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Liszt, Language, and Identity: A Multinational Chameleon

JOANNE CORMAC

Liszt had an impressively forward-looking awareness of public relations and had a range of means for altering his image as required. He managed to project diverse identities that were sometimes embraced by the public, and sometimes questioned. These “contradictions” in Liszt’s character have been the subject of much confusion and debate in Liszt literature, and one aspect particularly has scholars still perplexed—Liszt’s national identity. Writers have come down on all sides of the debate, declaring Liszt was “really” Hungarian, French, German, or “cosmopolitan.” Alan Walker, for example, is adamant that “Liszt was Hungarian in thought and word and deed.”¹ Recently, Dana Gooley has suggested that Liszt used different national identities as a means of winning over

concert audiences,² but the role of language in projecting these identities has so far been overlooked. This article will examine how Liszt adjusted his use of languages throughout his life to gain acceptance into certain groups and to manipulate the way he was perceived by others.

To define the context against which Liszt employed his linguistic strategies, the article begins by briefly examining nineteenth-century perceptions of the relationship between national identity and language. It then maps Liszt’s fluctuating proficiency and frequency of use of a number of languages onto his biography to discover what prompted these changes in his linguistic identity. The second half of the article undertakes a detailed investigation of Liszt’s

¹Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, 3 vols. (rev. edn. London: Faber and Faber, 1989), I, 48.

²Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). In particular, see chap. 3, “The Cosmopolitan as Nationalist,” pp. 117–55.

letters to establish why and how he used a device that bilingual speakers³ have at their disposal: “codeswitching”⁴ (switching language mid-conversation). It argues that Liszt used this device to project various identities (both national and otherwise) or ingratiate himself with others.

Liszt has long suffered from accusations of artificiality, both during his life and after, partly because his music and his language display a diverse array of influences. Susan Bernstein suggests that Liszt’s lack of a native language contributed to this idea: “For Liszt, all language is assumed. The display of the artificiality of his connection to language presents a threat, not only to the heavens, but above all to the ground of a ‘native language,’ a notion positing a natural relation between a language and a geographical territory. Liszt, his language, his music, and everything he does destabilize the idea that a work reflects identity, just as a ‘native’ language would ‘naturally’ reflect an origin and a national identity.”⁵ The supposedly artificial relationship between Liszt’s language and his identity would have been particularly difficult for his contemporaries to reconcile as the relationship between language and country was felt strongly toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. This period is often pinpointed by scholars as “the birth of nationalism”—a time of upheaval that saw several states struggle to achieve autonomy or unification. The strong connection between language and nation was taken up by many writers from different countries. Jean-Jacques Rousseau began his *Essay on the Ori-*

gin of Languages (1761) by writing: “Speech distinguishes man from the animals. Language distinguishes nations from each other; one does not know where a man is from until after he has spoken.”⁶ But it was in the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder that the essential link between language and nation was fully explored. In his essay “The Origin of Language” (1772), Herder writes that “variations in language among nations are not wholly, or even mainly, attributable to such *external* circumstances as climate of geographical distances, but largely to *internal* factors such as dispositions and attitudes arising from relations between families and nations. Conflict and mutual aversion, in particular, have greatly favoured the emergence of language differentiation.”⁷ Herder’s writing on this subject stimulated a wider nineteenth-century interest in the expression of the inner self and the perception that language reflects our mind and our spirit—indeed, that it constitutes the very essence of who we are. No longer was language viewed simply as a communicative necessity, but it symbolized a deeper sense of unity between people of a particular nation. Other writers soon began to build on this idea. Johann Gottlieb Fichte in his Thirteenth Address from 1808 wrote: “The first, original, and truly natural boundaries of States are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together, and are by nature one and an inseparable whole.”⁸ Again, the idea of a deep, spiritual

³The term “bilingual” means different things to different people and has generated much debate within linguistics. For example, see Michael Agar, “The Biculture in Bilingual,” *Language in Society* 20 (1991), 167–81, or Bee Chin Ng and Gillian Wigglesworth, *Bilingualism: An Advanced Resource Book* (New York: Routledge, 2007). For the purposes of this article I have taken bilingual to mean a near-native fluency in two languages.

⁴See “code-switching,” in Joan Swann, Rajend Mesthrie, Ana Deumert, and Theresa M. Lillis, *A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 40–41.

⁵Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 124–25.

⁶Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages, Languages and Writings Related to Music*, ed. and trans. John T. Scott in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), VII, 289.

⁷Johann Gottfried Herder, “The Origin of Language,” in *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, ed. and trans. F. M. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 167.

⁸Johann Gottlieb Fichte, “Thirteenth Address” from *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), pp. 223–24.

understanding between those who speak the same language is emphasized.

These were ideas that touched Liszt's own circle. Richard Wagner was motivated to publish writings on German nationalism, and he too made a clear link between national identity and language. He takes up this theme in his essay "What Is German?": "Jacob Grimm . . . has proven that 'diutisk' or 'deutsch' means nothing more than what is homelike to ourselves, 'ourselves' being those who parley in a language mutually intelligible."⁹ And later on Wagner writes:

It [deutsch] denotes those peoples who, remaining in their ancestral seat, continued to speak their ure-mother tongue, whereas the races ruling in Romantic lands gave up that mother tongue. It is to speech and the ure-homeland, then, that the idea of "deutsch" is knit. . . . What distinguishes the "Deutschen" proper from the Franks, Goths, Lombards &c., is that the latter found pleasure in the foreign land, settled there, and commingled with its people to the point of forgetting their own speech and customs. The German proper, on the contrary, weighed always as a stranger on the foreign people, because he did not feel himself at home abroad.¹⁰

Like Herder and Fichte, Wagner puts forward language as the main defining feature of the German people. Only music has a higher place for Wagner as an expression of the German spirit.

Liszt's one-time friend Heinrich Heine may also have subscribed to Wagner's view of the "Deutschen." Jeffrey Sammons tells us that Heine "did not allow himself to be completely acculturated in France"¹¹ despite his prolonged period of exile in the country. He chose to retain his German identity and adopted the typically German view that the French "were a people living on the surface of things, loquacious and convivial, but lacking true German emotional and philosophical depth."¹² Sammons

links this deliberate avoidance of assimilation to language: "Although French was his second language, Heine never became fully bilingual; contemporary evidence is unanimous that he spoke it with a very heavy German accent and he wrote it with resourceful verve but often somewhat faultily. He composed none of his works in French, even those that first appeared in that language; everything was written in German and then translated. . . . Like Thomas Mann and many other exiled modern writers, Heine's whole being was involved in his mother tongue and could not be naturalized in another."¹³ Sammons suggests a highly romantic connection between Heine's mother tongue and the expression of his inner self, his "whole being," through language.

Even for those uninterested in the works of Herder, Hegel, Fichte, von Humboldt, and so on, language and national identity went hand in hand. The early nineteenth century saw giant leaps forward in the area of philology. Suddenly numerous "mother tongues" were worthy of study, and the first grammars of several languages were printed, including the first Czech grammar by Josef Dobrovský in 1809. Languages such as Lithuanian, Albanian, and Armenian began to be studied for the first time,¹⁴ and the century also saw the first historical studies of the Romance languages.¹⁵ Simultaneously there was an explosion in the printing of books in a variety of languages as opposed to the previous monopoly of Latin. This was accompanied by a rise in levels of literacy.

