Beyond Sonata Deformation: Liszt's Symphonic Poem *Tasso* and the Concept of Two-Dimensional Sonata Form

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1. Form and Deformation

The idea that musical form in Liszt's orchestral music is mainly program-driven has loomed large in twentieth-century musicology.[1] It undoubtedly originates with Liszt himself. In his seminal 1855 essay *Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie*—a thinly disguised apology for his own symphonic poems—Liszt defends the formal innovations in contemporaneous orchestral music by invoking its programmatic nature.[2] A renewal of musical form, he maintains, is vital not only because traditional forms have been fully exhausted by great composers from the past, but also because it is necessary for the adequate expression of an extra-musical program:

> [Progressive composers] do not hope to glean further harvest from fields already mown by giants and live in the belief that the work begun by these [giants] can only be continued when they, like the latter in their time, create new forms for new ideas, new skins for new wine. (Liszt [1882] 1978:59–60)[3]

Over the last few decades, it has become generally accepted that Liszt did not refrain from recycling traditional patterns of formal organization for the expression of these "new ideas," perhaps more than he was aware. As Michael Saffle has considered, the formal organization of Liszt's orchestral compositions is often determined no less by the tradition of sonata form than by the demands of their programs (Saffle 2002:240–42). Indeed, in nine of the twelve Weimar symphonic poems, sonata form is one of the central principles guiding the large-scale organization. Even where this is not the case (in *Orpheus*, *Héroïde funèbre*, and *Hunnenschlacht*), isolated procedures originating in sonata form often exert a local influence. This does not mean, of course, that the form of Liszt's symphonic poems can be reduced to an unproblematic sonata form scheme, yet detailed studies of how exactly Liszt does treat sonata form are, nonetheless, rare.[4]

Much might be expected from applying James Hepokoski's theory of "generic" or "structural deformation" to Liszt's orchestral music. This

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theory is arguably the most substantial recent contribution to the study of musical form in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the concept of deformation may be applied to any standard pattern of formal organization, most of the relevant literature has focused on deformations of sonata-form patterns, hence the more common term "sonata deformation." Hepokoski approaches large-scale post-1850—or even post-1800—instrumental compositions as being "in dialogue" with normative models of musical form. These models are derived either from mid-nineteenth-century music treatises on form or directly from the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century repertoire on which these treaties are based. "The term 'deformation,'" Hepokoski states in one of his first publications on the matter, "is most appropriate when one encounters a strikingly nonnormative individual structure, one that contravenes some of the most central defining traditions, or default gestures, of a genre while explicitly retaining others" (Hepokoski 1992:143). Elsewhere he explains: "What is presented on the musical surface of a [sonata deformation] . . . may not be a sonata in any "textbook" sense, and yet the work may still encourage, even demand, the application of one's knowledge of traditional sonata procedures as a rule for analysis and interpretation" (Hepokoski 2001:447). A pattern of expectation for the formal course of the composition is, in other words, created, but subsequently frustrated. A specific composition derives its meaning from the interaction with the generic background against which it operates.

Hepokoski has drawn up a useful catalogue of deformations of normative sonata-form patterns arranged in a number of recurring "families." The most common compositional strategies are the "breakthrough deformation," the "introduction-coda frame," "episodes within the developmental space," the "strophic/sonata hybrid," and "multi-movement forms in a single movement" (Hepokoski 1993:6–7). Apart from these five central categories, Hepokoski has identified a large number of other deformation families, some of which partly overlap with the above categories. These include "content-based form," "rotational form," "teleological genesis," "*Klang* meditation," and the "interrelation and fusion of movements" (1993:21–30), the "off-tonic sonata" (1997:328), the "nonresolving recapitulation" (2001a:128–35), the "two-block exposition," the "loosely knit, discursive exposition," the "distorted recapitulation," and "progressive tonality" (2001b:448–53).

In discussions of these deformation families, Liszt's orchestral music is cited only in passing. Still, the concept of sonata deformation is, at least at first sight, especially promising for those analyzing Liszt's symphonic poems and large-scale instrumental form from the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century in general. Here is an approach to musical form that enables one to acknowledge the obvious innovatory aspects in

instrumental music from 1850 onwards, while still allowing for the use of a traditional sonata-form terminology.

