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Writing Liszt: Lina Ramann, Marie Lipsius, and Early Musicology[1]

JAMES DEAVILLE

McMaster University

Recent disciplinary histories in musicology have ignored any possible contribution of women during the field's formative years. Nevertheless, women were active as musicologists in Germany in the late nineteenth century, as witnessed in the scholarly work of Lina Ramann and Marie Lipsius (La Mara). Excluded from advanced musicological study of canonic topics, they independently turned their scholarly interests and talents toward study of the most commanding, if also controversial, figure of the time: Franz Liszt. His feminization by opponents made this act by Ramann and La Mara doubly transgressive. However, it was just this Liszt that allowed them to write themselves, even as they engaged in musicological work. It is no coincidence that both scholars, who were known in their day as having long-term same-sex partners, created a Liszt in harmony with their own subject positions.

In writing its history, the field of musicology has tended to discipline those voices that threaten its hegemony not only through disparagement but also through silence. Thus it is appropriate that, even as musicologists of today are producing studies about German-speaking male musicologists of the past—including Otto Jahn, Guido Adler, Otto Erich Deutsch, and Arnold Schering[2]—and the discipline re-

1. I want to thank the following individuals, who have provided useful comments regarding this article: Susan McClary, Mitchell Morris, Marischka Olech Hopcroft, Elisabeth Wood, Ruth Solie, David Gramit, and Teresa Magdanz. A version of this article was first presented at the Fifth Biennial International Feminist Music Conference, London (July, 1999).

2. These studies, the first detailed investigations of the discipline of musicology, are being undertaken by German-speaking and North American scholars, who have the greatest investment in the discourse of the field. In this context, Pamela Potter's brilliant study of Germany musicology and musicologists during the Nazi period, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), should be mentioned.

cently remembered the centenary of musicology at the University of Vienna,[3] an attempt be made to recover the unwritten history of women's contributions to musicology during its formative years, in the German-speaking world of the late nineteenth century.[4] To the extent that they are at all familiar, such names as Louise Otto-Peters, Elise Polko, Anna Morsch, Marie Lipsius, and Lina Ramann may be known as writers about music (see the appendix for a bibliography of their writings),[5] but not officially as scholars or musicologists. Because they were excluded from critical and scholarly writing, women of the time were required to pursue alternative forms of literary expression, whether the musical short story, musical travelogue, or biography, which they appropriated for musicological work but with a different voice.[6] As they engaged with these literary genres, however, they were writing themselves, and thereby redrawing the boundaries of critical and scholarly musical discourse.

In this study, I will look in detail at Lina Ramann (1833–1912) and Marie Lipsius (1837–1927), better known by her pen name *La Mara*, two musicologist-biographers dedicated to creating the foundations for serious discussion about one of the most controversial composers of the nineteenth century: Franz Liszt. Both have been unfairly dismissed by scholars, for whom it is no mystery why two women wished to work closely with Liszt: He was sexually attractive to women, who flocked around him as *Löwenjägerinnen*—lion hunters, women who hoped to gain favor, establish careers, or simply

3. The conference took place in October 1998, at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Vienna, under the title "Musikwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft—damals und heute."

4. In the context of the international conference "Die Frau in der deutschsprachigen Musikwissenschaft" in Vienna (November, 1998), an earlier version of this article was given and published under the title "Lina Ramann and La Mara: Zwei Frauen, ein Schicksal." It was published in the conference proceedings, *Frauen in der Musikwissenschaft: Dokumentation des internationalen Workshops Wien 1998*, edited by Markus Grassl and Cornelia Szabo-Knotik (Vienna, 1999), 239–252.

5. Much work remains to be done for all of these women, but especially for the first three, about whom no study of their work with music exists.

6. This aspect of women's activities in the nineteenth century has yet to be explored. In my unpublished paper, "New German School, or Old Boys Club? Gender, Genre, and Power in the 'Progressive' Musical Press of Nineteenth-Century Germany," delivered at the American Musicological Society Annual Meeting in Montréal (1993), I argue that, excluded from traditional music criticism in Germany in the late nineteenth century, women found alternative vehicles for the exercise of their criticism, notably through the short story and biography.

experience pleasure through chasing the master. There is an irony in the use of this term for women, for it positions them as sexualized, masculinized, and murderous (and hence dangerous) while ostensibly aiming to dismiss them. The image also presents the ambiguity of hunter and hunted, and thus also a complete gender reversal.

Yet at the same time, the designation fails to recognize not only the women's valuable roles within Liszt research[7] but also their pioneering contribution to the emerging discipline of musicology, for in studying a living composer they applied research methods that would only find wide use in the twentieth century.[8] And even more important, it does not account for how these women musicologists subverted musicological discourse. As we will see, the choice of Liszt as an object for study by Ramann and La Mara was not fortuitous, having its roots in their ability to find and write themselves in response to the sexually ambiguous positions of this transgressively attractive man.[9] These scholars created in their biographies a Liszt in harmony with their own subject positions (which were closely tied to their sexual identities), even as they engaged in musicological work about him. Considering the amount of primary source material and the complexity of the topic,[10] the following study of the activities of Ramann

7. An important attempt to reclaim Lina Ramann for Liszt research was made through the publication of her memoirs under the title *Lisztiana,* by Arthur Seidl and Friedrich Schnapp (Mainz: Schott, 1983). Equally significant was Eva Rieger's article "So schlecht wie ihr Ruf? Die Liszt-Biographin Lina Ramann," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 147 (July–August 1986), 16–20, which arose as a response to the publication.

8. Although it is true that, for example, a good number of personal memoirs and biographical studies about Brahms were published during his lifetime (including an important book by Florence May), some of them relying upon scattered questionnaires and interviews, it was not until the study of twentieth-century figures such as Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, and Charles Ives that we find the same level of systematic research devoted to documenting a composer's life and works through the most varied primary documents (interviews, questionnaires, letters, etc.) as we observed for Liszt at the hands of Ramann and La Mara.

9. As has been demonstrated time and again in the literature about him, Liszt can be all things to all scholars. This diversity of reception should not be regarded as a liability, however, as Liszt simply foregrounds what happens to all composers—and, indeed, all personalities—in the public's eye.

10. The Goethe- und-Schiller-Archiv in Weimar maintains 68 and 72 archival units for Ramann and La Mara, respectively, within the Liszt-Nachlaß, under call numbers 59/318–386 (Ramann) and 59/387–459 (La Mara). Many of the archival numbers are divided into individual folders. Also, the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum in Leipzig preserves a large La Mara-Nachlaß under the call number Rp. 5.

and La Mara on behalf of Liszt cannot claim comprehensiveness, but it can open up fascinating questions of gender and identity surrounding Liszt.

Both Ramann and La Mara showed inclinations toward literary, scholarly, and critical activities in music early in their lives. That they eventually succeeded in their literary projects about Liszt, and thereby secured for themselves individual niches within musical and Liszt scholarship, stems from qualities of independence, determination, perseverance, and self-awareness that were manifested throughout their careers and arose out of the opposition that professional women of their day encountered.

As a pupil of Franz Brendel's wife, Lysinka, in Leipzig during the 1850s, Ramann fell under the literary influence of the *Neue Zeitschrift* editor and Liszt associate.[11] Indeed, the unpublished correspondence from Brendel to Ramann reveals him already encouraging her to contribute reviews in 1858, when she was only 25:

> Continue writing reviews in papers that are at your disposal. I will use your concert review, of course in a revised and abridged version.[12]

By 1860, Ramann was writing regularly about Liszt and his New-German associates in the musical press. She also had proposed to Brendel an article "Über die Stellung der Frauen," which he turned down for publication[13]:

> My husband will probably make use of the little article about *Köhler* in his journal.

