *forte* and *piano* dynamic markings conjure a playful scene. Following this is another development on the upbeat. Liszt uses beautiful harmonies here: A ♭ 7(add6) – D ♭ maj9 – F7(add6) – B ♭ min9 – D ♭ 7(add6) – G ♭ maj9. A triplet figure is introduced here, and the music builds to a climax on an E ♭ 7(add9), which was approached by alternating E ♭ 7(add4) and B ♭ minor chords. The climax is essentially a slight variation of the short passage before the official statement of theme A. The E ♭ 7(add9) harmony is left somewhat unresolved and just fades out, and the triplet figure descends gradually becoming the accompaniment for a recapitulation of theme A.

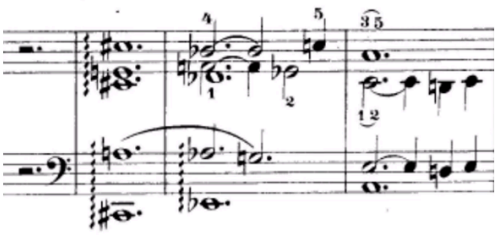
Theme A returns with a more frisky and spirited character because of the triplet accompaniment. This character is continued with the next variation, where the left-hand takes theme A. The right-hand continues the triplet figuration with a more angelic quality in the higher register. A gradual crescendo builds into a restatement of the expansion that followed theme A earlier, only truncated (only using the vi – V^7 / V part), transposed to G ♭ major. Interestingly, Liszt does not recreate the alternating *forte* and *piano* markings here. The V^7 / V (an A ♭ 7) would obviously be expected to resolve to a D ♭ major chord, but instead goes through A ♭ diminished 7 to resolve to C major. Throughout this C major restatement is a G pedal point, and when combined with the higher register, contributes to a more airy and fragile texture. An F7(add9) resolves first to C major, then to a D7(add11). This D7(add11) then goes to an E ♭ 7 to get back to A ♭ major. Between the dominant-tonic resolution, Liszt inserts a iii (C minor) giving a more delicate resolution. However, after resolving to A ♭ major, Liszt immediately moves back into the G ♭ major vi – V^7 / V development section. This time, the oscillating

forte and *piano* markings are indicated. The C major development is restated in a lower register. After using the same progression to get to A ♭ major, the piece remains in this key.

A marvelously graceful texture, reminiscent of the ending of *Au lac du Wallenstadt*, gradually rises up and falls down the keyboard while oscillating between tonic and dominant over an A ♭ pedal point. The coda involves a restatement of the introductory idea, except the phrase seemingly evaporates graciously in IV (D ♭ major). In a stunning harmonic move, Liszt uses a Neapolitan chord (♭ II, or A major), which would be expected to be resolved to a dominant chord. However, Liszt instead moves it to a B ♭ min7(add11), which then goes to a V9 (E ♭ 7(add 9)) and resolves to the tonic, A ♭ major. Interestingly, Liszt uses this same harmonic progression at the end of his famous *Liebesträume* No. 3 (published in 1850), as shown in examples 26 and 27. It is impossible to say where Liszt first conceived of the cadence, but reasoning that *Églogue* may have been worked on as many as ten years prior to 1850, it's likely that he first used it in *Églogue*. The piece ends with the dotted rhythm and eighth-note figure in the left-hand leading to a cadence of D ♭ maj9 – E ♭ 7 – A ♭ major.



Example 26: Franz Liszt, *Églogue* (1855)



Example 27: Franz Liszt, *Liebesträume No. 3* (1850)

8. Le Mal du Pays (Heimweh)

The eighth piece, *Le Mal du Pays* (Homesickness), is a fascinating synthesis of Liszt's experiences and emotions. The piece has a second title, *Heimweh*, which is simply "homesickness" in German. This might seem like a redundant addition, but it was apparently of high significance to Liszt. The copyist mistakenly omitted *Heimweh*, which Liszt deliberately added later (Jost 2020, 99). Even though there is no explicit literary reference here, the musical references give clues as to the significance of the piece. The first theme, an Appenzell "Ranz des Vaches", is a horn melody used by shepherds when moving their cattle. Melodies like this were actually forbidden to be sung by Swiss mercenaries because of the intense nostalgia, which supposedly led to illness and death in some cases, associated with the music (Bauman 1993, 96). Liszt first uses this theme and ideas in the second piece of Book II: Fleurs mélodiques des Alpes, from the larger Album d'un voyageur. The second theme of the piece was originally published as *Schwÿtzer Heimweh* (Homesickness of the Swiss) by Ferdinand Huber in his Collection of ranzes des vaches and folksongs. Liszt also used this theme in an earlier large-scale work called *Fantasie romantique sur deux mélodies suisses* (1835), which is an improvisatory composition on various Swiss melodies. For *Le Mal du Pays*, Liszt reuses the theme he marked "la Nostalgie (mal du pays)." This gives good insight into why Liszt wanted the second title, *Heimweh*, to be included. Moreover, German (not French) was Liszt's mother tongue.