It has been argued that Hepokoski's concept of sonata deformation—many aspects of which, it should be emphasized, are prefigured in the writings of Carl Dahlhaus[5]—is not without difficulties when it comes to defining what, exactly, a normative sonata form is. In a perceptive critique of deformation theory, Julian Horton has pointed out that it is particularly precarious to identify normative sonata form with "the *Formenlehre* model of sonata form established by A. B. Marx and others" (Horton 2005:7). This is a problem especially in Hepokoski's writings on the matter from the early 1990s. In his more recent contributions, the emphasis clearly shifts from a theoretical norm derived from mid-nineteenth-century composition manuals to a generic norm derived from the repertoire of sonata forms from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the recent *Elements of Sonata Theory*, mid-nineteenth century theory plays no role whatsoever in the definition of what Hepokoski and his co-author Warren Darcy consider normative sonata form to be (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006).

For Horton—writing before the publication of the *Elements of Sonata Theory*—the generic norm is no less insecure than the theoretical one. "[I]t is not at all clear," he argues, "that a common conception of sonata form as an architectural pattern . . . existed in classical practice either" (2005:10). Horton seems to be operating with Mark Evan Bonds's distinction between generative and conformational approaches to eighteenth-century musical form at the back of his mind. Whereas generative approaches stress "the unique shape of a specific work," conformational approaches emphasize "those various structural elements that a large number of works share in common" (Bonds 1991:13–14). Given the absence of a contemporaneous theoretical model of sonata form in the late eighteenth century,[6] it may indeed seem as if this repertoire can most appropriately be approached from a generative point of view. Yet even a purely generative approach to eighteenth-century musical form—a position that, as Bonds has argued, is problematic to the absurd[7]—cannot change the fact that a group of sonata forms from the past was available to composers working in the second half of the nineteenth century. Surely this situation allowed for—or even invited—generalizations about the formal procedures present in those works. It does seem legitimate, in other words, to assume the existence of a normative pattern of form from a large body of compositions *a posteriori*, even if those compositions themselves were composed in the absence of such a normative pattern, and even if none of them exactly coincides with the *a posteriori* norm.

According to Hepokoski and Darcy, however, the situation is more complicated than this. In their view, there is no such thing as "the" normative sonata form, no ideal type that is subsequently subject to deformation. In their most recent writings, both authors emphasize that they see normative sonata form not as a static object, but as a "constellation of flexible norms and options" that changes through time (Hepokoski 2006:30n70)—thus *de facto* reconsidering Hepokoski's own previous mention of a "set of reified defaults" (Hepokoski 1992:143). The relationship between works and norms is now described as "dialogic," a notion that occupies a position somewhere between generative and conformational: what happens in a specific composition interacts with what happens in other compositions and thus helps to shape what becomes to be perceived as normative. This is the case not only for sonata form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the same mechanisms remain at work throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Moreover, the dialogic moment is not restricted to the interaction between a composer—or a composition—and a norm (or other compositions). Also the listener—or the analyst—is invited to enter into and, indeed, influence the dialogue with the constellation of norms and works.

It is not my intention to develop a comprehensive critique of the concept of sonata deformation. Still, it seems to me that a number of pertinent issues require further reflection. One of these is the unavoidable discrepancy that arises between a norm defined around the latest turn of the century (such as Hepokoski and Darcy's normative sonata form) and the implicit or explicit norm that nineteenth-century composers would have confronted dialogically. Another issue is the very real danger that both sonata and deformation theory, in spite of the decidedly dialogic model defended by their creators, tend to slide back into a somewhat less sophisticated conformational approach when it comes to actual analytical practice. Related to this is the possibility that what begins as a deformation of a normative sonata form pattern can itself acquire normative character. Hepokoski and Darcy acknowledge this prospect (Hepokoski 2006:30n69; Hepokoski and Darcy 2006: passim), but although it is fully in keeping with their dynamic view of form, it remains somewhat underdeveloped in their own writings. Here as well, the classical norm turns out to be remarkably stubborn when it comes to actual analysis: for compositions throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, the classical norm, rather than what usually happens in compositions that constitute a chronologically (and geographically) more limited context for the deformational sonata form under discussion, ultimately determines what is a deformation and what not.