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11. An extensive unpublished correspondence between the Brendels and Ramann is preserved in the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Archiv des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins, under call number 70/347. According to the unpublished correspondence between Lysinka Brendel and Ramann, Ramann participated in the Saturday matinees at the Brendel home in Leipzig. This correspondence is the best source about Ramann's early life, until her memoirs pick up in the late 1860s and her diary begins in 1873.

12. "Fahren Sie fort Notizen zu machen in Blättern, die Ihnen zu Gebote stehen ... Ihre Concertnotiz werde ich benutzen, natürlich in anderer Fassung u. in geringerem Umfange." Unpublished letter from Franz Brendel to Lina Ramann, dated Leipzig, 2 April 1858; Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Archiv des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins, 70/347.

13. This article was never published and does not appear to survive.

However, nothing can be done with the large article *Über die Stellung der Frauen*—at least he cannot use it.[14]

Already in 1867, she sought help from Brendel to publish her collected writings, a request that he treated as arrogant. In a letter to Ramann, he argued that it took Schumann years to find a publisher for his collected writings:

With regard to his collected writings, *Schumann* turned *to me*, in order to get him a publisher. I didn't find any. Finally he found one himself. For years *I have wanted* to print my collected writings, *without finding a publisher*. You imagine that all of this is easier than it is and don't at all know the steps that are required for you to take.[15]

Nevertheless, Ramann did find a publisher, and her collected writings came out in 1868, when she was 35—a tribute to her perseverance and remarkable strength of will. Then, in 1874, she published a study of Liszt's *Christus*, which secured the composer's attention and served as the direct inspiration for the biography *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch,* which publisher Julius Schuberth commissioned the same year and which appeared in three volumes, in 1880, 1887, and 1894.

Marie Lipsius came from a family of theologians and scholars—her brothers undertook university studies, but this path was closed to her.[16] However, she found a mentor in Liszt's associate Richard Pohl

14. "Über den kleinen Aufsatz über *Köhler* wird mein Mann wahrscheinlich in der Zeitschrift verfügen. Dagegen ist mit dem großen Aufsatz *über der Stellung der Frauen* nichts anzufangen, wenigstens kann er ihn nicht brauchen." Unpublished letter from Lysinka Brendel to Lina Ramann, dated Leipzig, 10 April 1860; Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, 70/347.

15. "*Schumann* wandte sich bezüglich seiner gesammelten Schriften *an mich*, um ihm einen Verleger zu schaffen. Ich fand keinen. Endlich fand er selbst Einen. Seit Jahren *wünsche ich* meine gesammelten Schriften zu drucken, *ohne einen Verleger zu finden*. Sie denken sich das Alles viel leichter als es ist u. kennen noch gar nicht die Schritte, die zu thun nothwendig sind." Unpublished letter from Franz Brendel to Lina Ramann, dated Leipzig, 10 September 1867; Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, 70/347. Brendel, who was to die in late 1868, never found a publisher for his own collected writings. As a footnote to the relationship between Brendel and Ramann, after the death of Lysinka in 1867, he became clearly enamored of Ramann, turning to her as a personal confessor and healer.

16. Again, the best source of information about the writer is her own words, in the reliable autobiography entitled *Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1917).

and through him had access to Liszt and the Weimar circle,[17] as Ramann did through Brendel. Her first writings appeared in *Westermanns Monatshefte* in 1867; they were biographical sketches on Schumann, Chopin, and Liszt, the core of the first volume of *Musikalische Studienköpfe*.[18] For these writings, she chose the pen name La Mara, a combination of her first name and that of her sister-in-law, Laura: "The pseudonym [was] a combination of the names Laura and Maria, although my sister-in-law has no blame or responsibility for my works."[19] She did this because her deceased father had forbidden her to use the family name, if she should ever become a writer, and because she did not want to be identified as a female author.

> She betrayed my secret, which I had so carefully protected, not out of cowardice, but rather because of the prejudice against the *female* authorship of a serious book, which was so prevalent then.[20]

Her short biography received Liszt's praise[21] and led to other works about him and more *Studienköpfe*.

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17. Ibid., vol. 1, 23.

18. Perhaps her most lasting contribution to musical literature were her five volumes of *Musikalische Studienköpfe:* Vol. 1, *Romantiker* (Leipzig: Hermann Weißbach, 1868); Vol. 2, *Ausländische Meister* (Leipzig: Hermann Weißbach, 1872); Vol. 3, *Jüngstvergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Heinrich Schmidt & Carl Günther, 1875); Vol. 4, *Classiker* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881); Vol. 5, *Die Frau im Tonleben der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882). They were the most popular short biographies of composers produced in the German language. Even today, scholars refer to them in bibliographies (especially for more obscure composers). The fifth volume, with its inviting title, has yet to be discovered by feminist musicology as an early source for important information on women composers and performers in Germany of the late nineteenth century. Even more important, however, is its value as a collection of reworked autobiographical sketches by its authors, because, as La Mara herself points out, she relied upon the artists themselves for much of her information.

19. "Das Pseudonym [war] eine Kombination der Namen Laura und Maria, obwohl meine Schwägerin keinerlei Schuld und Verantwortung an meinen Arbeiten trifft." La Mara, *Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals*, vol. 1, 67.

20. "Sie verriet mein Geheimnis, das ich nicht aus Feigheit, sondern aus Scheu vor dem damals beherrschenden Vorurteil gegen die *weibliche* Autorschaft eines ernst zu nehmenden Buches so sorglich gehütet hatte." Ibid., vol. 1, 94.

21. For example, Liszt wrote the following to Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein on 16 October 1867: "The *Lloyd* has published a few extracts from a

What made this literary activity scholarly or musicological? La Mara expressed her general philosophy this way:

> [My books] are thoroughly based on the best sources, mainly on personal communications and archival material that I have uncovered. The books make historical faithfulness in descriptions and reliability in statements their tasks. I have placed my pen in the service of truth.[22]

The same philosophy applies to Ramann, as expressed in the preface to the English edition of *Franz Liszt*: "Our biography of Franz Liszt was fortunate to draw its facts, as far as his personal life is concerned, from the most authentic sources. . . ."[23] That "faithfulness," "reliability," and "truth" are relative concepts that will become apparent upon examination of their writings—Ramann and La Mara prove to be no different from Alan Walker and Serge Gut, both of whom claim to be faithful to the sources yet significantly differ in the Liszts they write.[24]

In their quest for reliable information, both Ramann and La Mara sent questionnaires to Liszt and associates, conducted interviews with them, and obtained their correspondence. Most interesting are the questionnaires, which provide insights into how the women dealt with

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biographical notice inserted in the October issue of *Westermann's Monthly Review*. I shall bring it to you. In it you will recognize a female hand—I add immediately that I know the authoress only slightly. The style does not lack elegance—and if anything, she praises me too much rather than not enough!" Published in Adrian Williams, *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998), 676.

22. "[Meine Bücher] stützen sich durchgängig auf die besten Quellen, meist auf persönliche Mittheilungen und selbstgewonnenem archivalischen Material, und machen sich historische Treue der Schilderung und Zuverlässigkeit der Angaben zur Aufgabe. Ich habe meine Feder in den Dienst der Wahrheit gestellt." La Mara, quoted in Anna Morsch, "La Mara (Marie Lipsius)," *Deutschlands Tonkünstlerinnen. Biographische Skizzen aus der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Stern & Ollendorff, 1893), 22–23.