Le Mal du Pays specifically has served as a major inspiration for "the most popular and widely discussed Japanese novelist of his generation", Haruki Murakami (Williams 2003). Murakami's novel, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (2013), falls into the bildungsroman literary genre. Bildungsroman focuses on the journey, growth, and education of a protagonist from their youth to adulthood (Graham 2019). The novel follows Tsukuru Tazaki, an engineer in his late thirties experiencing loneliness, alienation, and self-doubt. During his youth, he had a very tight group of friends who were "like five fingers" on a hand (Murakami 2013,

110). However, Tazaki was ostracized by them, and became extremely depressed – and has not completely gotten over this difficult situation. The novel explores current attempts by Tazaki to reconcile with himself and his former friends, why he was rejected by people that he was so close to, and how his experiences have shaped who he became. Liszt's *Years of Pilgrimage*, mostly *Le Mal du Pays* (although other pieces, namely *Les Cloches de Genève* from the Swiss year and *Petrarch Sonnet* No. 47 from the Italian year, are briefly mentioned) becomes a sort of soundtrack for the novel. For example, Haida, a new friend that Tazaki had made at university following the loss of his core friend group and depressive episodes, began listening to classical music with Tazaki. Describing *Le Mal du Pays*, she says:

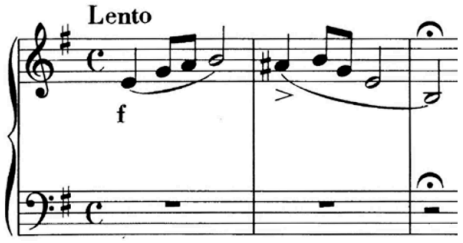
> Usually it's translated as 'homesickness', or 'melancholy.' If you put a finer point on it, it's more like 'a groundless sadness called forth in a person's heart by a pastoral landscape.' It's a hard expression to translate accurately (Murakami 2013, 47).

Much later on in the novel and Tazaki's life, he took out Lazar Berman's recording of Liszt's *Years of Pilgrimage* left by Haida fifteen years prior. His experience was described:

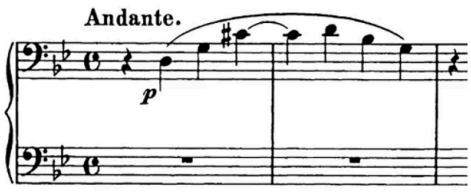
> The quiet, melancholy music gradually gave shape to the undefined sadness enveloping his heart, as if countless microscopic bits of pollen adhered to an invisible being concealed in the air, ultimately revealing, slowly and silently, its shape (Murakami 2013, 151).

Le Mal du Pays follows a rounded binary with two principal sections. Section A begins in E minor, and reworks ideas used in the earlier composition in Album d'un voyageur. The music is restless, jumping between distinct ideas, and is essentially an improvisatory exploration of a *Ranz des Vaches* that was discussed earlier. A monophonic theme (E – G – A – B – A♯ - B – G – E – B) is stated with a prominent sharpened scale degree four. Liszt possibly had this theme in mind when composing his innovative *Nuages Gris* (1881), with the melody of that piece following the same broad outline and sharpened scale degree four as *Le Mal du Pays*, as shown in examples 28 and 29. The metaphysical link between the two pieces is evident, with *Nuages Gris*

expressing the gloominess and despair an elderly Liszt was experiencing.