The national language gained prominent place in the numerous national movements and revolutions that sprang up throughout the century. Language played a very significant role in, for example, the Hungarian national movement, which enjoyed Liszt's sympathies. During his lifetime, Hungary was under the control of the

⁹Richard Wagner, "What Is German?" in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works: Art and Politics*, ed. and trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1895), IV, 152.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 152–54.

¹¹Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 171.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Holger Pedersen, *The Discovery of Language: Linguistic Science in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Webster Spargo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 12.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 97.

Habsburg Empire¹⁶ and felt oppressed by imperial power. In May 1784, German was made the language of all official communication and education in Hungary because Hungarian was seen as “imperfect” and “unsuited for civilized requirements.”¹⁷ Officials were required to learn German within a deadline of three years. Measures such as these ignited a popular revival of Hungarian national culture. As a result, the increased use and modernization of the language became an important part of the nationalist campaign.

According to nineteenth-century thinking, therefore, language expressed identity, and, in particular, national identity. Sociolinguists have identified two main schools of thought regarding perceptions of identity. Traditionally, it has been seen as something that is “imposed on us by birth or early circumstances . . . remaining essentially unchanged thereafter.” This was known as a “structuralist” approach, and we can assume that most people in the nineteenth century would have perceived their mother tongue and their national identity in this way. However, increasingly, scholars of sociolinguistics now subscribe to the “poststructuralist” or “constructionist model,” which sees both language and national identity as something we “construct and negotiate throughout our life.”¹⁸ David Block writes that “a poststructuralist approach to identity frames identity as socially constructed, a self-conscious, ongoing narrative an individual performs, interprets and projects in dress, bodily movements, actions and language. All this occurs in the company of others . . . with whom to varying degrees the individual shares beliefs and motives and activities and practices.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Tope Omoniyi has observed that most people entertain a number of identity options at all times and bring forward the appropriate identity ac-

ording to circumstance.²⁰ Such an approach to identity would have been unusual in the nineteenth century and perhaps even considered superficial, but this seems much closer to how Liszt understood and treated the concept. His language, as we will see, underwent several significant “reconstructions” during his life, all in response to the need to bring forward the appropriate identity at an appropriate moment.

LISZT’S LINGUISTIC RECONSTRUCTIONS

Liszt’s linguistic heritage and development were unusual and complicated. He was born in the small town of Raiding on the Austro-Hungarian border. Now in Austria, Raiding was part of Hungary during Liszt’s lifetime. It did not become part of Austria until 1919, so Liszt would only ever have thought of his birthplace as being in Hungary. Liszt’s father, Adam, was descended from German-speaking migrants; his mother was also of Austro-German descent. Neither parent spoke Hungarian, nor did Liszt. German, specifically a “lower class” Viennese dialect, was spoken at home.²¹ This was not unusual in Hungary, a country with a large immigrant population made up of Germans, Romanians, Slovaks, Serbs, and Croats, and therefore housing an exceptional variety of languages.

Liszt’s musical talent was quickly noticed by his father, who set about supporting his son’s career as a virtuoso pianist. Initially, Liszt traveled with his father to Vienna so that he could study for a year with Czerny and Salieri. Adam Liszt also intended his son to learn languages. He had petitioned his employer, Prince Nicholas Esterházy, to be transferred from Raiding to Vienna so that his son could be provided with “an excellent music teacher who would work with him at least three times a week; the

¹⁶Liszt would also have seen the Habsburg Empire become the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867.

¹⁷See László Kontler, *A History of Hungary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 215.

¹⁸John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 94.

¹⁹David Block, “Identity in Applied Linguistics,” in *The Sociolinguistics of Identity*, ed. Tope Omoniyi and Goodith White (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 39.

²⁰Tope Omoniyi, “Hierarchy of Identities,” in *Sociolinguistics of Identity*, p. 19.

²¹There is evidence of this in Liszt’s early letters to his mother: see *Franz Liszt Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter*, ed. Klára Hamburger (Eisenstadt: Burgenländische Landesregierung, 2000), and in the reminiscences of contemporaries: for example, see Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt: By Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 243.

boy would also learn French and Italian."²² It is likely, therefore, that Liszt had some knowledge of French and Italian from an early age.

After a short sojourn in Hungary, the Liszts then traveled to Paris, stopping along the way to give concerts in Vienna, southern Germany and eastern France.²³ When they arrived in Paris in December 1823, Liszt was just twelve years old, and he would not return to Hungary for another fifteen years—a longer period than he had actually lived in his “home nation.” Although he was not offered a place at the conservatoire, which was fully subscribed and would not at that time admit foreigners, Liszt received a warm welcome from Parisian society and was quickly adopted as one of their own. Liszt, in return, quickly became fluent in the French language. In December 1824 it was reported in *L’Etoile* that “having begun to learn French only a short time ago, he [Liszt] already expresses himself in the language with a clarity, and sometimes with even a finesse, which would do honor to many sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds.”²⁴ Along with this fluency in French came assimilation into French society and an interest in French cultural life, facilitated by his age.²⁵ He apparently adopted native mannerisms, and it seems to be the case that he spoke the language with a native accent.²⁶

At this point in his life, Liszt’s letters to his mother indicate a clear switch in language preference. The first letter in Klára Hamburger’s

edition, *Franz Liszt Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter*, dated 24 August 1827, is a letter from Liszt asking his mother to come to France because of his father’s illness. It is written entirely in German.²⁷ At this point Liszt had been living in Paris for nearly four years, and there is evidence that he by now spoke French fluently. It seems probable that he had to write to his mother in German at least until she moved to Paris in 1827, since she probably had no knowledge of French before this. Unfortunately, letters from the 1820s are scarce. The second letter in Hamburger’s collection, from 11 May 1831, is written entirely in French,²⁸ and from this point onward Liszt’s letters to his mother were almost always written in French, with the occasional German phrase or paragraph. It seems that he gave up writing in German as soon as Anna became able to read French (even though she continued to write to him in German for the rest of her life). This may have been simply because his growing proficiency in French had caused his German to atrophy—a common phenomenon in immigrant children.²⁹ But it may also have been a product of the identity that Liszt wished to project. Sociolinguists have noted that, when questioned about language use, speakers often “claim use of a language or variety which commands high prestige.” At the same time, they “deny knowledge or use of a code that is stigmatized.”³⁰ It would have been important for Liszt’s career and social standing that he quickly lose his lower-class dialect of German and adopt the more sophisticated French language, which of course then enjoyed the status of being the dominant *lingua franca* (as the term suggests) of Western European elites, as his mother tongue.

²²For a translation of this petition, see Walker, *Franz Liszt*, I, 66.

²³Dezső Legány, *Ferenc Liszt and His Country, 1869–1873*, trans. Gyula Gulyás, rev. Bertha Gastev (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1983), p. 6.

²⁴Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, p. 13.

²⁵Children generally assimilate more easily and completely into a new community and culture than adults. According to Robert F. Roeming, “in learning two languages simultaneously as a child, one absorbs the total behavior pattern of any aspect of the language and not just the language itself” (Robert F. Roeming, “Bilingualism and the National Interest,” *Modern Language Journal* 55 [1971], 73).

²⁶Immigrant children are generally more likely to pick up a native accent than an adult learner, because adults “may process phonetic input differently than children due to pre-existent phonetic categories from the L1 [first language]” (Alene Moyer, “Ultimate Attainment in L2 Phonology: The Critical Factors of Age, Motivation, and Instruction,” *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 21 [1999], 82).