23. Lina Ramann, "Preface to the English Edition," in E. Cowdery (Trans.), *Franz Liszt: Artist and Man* (London: W. H. Allen, 1882), vol. 1, xii.

24. Here I am not necessarily referring to one particular book, but rather to the authors' series of writings about Liszt that reveal a particular perspective. Nevertheless, in the case of Alan Walker, the main source is his monumental, three-volume biography entitled *Franz Liszt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983–1996); for Serge Gut, it is the monograph *Franz Liszt* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois/L'Âge d'homme, 1989).

a living subject. The first examples are taken from the thirty-seven pages of questionnaires sent by Ramann to Liszt between 1874 and 1881, used in the research for her biography (see Figures 1 and 2).[25] Note Ramann's handwritten questions on the left folio and Liszt's answers on the right.[26] There is no record for the questionnaires La Mara may have used for her short biography of Liszt, but there do exist those for the letter editions and the *Musikalische Charakterköpfe.* Figure 3 is from questions posed to Marie Princess Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst in the early 1890s about private names used by her mother and Liszt in their correspondence.[27] As an indication of La Mara's commitment to using questionnaires, even during Liszt's lifetime, Figure 4 presents one page from the extensive body sent and returned to gather information for *Die Frauen im Tonleben der Gegenwart* (1882).[28] Ramann and La Mara appear to have been the first women in music to avail themselves of the questionnaire to conduct research on a living composer, and it was only part of the larger scholarly apparatus they developed (letters to and interviews with the subject and his acquaintances, for example). Thus it is possible to argue that they pioneered (or, expressed another way, anticipated)

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25. I thank the Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, for kind permission to reprint these questionnaires, which are preserved under call number 59/351 in the Liszt-Nachlaß of the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv. The texts of the questionnaires are published in their entirety as an appendix to *Lisztiana*, 387–408, and one page appears as a facsimile in Rieger, 19.

26. The questions here regard parents and dates of major compositions or first compositions in various genres, typical issues for a biography. Other questionnaires addressed such diverse issues as his reading habits, first contact with Wagner, and the number of his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. It is clear that Ramann primarily used the questionnaires to gather specific details about Liszt's life and works, which is the best and most efficient use for that information-gathering vehicle; more general questions were posed in the interviews with and letters to Liszt, which are recorded in *Lisztiana*.

27. This questionnaire also is reproduced with the kind permission of the Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar—it comes from archival folder 59/458C in the Liszt-Nachlaß.

28. This page of unpublished questionnaire involves La Mara's questions and answers by the rather colorful figure Teresa Carreño. It is presented here with the kind permission of the Bibliothek of the Museum für Stadtgeschichte, Leipzig, and it comes from the partial La Mara Nachlaß presevered there under call number Rp. 5 (Biographisches).

Text continues on page 85.

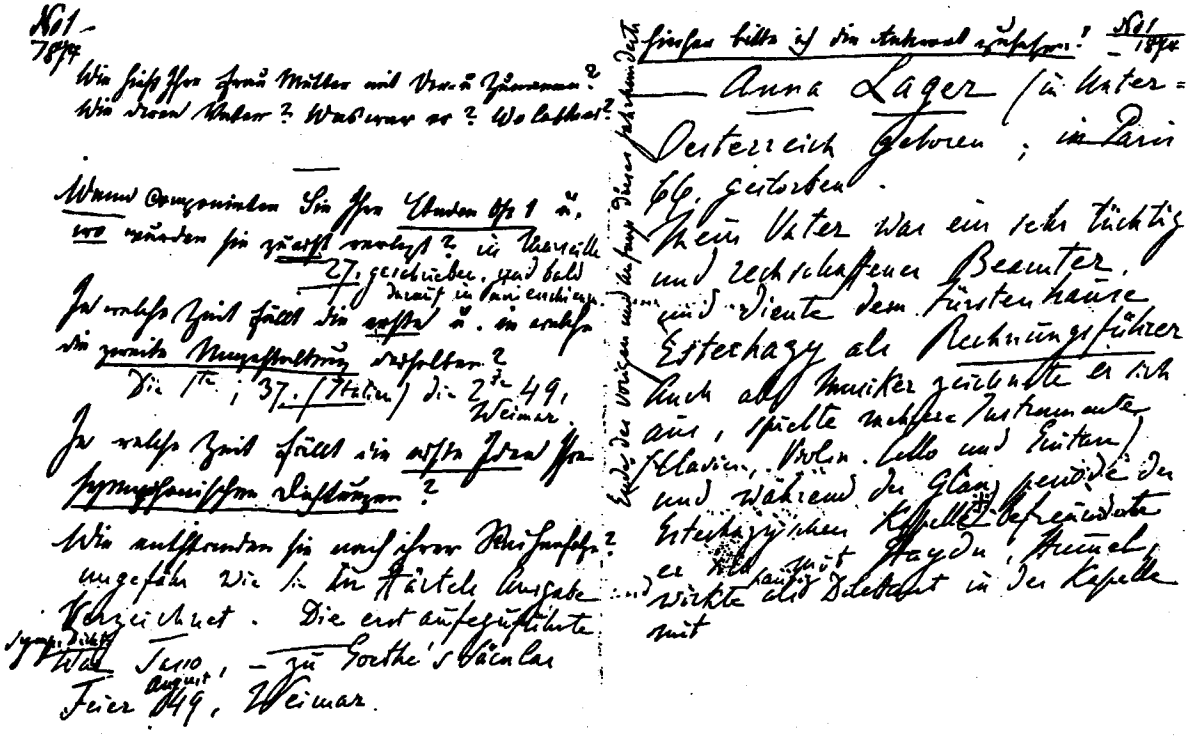

Figure 1. Unpublished questionnaire from Lina Ramann to Franz Liszt, No. 1 (1874); Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß, 59/351, 1.