Example 28: Franz Liszt, *Le Mal du Pays* (1855)



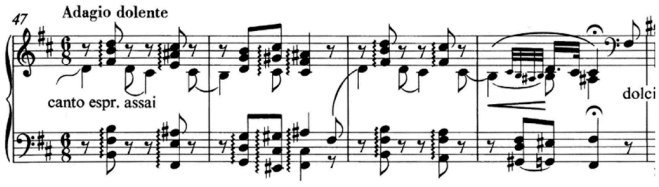
Example 29: Franz Liszt, *Nuages Gris* (1881)

Worth mentioning, yet often ignored, are the careful slur indications Liszt provides for this theme. The first time it appears, Liszt slurs the first part together and separately the second part together. However, the second time it appears (also third and fourth, in G minor, for that matter), the whole theme is under one slur. But, when the theme returns to E minor for the last time, the same parted-slurring appears. This is a very subtle, yet powerful musical representation of homesickness. After this thematic statement, there are seven distinct ideas that are presented. Firstly, is the alternating quaver-semiquaver figure oscillating between dominant and tonic, with its *accelerando* and crescendo. After building in tension and dynamic, Liszt gives a sudden and surprising fermata, emphasizing the sense of uneasiness. Secondly, is the triplet and chromatic idea, with its unconventional resolution of V^7 / V (F♯7) directly to i (E minor). It also gradually decreases in both tempo and dynamic. This leads directly into the third idea, which keeps the triplet motif with its appoggiatura-like figure and tenuto-slur-staccato articulation pattern. Fourthly, is the *Andantino* idea following the progression: V (B major) – i (E minor) – VI°M7 (C°maj7) – VIM7 (Cmaj7). The diminished major 7 chord is highly dissonant and is more commonly encountered in jazz and bebop. Fifthly, is another monophonic idea cascading down the keyboard (G – F♯ - D♯ - B). Sixthly, is a repeated note embellishment of the fifth idea. Lastly, is an ascending

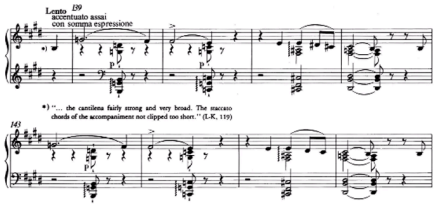
scalar dominant arpeggio in both hands. However, this cadence on the dominant (B major) does not really resolve, and instead moves from E minor to the more distant G♯ minor.

Section B (m. 20) presents the *Heimweh* melody, which Liszt originally marked "la Nostalgie (mal du pays)." In the earlier *Fantasie romantique sur deux mélodies suisses*, the melody is presented in G minor with a triplet accompaniment for the quasi-recitative theme. However, Liszt transposes it to G♯ minor with a more refined harmonic accompaniment. Liszt ends the phrase, building tension with the harmonic language (Emaj7 – E7 – D♯ major) and crescendo. We then get an unexpected shift into A ♭ major (enharmonic parallel major of G♯ minor), creating a very sentimental, albeit brief moment. We only stay in A ♭ major for two measures, before moving back into G♯ minor and cadencing on V (D♯ major). The cadence on D♯ minor is left unresolved, as section A returns only transposed to G minor (m. 28). The sequence of the seven ideas after the main monophonic theme (now G – B ♭ – C – D – C♯ - D – B ♭ – G – D) remains the same, however there are subtle differences in expression and articulation. For instance, Liszt does not mark the first idea *piano* like it was earlier. Additionally, the second idea originally had two decrescendos, but this time Liszt only indicates the first one. Moreover, the third idea has an added *rallentando* and is now without the *accelerando* and crescendo markings. These subtle changes could invoke small recall errors when remembering past experiences. Liszt reuses the same ascending scalar dominant arpeggio (D major) to move from G minor to a more distant key, B minor.

Section B returns, transposed to B minor (m. 47). The texture Liszt uses a more harp-like accompaniment, which is very similar to a passage in his second legend, *St. Francis of Paola Walking on the Waves* (1863), as shown in examples 30 and 31.



Example 30: Franz Liszt, *Le Mal du Pays* (1855)



Example 31: Franz Liszt, *St. Francis of Paola Walking on the Waves* (1863)