This is unfortunate, because the flexible nature of what counts as normative can have profound consequences. It opens the possibility that

there are cases where deformations are so numerous and drastic that it is no longer practicable to interpret them against the background of a set of norms that can be described as sonata form. It seems to me that within the flexible set of norms and options that sonata form is—and exactly because of that flexibility—more or less self-contained subsets can come into being that make reference to the larger set superfluous or even inadequate. Another way of saying this is that in certain cases, it seems advantageous to study musical form after 1850, even if it is apparently related to sonata form, against the background of a more specific set of conventions establishing a context of their own, in which individual compositions can be understood. This might be true *a fortiori* for single-movement compositions. To measure a single-movement composition against a norm derived from a movement of a multi-movement composition obviously ignores the individuality of single-movement patterns of formal organization.[8]

In the following paragraphs, I will illustrate the desirability of an approach that goes beyond the deformation of normative sonata form, taking Liszt's symphonic poem *Tasso* as a case study. First, I will show how *Tasso* invites the application of sonata-deformation categories, but how at the same time, those categories fail to account for salient aspects of the piece. Second, I will develop an alternative and more specific theoretical background against which *Tasso* can be interpreted, and demonstrate how the piece's formal organization can be charted without taking recourse to the concept of deformation. Finally, I will discuss some of the broader implications this approach can have for the interpretation of Liszt's symphonic poems in general.

2. *Tasso*: First Approach

Liszt began work on *Tasso: lamento e trionfo* as early as in 1847, but published it as "Symphonic Poem no. 2" only in 1856. In his preface to the score, Liszt states that it was his intention to "formulate the grand antithesis of a genius mistreated during life but radiating after his death with a glory that crushes his persecutors." He then provides the outlines of a program:

> Tasso loved and suffered in Ferrara; he was revenged in Rome, his glory is still alive in the popular songs of Venice. These three moments are inseparable from his imperishable memory. To render them in music, we first evoked the grand shadow of the hero as it haunts the lagoons of Venice even today; next his lordly and sad figure appeared to us as it glides along the feasts of Ferrara, where he gave birth to his masterpieces; finally we followed him to Rome, the eternal city, which, in holding forth to him his crown, glorified him as martyr and poet.[9]

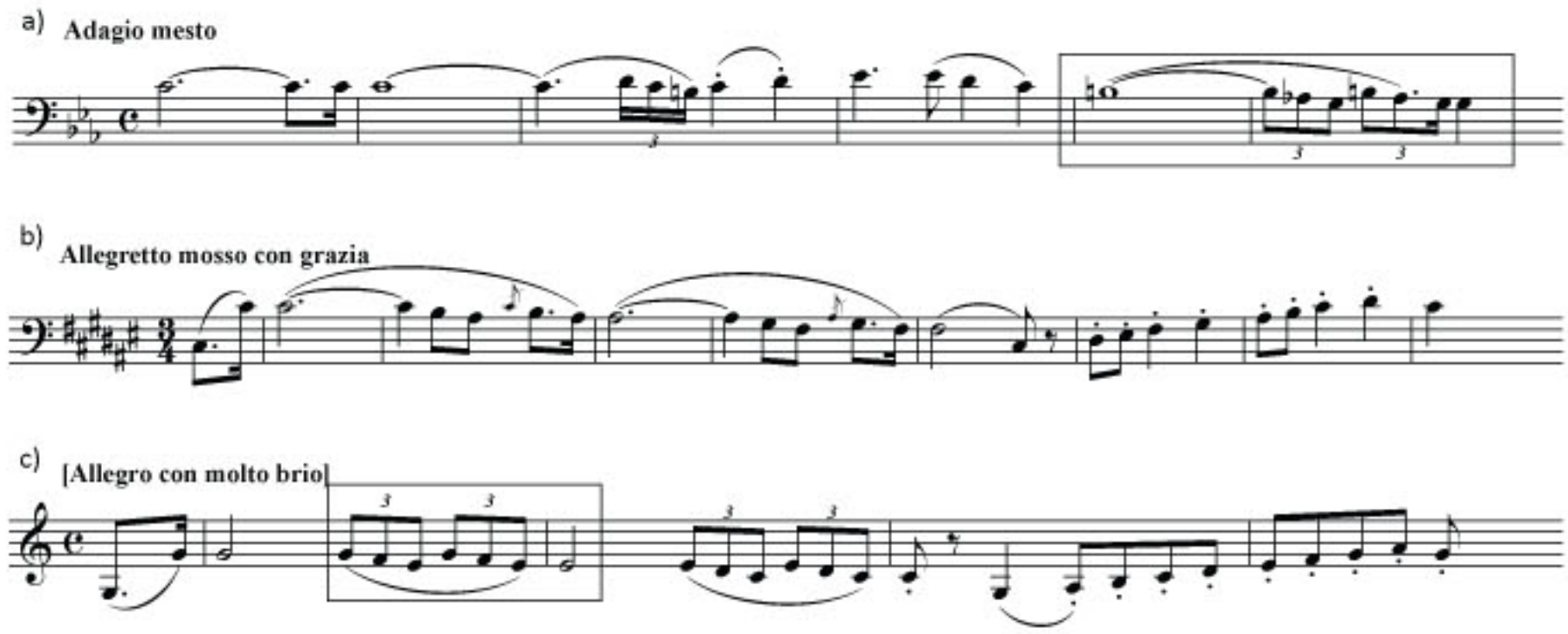
In order to render his piece "l'éclat du fait," Liszt adds, he incorporated a melody to which he heard Venetian gondoliers sing the opening of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*.