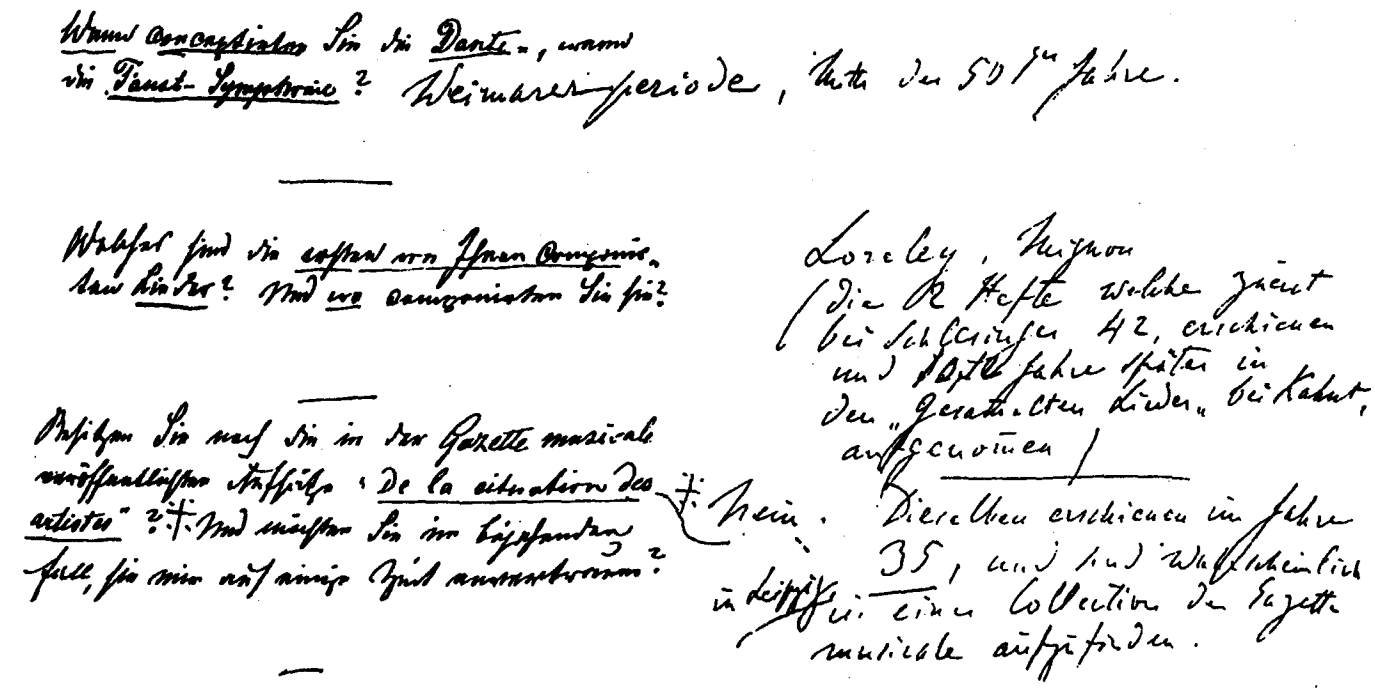

Figure 2. Unpublished questionnaire from Lina Ramann to Franz Liszt, No. 2 (undated); Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß, 59/351, 1.

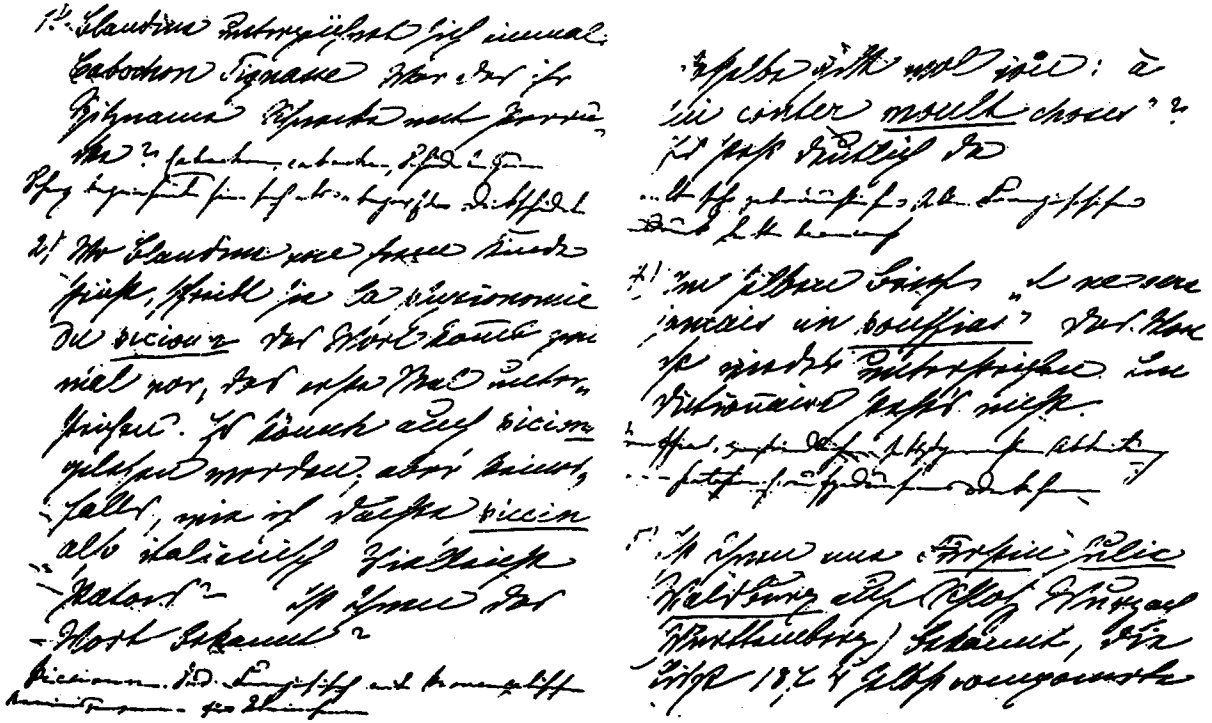

Figure 3. Unpublished questionnaire from La Mara to Marie Princess Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (undated); Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß, 59/458C.

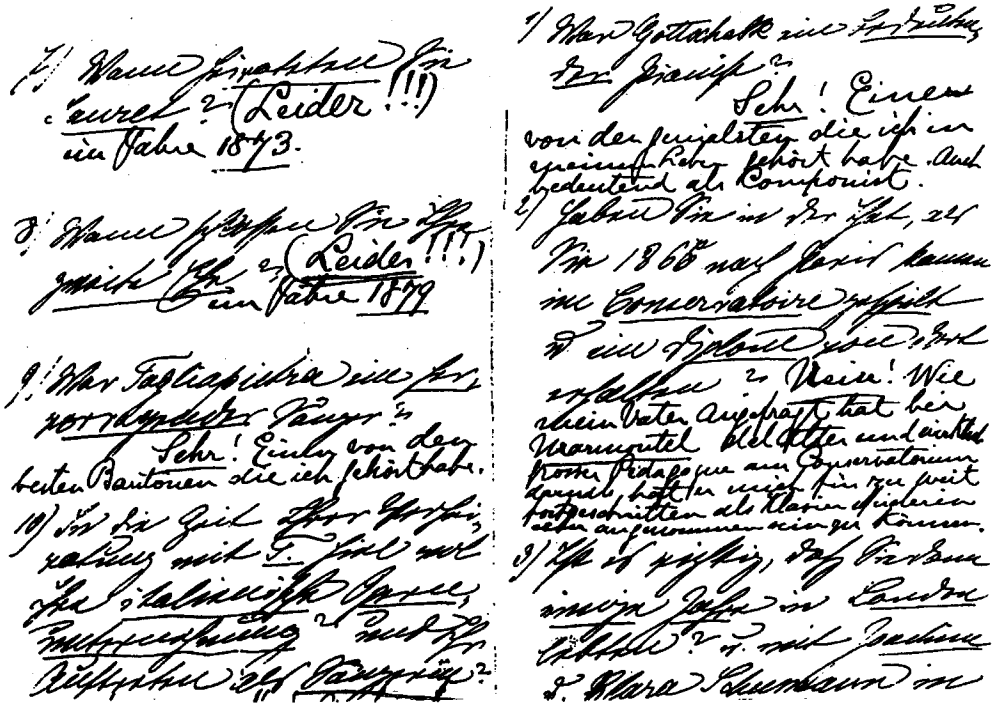

Figure 4. Unpublished questionnaire from La Mara to Teresa Carreño (undated); Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, La Mara-Nachlaß, Rp. 5, "Biographisches."

methods that would become normative in the twentieth century, once living subjects were regarded as suitable topics for research.[29]

This activity occurred at a time when early male musicologists such as Otto Jahn, Gustav Nottebohm, and Charles-Edmond-Henri de Coussemaker were devoting themselves (respectively) to Mozart, Beethoven, and Gregorian chant—that is, to music and composers from the past, the more distant, the better.[30] Such respected musicologists did not work with the present, which created a space for scholars like Ramann and La Mara.[31] Furthermore, the work of these men presupposed access to specialized training that was not available to women at the time. Thus Rieger observes that Ramann was a woman "for whom the universities and educational institutions were closed."[32] Yet the "quality" of her work (and that of La Mara) did not suffer from her lack of academic credentials, for Liszt himself wrote the following to Ramann in 1874:

> I already distributed [your so remarkable study about the oratorio *Christus*] to several friends, who could not believe that the author was not a professor at the University of Berlin or Leipzig![33]

Perhaps it was just this independence from the academic mainstream that allowed the two scholars to transcend narrow positivism, to find their own paths informed by issues and approaches that mattered to them. Both Ramann and La Mara were involved in the women's movement of the late nineteenth century, even as they

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29. The question revolves around whether their working methods were known to later generations of scholars, which was unlikely, considering the predisposition of the times against women as scholars.