Liszt alters the harmonic language of the first phrase's cadence, to G♯ø7 – G7 – F♯ major. Similarly to the first statement of section B, this F♯ major resolves to the parallel major, B major, for another sentimental moment. This moment gradually ceases and fades out. The next passage (m. 53) uses fragments from both parts of section B (the beginning part of the first theme, and the ending part of the second theme) in a more agitated and passionate character. The melody alternates between hands, and is stated in B minor, E ♭ minor, and G minor. Liszt uses the dominant to move to the next tonal center (for example, F♯ major in B minor to E ♭ minor), in the same harmonic move done between sections A and B. The music becomes increasingly impassioned and seems to be building to a huge climax, but Liszt subverts this expectation, "climaxing" on a single note (G) which turns into a descending monophonic G aeolian scale, ending abruptly on A. Liszt cleverly uses an Aø to move into an E major restatement of the second part of section B. However, Liszt changes the ending of this passage, and uses a B°7 – Bø(add ♭ 9) to move to a mini-climax on a B7(add ♭ 9). We get another monophonic descending scale, which pauses first on a single G that suspends over (G to F♯) a B7(add ♭ 9). The opening melody from section A returns in E minor, in a lower register (m. 66). Sharpened scale degree four is emphasized and given a harmonization, F♯ø(add♯4), resolving to the tonic (E minor). The final cadence does not give a standard resolution, using borrowed IV (A major, from E major) – F♯ø(add♯4) – E minor. This final harmonic cadence represents the unsatisfied nature of homesickness and yearning for past times. Liszt makes an interesting notational move, opting not to alter the key signature from B minor for the final 24 measures

(47-70). The first four measures are squarely in B minor, the next two have a brief departure to the parallel major (B major), and we get two more measures of B minor (until m. 54). The last 16 measures (55-70) are not even closely related to B minor, and it could have been expected for Liszt to change to E minor for the final five measures where the opening melody returns. This could be interpreted as a musical and poetic representation of homesickness, with the indicated key signature not matching with the tonal center and key of the theme.

9. Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne

... Minuit dormait le lac

Était tranquile, les cieux étoilés ...

Nous voguissons lon du bord

Liszt?

I live not in myself, but I become

Portion of that around me

Byron

The ninth piece, *Les cloches de Genève* (The Bells of Geneva), serves as both the finale of the set and Liszt's experiences. Geneva is a city in the far western corner of Switzerland, and is where Liszt escaped to with Countess Marie d'Aguolt in 1835. d'Agoult was married to Charles Louis Constant d'Agoult, Comte d'Agoult, a prominent French military figure. Their relationship was one of a marriage of convenience, and after Liszt and d'Agoult became romantically involved, they moved to Geneva to escape the possible scandal. Geneva was also important for Liszt as it was where his first child, Blandine, was born. The original version, published as the inconspicuously conspicuous *Les cloches de G***** in the Album d'un voyageur, differs significantly to the revised version. The earlier piece is essentially a large-scale fantasy on a theme (the theme that becomes the first of two themes in the later version), with huge climaxes and passionate passagework. Although the later version does reach a tremendous climax, it is much more restrained and refined structurally and musically. It is also important to note that Liszt made some notational changes to the revised version. For one, he explicitly states "Geneva" instead of "G****." Secondly, he removed some of the references to d'Agoult, as the two had separated by this

time. The designation of *Nocturne* was provided, which could have been a direct homage to Frédéric Chopin, a close friend of Liszt's despite their grievances, who died a few years prior to the publishing of the later version.

Geneva is actually fairly famous for its bells, particularly those from the Saint Pierre Cathedral. Liszt musically represents bells many ways throughout the piece, but most prominently with the descending three-note figure. This idea permeates throughout the work, and serves as a short introduction. In B major, two descending three-note figures are presented, introducing the ii – I (C♯ minor – B major) relationship. The "ii" will be varied throughout the work, including in measure 3 where it is altered to a vii^{ø}7 (A♯^{ø}7). These bells seem to be more distant at this point, with Liszt using a very sparse texture. Silence, through the use of fermatas, contributes to this atmosphere. Following the short introduction, theme A is presented and uses the descending three note figure as the accompaniment. Theme A is a lyrical, long-phrase melody that is very reminiscent of the cathedral bells – hear the rising scalar motive and grace note. This theme is stated twice (embellished a little the second time), and Liszt modifies it midway through the third statement.

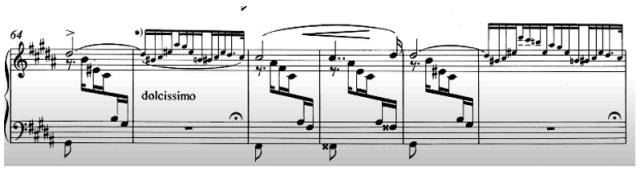
Alexandra Kieffer presents how the structure behind this piece bears similarities to the second piece from Ravel's *Sites auriculaires*, *Entre Cloches* (1897). Piano 2 in Ravel's work contributes "layers of sonority", which are in conjunction with the ostinato of Piano 1, as if the two pianos are part of a larger set of bells. This contextualizes "the initial bell ostinato harmonically and situate(s) it within a series of tonal relationships" (Kieffer 2017, 450).