²⁷Hamburger, *Franz Liszt Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter*, p. 41 (letter F1, 24 August 1827).

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 42 (letter F2, 11 May 1831).

²⁹For details, see Herbert W. Seliger and Robert M. Vago, “The Study of First Language Attrition: An Overview,” in *First Language Attrition*, ed. Herbert W. Seliger and Robert M. Vago (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 3–15.

³⁰Lesley Milroy and Matthew Gordon, *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 211.

French replaced German as Liszt's "natural" means of communication. He continued to prefer to speak and write in French for the rest of his life. His published writings from the Weimar years, for example, were composed in French and translated into German by Peter Cornelius.³¹ Liszt's preference for French is also apparent in his Lieder. Several of them contain mistakes in accentuation that a native speaker would not make. Such mistakes occur predominantly in the songs based on German and not French texts.³² He also encountered similar difficulties in his setting of the words "das ewig Weibliche" in the *Faust* Symphony. It was only in response to a suggestion made by Hans von Bülow in a letter of 1861 that Liszt corrected his mistake, after the work had already been engraved.³³

The "ewig Weibliche" anecdote suggests that Liszt was not as comfortable using German as French. Indeed, while his French remained fluent, Liszt's proficiency in German fluctuated throughout his life, and these fluctuations were intimately connected to the identity he wished to project. His letters, particularly those to his mother, provide an invaluable chronicle of his proficiency in German. Hamburger's edition of these letters is much more revealing than La Mara's collection, for La Mara improved Liszt's original German and often did not indicate the original language.³⁴ Hamburger's edition leaves intact Liszt's frequent mistakes in spelling, his garbling of the accusative and dative cases, and his confusion over capitalizations and the conjugation of certain verbs. Evidently Liszt la-

mented his lack of grammatical precision, for he wrote to Joachim Raff in March 1854: "What do you say to my German writing?—I would give a lot if I were gradually able to edit my German essays—But I lack entirely the fingering of Syntax!"³⁵

Liszt's difficulty with German grammar can perhaps be explained with reference to the context in which he learned the language. We know that his early success as a pianist led to the sacrifice of his formal education. Although German was the language of his childhood, regular instruction in it was broken off prematurely. Presumably, most of Liszt's German would have been taught him by his mother. Interestingly, Anna Liszt's letters contain similar mistakes to her son's, despite the fact that German was, and remained, her mother tongue. It is important to remember that Anna, as a result of her social circumstances, would have received little formal education, and this makes her grammatical irregularities less surprising. In her letters it is evident that her knowledge of German was acquired through speaking rather than formal instruction. It would appear that the mistakes in the mother's writing were inherited by the son.

We have seen that during the 1830s Liszt's German deteriorated and was replaced with French, but the letters of the late 1840s and 50s provide much evidence of a renewed interest in German, and of a higher level of fluency in the language than he had ever before achieved. These linguistic developments can easily be explained with reference to Liszt's biography. In 1842 Liszt was offered a part-time position as Kapellmeister of the Weimar Court Theatre. He initially promised to spend three months of the year in Weimar—a promise he only sporadically fulfilled—but in February 1848 he took up the post full time and settled in the small German town. Liszt lived exclusively in Weimar for the next twelve years, and in later life spent roughly a third of every year there. To many

³¹See Detlef Altenburg, "Autoren und Übersetzer," in *Franz Liszt, Sämtliche Schriften: Dramaturgische Blätter*, ed. D. Altenburg (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1989), V, 149–54.

³²See Monika Hennemann, "Liszt's Lieder," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, ed. Kenneth Hamilton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 195.

³³See László Somfai, "Die Metamorphose der 'Faust-Symphonie' von Liszt," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 5 (1963), 290.

³⁴Even in recent editions of Liszt's letters this can be a problem. One example is Adrian Williams, *Franz Liszt Selected Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). This otherwise excellent English translation of a range of Liszt's letters is inconsistent in indicating codeswitching, which is lamentable, as the choice of language can sometimes communicate something more than the words themselves.

³⁵The original reads: "Was sagt Du zu meiner Deutsch Schreiberei?—Ich gäbe viel daran, wenn ich es nach und nach so weit bringen könnte meine Aufsätze deutsch zu redigieren—Es fehlt mir aber durchaus der Fingersatz der Syntax!" (quoted in *Franz Liszt, Sämtliche Schriften*, V, 154).

the move to Weimar appeared unusual, but during the later 1830s Liszt had faced much criticism in Paris, and this perhaps made a career in Germany an attractive prospect. Admiration for his rival, Thalberg, was almost unanimous, whereas Liszt's reception was mixed. Furthermore, while Thalberg's compositions were praised in Paris, Liszt's were either overlooked or cuttingly criticized. His embattled reputation in Paris led to Liszt's decision to look elsewhere. Weimar was certainly not his first choice. He wrote to his mother on 22 October 1846 that his first opera, *Sardanapale*, was to be given in Vienna and that there was a good chance of his being offered the post of Kapellmeister there.³⁶ Donizetti, who held the post at the time, was very ill, and Liszt's prospects seemed bright. But *Sardanapale* was never completed, and Donizetti held onto the job until his death in 1848, by which time Liszt found himself committed to Weimar.

Whether in Weimar or Vienna, Liszt clearly intended to settle in the German-speaking world for a time. It now became necessary for him to "relearn" his lost mother tongue (or rather a standardized, upper-class version of it) to make himself marketable for this new situation. He brought his "Germanic" identity to the fore through his language. Indeed, his letters from this period show that his German improved considerably. From 1848, when he began work in Weimar full time, he went through a phase of writing to his mother in German. The bulk of his correspondence was still conducted in French, but of the thirteen letters in the Hamburger collection that are written entirely in German, the majority originates from 1848 to 1860: the period of Liszt's tenure in Weimar. After this time, the number of letters written to Anna Liszt in German decreases. In earlier letters to his mother, Liszt had used German almost exclusively out of a need for secrecy, but the subject matter of the German letters from the Weimar years does not seem at all sensitive. A letter written on 20 April 1854, for example, is written entirely in German but covers only innocuous topics, including inquir-

³⁶Hamburger, *Franz Liszt Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter*, p. 197 (letter F 61, 22 Oct. 1846).

ies after his mother's foot (which she had broken after a fall when visiting Liszt in Weimar two years earlier) and praise for his son Daniel, who had just won a prize.³⁷ The choice of language seems to have been made because Liszt now used the German language more regularly in his daily life.³⁸ A similar phenomenon can be found in Liszt's letters to his Hungarian friend Baron Anton Augustz. Their correspondence began in 1846, and until 1855 Liszt's letters to Baron Augustz were written entirely in French, with only the occasional brief switch to German. From June 1855 to December 1856, Liszt wrote the majority of his letters to the baron in German, and only a few were written in French. Yet after this period Liszt's letters to the baron were mainly written in French, with only the occasional letter in German. Liszt also used German in his correspondence with Wagner, Schumann, Peter Cornelius, and Felix Draeseke in letters dating from the Weimar period.³⁹

Even though Liszt was relearning his "mother tongue," there is little evidence to suggest that he was motivated by a need to rediscover his heritage. His letters and diaries do not show sentimentality over the language. He had not previously shown an interest in improving his command of German, and he had long corresponded with his German-speaking mother in French. His renewed interest in the German language was motivated by his awareness that if he reconstructed his identity he would be able to operate to his advantage in his new environment. A letter to his partner Marie d'Agoult, from December 1843, clearly suggests that Liszt was calculatedly doing everything he could to be accepted in Germany: "I am pushing hard for this Germanic appearance. It's an excellent

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 264–65 (letter F 82, 20 April 1854).

