The weakening of tonal syntax that characterises late nineteenth-century music was brought about in a variety of ways during the course of the century.* The established conventions of the preceding style were transformed by such means as increasing levels of dissonance, non-functional harmonic progressions, non-diatonic scales and the attenuation of the tonic-dominant polarity.¹ The late works of Liszt demonstrate many of these characteristics associated with the move towards atonality. In particular, they show a weakening of the traditional tonic-dominant axis by minimising the contrast between its two constituent elements. The music features a harmony that, in a sense, is tonic and dominant simultaneously, creating a synthesis of function. I term such harmony androgynous, i.e. having the characteristics and nature of both tonic and dominant.² I first discuss the phenomenon with relatively obvious examples from Liszt's music written before 1880, then examine three late piano pieces in more detail: Nuages gris, La lugubre gondola I, and R. W.-Venezia.³

The V-I motion involves three distinct elements: 1) the bass leap 5 to 1; 2) the step 2 to 3 (or 2 to 1); and 3) the semitone motion 7 to 1. The V-I motion is weakened to various degrees by altering one or more of these elements, for example, by inversion of one or both of the harmonies, or by the use of anticipations and elisions. Although Liszt employed the V-I gesture throughout his music, the later works weaken it frequently and at times significantly. The final tonics and dominants are often inverted and in some cases partially hidden, usually through substitution or addition of non-harmonic tones. However, of the three contributing elements, Liszt takes care to preserve most carefully the 7-1 motion. The resolution of the leading note is sometimes one of the only indications of the tonal centre:

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Outside of those rare instances in which key orientation may only be ascertained by subjective speculation (e.g., Unstern and Bagatelle ohne Tonart), the resolution of the leading tone to the tonic is usually sufficient means for establishing tonal identity. . . .

In this way Liszt reduces the most tonal of all harmonic events, the dominant-tonic progression, to the smallest possible event: a single semitone shift. In his earlier works this semitone may be only a surface detail, but it gains importance in the late style.

ANDROGYNY IN THE MAJOR

In addition to chord V, the leading note belongs to VII and III. The diminished triad on VII is typically understood as a type of dominant, an incomplete V. III, on the other hand, is a more interesting structure in that it may function as both a tonic and a dominant. The reason is that it shares two notes with each chord. Usually the context clarifies the function (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1 Two Functions of III

In b.1 of Ex. 1 the III chord functions as a tonic, arising from the passing note in the soprano, while in b.2 it is a dominant, arising from a substitution of 6 for 5 within the dominant chord. Nevertheless, this kind of clarity of function becomes less common in Liszt's late works. In certain cases the III functions as both I and V simultaneously.

The 'Agnus Dei' from Liszt's Organ Mass (1879) ends with the following progression (Ex. 2):

Ex. 2 Organ Mass, 'Agnus Dei'
The V is prolonged through a neighbouring III and then resolves to I. The bass subsequently repeats the cadential gesture, but a pedal D in an upper voice makes the chord at b.36 a III\(^6\), not a V. Of course it does not function as a mediant (it is an ‘apparent’ III),\(^6\) but rather as an altered dominant (6 replacing 5) that prolongs the final tonic. Nevertheless, the pedal D and the common note F give this dominant a strong tonic character. In terms of pcs, only a single semitone differentiates the V and the I. The reason we hear a relatively strong motion to V is the leaping bass; without it we would be more likely to perceive the chord as an altered I (like the first III in Ex. 1). As it is, both harmonies can be heard; it is both tonic and dominant – it is androgynous. In the following analyses I represent such harmonic constructs with the symbol \(\Psi\). Like the harmony itself, it is a combination of I and V (as well as a distorted III).

The ambiguity of I and the altered V becomes particularly notable when the context itself is ambiguous; the true meaning of III is ambiguous and its function uncertain. Two other movements of the Mass end in a similar fashion, that is, III to I, the III better labelled as \(\Psi\). However, in the other movements the bass does not leap 5 to 1, and hence the function of these dominants is less certain (the stronger close of the ‘Agnus Dei’ is clearly necessitated by its function as the close of the entire Mass). Ex. 3 shows these two endings, as well as the prototypical harmonic patterns they represent.