Liszt uses a E♯°7 to move to C major, in a very artistic and moving modulation. A G7 is used to more explicitly state C major, with a cadenza-like flourish in the right-hand – an idea that will return throughout the piece. However, the music seems to stop abruptly, pausing without resolution. Liszt does resolve to a C7, which is treated as a stable harmony. The three-note figure, now a much lower register, evokes the deep, sonorous bell sounds calling people to worship. In a stunning and somewhat eerie passage, Liszt has the deep bell sounds in the

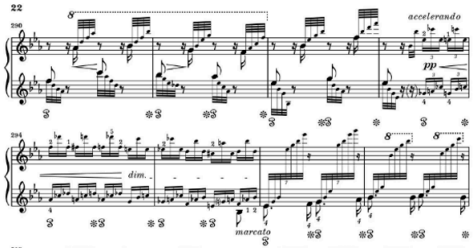
bass echo through an expressive descent of the three-note figure (now G – E – C) in the right hand down three registers. Next, Liszt moves the bell tone even lower and uses the progression: C♯°– C♯7 – A♯°7 (stacked on top of an F♯7). The last stacked harmony echoes through another descent of the three-note figure (now G♯ – E – C♯) in the right hand, down only two octaves this time where it turns into the accompaniment for the return of theme A. The ii – I progression is slightly altered to a vii^{ø}7 – I (A♯min^{ø} – B major), which was foreshadowed in the opening. The left-hand now has the melody, which follows the same structure as the first presentation. For the third statement during this reprise of theme A, the music grows increasingly impassioned and seems to be building to a climax. Earlier, the music faded away, however we do reach a proper climax here. Liszt again uses the E♯°7, but resolves it to D major instead of C major. A huge three octave leap (F♯ – A) emphasizes the climax, and a chordal variation of the mini-cadenza continues the melody. Similarly to the earlier C major resolution, Liszt uses the dominant (A7) to more firmly establish the key center, and slightly delays the melodic resolution from the harmonic resolution. With the right-hand figure gradually cascading down the keyboard, the harmony moves directly from D major (♭ III) back to B major. The same dominant (F♯7) idea is used to decidedly indicate B major, with the same left-hand melodic figure, as the first section of the piece closes.

The figuration directly leads into the second section of the piece (m. 46), with theme B in B major. Importantly, the meter changes from a compound duple meter (6 / 8) to simple duple meter (2 / 4), in a seamless manner. Theme B was not present in the earlier Album d'un voyageur, and is an Italian aria-like melody with a harp accompaniment. It is a very long melody with four parts. Firstly, is the descending part: F♯ – D♯ – D♯ – D♯ – C♯ – E – D♯ – C♯ – B. Secondly, is a part to counter the first: F♯ – C♯ – D♯ – A♯ – B – G♯ – B – D♯ – F♯ – E♯ – D♯ – C♯. Thirdly, is the chromatic part with a cadenza: C♯ – C♯ – D♯ – D♯ – cadenza. The chromatic progression adds some tension and dissonance, with: F♯ major – F𝄪°7 – C♯7(add9). The cadenzas are variations of the mini-cadenza heard at the end of the first statement of theme A, growing increasingly

intricate, and interrupting the long phrases. These bear similarity in function and feel to ones found in the *Tarantella* (No. 3 from *Venezia e Napoli*, *Années de pèlerinage II, Supplément*) published in 1861, as shown with the grace notes in example 32 and mm. 293-295 in example 33



Example 32: Franz Liszt, *Les cloches de Genève* (1855)



Example 33: Franz Liszt, *Tarantella*, No. 3 from *Venezia e Napoli*, *Années de pèlerinage II, Supplément* (1861)

Lastly, is a part to bring it all home: C♯ – A♯ – G♯ – G♯ – F♯ – F – E ♭ – D – D – C – B ♭ . Liszt achieves a superb modulation from B major to B ♭ major with this last part, using the progression: F♯ major – A♯7 – D♯ minor – E ♭ min9 – B ♭ major – F7 – B ♭ major. However, Liszt quickly departs from B ♭ major, directly modulating to the relative minor, G minor. This G minor part is a development on the third part theme B. The progression is now: G minor – G♯°7 – D7(add ♭ 9). This is repeated twice, creating a more nostalgic and tender character. After the second cadenza, the music begins to gradually slow down with markings of *rallentando* and *smorzando*. The fourth part of theme B is now developed, in a fragmented form – it starts and is interrupted by a descending chromatic scale cadenza. It follows: G minor – F°7 – E°7(add ♭ 11) – descending chromatic scale – F♯ minor – E ♭ °7 – D°7(add ♭ 11). This harmonic restlessness combined with the stop-start quality of the music contributes to a feeling of anxiousness. The last descending chromatic scale leads to an *agitato* transitory passage that builds tension and pacing. The passage is built around a D ♭ 7 with chromaticism and tone clusters (E-F-G and F-G-A ♭). A brief resolution to Fmin(sus4-3) occurs, but the melody line changes from single notes to octaves and uses a C♯7 (enharmonic equivalent of D ♭ 7) to move into a prolonged B major