There can be no doubt that this *per aspera ad astra* narrative informs the overall course of Liszt's symphonic poem. There is a general consensus that the slow C-minor *cantilena* in mm. 62–90 represents the Venetian gondolier's song, that the *Quasi Menuetto* in F♯ major (mm. 166–347) evokes "the feasts of Ferrara", and that the festive C-major music from m. 383 onwards constitutes Tasso's posthumous triumph in Rome. At the same time, it seems that Liszt selected the three "moments" mentioned in the program exactly because they could result in a (for him) satisfying musical form. Moreover, the stated program is insufficiently detailed to account for large parts of the composition as well as many of the specific compositional choices Liszt has made. The program remains silent about more than one substantial portion of the piece (particularly mm. 1–62, mm. 91–164, and mm. 348–82), and does not motivate the internal organization of the passages that can be explained from the program.[10]

It does seem reasonable, therefore, to assume that in composing his second symphonic poem, Liszt was also drawing on inherently musical traditions. Indeed, *Tasso* seems particularly fit for an interpretation as a sonata deformation. On the one hand, and as Richard Kaplan has emphasized, it displays a number of characteristics that resolutely point in the direction of sonata form (Kaplan 1984:145, 149–50). A slow introduction (mm. 1–26) is followed by what appears to be a sonata-form exposition, comprising thematic contrast and a tonal trajectory leading in descending major thirds from C minor through A♭ major to E major. At least part of the thematic material from this exposition is recapitulated from m. 348 onwards, and themes that appeared off-tonic in the exposition return in the tonic major in the recapitulation.

On the other hand, there are many elements in *Tasso* that are difficult to align with even the most flexible conventions of sonata form. First, the *Allegro strepitoso* unit that initially appears to function as a main theme (mm. 27–53) turns out not to behave as a main theme from a tonal-harmonic point of view and is followed by a return of introductory material in the original tempo (mm. 54–61). Second, the alleged group of contrasting themes (mm. 62–144) begins in the tonic—suggesting at least an extraordinarily liberal concept of sonata form—and is in a different tempo than the apparent main theme group. Third, *Tasso* lacks an actual development section, its exposition being separated from the recapitulation by an extensive section marked *Quasi Menuetto*. Fourth and finally, a considerable part of the thematic material presented in the exposition is omitted from the recapitulation, often being replaced by non-expositional material.

Examples 1a, 1b, and 1c: Themes from *Tasso*, mm. 62–67, °166–73, and °397–400.



Several authors have tried to come to terms with the extraordinary formal organization of this composition. Kenneth Hamilton considers mm. 1–61 to be a multi-tempo introduction that partly returns at the beginning of the recapitulation. In his opinion, the slow melody in C minor in mm. 62–101 functions as the main theme, which is recapitulated in a transformed shape from m. 397 onwards. "Liszt's stroke of genius," Hamilton comments, "is to have a slow minor-key exposition subject (the *Lamento*) recapitulated in a fast major-key variation (the *Trionfo*)" (Hamilton 1996:24).

That which Hamilton calls a transformation of the "main theme" is, however, no such thing at all. To be sure, there is a motivic connection between the theme from mm. 397ff and that from mm. 62ff: both contain the same basic motive (see the boxes in examples 1a and 1c). As a whole, however, the theme from mm. 397ff is a transformation of the theme that begins the *Quasi Menuetto* section (see examples 1b and 1c). The alleged main theme returns only considerably later, initially in a modulating context (mm. 475ff) and only in mm. 534ff in a firm tonic version.