The ‘Kyrie’ follows a non-traditional harmonic structure (to which I return later) and ends with a shift from VII\(^1\)\(^3\) up a semitone to the tonic B\(_4\). The shift occurs via \(\Psi\). More conventionally this chord would be V\(_6\), but the third of the tonic, the D, arrives early. The ‘Sanctus’ ends with a variant on the familiar progression \(\PsiVI-V-I\) (\(\PsiVI\) respelled for convenience). Liszt first alters the mode of the \(\PsiVI\) – actually anticipating the third of the next chord – then anticipates the fifth of the tonic, again producing a \(\Psi\)-I ending. In both cases the final tonic arrives as a result of a single semitone motion upwards; the cadential close becomes more of an appoggiatura gesture. The penultimate chord already seems like the tonic. Yet it also represents the dominant; there is no other harmony to take the dominant function and the ending is unsatisfactory without it. The chord is androgynous.\(^7\)

The use of \(\Psi\) is not limited to Liszt’s church music. The songs depart from conventional tonal structures to varying degrees, but their final gestures typically introduce the leading note-tonic motion as a dominant-tonic reminder. A simple example is ‘Ihr Glokken von Marling’ (1874) (Ex. 4). The song is not exceptionally chromatic and brings a relatively clear structural V in b.41 (in second inversion). Although a \(\PsiVI\)-for-I substitution in b.42 delays the tonic arrival, the I does appear in b.45. Like the dominant, the tonic is inverted, somewhat weakening its effect. It is prolonged with subdominant and supertonic harmonies from b.45 to the end of the song, setting the singer’s triple plea ‘ihr Glokken von Marling,
Ex. 3 *Organ Mass*, endings of ‘Kyrie’ and ‘Sanctus’

behiitet mich gut!’. The final three bars decorate the tonic with the neighbouring motion E-D♯-E. The D♯ is the leading note and produces a Υ. This is the only 7-I motion since the structural close in bs 41-2, a subtle but characteristic confirmation of the tonic.

In contrast, the song ‘Sei still’ (1877) employs the 7-I gesture as one of the important structural ideas. The text poses questions about life and death and suggests that both become less difficult when our heart is calm, as God wishes. The song is in D major, but the first tonic harmony and the first important tonic pitch do not appear until b.27, the exact midpoint. This bar sets a crucial word of the text – ‘Leben’ – and contains the song’s climax, both agogic and dynamic. It is the culmination of a gradually rising chromatic line: C (bs 10-11), C♯ (bs 22-3, 26), D (b.27). Despite a melody that for the most part calls for I and V, a C♯ pedal makes the primary harmony in the first half of the song III6 alternating with VII7. III6 also precedes the first tonic at b.27. Thus III replaces I, the result of a 7-for-1 substitution. In this way Liszt saves the D until the climactic moment.

The second half of the song focuses on I6; it contains two II6-VII6-VI6-I6 progressions that bring the tonic in a more convincing manner. The final
LISZT'S ANDROGYNOUS HARMONY

Ex. 4 ‘Ihr Glocken von Marling’
Ex. 5 ‘Sei still’

Ach, was ist Le- ben doch so schwer, wann, was du lieb hast,

ist nicht mehr: a- ber sei still, sei still: weil Gott es will!

weint um- her: a- ber sei still, sei still: weil Gott es will!
Ex. 5 cont.

Ach, Le - ben, Ster - ben wäracht schwer, wenn

un - ser Herz nur stil - le wär, wenn un - ser Herz nur stil - le wär. Dar - um sei

still, weil Gott es will, dar - um sei still, weil Gott es will,

sei still, weil Gott es will. cf. bs 1 + 39
tonic is prolonged with a $\text{V-I}^6$ alternation. Thus, in ‘Sei still’, $\text{V}$ is more than a brief surface detail; its appearance in the closing bars represents a reflection of the song’s overall structure. This is especially evident in bs 50-1 where $\text{V}$ appears with $C_4$ in the bass, just like the prolonged sonority of the first half that prepared the climactic vocal sigh.