³⁸Yet, even during this time Liszt still confused the accusative and dative cases. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁹For example, see Williams, "Note to the Reader," in *Selected Letters*. The translations of the Wagner letters in this edition are almost always marked with a "G" to indicate that the original sources were written in German. For examples, see letter 268 on p. 320, letter 269 on p. 323, or letter 270 on p. 325. See also Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 275 (letter 227 to Schumann, 5 June 1849), p. 365 (letter 311 to Cornelius, 3 Sept. 1854), and p. 452 (letter 393 to Draeseke, 10 Jan. 1858). All of these translations are marked with a "G" to indicate that the original was in German.

grain of silliness and it kills two birds with one stone."⁴⁰

Of course, Liszt is perceived by many people as neither French nor German, but Hungarian. He did much to promote this idea during his lifetime, so a discussion of his national and linguistic identity would not be complete without considering his Hungarian identity. By now it has been established that Liszt did generally alter his language (whether consciously or not) to project new identities at appropriate periods in his life. We might expect, therefore, to find a sudden wealth of Hungarian in his letters from the 1840s—the period of Liszt's "rediscovery" of his Hungarian roots. This rediscovery has been well documented. The familiar story is that the impact of the 1838 flood, which devastated Budapest, prompted Liszt to give a series of highly successful concerts in Vienna, one of which was for the benefit of the flood victims. Soon after Liszt's Viennese tour the Hungarian nationalist movement began to pick up pace. Liszt felt sympathy for the Hungarian cause and, following his Vienna successes, began to publicly parade his Hungarian nationality. He resolved to give a concert tour in Hungary from 1839 to 1840.

Liszt resolved to learn Hungarian after the embarrassing debacle when he was famously presented with a decoration of nationalist significance, the Hungarian Sabre of Honor, after a concert at the Hungarian National Theatre on 4 January 1840.⁴¹ He had been claimed by Hungary as a national symbol but was forced to give his acceptance speech in French because he did not know any Hungarian. However, this "resolution" to learn the language is not in evidence in his letters from the 1840s, but there is a letter that Liszt drafted in French and had someone translate into Hungarian. This was addressed to Baron József Eötvös and writ-

ten in Pest on 13 May 1846.⁴² József Eötvös was an important figure of the Hungarian revolution. In the spring of 1848 he actually became a minister in the independent Hungarian administration that was the (temporary) achievement of the revolution. He was an educated man who would have understood French or German, but Liszt obviously recognized that it would be beneficial to clearly project his Hungarian identity when addressing him.

We might again expect to find Hungarian in Liszt's letters from the 1870s, when he was spending roughly a third of every year in Budapest. Again, there are reports of his desire to learn the language. He engaged a teacher in the early 1870s—a Priest monk named Zsigmond Vadász, who reportedly visited Liszt every day and provided him with lists of words to memorize.⁴³ The only other examples of Hungarian in Liszt's correspondence appear in letters from this time. He began a letter to Baron August dated 9 November 1869 by writing "Éljen Szegzárd!" (Hail/Hurrah Szegzárd!),⁴⁴ thereby drawing on the national tie that he shared with the baron. Liszt again had a letter translated into Hungarian, this one addressed to the Hungarian Prime Minister and written in Pest on 21 November 1871.⁴⁵ It seems, then, that Liszt was prepared to make the effort to find a translator when addressing Hungarian nationalist statesmen. He was keen to project his Hungarian identity in letters to such recipients.

Liszt's level of proficiency in Hungarian has been a sensitive issue because of the question of nationality that it naturally provokes, and it is something that is difficult to ascertain. He did own a number of Hungarian books, listed as part of his Weimar collection, and they are on subjects that interested him. Titles include József Ság's *Magyar zenészeti lexicon* (Hungarian National Music Lexicon [Budapest,

⁴⁰Translation in Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, p. 187 of "Je pousse beaucoup pour *cetter apparence* germanique. C'est une excellente graine de niais—et cela fait de deux coups une pierre" in *Franz Liszt [et] Marie d'Agoult Correspondance*, ed. Serge Gut and Jacqueline Bellas (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 1058 (letter 505, 30 Dec. 1843).

⁴¹Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, p. 133.

⁴²See explanatory notes in *Franz Liszt: Briefe aus ungarischen Sammlungen 1835–1886*, ed. Margit Prahács (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), p. 303.

⁴³Legány, *Ferenc Liszt and His Country*, p. 163.

⁴⁴*Franz Liszt's Briefe an Baron Anton Augustus (1846–1878)*, ed. Wilhelm von Csapó (Budapest: Friedr. Kilián's Nachf., 1911), p. 157 (letter 63).

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 151.

1879]), János Danielik's *Magyarországi Szent Erzsébet élete* [A Life of St. Elizabeth [Pest, 1857]], and Mihály Bogisich's *Melyik a valódi egyházi zene?* (Which Is the True Church Music? [Budapest, 1878]). If Liszt actually read these books, his knowledge of Hungarian was rather better than has generally been allowed up until now, but we have no way of knowing if he did so. Generally, examples of Hungarian words and phrases in Liszt's correspondence are extremely rare. Other than the two translated letters mentioned above, there are no Hungarian words or phrases in the letters included in *Franz Liszt Briefe aus Ungarischen Sammlungen 1835–1886* (Franz Liszt Letters from Hungarian Collections 1835–1886). The majority of the recipients of these letters are Hungarian, so it would be expected that if Liszt did use Hungarian it would appear in these letters. The problem is an obvious one: to switch to another language one needs to have at least some knowledge of it. This knowledge need not even be particularly extensive. Codeswitching often merely consists of embedding words from one language into a sentence constructed from another (as in the above example to Baron Augustz), therefore the only requirement is knowledge of some vocabulary.⁴⁶ In view of this and considering his habit of incorporating other languages into his writing (even those of which he had only limited knowledge), it seems likely that Liszt actually knew very little Hungarian.

Hungarian is notable as the only identity that Liszt only rarely projected by means of language. Instead he simply had to "announce" it, writing to Augustz on 7 May 1873: "From birth to death, and despite my lamentable ignorance of the Hungarian language, I remain heart and soul a Magyar."⁴⁷ He also used dress and music as outward markers. The *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, for example, clearly proclaimed his Hungarian identity, as did the associated controversial book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859). Perhaps if he had learned the language there would have been

less controversy over his national identity during his lifetime and today.

One final Liszt identity that has received much criticism is unrelated to nationality; it is rather his religious identity. Many critics have found it difficult to reconcile Liszt's lifestyle with his religious calling and have simply concluded that this identity was superficial. This conclusion is at odds with the profound religious beliefs Liszt held throughout his life that are easily discernible in his letters. He had in fact considered becoming a priest on several occasions from a young age. Latin and Italian phrases appear in his letters as indicators of this identity.