Whereas Hamilton's reading focuses on the exposition and the recapitulation, Hepokoski has suggested a way of coming to terms with the absence of a traditional development section. For Hepokoski, *Tasso* is a standard example of a sonata deformation with episodes within the developmental space.[11] More exactly, he distinguishes two episodes, and although he does not specify them, we may assume that he is thinking of the E-major passage in mm. 131–44 and the *Quasi Menuetto* section in mm. 165–347. Whereas an interpretation of the *Quasi Menuetto* as an episode is convincing, this is less so for the E-major passage in mm. 131–44. One of the basic characteristics of this kind of episodes being that they contrast with the context in which they occur, a slow episode in a sonata form that is itself already partially slow is unlikely. Admittedly, the basic tempo indication of the E-major passage (*Meno Adagio*) is slightly faster than that of the preceding units, but

not sufficiently so to effect a genuine contrast. Another reason to include mm. 131–44 in the exposition rather than to see them as an episode is that a large-scale tonal progression from C minor to E major is not unusual in Liszt's sonata-style music. In several of the instrumental works, the exposition ends in the key a major third above the tonic, "even," as Kaplan remarks, "in the minor-mode pieces" (Kaplan 1984:150).[12]

I will come back to the function of the E-major passage in section 4, at this point noting merely that both Hamilton and Hepokoski operate within the conceptual framework of sonata deformation. Although only Hepokoski explicitly uses the term, Hamilton's views on the relationship between normative sonata form and characteristics of individual compositions that interact with these norms are strikingly similar. "To fully understand the organization of a work like *Tasso*," he writes, "we always have to keep the idea of sonata form in mind" (Hamilton 1996:24). And elsewhere: "[Liszt's] formal ingenuity . . . often demands that it be heard against the background of conventional sonata form for its full effect" (Hamilton 1997:149).

Doubtless many of the eccentric features in *Tasso* can be catalogued as deformational, and several of Hepokoski's deformation families spring to mind: not only the episodes within developmental space, but also the off-tonic sonata, multi-movement patterns in a single movement, and the modified recapitulation. But what does it mean to say that a particular musical form is a deformation? The mere identification of a number of deformational features does not get us much further, and using the concept as an analytical alibi for anything in a musical form that resists easy explanation surely would be simplistic. Rather, the identification of deformational features is advantageous only when it plays a role in a broader analytical argument. If a particular feature of a composition is legitimately interpreted as a deformation, it should be possible to demonstrate how that deformation contributes to the way that specific composition functions, and why exactly it differs from the norm it deforms. Preferably, the answers provided by the application of the concept of deformation should outnumber the new questions it raises. This might seem obvious, yet in all these respects neither Hamilton's nor Hepokoski's account of *Tasso* is entirely satisfying.

Of course, this is partly due to the fact that especially Hepokoski's remarks on the piece are restricted to brief comments in survey texts and thus have never been developed into a comprehensive argument about *Tasso* as such. Still, this does not seem to be the sole cause of the unsatisfactory nature of previous discussions of *Tasso*. I maintain that to enable a convincing interpretation of *Tasso*'s formal properties, we have to move beyond sonata deformation and invoke a more specific subset of conventions.

3. Two-Dimensional Sonata Form

In the case of *Tasso*, the most useful referential framework is the pattern of formal organization I call "two-dimensional sonata form": the combination of sections of a sonata cycle and movements of a sonata form at the same hierarchical level in a single-movement composition. Since William Newman's book *The Sonata Since Beethoven*, this concept has become widely familiar under the name "double-function form" (Newman 1969:134–35, 373–78). Newman's term is, however, a problematic one, because it implies that each unit in the form has a double function—one in the sonata cycle, another in the sonata form. As will become clear below, this is not the case.