ANDROGYNY IN THE MINOR

In minor keys the phenomenon is similar. The main difference is the quality of the III: in a minor key, a III with the leading note is an augmented triad. Because of its symmetrical structure the augmented III contains the same pitch classes as an augmented V and usually functions as a dominant. The resolution of this chord to a minor tonic is a phenomenon that parallels the preceding discussion: two of the pcs are the same, while the third pc is the leading note that rises a semitone to the tonic. In other words, the difference between the tonic and the altered dominant is a semitone in one of the voices. I shall again employ the symbol $\text{V}$ to represent this harmonic function (Ex. 6).

Ex. 6 Augmented dominant resolving to minor tonic

![diagram]

The resolution of an augmented dominant triad to a minor tonic is generally a weaker harmonic motion than a similar resolution to a major tonic. In a major key the altered note behaves as a second leading note, resolving to the third of the major triad. In a minor key the altered note is the same as the third of the tonic and hence cannot resolve in the same way. The strong dissonance of the altered dominant becomes a consonance within the tonic. The resolution is strong if the augmented triad results from a suspension, an escape note or melodic arpeggiation; that is, when a downward stepwise resolution is assumed (Ex. 7a). If the augmented triad results from anticipation or a pedal, the resolution is weaker (Ex. 7b). In such cases the dominant element has a strong tonic character and may be perceived simply as an inflection of the tonic. It is just such situations that become common in Liszt’s later music; hence the tonic-dominant contrast is weakened.

In a major key an altered V inverts without difficulty. In the minor, the inversions are quite different. Although the augmented triads are the same ones that function as altered dominants in the $\frac{6}{4}$ inversion, in other inversions the impression of dissonance changes. The most dissonant note within the $\frac{6}{4}$ is stable in the $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$ (Ex. 8). In the $\frac{3}{4}$ inversion the chord typically results from the chromatic passing motion $\frac{5}{4}-\frac{6}{4}$, III-I$^6$, rather
LISZT'S ANDROGYNOUS HARMONY

Ex. 7 Origins of the augmented dominant in the minor

than from an altered-V-I cadence. In the inversion the chord results from a simple neighbouring motion of the bass. That note is the perceived dissonance; the other two form a consonant pedal. While this is clearly the larger meaning of the harmony, in both cases the pc set is equivalent to the augmented dominant.

Ex. 8 Inversions of the augmented dominant

Liszt employed all inversions as dominants. In the Petrarch Sonnet No. 104 the augmented triad functions as an applied dominant to VI (Ex. 9, b.8). Nevertheless, note the E/G♯ pedal; even though the chord is an applied dominant, it is also an inflected VI. Like the III chords in the major, it is androgynous.

Ex. 9 Petrarch Sonnet No. 104, bs 7-9

The symmetry of the augmented triad allows easy reinterpretation of its root. In Il Penseroso Liszt uses this property to modulate from E major to G major (Ex. 10). The augmented triad in b.9 is a neighbouring altered dominant to E minor. G and B remain as a pedal, while D♯ is the leading note that rises back to the tonic. In b.11 a respelling of the same
augmented triad produces an altered dominant of C minor. It resolves to a C minor chord in b.12 by keeping Eb and G as a pedal and treating the B as a leading note. The C minor chord then functions as IV of G, the goal of this modulation. Thus, the augmented triad acts as an altered dominant to two different harmonies; it changes its meaning by alternately raising one, then another chord member. Even though the larger effect is relatively dramatic (a shift up a third), the local effect is subtle: the augmented triad is perceived only as a chromatic inflection of the two tonics.