Liszt had some knowledge of both Italian and Latin, but he did not achieve high levels of proficiency in either language. We have already seen that Liszt probably had some Italian lessons as a child, he had lived in Italy with his partner Marie d'Agoult, and he continued to spend a considerable amount of time in Italy throughout his life. In addition, Liszt's father occasionally taught Latin to pupils⁴⁸ and so may have taught Liszt as well. Liszt further showed some desire to learn Latin after taking minor Holy Orders on 25 April 1865. A description of his audience with Pope Pius IX on this day appears in a letter to his partner Princess Carolyne von Sayn Wittgenstein, and it alludes to both his father's proficiency and his own desire to learn. Interestingly, the pope seems to have taken Liszt for German, a mistake Liszt quickly corrected: "The Pope then said: 'You will now have to undertake some theological studies.'—'I have not remained entirely a stranger to them, and shall resume them with all the more joy and zeal. It is also indispensable for me to work at my Latin.' Pius IX: 'The Germans have great facility.'—Ego: 'In particular my compatriots, the Hungarians—my father was an excellent Latinist.'"⁴⁹

Liszt occasionally included Latin quotations in his letters, particularly those to Carolyne and to his mistress Agnes Street-Klindworth. For example, on 17 April 1855 Liszt wrote to

⁴⁶See Carol Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching: Evidence from Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 119.

⁴⁷Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, p. 462.

⁴⁸Walker, *Franz Liszt*, I, 39.

⁴⁹Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 629 (letter 548, 25 April 1865).

Agnes: "Ces choses doivent être comme le Christ 'genitum, non factum!'" (These things must be like Christ "begotten, not created!")⁵⁰ A little later, on 4 May 1855, Liszt wrote to Agnes: "J'ai entièrement terminé la Partition de ma Messe à laquelle je pourrai mettre comme épigraphe 'Laboravi in gemitu meo. . . . Sana me, Domine, quoniam conturbata sunt ossa mea'" (I have completely finished the score of my *Mass*, to which I could affix as an epigraph "I am weary with my groaning. . . . O Lord: Heal me for my bones are vexed").⁵¹

There is a marked increase in Liszt's use of Latin in the letters from 1865 onward—the year Liszt took Holy Orders. The change is apparent in his letters to Carolyne⁵² and Agnes,⁵³ but it is perhaps most pronounced in the letters to baron August. Liszt occasionally used Latin quotations to Carolyne and Agnes prior to 1865, but he had not done so in his letters to the baron. After he took Holy Orders things seem to have changed. For example, in a letter dated February 1866 Liszt wrote to the baron entirely in French, apart from a bible quotation: "Dominus autem dirigat corda et corpora nostra in charitate Dei et patientia Christi!" (May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and

to the steadfastness of Christ.)⁵⁴ Similarly, on 14 March 1867 Liszt wrote, "Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum: cantabo, et psalmum dicam!" (My heart is ready O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and give praise.)⁵⁵ There are numerous other Latin quotations in the rest of the letters from Liszt to the baron from the late 1860s and 70s. Another notable change in the letters to Carolyne from this time is the marked increase in the use of Italian phrases. Prior to the move to Rome, Italian appears only rarely in their correspondence. The letter to Carolyne written on the day Liszt took orders naturally contains several Latin and Italian phrases.⁵⁶ Some Italian also appears in a letter from 5 March 1866 and in a letter from 10 May 1866,⁵⁷ to cite but a few examples. It is tempting to imagine Liszt's speech at this point in his life, which may well also have been peppered with Italian and Latin phrases.

It is difficult to tell whether this increase in Italian and Latin in Liszt's language was a natural product of his being immersed in his new life in Rome, or whether it was used as a deliberate means of projecting a new identity. His impetus for taking Holy Orders seems to have been basically a matter of long-held deeply religious beliefs. The increased use of Italian and Latin may have been subconscious, but it certainly helped project a new image, as did his clothes—he was always photographed in his robes from this point onward.

CODESWITCHING IN LISZT'S LETTERS

So far it has been established that Liszt had varying degrees of knowledge of a number of languages and that his use of these languages sometimes changed as he became aware of a need to reconstruct his identity. Broad linguistic changes have so far been considered, but a common feature of Liszt's writing is his tendency to switch languages within a single letter—sometimes just for a single word or short

⁵⁰*Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: A Correspondence 1854–1886*, ed. Pauline Pocknell (New York: Pendragon Press, 1999), p. 301 (letter 6, 17 April 1855); trans., p. 11.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 302 (letter 7, 4 May 1855); trans., p. 14.

⁵²For example, he began a letter to Carolyne dated 22 April 1865, "Et ego semper tecum!" (I am continually with thee). Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 625 (letter 546). The quotation is from Psalm 72.

⁵³For example, Liszt quoted John 4:16 in a letter to Agnes dated 1 May 1865: "Deus charitas est, et qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo!" (God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!). See Pocknell, *Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth*, p. 240 (letter 128). Equally, in a letter to Agnes dated 14 February 1867, Liszt quoted Psalm 120: 5–6: "Heu mihi! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar, multum incola fuit anima mea!" (Woe is me, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; my soul hath long dwelt with him.) *Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth*, p. 254 (letter 136). Finally, in a letter from 29 May 1867 Liszt quoted Psalm 128:5: "Confundantur et convertantur retrorsum omnes qui oderunt Sion!" (Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion), p. 257 (letter 138). There are also many other examples in the letters to Agnes from the late 1860s and 70s.

⁵⁴Csapó, *Franz Liszts Briefe an Baron Anton August*, p. 112 (letter 39). The quotation is from the second letter of Paul to the Thessalonians 3:5.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 122 (letter 45); the quotation is from Psalm 56.

⁵⁶Williams, *Selected Letters*, pp. 627–30 (letter 548).

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 645 (letter 565); p. 656 (letter 576).

phrase, but also occasionally for whole paragraphs. The following discussion will largely focus on such “codeswitching” in Liszt’s letters, but there is also evidence that he codeswitched in conversational contexts. In Weimar in 1849 Hans von Bülow noticed that when Liszt “talked in German he constantly interpolated not merely words but whole phrases in French.”⁵⁸ He was now in Weimar full time and using written and spoken German more frequently, yet he would still codeswitch with Bülow. Even much later in life there is evidence that Liszt continued his practice of conversational codeswitching. In 1877 Borodin noted that “he speaks both French and German very fluently, rather loudly, with vivacity, animation and volubility.”⁵⁹

Interestingly, there is also evidence that Liszt could, perhaps deliberately, suppress this tendency when necessary. It has already been noted that in 1842 Liszt had accepted a part-time position in Weimar and he was considering a future in the German-speaking world. He now seems to have deliberately modified his style and use of spoken language. He created a new version of himself to be able to communicate more effectively in Germany. Writing in October 1843, the music critic and composer Carl Gollmick observed: “I admired his flow of speech, in which he intermingles things old and new, things important and trivial. Yet, his conversation is clear, for one sees many healthy ideas, like bright stones on the ground. And he has become altogether calmer, for he no longer embodies the Babylonian confusion of tongues as he did before.”⁶⁰ “Clear conversation” and “healthy ideas” would certainly at this time have been perceived as characteristically “German” attributes. The “Babylonian confusion of tongues” is also interesting, implying that on his first meeting with Gollmick Liszt had employed his habitual codeswitching, but now no longer did so. It is likely that Liszt’s choice to use only German in his conversation with Gollmick in 1843 was deliberate. His previous codeswitching may have been an “exploratory

choice”—something speakers employ when “they themselves are not sure of the expected or optimal communicative intent, or at least not sure which one will help achieve their goals.”⁶¹ On his earlier meeting with Gollmick, Liszt may have been unsure whether Gollmick would most appreciate his speaking in French, German, or a mixture of the two and tested the waters. When he met Gollmick again later, he knew which code to employ. Perhaps also a Germanic appearance had not previously been important to Liszt, and so he incorporated French words and phrases into his language, maybe even deliberately, to highlight his exoticism.