30. Nottebohm (1817–1882) worked first and foremost with Beethoven source material; Jahn (1813–1869) was renowned for his authoritative, multivolume biography of Mozart; and Coussemaker (1805–1876) applied source-critical methods to early music theory and the works of Adam de la Halle.

31. An early study of women creating a space of their own is Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's "The Female World of Love and Ritual," *Signs* 1 (1975), 1–30.

32. "[Eine] Frau, der die Universitäten und Bildungsanstalten verschlossen waren," Rieger, 20.

33. "Exemplare [der so bemerkenswerthen Studie über das Oratorium *Christus*] vertheilte ich bereits an mehrere Freunde welche nicht glauben konnten dass der Autor kein Professor der Berliner oder Leipziger Universität wäre!" Quoted by Ramann in *Lisztiana*, 31

were writing about Liszt.[34] Thus the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv of Weimar preserves more than eighty-eight letters from feminist Louise Otto-Peters to Ramann from 1866 through 1895.[35] As president of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein and editor of their journal *Neue Bahnen*, Otto-Peters won her friend over to the cause of the women's movement, to the extent that Ramann could write the following in a posthumous tribute to Otto-Peters from 1896, only two years after publishing the third volume of her Liszt biography: "It would be crazy still to want to believe today that . . . the national greatness and might of Germany can do without women. . . . We women must never forget that!"[36]

La Mara was not so clearly linked to the women's movement, but she did contribute articles to the *Illustrierte Frauenzeitung*, and *Die Frauen im Tonleben der Gegenwart* (from 1882) was the first collection of biographical sketches devoted to women musicians. Furthermore, by taking the unheard of action of suing a male newspaper editor who had slandered her friend Auguste Götze, La Mara earned the respect of Otto-Peters, who felt she had done a service to the cause of women, even though La Mara lost the case and had to pay substantial court costs.[37]

Based on the prevailing image of Liszt as a womanizer, one must ask why the two proto-feminists would be attracted to working with

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34. For a history of the women's movement in Germany during the late nineteenth century, see the acclaimed monograph by Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört—Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuchverlag, 1990).

35. They are preserved under archival call numbers 59/329–330. About Otto-Peters, the best studies are Ilse Nagelschmidt and Johanna Ludwig (Eds.), *Louise Otto-Peters. Politisches Denkerin und Wegbereiterin der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Dresden: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1996); Johanna Ludwig and Rita Jorek, *Louise Otto Peters: Ihr literarisches und publizistisches Werk: Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1995); and Otto-Peters's own *Mein Lebensgang. Gedichten aus fünf Jahrzehnten* (Leipzig: Moritz Schäfer, 1893). The Louise-Otto-Peters-Gesellschaft e.V. in Leipzig is currently republishing the literary works of Otto-Peters.

36. "Es wäre ein Wahn, noch heute glauben zu wollen, . . . Deutschland, seine nationale Größe und Macht, könne der Frauen entraten. . . . *Das dürfen wir Frauen nimmer vergessen*!" Lina Ramann, "Erinnerungen an Louise Otto. Zum 13. März," *Neue Bahnen* 31 (15 March 1896), 48–49.

37. Unpublished letter from Louise Otto-Peters to Lina Ramann, dated Leipzig, 27 December 1891; Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß, 59/329, U1.

him.[38] The answer appears to reside in the multiple sexual identities of Liszt, Ramann, and La Mara.[39] Teresa Magdanz has suggested, for example, that one of the strategies of the conservative opposition to discredit Liszt was to feminize him.[40] Is it possible that those critics were observing his sexually ambiguous position, from the kiss of consecration with Beethoven as a youth,[41] through the enactment of male sexual bravado as a virtuoso pianist, to the drag garb of the Catholic church in later years?[42] And in the context of writing about Liszt's own performances of male and female, hetero- and homosexual positions, Ramann and La Mara may have found the space to enact their own sexual identities.

The evidence is rather compelling. Upon study of Ramann's Liszt biography, her detailed foreword to the English language edition, and the reception of the biography, a consistency in position reveals itself. Throughout the volumes, the reader encounters Ramann exhaus-

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38. Such literature as Julius Kapp's book *Franz Liszt und die Frauen* (Leipzig: F. Rothbart, 1911) and Charlotte Franken Haldane's fantasy *The Galley Slaves of Love: The Story of Marie d'Agoult and Franz Liszt* (London: Harvill Press, 1957) established a topos in Liszt reception that foregrounded and privileged his flamboyant relationships with women, above all from the virtuoso years.

39. Readings of Liszt from the perspective of gender studies have only recently begun to appear in the scholarly press. See, for example, Kevin Kopelson, *Beethoven's Kiss: Pianism, Perversion, and the Mastery of Desire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Richard Leppert, "Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt," in James Parakilas (Ed.), *Piano Roles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 178–199. However, it is not coincidental that Liszt, and not Wagner, would have become one of the nineteenth-century flash points in current scholarship for issues of sexuality, next to Schubert and Chopin.

40. Teresa Magdanz, *Declawing the Lion: Gendering Liszt*. Unpublished paper presented at the Feminism and Music Theory 5 Conference, July 1999, London.

41. This (alleged) episode in Liszt's life was the subject for public debate between scholars.

42. Very little has been written about Liszt's later years, other than in the context of his death and the linking of his extraordinary late style with his own emotional health; see Walker, *Franz Liszt:* Vol. 3, *The Final Years, 1861–1886* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 437–456. It is not surprising that no study of the *Liszt–Rezeption* has yet appeared for the years after 1860, even though several exist for the virtuoso and Weimar years. One reason is undoubtedly the difficulty coming to grips with Liszt's identity(ies) during that time, as the post-Weimar period introduced so many paradoxical elements.

tively fixing Liszt in past and present, like an object that can be possessed. To the extent that literary theorists have figured the nexus of past and present as the traditional domain of male writers, Ramann occupies that terrain. Her treatment of Liszt in unidealized prose—that is, writing that did not engage in the utopian style so favored at the end of the nineteenth century[43]—has an edge, fixing a masculinity for him that Liszt himself did not always appreciate. Thus he complained about the harshness of her representation, whether her use of the term *battle* for the musical dispute with Thalberg (Liszt preferred the designation *episode*) or her portrayal of him as forcing Countess d'Agoult to convert.[44] In fact, as can be seen in Figure 5, he sent back to Ramann a number of altered pages from the first volume, which she resisted or ignored (remember her independence with Brendel already).[45] Ramann loved the Liszt she had constructed too much to let his own position-taking get in the way, although he ultimately approved her work.[46]

Ramann explains her position in the introduction to the English edition of Volume 1 from 1882, where she admits that hers was not an idealized (i.e., feminine) view of Liszt, but rather one that "without listening to the siren's song," has "striven to trace the development of Liszt's character and intellect as a man and artist . . . from the most reliable sources."[47] In doing so, however, she was writing not only about Liszt but also about herself, which was apparent to those around her. Thus in a letter from 1875, Princess Carolyne zu Sayne-Wittgenstein referred to a "male objectivity" in Ramann's writing.[48] August Stradal's 1912 memoir of Ramann prominently mentions her