Ex. 10 *Il Penseroso*, bs 8-13

The opening of the *Faust Symphony* (1854) is a celebrated example of ‘dissonant prolongation’; it prolongs an augmented triad for twenty-two bars.9 The listener begins to feel that locally the augmented triad is stable, the referential point. This is, of course, a slow introduction, like many by Haydn and others. Whereas in the Classical style a slow introduction typically prolongs the dominant which resolves to the tonic at the beginning of the Allegro, here the mysterious opening leads into the subdominant. At b.24 the prolonged augmented sonority resolves to F minor Ⅴ, the IV of the tonic C minor (Ex. 11a). The primary bass note of the introduction is Ab and it remains as the bass of the chord of resolution. The means of resolution is a single semitone motion: E rises to F.10

In bs 359-81 (within Rehearsal Letter W) the introductory passage returns. This time, however, the prolonged augmented triad is reinterpreted as an altered dominant of A minor and resolves as such in b.382. Ab becomes G# and rises a semitone while the other two notes stay as a pedal. An E-F motion follows, now representing Ⅴ-Ⅵ of the local A minor tonic (Ex. 11b). In both parts of the movement it is difficult to say...
unequivocally that the prolonged augmented triad is a dominant; there are two notes from the dominant but also two notes from the following tonicised triads. The harmonic function is best labelled as $V$.

Liszt’s song ‘Die tote Nachtigall’ (1878) involves several shifts from $F_#^\text{b}$ minor to $F_#^\text{b}$ major, corresponding to the textual images (generally associating minor with the ill-fated nightingale and major with the awakening of spring). The closing section, which returns to the minor, (‘... und ach! kein Ruf erweckt dich wieder, du arme, kleine Nachtigall!’) is fourteen bars long and contains only two harmonies (Ex. 12).

The augmented triad is an inflected tonic, but at the same time it is the only candidate for a dominant. There is no other dominant to close the song, even though one is necessary after the diminished seventh of the preceding bars. When the augmented triad first appears it is heard as a dominant but by the time it resolves it is felt more as a tonic. The only event of harmonic import within the last fourteen bars is the resolution of the leading note. That which was an almost insignificant detail at the end of ‘Ihr Glocken von Marling’ becomes an important event here. The leading-note resolution embodies the more traditional V-I close.

The pieces I have discussed thus far always subsume the ambiguity of $V$ within a larger, tonally clear context. The remainder of this study examines three late works where the context itself becomes increasingly uncertain; in these the focus begins to shift from I to $V$. It is here that Liszt appears to be moving in the direction of atonality. Nevertheless, my analyses still interpret the music in terms of the tradition from which Liszt arrived. Leading note activity forms the focus of the discussion; the leading-note
Ex. 12 ‘Die tote Nachtigall’

Nach-ti-gal-len Lie-der,

Dann schliefst du still in Gra-bes Nacht, und ach!

kein Ruf er-weckt dich wie-der, du

ar-me, klei-ne Nach-ti-gall!
resolution spawns other semitone motions which take on a motivic role.

**NUAGES GRIS (1882)**

*Nuages gris* is a model example of the minimal contrast between the augmented V and minor I; the basic structure of the piece consists entirely of their alternation. Bars 41-2 contain an arguable pre-dominant sonority, while other chords result from either neighbouring motions or chromatic passing connections that prolong the augmented V. As a related phenomenon, the semitone becomes the primary motivic idea.

The G minor tonic is relatively clear: the opening melodic gesture begins on the dominant note and then outlines the tonic triad, the melodic fragments of bs 25-32 are stereotypical G minor gestures, and the final melodic motion is from $F_\natural$ to G. The key signature of two flats also indicates G minor. However, the G minor sound is disturbed by numerous chromatic passing chords, an ambiguous and aimless bass, and the famous whole-tone ending.

The altered V of G minor is D-$F_\natural$-$B_\flat$. This androgynous dominant shares D and $B_\flat$ with the tonic; the only difference between the two harmonies is the semitone $F_\natural$-G. Liszt further minimises the contrast of tonic and dominant by employing one of the common notes, the $B_\flat$, as the primary bass. The background harmonic progression that controls the piece therefore looks as follows (Ex. 13):

Ex. 13 Harmonic design of *Nuages gris*

![Harmonic Design Diagram]

The tonics expand through simple repetition, while the androgynes do so through chromatic lines. Bars 21-4 emphasise $B_\flat$-$D$ and avoid $F_\natural$ or G; hence they remain intentionally ambiguous. The last harmony in the above example is hypothetical, as Liszt leaves the ending partly unresolved. The reduction clearly shows that the dominant element has been reduced to its absolute minimum and hence may be perceived as an inflection of the tonic. This is the same phenomenon we saw earlier but on a larger scale, involving the entire piece.