Codeswitching occurs in Liszt’s letters in a range of circumstances, but this study concentrates on those switches related to identity. There has been much debate among sociolinguists regarding the extent to which speakers switch codes deliberately (and even strategically) or unconsciously. Some studies have found that bilinguals have difficulty in monitoring their own language-mixing behavior and that they are often “unable to remember which language was used in any particular exchange.”⁶² In contrast, Carol Myers-Scotton has suggested that speakers are aware of the social and psychological associations attached to various languages and of the language choices they make.⁶³ The following switches demonstrate that Liszt was highly sensitive to the national and linguistic identity of others and that he could in fact remember the languages used in particular exchanges.

Perhaps the most common reason for codeswitching in Liszt’s letters was to quote a friend, acquaintance, or family member, demonstrating his sensitivity to the linguistic or national identity of others.⁶⁴ For example, in a letter to Marie dated 3 July 1834, Liszt wrote:

⁶¹Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*, p. 142.

⁶²Milroy and Gordon, *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation*, pp. 211–12.

⁶³Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*, pp. 108–09.

⁶⁴This is in fact one of the most common examples of codeswitching found in studies of the phenomenon. See Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*, p. 117.

⁵⁸Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, p. 255.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 540.

⁶⁰Reproduced in Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, p. 175.

"Ma bonne mère me dit l'autre jour: 'Tch weiss nicht, warum du immer das Appartement Ratzenloch heisst—es sind doch keine Ratzen darin—du solltest mehr Respect haben dafür—es kostet 200 Franken.'" (My good mother said to me the other day, "I don't know why you always call the apartment the Rat hole—there are no rats in it—you should have more respect for it—it costs 200 Francs.")⁶⁵ Similarly, Liszt switched to Italian when quoting someone who spoke to him in Venice:

En quittant Fanna . . . je prends un gondolier pour faire le *giro* du Grand Canal. Nous restâmes silencieux tous deux jusqu'au palazzo Foscari qu'il me nomma. "Di impeto, veniva l'Imperatore per veder le feste—poi qui (al palazzo Mocenigo) abitava Lord Byron (Il prononçait à l'Anglaise). —Come?—Lord Byron—Si Signore—L'avete conosciuto voi. Si Signore. L'ho servito cinque giorni, perché uno de suoi battellieri era amalato [*sic*]." (On leaving Fanna . . . I picked up a gondolier in order to take the *tour* of the Grand Canal. We both remained silent until the Palazzo Foscari, which he named for me. "The Emperor came to see the festivities with enthusiasm—and then here lived Lord Byron [He pronounced it in English]. —What? —Lord Byron—Yes Sir—Did you know him? Yes Sir. I served him for five days because one of his boatmen was ill.")⁶⁶

And again Liszt switched to English when quoting a young Englishman: "J'ai rencontré ces jours derniers un jeune homme qui a fait le voyage de Constantinople à Paris avec B[ulwer-Lytton]. Comme je lui demandais ce qu'il en pensait, 'He is a very debauched character I think,' me répondit-il." (A few days ago I met a young man who had traveled from Constantinople to Paris with B[ulwer-Lytton]. When I asked him what he thought he replied, "He is a very debauched character I think.")⁶⁷

Switches in reported speech also occur in Liszt's letters to Carolyne⁶⁸ and to Baron

Augustz,⁶⁹ as well as a number of other recipients throughout Liszt's life. This type of switch can even be found in a letter to the Grand Duke Carl Alexander written on 23 May 1849: "Moreover, as a woman of heart and intellect yesterday so rightly said: *Ausserordentliche Menschen muss man nicht mit dem gewöhnlichen Massstabe messen.*" (Exceptional people are not to be measured by the usual standards.)⁷⁰ This example stands out in Liszt's correspondence with the Grand Duke because generally Liszt avoided codeswitching in these letters. He was perhaps aware of the negative connotations associated with linguistic inconsistency,⁷¹ and the use of a single code therefore reflects the formal and professional context of his relationship with the Grand Duke. In all these examples Liszt shows an awareness of which languages were used in particular exchanges, suggesting that he could make a conscious and strategic choice when selecting a language appropriate to the identity he wished to project in dealing with different people. These switches also have an aesthetic effect, bringing the reader closer to the actual exchange itself.

Related to reported speech is the use of codeswitching in descriptions of people. Liszt's descriptions of people are often accompanied by a switch to the native language of the person in question. This is perhaps an aesthetic device used to make the description more vivid. When describing Schumann to Agnes, Liszt switched to German mid-turn: "Chez Schumann la passion arrive rarement à ces momens d'expansion ardente où elle fleurit instantanément dans d'autres coeurs; on dirait qu'elle se contracte dans le sien et lui donne des crampes—und dann summt und brummt er so dahin, wie ein *spezifisch* musikalisches Spinnrad." (With Schumann passion rarely explodes into those fiery outbursts which cause it to blaze up instantaneously in other hearts: one would say it contracts in his own heart and

⁶⁵Gut and Bellas, *Correspondance*, p. 160 (letter 84, 3 July 1834); my trans. From here on, unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

⁶⁶Gut and Bellas, *Correspondance*, p. 380 (letter 210, 25 Oct. 1839).

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 639 (letter 310, 16 Sept. 1840).

⁶⁸See Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 310 (letter 256), p. 365 (letter 310), and p. 393 (letter 340) for just some examples of this. Many others can also be found.

⁶⁹For example, see Csapó, *Franz Liszts Briefe an Baron Anton Augustz*, p. 49 (letter 6).

⁷⁰Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 273 (letter 225, 23 May 1849).

⁷¹See Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 126, for discussion of how inconsistency in Liszt's literary work has been interpreted as "bad style."

gives him cramps—and then it hums and whirs so inside, like a *particular* musical spinning wheel.)⁷² A similar switch occurred when describing Louis Spohr: “Spohr est un excellent et digne homme; Bieder und Tüchtig.” (Spohr is a fine and worthy man, decent and diligent.)⁷³ Such switches suggest that Liszt strongly associated these people with their native language, and that he saw their native language as an important part of their identity.