modulation. The tension, pacing, and dynamics are all increasing with fragmented statements of theme A that cry out through embellished F♯ harmonies – D♯min ♭ 9 (second inversion) – F♯7 – F♯ø7 – F♯°7 – F♯7(add9). The section swells into a huge, sweeping G♯°7 scalar arpeggio. This whirlwind of sound surges to the main climax of the work and a reprise of theme B.

Theme B returns in a gloriously divine climax, with the melody in octaves, and the harp-figure accompaniment (m. 108). Again, theme B is an extremely long melody with the same part-structure as before. The cadenzas appear more jarring, interrupting the long phrases in a dramatically operatic way. The second cadenza builds into the fourth part of theme B, which now begins on A major – a remarkable tonal shift. This chord serves to be a dominant for the passage in D minor, which uses suspended harmonies with the melody line descending downwards. Liszt uses rhythmic displacement of the melody, adding some interesting feeling. A transitory chromatic passage follows, building to the final climax of the work. Notice the chromatic line in the lower register: C – D ♭ – D – D♯ – E – F – G ♭ – G – A ♭ – A. Dissonant and suspended harmonies are used leading to a powerful triple *forte* climax on a B♯°7, which resolves to a C♯ minor chord (through a G♯7). After this climax, the most elaborate of the many cadenzas on top of a E♯°7 ensues and unexpectedly halts on a G, as if we are left precipitously hanging off the side of a cliff. A development of the fourth part of theme B follows (m. 155), now back in B major, but Liszt alters the harmonic language slightly under an F♯ pedal point: B major – G7 – C♯min7. The C♯min7 is a rising and falling scale. A small detail that is often missed in performance is where the notes switch from semiquavers to triplets during the descent. This is repeated twice before the introductory three note motives return for a coda, now departed from the compound meter. The harmonic color is altered here, with the vii^{ø}7 (originally ii) now an V9, with the three-note bell figure in the high register. The progression goes: F♯7(add9) – B major – F♯7(add9) – B7 – G major – C♯min7. The last three chords are

particularly radical, where Liszt uses a G major chord to transition from an unresolved B7 to C♯min7. The C♯min7 sounds three times and slowly fades out.

The last ten measures close out not just this piece, but the whole set. It is very long and drawn out. We get two final tolling of the bells, in the lower register. B major harmonies ring through the last seven measures, and the piece slowly ends, closing the book on our journey. It is possible that B major had a conclusive character to Liszt. Two of Liszt's most important and expansive works, the *Sonata* and *Ballade* No. 2, both in B minor, end in B major in similar ways to this cycle. Moreover, this ending is quite interesting in that it is malleable in function and feel. Firstly, and most obviously, it functions as the end of a piece. Secondly, it functions as the end of the final piece of the cycle, and achieves the cathartic and satisfying conclusiveness that is needed for a long literary or musical story. Thirdly, it functions as the ending of a "chapter", as there are still two more "chapters" (or, more accurately, "years") to go. Regardless, the story of Liszt's travels and experiences in Switzerland have come to an end.

Conclusion

Franz Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage*, Première année: Suisse is truly a pinnacle of nineteenth century music. Its influence on musical structure, harmony, and texture can be seen in many later musical styles including impressionism and minimalism. Numerous composers including Ravel, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Messiaen, Bartok, and Godowsky were influenced in some way by the cycle. Beyond music, the set has permeated into the world of literature and art, with important figures like Murakami and Aciman taking inspiration from it. Additionally, the cycle represented a critical point in Liszt's own musical career, being the first major instance of his transformative and revolutionary ideas being fully realized. Unfortunately, the narrative of Liszt as a charlatan and showman still has not been squashed as patently absurd. It is my hope that this study can help finally discard this narrative and show Liszt as what he was: one of the greatest and most important composers in music history.

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