$F_\natural$ to G – the only difference between the tonic and the altered dominant – is a crucial event and forms the climactic resolution at the end of the piece. Other semitones that surround the tonic triad become motivic: $C_\sharp$-$D$, $E_\flat$-$D$, $A$-$B_\flat$ ($C_\flat$-$B_\flat$ appears only coincidentally as part of a chromatic line, and then reappears as a Picardy $B_\flat$-$B_\natural$ at the end). In
bs 9-20 and 33-43 the repeated bass neighbour B♭-A-B♭ alternates the altered and fundamental forms of V. From the chromatic motives grow chromatic lines: R.H. 9-20, L.H. 33-42, R.H. 33-48. Ex. 14 shows Nuages gris in greater detail. The example includes the large-scale unfolding of the V→I that Allen Forte reveals in his analysis of the piece.11

Ex. 14 Reduction of Nuages gris

In the concluding bars the bass remains frozen on A and forms a dissonance with the final tonic of the melody. Likewise, an inner-voice neighbouring E♭ remains unresolved. These dissonances are necessitated by the preceding bars; the high level of dissonance at the specified Andante tempo engenders a banal, almost ridiculous effect in a resolution to a simple triad. The Picardy third only accentuates the problem. However, since the crucial leading-note resolution does end the piece, Liszt is free to retain other dissonances. His solution is ingenious in that it provides the necessary tonal closure and yet retains the aura of mystery that pervades the entire piece.

LA LUGUBRE GONDOLA I (1882)

While Nuages gris contains two significant prolongations of V, La lugubre gondola I is in its entirety one large statement of V, with only incidental appearances of the tonic. The music leads to a point where a decisive tonic could appear, but instead the initial V returns and the piece ends as ambiguously as it began. In a way La lugubre gondola I emulates the Faust Symphony introduction, but without a definitive resolution.

The piece has been somewhat misunderstood in published analyses. The main problem is the key; it is always given as F minor when in fact the tonic is D♭ minor. The confusion is understandable. The prolonged sonority is the augmented triad E♭-A♭-C, and hence can imply an F, A or D♭ tonic. A recognition of the D♭ as tonic is essential for a proper understanding of the piece and its large-scale use of V. The reasons for
preferring F minor might be as follows: 1) the opening key signature has four flats; 2) the opening melodic interval C–A₆ is typical of an F minor piece; and 3) the bass effects a standard F minor gesture in its first twenty bars – E₆–F (leading-note to tonic, Ex. 15). It has also been remarked that F minor appears to be Liszt’s funeral key, acting as the tonic in other funereal works.¹²

Ex. 15 *La lugubre gondola I*, bs 1-23

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MUSIC ANALYSIS 13:1, 1994

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The primary problem with F minor, however, is the melody; after the opening interval, F minor is possible only through chromaticism. It moves to A♭ (possibly explainable as modal mixture), then G♭, F♭, E♭ – hardly an F minor gesture. James Baker has observed that the 'melody unfolds a sixth descending from A♭ to C♭ although the exact course of this unfolding is difficult to analyse'. It is, however, much easier to analyse the melody out of context; it is moving diatonically towards D♭ minor, though constantly avoiding the tonic by jumping to the leading-note C. It finally does land on D♭ in b.19, the end of this melodic section (a new melodic idea immediately follows). The harmony in b.19 is D♭5 – not an F minor tonic with an added sixth but rather a major tonic with an added seventh. Here is where the modal mixture occurs, not bs 6-7. The A♭ of bs 6-7 is not the result of modal mixture; it is a misspelled B♭♭.