All these switches demonstrate that Liszt was highly aware of the linguistic and national identity of others. He also drew on this awareness (whether consciously or not) to ingratiate himself and to project certain identities. For example, he often briefly switched language in his letters to create a sense of intimacy with the recipient, even including a word from a language of which he had very little knowledge. These examples occur in the letters to Carolyne, in which her Polish nationality and language are occasionally brought to the fore: “Since as a Pole you have strong national dislikes, you willingly add to them other additional dislikes—and the *scholar* being always more or less ‘Niemiec’ [German], you make him the embodiment of a ‘profound feeling of tedium.’”⁷⁴ Another instance can be found in a letter from 1851, where Liszt draws on Carolyne’s mother tongue to create a linguistic bond: “Quand me donnera-t-on du ‘barszcz’—dites-moi comment on orthographie ce mot, que je devrais savoir—et des ‘zrazy?’” (When will I receive some “borsch”—tell me how one spells this word, I should know—and “zrazy” [a Polish beef dish]?)⁷⁵

In his letters to two of his loves, Marie d’Agoult and Agnes Street-Klindworth, Liszt often used the German language, which was usually meant to communicate something secretive, but it also highlighted a shared linguistic identity and thereby created a sense of intimacy. Both Marie and Agnes came from bilin-

gual backgrounds in which German was one of the main languages of the home. In the early days of Liszt’s affair with Marie, he used German as a lover’s code, as in this passage from an 1833 letter: “O Schreiben Sie mir oft. . . Sie Schreiben so göttlich, so herzlich, alle Ihre Worte flammen so innig.” (O write to me often . . . you write so divinely, so affectionately, all your words burn so deeply.)⁷⁶ And on 15 September 1834 he declared, “O wie heiss, wie glühend ist noch dein letzter Kuss auf meinen Lippen! Wie himmlisch, wie göttlich dein Seufzer in meinem Busen. . . Zu dir alles, herzliebste—für [*sic*] dich alles.” (O how hot, how aglow your last kiss is still on my lips! How heavenly, how divine your sigh in my heart . . . to you everything, dearest—for you everything.)⁷⁷ Similarly, in a letter to Agnes dated 12 April 1855, Liszt signed himself with the secret cipher A. A. and then wrote, “Sie wissen was dies heist!” (You know what that means!).⁷⁸

Liszt did also occasionally include short German phrases in the letters to Carolyne, but with nowhere near the frequency with which he used them in the letters to Agnes and Marie. She probably had more knowledge of German than she is usually credited for; Lina Ramann recalls conducting her interviews with the princess for her biography, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*, in German.⁷⁹ It therefore seems unlikely that Liszt refrained from using German because he feared Carolyne would not understand him, but because German meant little to her personally. It could not be used to create a bond as it would for him and Marie or Agnes.

We have seen that on one occasion Liszt did use a Hungarian word in a letter to Baron Augustz to draw on their shared national identity. Nonetheless, Liszt probably did not have

⁷²Pocknell, *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth*, p. 300 (letter 5, 12 April 1855); trans. p. 9.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 307 (letter 15, 31 May 1855); trans., p. 30.

⁷⁴Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 349 (letter 295, 18 July 1853).

⁷⁵La Mara, *Franz Liszts Briefe* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893–1905), IV, 57 (letter 59, 31 Jan. 1851).

⁷⁶Gut and Bellas, *Correspondance*, p. 61 (letter 16, written between 5 and 14 May 1833).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 174 (letter 95, 15 Sept. 1834).

⁷⁸Pocknell, *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth*, p. 10 (letter 5, 12 April 1855). Liszt scholars are divided as to the meaning of “A. A.” Maria Tibaldi thought it meant “à Agnes” or “amitié amoureuse,” whereas Pauline Pocknell suggested that it was a cipher (p. xliii).

⁷⁹Lina Ramann, *Lisztiana: Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt in Tagebuchblättern, Briefen und Dokumenten aus den Jahren 1873–1886/87*, ed. Arthur Seidl and rev. Friedrich Schnapp (Mainz: Schott, 1983), p. 75.

sufficient knowledge of Hungarian for it to be a regular option. His switches in letters to Baron Augusz are therefore mainly to French or German, and they do not seem to be related to a particular national identity that Liszt wished to project; at times they seem to occur for no apparent reason. Studies suggest that speakers use codeswitching to “symbolize dual membership,”⁸⁰ but it would not have been beneficial to Liszt to emphasize either of his linguistic identities to the Hungarian Baron, particularly not the German identity. Perhaps, then, Liszt switched language to avoid being tied down to a particular linguistic (and therefore national) identity. If he could evade a fixed, original identity, it would be easier for Hungarians to claim him. His switches in these letters might then occur for no reason other than the need to keep switching.

In general, Liszt’s frequent switches between different European languages project another identity we commonly associate with Liszt: the “intellectual, cosmopolitan socialite.” Liszt would often alternate between French and German, but also occasionally between Italian, English, and Latin. This use of multiple languages occurs frequently in letters to the educated, literary women of his life. It seems calculated to send certain messages about Liszt’s identity and perhaps also reflects certain insecurities. His talent as a pianist was spotted at a very young age, bringing a premature end to his formal education. He later tried to compensate for the deficiency by reading extensively, but always felt that he could never completely fill the gaps in his education.⁸¹ His multilingualism, therefore, perhaps reflects a desire to appear “intellectual,” and of course multilingualism was also a marker of the high social class of which Liszt wished to be part.

Liszt often drew attention to his intellectual identity and literary knowledge by quoting foreign poetry or literature in the original language. Marie, Agnes, and Carolyne would have identified with this side of Liszt’s character.

⁸⁰Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*, p. 119.

⁸¹For example, see Williams, *Selected Letters*, p. 356. Here Liszt congratulates his son Daniel for Daniel’s academic successes and laments his own missed opportunities.

Examples of these quotations are readily found, particularly in the letters to Marie and Agnes, and to a lesser extent in the letters to Carolyne. For example, a letter to Agnes attributed to 31 July 1856 includes the following Byron quotation:

Il y a plus de 12 ans, on autographia sous mon Portrait ces vers de Byron. (More than twelve years ago somebody inscribed beneath my portrait these lines by Byron.)

Here’s a sigh to those who love me
and a smile to those who hate;
and wathever [*sic*] sky’s above me
Here’s a heart for every fate!⁸²

He had also included this quotation (in English) in an earlier, 1834 letter to Marie.⁸³ In a letter to Carolyne from July 1853, Liszt quoted Metastasio and suggested that Carolyne ask her daughter to translate it:

Se la cetra non era
D’Amfione e d’Orfeo, gli uomini ingrati
Vita traccian pericolosa e dura
Senza dei, senza leggi e senza mura.⁸⁴

Numerous examples of these kind of switches appear in Liszt’s letters, even to people he knew in a more professional context. Clearly he hoped to project this identity beyond his close circle into the wider world.

FROM LANGUAGE TO MUSIC

Codeswitching seems to have been a regular feature of Liszt’s language, both written and spoken, throughout his life. It is tempting to consider how this practice may also relate to his music. Scholars have frequently noted Liszt’s absorption of a wide variety of musical styles, often associated with different nationalities.⁸⁵ Sometimes Liszt’s switches in code

⁸²Translation in Pocknell, *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth*, p. 328; trans. p. 101.

⁸³Gut and Bellas, *Correspondance*, p. 150 (letter 78, 12 June 1834).

⁸⁴La Mara, *Franz Liszts Briefe*, IV, 139 (letter 112, 3 July, probably 1853).

⁸⁵See Derek Watson, *Liszt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 180–81.

Example 1: Liszt, *Héroïde funèbre*, mm. 7-9.Example 2: Liszt, *Héroïde funèbre*, mm. 152-58.

were seemingly unrelated to identity, but instead fulfilled a structural role, and this practice is one he carried over to his music. In his letters a switch in topic is sometimes accompanied by a switch in language. Peter Auer describes switches such as these as “discourse-related.”⁸⁶

A good example of “discourse-related switching” appears in a letter to baron Augusz dated 14 November 1858. Liszt begins in French, asking the baron to organize the translation of the title of his Mass into Latin (in order, he explains, to reflect the Catholic character of the work—we have already seen that Latin was intrinsically linked to religious identity in Liszt’s mind). He then switches to German to emphasize a particularly important instruction: “Nb. eine speciell bezeichnende Widmung wünsche ich *nicht*.” (Nb. I do not want a particular dedication.)⁸⁷ The linguistic and visual jolts (the change in script would have been particularly noticeable for the reader) draw attention to this point. He continues the point in German and then finally brings up the matter of the Latin title once more, accompanied by a switch back to French—the language in which this topic was introduced. The letter is concluded in French. It is essentially an ABA form with two topics that are structurally demarcated by a switch in language.