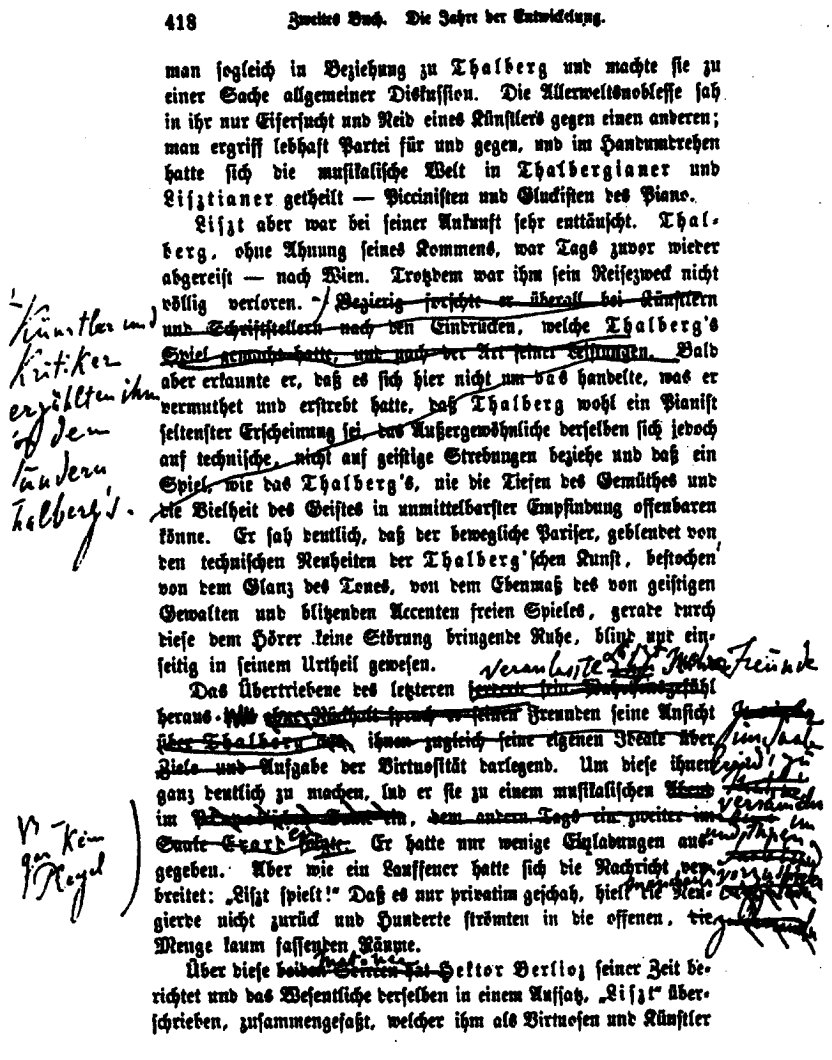
43. Regarding women writing utopias in the nineteenth century, see Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).

44. See *Lisztiana*, 153–156, which includes a transcription of a letter from Ramann to Liszt, dated Nuremberg, 23 October 1880, and of the response from Liszt to Ramann, dated [Villa d'Este], 14 November 1880.

45. I thank the Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, for permission to reproduce Liszt's corrections, which come from archival folder 59/350, I in the Liszt-Nachlaß.

46. This, of course, applies primarily to Volume 1, which appeared in print during Liszt's life. It is not coincidental that personal interpretation plays a much greater role in—indeed, underpins—vol. 3 from 1894.

47. Ramann, "Preface to the English Edition," xii–xiii. This text does not appear in the German edition, and it does not exist in autograph, so we may never know Ramann's original wording, presuming that it was translated by Cowdrey.



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man ſogleich in Beziehung zu Thalberg und machte ſie zu einer Sache allgemeiner Diskuſſion. Die Allerweltsnobleſſe ſah in ihr nur Eiferſucht und Neid eines Künſtlers gegen einen anderen; man ergriff lebhaft Partei für und gegen, und im Handumdrehen hatte ſich die muſikaliſche Welt in Thalbergianer und Liſztianer getheilt — Picciniſten und Gluckiſten des Piano.

Liſzt aber war bei ſeiner Ankunft ſehr enttäuſcht. Thalberg, ohne Ahnung ſeines Kommens, war Tags zuvor wieder abgereiſt — nach Wien. Trotzdem war ihm ſein Reiſezweck nicht völlig verloren. Begierig forſchte er überall bei Künſtlern und Schriftſtellern nach den Eindrücken, welche Thalberg's Spiel hervorgerufen hatte, und auch der Art ſeiner Leiſtungen. Bald aber erkannte er, daß es ſich hier nicht um das handelte, was er vermuthet und erſtrebt hatte, daß Thalberg wohl ein Pianiſt ſeltenſter Erſcheinung ſei, das Außergewöhnliche derſelben ſich jedoch auf techniſche, nicht auf geiſtige Strebungen beziehe und daß ein Spiel, wie das Thalberg's, nie die Tiefen des Gemüthes und die Vielheit des Geiſtes in unmittelbarſter Empfindung offenbaren könne. Er ſah deutlich, daß der bewegliche Pariſer, geblendet von den techniſchen Neuheiten der Thalberg'ſchen Kunſt, beſtochen von dem Glanz des Tones, von dem Ebenmaß des von geiſtigen Gewalten und blitzenden Accenten freien Spieles, gerade durch dieſe dem Hörer keine Störung bringende Ruhe, blind und einſeitig in ſeinem Urtheil geweſen.

Das Übertriebene des letzteren ſpürend, ſprach er ſeinen Freunden ſeine Anſicht über Thalberg aus, ihnen zugleich ſeine eigenen Ideale über Ziele und Aufgabe der Virtuoſität darlegend. Um dieſe ihnen ganz deutlich zu machen, lud er ſie zu einem muſikaliſchen Abend im Pleyel'ſchen Saale ein, dem andern Tags ein zweiter im Saale Erard folgte. Er hatte nur wenige Einladungen ausgegeben. Aber wie ein Lauffeuer hatte ſich die Nachricht verbreitet: „Liſzt ſpielt!“ Daß es nur privatim geſchah, hielt die Neugierde nicht zurück und Hunderte ſtrömten in die offenen, die Menge kaum faſſenden Räume.

Über dieſe beiden Soireen hat Hektor Berlioz ſeiner Zeit berichtet und das Weſentliche derſelben in einem Aufſatz, „Liſzt“ überſchrieben, zuſammengefaßt, welcher ihm als Virtuoſen und Künſtler

Figure 5. Franz Liszt, autograph alterations to Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*; Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß, 59/350, 1.

48. "Sie werden es von Ihrem Standpunkt aus ganz gewiß begreifen und auch mit Ihrer männlichen Objektivität wiedergeben." Letter from Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein to Ramann, dated Rome, 29 December 1875; reprinted in *Lisztiana*, 63–64.

"*oeuvre* that was born by a masculinely strong spirit."[49] Liszt himself, significantly, called her "[*un*] *chevalier sans peur et sans raproche.*"[50] In other words, we could say that Ramann was performing masculinity in her writing about Liszt. It should be clear that Ramann also was claiming a place for herself in the present through Liszt: Writing about Liszt in this way meant possessing him here and now, and possessing him here and now meant establishing a niche of respectability for a woman and a scholar of the late nineteenth century. That she achieved this through the performance of masculinity should question heterosexist notions of Liszt biographers about the operation of female desire toward Liszt.