The main problem with the D♭ minor reading is the F minor key signature. There are two possible reasons. First, there is no key signature for D♭ minor (it would require B♭♭); hence Liszt uses the first key signature that includes the tonic D♭ (especially since that note appears in every bar from 1 to 28). The second – more contentious – possible reason is that Liszt himself initially felt F minor, with the leading-note E♭ and the opening melodic gesture.

The reading of a D♭ minor tonic is supported by subsequent events. Bars 1-34 are immediately repeated at T10 with only minor variations. Apart from the transposition, there are two significant changes: the key signature is two sharps, and the second half of b.44 contains a G♭, not F♭. F minor at T10 produces D♭ minor or E♭ minor, whereas D♭ minor at T10 produces B minor – two sharps. The melodic line now clearly shows a B minor scale, focusing on the leading-note A♭, then finally reaching the tonic B in b.57. Beginning at b.77 the opening material reappears, greatly abbreviated, at T5. The key signature has no sharps or flats. D♭ minor at T5 produces A minor, no sharps or flats.

Treat D♭ minor as the actual tonic of the piece, we can make the following observations. The tonic first appears within the opening pattern; the A♭-C-E♭ arpeggio with a D♭ neighbour represents an altered dominant Ⅴ 4 alternating with a tonic Ⅴ 5. There is little sense of harmonic change; only one harmony is projected and it fuses the two harmonic functions. The tonic returns more clearly in the parallel mode (bs 19ff.), it is strongly expected in bs 101-3, and it also returns in the final bars (especially in b.116). Yet it is not established as the primary sonority; overall it is subsumed within the prolonged V.

The overall bass descent outlines the same augmented triad; it moves down from the fifth (b.1), through the third (b.77) to the root (b.95). This is shown in Ex. 16 (I have changed the key signature and respelled some of the notes to emphasize the D♭ tonality). Once in root position the augmented triad appears ready for a resolution to the D♭ minor tonic (perhaps in b.101 or b.103). The dynamics emphasise that moment, as a
crescendo begins with the arrival of the bass A♭ in b.95. Nonetheless, in the present context such a resolution would seem to be anachronistic and somewhat banal (though not as disturbing as a major triad at the end of *Nuages gris*). The point of this piece is not to prepare a glorious tonic resolution but to highlight the ambiguous nature of the augmented dominant in a minor context. Instead of the tonic, b.101 brings back the bass E and the androgynous harmony continues to the end of the piece. The final bars contain only two pcs in the left hand tremolo while the right hand adds the third, determining note. Bars 115-17 waver between C and D♭ (a neighbouring figure taken directly from the opening left-hand gesture), and it almost does not seem to matter which one will be last.

Ex. 16 Reduction of *La lugubre gondola I*

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**R.W. – VENEZIA (1883)**

Of the three late piano pieces I analyse here, *R.W. – Venezia* is the most ambiguous in terms of its large-scale tonal orientation: ‘*R.W. – Venezia* demonstrates that on occasion Liszt found the confidence to dispense altogether with the framework of tonality’. There is very little to help the tonality-seeking ear. Nevertheless, the structural logic becomes less of a mystery once we are aware of the earlier works.

The tonic is B♭, though its existence is precarious. It seems to be established only through one augmented-V to I motion (bs 30-4) and is supported by the key signature of two flats in bs 31-8. However, the true confirmation of B♭ comes within the outer sections of the piece. These expand the V of B♭ minor and hence point to a rather traditional minor-major-minor ternary design:

- A (bs 1-30) – expands V of B♭ minor (C♯ pedal)
- B (bs 31-42) – presents the tonic B♭ major
- A' (bs 43-9) – returns to V (C♯ pedal)
The $C_\#$ pedals represent both $C_\#$ and $D_b$, depending on immediate context; the pitch is either the altered fifth of the dominant or the third of the minor tonic. Ex. 17 summarises the piece in a graphic format.