A similar example of structural code-switching is evident in Liszt’s music. The symphonic poem *Héroïde funèbre* is a particularly cosmo-

politan concoction and based on the first movement of a Revolutionary Symphony that Liszt had initially planned in the wake of the July revolutions in France in 1830.⁸⁸ The final symphonic poem opens with a distinctive melody in a “Hungarian” style, with its characteristic use of augmented seconds (ex. 1). The second subject introduced at m. 152 (ex. 2) presents a very different Italianate *cantilena* style, of which Liszt was very fond, and adopted in many works. This switch is not unusual—we would expect a theme in a contrasting, lyrical style at this point in the piece—and it only carries weak national connotations as it is such a common musical style across genres and nationalities. This melody is interrupted at m. 169 by a theme that creates a strong stylistic contrast and has a clear national identity as it is closely based on the *Marseillaise* (ex. 3). Furthermore, it has also been suggested by Kenneth Hamilton that mm. 271–79 owe something to Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,”⁸⁹ adding to the mix of stylistic diversity and national associations. The Hungarian and Italianate styles demarcate formal sections in the work (similar to the structural linguistic codeswitching in the letter to Baron Augusz), and then they are heard simultaneously from m. 305.

The interruption of the Italianate style second subject by the *Marseillaise* creates an interesting stylistic switch. Carol Myers-Scotton

⁸⁶See Peter Auer, *Bilingual Conversation* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1984), and *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998) for Auer’s principal works on the topic.

⁸⁷See Csapó, *Franz Liszt’s Briefe an Baron Anton Augusz*, p. 88 (letter 27, 14 Nov. 1858).

⁸⁸For a detailed account of the gestation of this work, see Adrienne Kaczmarczyk, “Die vergessene Symphonie: Die kompositorischen Probleme der *Revolutionssymphonie* von Franz Liszt,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 41 (2000), 375–88.

⁸⁹See Kenneth Hamilton, “Liszt,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), p. 146.

Example 3: Liszt, *Héroïde funèbre*, mm. 169–75.

has put forward a “markedness model” that suggests that writers and speakers make “marked” or “unmarked” code choices. Whether a code choice is “marked” or “unmarked” depends on “the extent its use ‘matches’ community expectations for the interaction type or genre where it is used: What community norms would predict is unmarked; what is not predicted is marked.”⁹⁰ By flouting expectations, the speaker draws attention to their words. In a similar way, the interruption of the *Marseillaise* in its martial style defies the listener’s expectations of a continuation of the lyrical second subject and thereby grabs the listener’s attention. By contrast, the switch to the Italianate style is “unmarked.”

Finally, the codeswitching utilized in *Héroïde funèbre* was probably employed deliberately to convey the programmatic content. Liszt’s written preface sets a distinctly pacifist tone (perhaps in answer to his critics) in which he seems to place himself above nationality, observing that the grief brought about by war is common to everyone: “Everything may change in human societies, manners, religions, laws, and ideas, but Grief remains the same.”⁹¹ The variety of national styles on display in this work appropriately conveys this universality, provides the piece with a clear structure, and enables Liszt to project a pan-European identity.

Contemporary sociolinguistic theory may not give us the key to all of Liszt’s motivations for switching language, but it does at least make the patterns seem less unusual. Liszt treated his identity as fluid, and sociolinguistic theory

shows that he was by no means exceptional in this regard, although he was perhaps exceptional for his time. The fixed nineteenth-century view of language and identity meant that Liszt’s identity often aroused confusion, distrust, and criticism. No one was sure where Liszt was from, and this uncertainty persisted throughout his life and afterward. Salieri described Liszt as “the young French boy” in a letter from August 1822,⁹² reviewers of his British tours of 1840–41 frequently referred to him as “German,”⁹³ and we have seen that the pope made the same “mistake” in 1865. Yet Liszt’s lack of linguistic and national ties was useful to him. He understood that such ties were important to others and altered his language to present different versions of himself. Indeed, his linguistic identity underwent a number of “reconstructions” to gain acceptance into certain circles. His use of the mother tongues of others to ingratiate himself is evident not only in the broad linguistic patterns of his life but also in the codeswitching that was a common feature of his written (and possibly also spoken) language.

The motivations behind Liszt’s linguistic codeswitching may also partly explain his stylistic receptivity and aesthetic attitude to stylistic codeswitching in his music. His frequent use of a variety of musical styles (often with various national associations) has commonly been remarked upon, and even criticized for contributing to an unevenness in his output—just as those who engage in linguistic codeswitching are often criticized for being lazy or

⁹⁰Carol Myers-Scotton, *Codes and Consequences: Choosing Linguistic Varieties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5.

⁹¹See Liszt, preface to *Héroïde funèbre* in *Symphonische Dichtungen für Orchester* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, pub. date unknown), vol. II, X–XI.

⁹²Walker, *Franz Liszt*, I, 74.

⁹³See Adrian Williams, “Liszt’s British Tours: Reviews and Letters,” *Liszt Society Journal* 8 (1983), 7.

linguistically incompetent.⁹⁴ Yet, Liszt used codeswitching as a stylistic tool, which added both character and clarified formal structure in his letters and music. This relationship between language and music can also be applied to other composers of the time; comparisons could be drawn with Meyerbeer's "cosmopolitan" style and fluent multilingualism, or with Schumann's and Wagner's largely monolingual outlook and thoroughly Germanic style. The concept of codeswitching may therefore provide a new and fruitful approach to exploring the stylistic influences and borrowings of certain composers. Of course multilingualism does not necessarily predetermine stylistic codeswitching. One has only to consider the multilingual Mendelssohn, who nevertheless always remained stylistically German in his music. Nonetheless, the concept certainly offers a starting point for further research into a highly characteristic aspect of Liszt's output.



⁹⁴Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 108.

Abstract.

Throughout his life Liszt projected diverse identities, which were sometimes embraced by the public, and sometimes questioned. These "contradictions" in his character have been the subject of much confusion and debate, and one aspect in particular still has scholars perplexed: Liszt's national identity. Writers have come down on all sides, declaring Liszt was "really" Hungarian, French, German, or "cosmopolitan," yet the role of language in projecting these identities has so far been overlooked. This article maps Liszt's fluctuating proficiency and frequency of use of a variety of languages onto his biography. It identifies clear patterns that suggest his linguistic "reconstructions" were a means of deliberately adapting his identity as appropriate. It draws patterns from a wide range of Liszt's letters in order to establish why and how he used a device commonly referred to in sociolinguistics as "codeswitching." This is a concept whereby bilingual speakers switch language mid-conversation or mid-sentence. The article argues that Liszt switched language to bring forward certain identities to certain recipients. It concludes by considering how "codeswitching" may also relate to his music, by applying the concept to the symphonic poem *Héroïde funèbre*. Keywords: Liszt, identity, language, style, codeswitching, sociolinguistics