La Mara, in contrast, performed femininity and clearly had her sights on the future. If Ramann was creating a masculinized Liszt, La Mara's Liszt was feminized. The Liszt La Mara writes was one whose realm is not of the present, but of the future, as expressed by the popular saying "the future is a woman" and as theorized by Lynne Segal, among others.[51] La Mara's Liszt is contingent, not fixed or contained, but always awaiting completion or recognition in the utopian sense that motivated so much women's writing in the nineteenth century, including the *Musikalische Märchen* of Polko and the expository prose of Otto-Peters.[52] And this is also the site of La Mara's own position. When, for example, she writes, "Liszt [was] aware that also *his* time would certainly come, and that the future tends to be a more just judge than the present,"[53] she is hoping the same for herself. Upon La Mara's expression of disappointment over the lack of popular resonance for her writing, the princess significantly answers:

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49. "Wer Lina Ramanns von einem *männlich* starken Geiste gestragenes [sic] Schaffen ganz gekannt, mußte von Erstaunen und Bewunderung erfüllt werden." Stradal, "Lina Ramann," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 79 (11 April 1912), 206.

50. Letter of Liszt to Ramann, dated Weimar, 23 May 1878; reprinted in *Lisztiana*, 127.

51. Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* (London: Virago, 1988).

52. This issue is key to my unpublished paper "New German School, or Old Boys Club?" (see note 6).

53. "Liszt [war] im Bewußtsein dessen, daß auch seine Stunde noch kommen müsse, und daß die Zukunft eine gerechtere Richterin zu sein pflegt als die Gegenwart." La Mara, "Franz Liszt," in *Musikalische Studienköpfe*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Heinrich Schmidt, 1874), vol. 1, 255. It is important to note her use of the feminine form of the German word for judge, *Richterin*.

Continue your path . . . firmly and courageously. You open it to women . . . and at the same time teach them the virtue of . . . perseverance. The future will thank you, dear woman, and believe me, *its* applause means more than that of the present. It is *less biased*, more enlightened.[54]

Thus the last paragraph of La Mara's Liszt biography issues a challenge to the future, a challenge that La Mara seems ready to meet herself: "May it also be reserved for the future to create a biography [of Liszt] that presents him in the full greatness and beauty of his being."[55]

This feminizing carried over into the reception of her biography, which Princess Carolyne, for example, lauded for its feminine insight, quite in contrast with Ramann's "male objectivity": "In your [character] drawing you have descended into psychological depths as only a woman . . . is able to expose and express."[56] Later, when the princess discovered that La Mara was to translate Liszt's Chopin book, she observed: "There is almost a second book there between the lines. Your woman's spirit, the ear of your heart will hear the words."[57] In comparison with La Mara's feminine speaking to the heart and portrayal of psychological conditions, Ramann's masculine treatment of Liszt became "the dry recounting of dates and events."[58] This may involve an essentializing of literary style, but in her memoirs, La Mara gladly accepted these representations of her writing.[59]

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54. "Setzen Sie ihren Weg so fest und mutig fort. Sie öffnen ihn den Frauen . . . und gleichzeitig lehren Sie ihnen eine Tugend . . . die Beharrlichkeit. Die Zukunft wird es Ihnen Dank wissen, liebe Frau, und glauben Sie mir, *ihr* Beifall gilt mehr als der der Gegenwart. Sie ist *unbefangener*, aufgeklärter." Quoted in La Mara, *Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals*, vol. 1, 217.

55. "Möchte es der Zukunft auch vorbehalten sein, ein Lebensbild [von Liszt] zu erzeugen, das ihn in der vollen Größe und Schönheit seines Daseins zur Erscheinung bringt." La Mara, "Franz Liszt," in *Musikalische Studienköpfe,* vol. 1, 296.

56. "In Ihrer Zeichnung sind Sie in die psychologischen Tiefen hinabgestiegen, wie sie nur eine Frau . . . zu deuten und auszudrücken vermag." La Mara, *Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals,* vol. 1, 218.

57. "Es liegt beinahe ein zweites Werk in dem Band zwischen den Zeilen. Das wird Ihr Frauengemüt, Ihr Herzensohr den Worten ablauschen." Ibid., vol. 1, 281.

58. Ibid., 334.

59. The question of essentialism is one that always surfaces in discussing literature or music by women. There is no easy solution to the problem, but La Mara's own position makes it negotiable, if not fully justifiable, here.

To take the interpretation of the evidence one step further, it is possible to suggest that the positions articulated therein reveal Ramann and La Mara enacting their own sexual identities through writing about Liszt. Both scholars enjoyed long-term relationships with same-sex partners, Ramann with Ida Volkmann and La Mara with Similde Gerhard.[60] Particularly moving are passages in La Mara's memoirs about the death of her partner in 1903:

> She requested of me, "when I die, don't be too sad! Our separation will not last long. We remain united in God, who brought us together." Our happy "pairing," as Liszt called it, was gone after twenty-one years. The caption "Alone" stood over the chapters of my life that were yet to follow.[61]

Although Ramann's relationship with Volkmann was known throughout the German musical world, as attested by entries in her autobiographical *Lisztiana* and references in the musical press, it was a public secret.[62] The question arises, then, how can we avoid essentializing the positions of Ramann and La Mara based on their sexual preferences?

In her reading of Willa Cather's fiction, Judith Butler's study *Bodies That Matter* allows us to theorize a free position-taking that is not bound by essentialism. Through the concepts of transfer of sexuality and substitutability in application to the texts, Butler provided models of lesbian interpretation that can open other texts in which the author appears "not to place herself in a legible relation to women or to lesbianism."[63] For Sue Wise, in her important 1986 article "From Butch God to Teddy Bear? Some Thoughts on My Relationship with Elvis Presley," this meant justifying a lesbian writing about the "dead

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60. This important aspect of the lives of the two scholars seems to have eluded their own biographers.

61. "'Wenn ich sterbe, sei nicht zu traurig!' bat sie mich. 'Unsere Trennung dauert nicht lang. In Gott, der uns zusammengeführt hat, bleiben wir vereint.' . . . Dahin war nach 21 Jahren unsere glückliche 'Zweisamkeit,' wie Liszt sie nannte. Über den noch folgenden Kapiteln meines Lebens stand die Überschrift 'Allein!'" La Mara, *Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals*, vol. 2, 367–368.

62. *Lisztiana* is filled with references to the women's relationship that are clearly homoerotic, such as the passage about the water bottle that Ramann shared with Volkmann (and Liszt!) and called "baby" (222).

63. Judith Butler, "'Dangerous Crossing': Willa Cather's Masculine Names," in *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 143.

man" Elvis (who has been significantly tied by Susan McClary and others to Liszt) and establishing a clear link between Elvis's sexual personae and how she (Wise) has "chosen to write biographically [about him]."[64] In our case, this constitution of gender and sexuality at discursive sites can result in Ramann taking a masculine position vis-à-vis a male Liszt (what Butler referred to in *The Psychic Life of Power* as "a 'woman' performing masculinity,"[65] as a proto–Gertrude Stein), even as a feminine La Mara creates a female Liszt.

One support for this thesis can be seen in a photograph from the music festival in Sondershausen in June of 1886 (see Figure 6).[66] Here we see Liszt next to Ramann, whose body language signifies her uncontested ownership of Liszt. By presiding over him in front of the important men in the photo, she can be seen as laying claim to the homosocial realm of brotherhood, important both for those men and for her own identity.