Ex. 17 Summary of R. W. – Venezia

As this summary suggests, the revolutionary nature of the piece depends not upon its large-scale plan but on the way its sections expand. None of the three prolongs a traditionally stable harmony in a conventional way. Section A prolongs $\underline{\mathbf{V}}$ through a chromatic rising octave; B moves away from the tonic in rising minor thirds and never brings the tonic back; and A' vacillates between I and $\underline{\mathbf{V}}$ throughout. Some of the coherence that would result from a more stable tonality shifts to the motivic structure. As in Nuages Gris, the semitone becomes the fundamental motivic idea, primarily the motion $A-B\flat$. It first appears in bs 4-5, 6-7 and 8-9, returns in bs 30-1 and is then reversed in the closing moments, bs 44-7 (Ex. 18). As was evident in Ex. 17, the large-scale design of the piece projects the same motivic gesture.

Ex. 18 Reduction of R. W. – Venezia

The A section begins on $\underline{\mathbf{V}}$ and resolves to a (misspelled) $B_\flat$ minor chord in b.5. After a sequential repetition, faster harmonic rhythm and rhythmic fragmentation, the section ends on the same augmented triad, again with A as the melodic note. The pedal $C_\#$ (the altered note of the dominant)
finally resolves to D in b.31, the beginning of the B section. This resolution parallels the one in bs 4-5, except for the mode shift from minor to major.

The B section moves through the rising thirds B♭→D♭→E♭, and then turns to – and ends on – A. The turn to A accomplishes two goals: the framing harmonies of the B section produce a large-scale motivic statement B♭-A, and the A harmony prepares the augmented triad that begins and ends the piece. All that is needed is the motivic semitone E-F.

A’ returns to the opening augmented triad but now with the addition of a decorating B♭. The A-B♭ motive has become B♭→A, and the overall arpeggio now only descends. This arpeggio is clearly androgynous: it is a combination of the tonic minor and the altered dominant. We cannot say whether the final harmonic impression is that of tonic or dominant. The final note is C♮ (=D♭), which is common to both harmonies.

To reinforce the view that Liszt considered B♭ as the tonal centre, it is useful to make a comparison between R.W. – Venezia and the Organ Mass ‘Kyrie’ discussed earlier. The Mass as a whole centres on B♭ (compare the beginning of the ‘Kyrie’ with the end of the ‘Agnus Dei’). Similarly, the ‘Kyrie’ itself begins and ends in B♭. However, apart from the framing tonics, the movement does not confirm the key in a traditional way. It in fact follows the identical harmonic pattern found in the B section of R.W. – Venezia. The main structural difference between the two compositions lies in the two A sections that surround the central part of the piano piece. Ex. 19 summarises the ‘Kyrie’; compare this with the B section of Ex. 18.

Ex. 19 Reduction of the ‘Kyrie’ from the Organ Mass

CONCLUSION

The vagueness pervading these late pieces – and the vagueness of androgynous harmony in general – is a direct expression of Romantic ideology, an ideology which values openness and progress above closure and stability (the state of Becoming rather than Being, as Leonard Meyer might put it19). The tentative openings suggest a process already begun, while the open endings represent cessation rather than closure.20 Both, of course, are characteristic of the nineteenth century and have numerous precedents.
The former is usually traced to the opening of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony; Liszt himself anticipates the latter in tone poems such as Orpheus (1854) and Hamlet (1858), where the endings reflect the implied programmes. Meyer suggests a reason for our natural acceptance of these endings:

There is something deep within our primordial affective beings that leads us to identify with such abatement processes..., sensing in them the natural cycles of existence – the times of day, the seasons, and the course of life itself.31

In that sense, Liszt’s last tone poem, Von Wiege bis zum Grabe (1882), stands as an almost prototypical example. La lugubre gondola I and R.W. – Venezia practically demand such closure. The endings of the earlier tone poems are indefinite only in their effect, though, through secondary parameters; tonally they are quite clear. It is however a natural extension to accentuate the final vagueness through a vagueness in the harmony itself, once the harmonic language allows it.

Richard Taruskin writes that ‘Wagnerian harmony is essentially dominant harmony... Lisztian harmony, on the other hand, with its circles of thirds is harmony that seems, at times, to deny the existence of the dominant’.22 This statement could be clarified by specifying that Liszt’s harmony is still about dominants, but at times they are hardly distinguishable from the tonics and hence are often interpreted as tonics. Careful analysis shows that in their proper interpretation as dominants relatively familiar harmonic structures emerge. This is, of course, not meant to deny Liszt’s great advances in the harmonic language; they are obvious, even on casual acquaintance with the music. These, however, did not appear spontaneously. They developed as transformations of traditional structural elements.

In a thought-provoking discussion of Liszt’s experimental idiom, Allen Forte indicates set 4-19 (0148) as one of the ‘fundamental components of much of that music’.23 The fact can hardly be disputed; the set is found in numerous and diverse contexts. However, it is significant that 4-19 has a rather simple tonal meaning: it is the combination of a minor tonic and its augmented dominant triad. The androgynous harmony that Liszt explored in his last years created a construct that became entirely at home within the radically transformed musical language of the early twentieth century.

NOTES

LISZT'S ANDROGYNOUS HARMONY


2. Apart from the general idea of 'characteristics of both', it seems unnecessary to suggest any further parallels between male/female and tonic/dominant in this context. The harmony could also be termed 'synthetic', but this creates other problems: apart from the more recent association with 'chemical' and 'plastic', it has a specific meaning in nineteenth-century theory based on Hegelian dialectics and also appears in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian theoretical writings. The term 'dual' seems bland, while the coined terms 'domic' and 'toninant' appear absurd in a scholarly context.


5. This idea forms an important part of Hugo Riemann's harmonic theory. He derives the secondary chords of a key through substitution within a primary chord: either 6 for 5 (Parallelklang) or 7 (leading-note) for 1 (Leittonwechselklang). In C major an E minor chord is either the dominant Parallelklang (Dp) or the tonic Leittonwechselklang (T), depending on context. William Mickelsen summarises Riemann's position on chord III as follows: 'The III chord is an unhappy chord which, having tones of both the tonic and dominant, can be either thetic [tonic] or synthetic [dominant] according to use'. William C. Mickelsen, Hugo Riemann's Theory of Harmony (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p.29. See also pp.64-6 and pp.221-2.


7. The 'Gloria' also has a similar ending, though less obvious. After many bars that imply F# major and B major, the final D tonic arrives via an F# minor harmony (although only two notes appear on the downbeat of b.77, the C# is clearly implied). The immediate repetition of the passage omits b.76, reinterpreting the V as I#6. Here the final tonic is prolonged with a I-V-IV-I progression.

8. The III chord in the penultimate bar is actually a combination of V and V; both A major and F# minor appear simultaneously. It results from a V and an
F♯ pedal. In effect it is similar to the  and hence I label it the same way.
10. Liszt anticipates this event within the introduction itself by moving to the F several times. These Fs, however, are usually harmonised with another augmented triad and hence create tension rather than serving as resolutions of the preceding dissonance. In bs 16 and 18 the F is suspended into the second beat, where it creates a brief ‘apparent’ consonance before resolving back to the E and the main augmented triad. Those two points encapsulate the relationship of the introduction to the opening of the Allegro but in reverse.
14. This reading answers the question that Baker poses after the above quotation: ‘Is E♭ in b.9 a main element, or is it a lower auxiliary to F♯?’ (p.156).
15. By way of comparison, *La lugubre gondola II* uses the same harmony and opening melodic gesture but is unambiguously in F minor. However, the melody is significantly altered, employing G♯ and focusing on F as the tonic.
16. The augmented triad is arpeggiated in sixths and hence the second and third notes of the left hand anticipate the opening of the right-hand melody. This interval then becomes the tremolando bass in bs 77-85.
18. According to its notation the chord is an ‘apparent’ consonance, including C♯ and B♭. However, the sequential repetition in b.15 spells the minor chord correctly. Linear considerations and avoidance of enharmonic notation (C♯ to D♭) outweigh local vertical logic. The chords are part of a G♯-♭6 sequence; the relative importance of the alternating harmonies is locally questionable.
20. Terms used by Meyer to describe the Tristan ending, *Style and Music*, p.324.