In closing, I should note that there was a separation between the two scholars: They met only once, in June of 1880, and the archival records indicate that they exchanged only three letters with each other.[67] Although one could assert that the distance arose out of a competition to be the "authorized" musicologist for Liszt, I would argue that their opposing gendered and sexual positions in relation to Liszt—with Ramann playing the male to a masculinized Liszt and La

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64. Published in Denise Farran, Sue Scott, and Liz Stanley (Eds.), *Writing Feminist Biography* (Manchester: University of Machester, 1986), 111–112. There is a dearth of literature about women writing about men, for good reason: Feminists have found fruitful ground for the study of identity and subject formation in literature by women, about women (above all, autobiography). In that literature, there is no possibility of an essentialist bind, nor is there the problem of the author having to compete with men in dealing with the subject. Still, considering the number of writings about male musicians by women, writings that still tend to be dismissed by male "authorities," there is a significant need to explore this body of literature.

65. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 146.

66. Published in *Lisztiana*, 342–343. This photograph was taken by noted Weimar photographer Louis Held on 5 June 1886, and is the final picture taken of Liszt during his lifetime.

67. Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar, Liszt-Nachlaß. The letters from Ramann to La Mara are preserved under call number 59/411, U4 (20 December 1892, 4 September 1893, 15 June 1903); those from La Mara to Ramann, under call number 59/325, U 7 (17 April 1881, 16 September 1892, 19 June 1893).

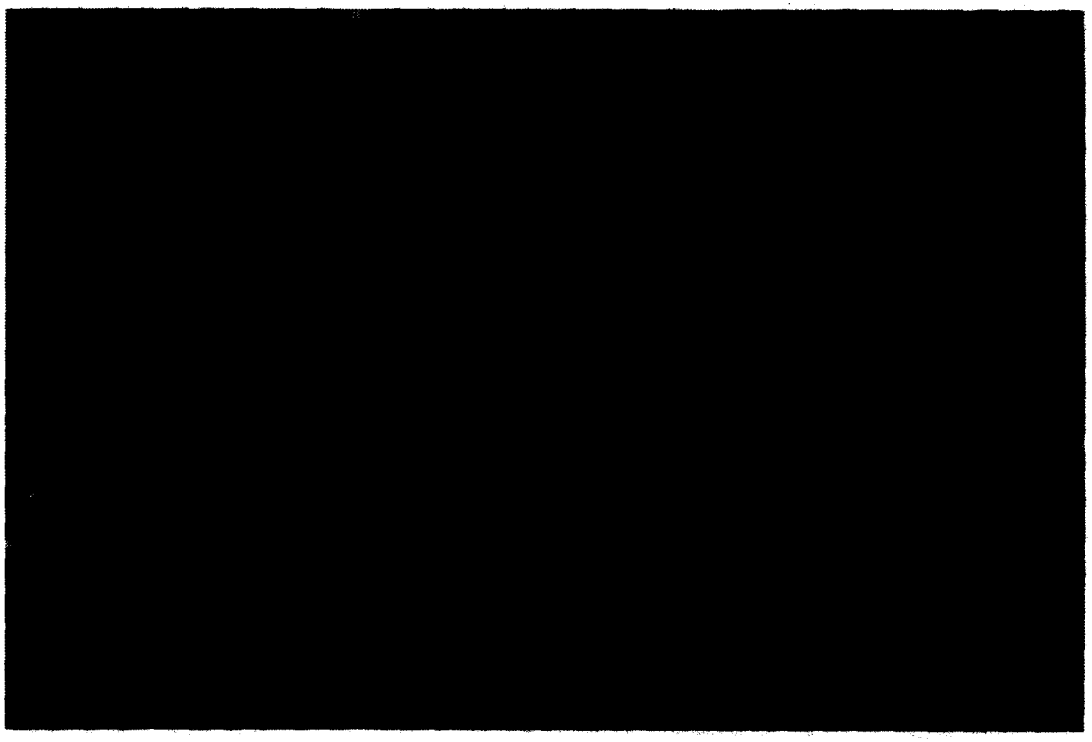

Figure 6. Tonkünstler-Versammlung in Sondershausen. Photograph by L. Held (1886), from *Lisztiana* (p. 342).

Mara playing the female to a feminized Liszt—was a further, and perhaps decisive, factor behind the separation of the two scholars. Both captured and possessed Liszt in their writings, but a Liszt in harmony with their own individual subject positions. In so doing, they were participating in the diffusion or refraction of Liszt's own sexual identities, which manifested throughout his life. Yet, ironically, these scholars were striving for the same goal—a faithful representation of Liszt's life and work—and they believed they possessed the musicological methodology and ability to carry it out. It is no wonder the musicological establishment has ignored these dangerous voices in writing its own history, in the creation of its canon, despite their pioneering scholarly work with a living composer. Today, we should recognize their Liszt biographies for what they are: fine examples of scholarly work that reveal as much about their authors as their subject as well as tributes to the determination and perseverance of women who wrote at a time when neither they nor their topic had scholarly respectability. May their achievements continue to inspire us in a day when their struggles are all too familiar!

Table 1
Selected Publications by Late-Nineteenth-Century *Musikschriftstellerinnen*

Louise Otto-Peters (1819–1895)

Lieder eines deutschen Mädchens (Leipzig: Wienbrak, 1847).
Die Mission der Kunst mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Gegenwart (Leipzig: Matthes, 1861).
Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb. Blicke auf das Frauenleben der Gegenwart (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1866).
Frauenleben im Deutschen Reich (Leipzig: Schäfer, 1876).
Various articles in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik.*

Elise Polko (1823–1899)

Musikalische Märchen, Phantasien und Skizzen (Leipzig: Barth, 1852).

Table continues on p. 96.

Table 1, *Continued*

Elise Polko (1823–1899)

Neue Novellen (Leipzig: Schlicke, 1861).
Vom Gesange. Musikalische Winke und Lebensbilder (Leipzig: Barth, 1877).
Neue Künstlermärchen. Phantasien und Skizzen (Leipzig: Barth, 1879).
Unsere Musikklassiker. Sechs biographische Lebensbilder (Leipzig: Schmidt & Günther, 1880).
Stimmungsbilder. Novellen und Skizzen (Breslau: Schottländer, 1881).

Anna Morsch (1841–1916)

Der Klavier-Lehrer [journal] (Berlin: W. Peiser, 1878–1910).
Der italienische Kirchengesang bis Palestrina. Zehn Vorträge (Berlin: Stern & Ollendorff, 1887).
Deutschlands Tonkünstlerinnen. Biographische Skizzen aus der Gegenwart (Berlin: Stern & Ollendorff, 1893).

Lina Ramann (1833–1912)

Aus der Gegenwart. Aufsätze über Musik für Musikfreunde (Nürnberg: Schmid, 1868).

Die Musik als Gegenstand des Unterrichts und der Erziehung (Leipzig: Merseburger, 1868).
Franz Liszt's Oratorium Christus (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt, 1874).
Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1880–1894), 3 vols.
Franz Liszt: Artist and Man, translated by E. Cowdery (London: W.H. Allen, 1882), 2 vols.
Franz Liszt. *Gesammelte Schriften,* edited by Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1881–1883), 5 vols.
Liszt-Pädagogium (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1902).

Table continues on p. 97.

Table 1, *Continued*

La Mara [Marie Lipsius] (1837–1927)

Numerous composer monographs in the series *Musikalische Studeinköpfe*, editions of Liszt letters

"Franz Liszt," in *Musikalische Charakterköpfe*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Heinrich Schmidt, 1868): 251–297.

Franz Liszt's Briefe (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1893–1905), 8 vols.

Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1895–1904), 3 vols.

Liszt und die Frauen (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911).

Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1917), 2 vols.

An der Schwelle des Jenseits. Letzte Erinnerungen an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1925).