The integration of elements of multi-movement patterns into single-movement designs was a constant concern of many composers in the nineteenth century; Beethoven's *Große Fuge*, op. 133 and Schubert's *Wandererfantasie*, op. 17 are among the earliest manifestations. Two-dimensional sonata forms distinguish themselves from this broader tradition by the fact that both the sonata form and the three- or four-movement sonata cycle are complete and that both comprise the entire composition. Liszt adapted this pattern of formal organization to some of his symphonic poems (notably *Tasso*, *Les préludes*, and *Die Ideale)* from what is probably the earliest example of this kind of form (as well as the piece for which Newman originally coined the term double-function form), the B-Minor Sonata. Apparent in some of Richard Strauss's tone poems as well (*Don Juan*, *Ein Heldenleben*, and *Symphonia domestica*), two-dimensional sonata form survived into the early instrumental works of Arnold Schoenberg (*Pelleas und Melisande*, the First String Quartet, and the First Chamber Symphony), from whence it spread not only to composers of Schoenberg's immediate circle (e.g., Alexander Zemlinsky), but also to other composers working in Vienna (e.g., Franz Schreker and Franz Schmidt).[14] Comparable adaptations of the model developed by Liszt appear all over Europe throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (e.g., Camille Saint-Saëns's A-minor Cello Concerto, op. 33 and several of Bedřich Smetana's symphonic poems—to name but a few).

The order in which sections of the sonata form and movements of the sonata cycle appear in each of these compositions can be very different. In all cases, however, this form can be conceptualized as the projection of a sonata form onto an entire through-composed sonata cycle. The result is a form that unfolds in two *dimensions*—the dimension of the *sonata cycle* and that of the *overarching sonata form*. Because the composition as a whole is a sonata cycle and a sonata form simultaneously, each dimension contains apparent anomalies; they are, in other words, no longer just a sonata form

or a sonata cycle. Theoretically speaking, it is possible that all sections of the sonata form and all movements from the sonata cycle in a two-dimensional sonata form neatly coincide. In reality, such a situation is unlikely. Instead, the projection that takes place in a two-dimensional sonata form can be described as being both strong and loose. It is a *strong* projection, because that which is projected dominates that on which it is projected. Put differently, it is the sonata form that appears as the principal strain of formal organization in a two-dimensional sonata form. The projection is *loose*, in that sections of the sonata form do not always stand to movements of the sonata cycle in a one-to-one relationship. A movement may coincide seamlessly with a section of the sonata form, but it may also coincide with only part of a section, or overlap with parts of several consecutive sections. Often—and this is the major difference from Newman's concept of "double-function form"—even entire movements stand between two different sections of the sonata form, thus fulfilling a function in only one of both dimensions.

A hypothetical example is given in table 1. In this two-dimensional sonata form, the first movement of the sonata cycle coincides with the exposition and a first development segment of the overarching sonata form. Belonging exclusively to the dimension of the sonata cycle, the second movement interrupts the development of the overarching sonata form. The third movement coincides with a second development segment from the overarching sonata form, and the finale coincides neatly with the recapitulation. The coda of the overarching sonata form, finally, plays no role in the sonata cycle, but belongs exclusively to the dimension of the form.

Following Dahlhaus's coinage, the situation in which a formal unit of the sonata form and a formal unit of the sonata cycle coincide can be called *identification*. That in which a movement of the sonata cycle stands between units of the sonata form is labeled *interpolation* (Dahlhaus 1988). The notion of identification allows further refinement by distinguishing between identification proper and what may be termed *substitution*. Identification proper means that a unit in a two-dimensional sonata form does not only *function* as part of the sonata form and as a movement in the sonata cycle, but actually *is* both part of a sonata form and a movement in the cycle, bearing distinct traces of both dimensions. In the case of substitution, by contrast, a unit functions both as part of the overarching sonata form and as a movement of a sonata form, but bears actual traces of only one of the two functions. A unit of the sonata form can thus substitute for a movement of the sonata cycle, or vice versa.

As discussed above, Hepokoski considers the mixture of elements from multi-movement and single-movement designs to be the defining characteristic of a specific sonata-deformation family. It seems a more fruitful option to regard two-dimensional sonata form as a formal type in its own right—or,

Table 1: Hypothetical two-dimensional sonata form.

form	exposition	development	----------	development	recapitulation	coda
cycle	first movement		second movement	third movement	finale	------

if one prefers, as something that originates as a sonata deformation but has itself become normative. The concept of two-dimensional sonata form is used in a considerable number of compositions dating from roughly 1850 to 1950, and although it obviously has its roots in sonata form, it is not very helpful to relate individual compositions belonging to this category back to normative ("one-dimensional") sonata forms. It would be stretching the theory too far to postulate a "normative" two-dimensional sonata-form model that is then subject to deformation—not least because such a norm would be even more difficult to determine than for a "one-dimensional" sonata form. Yet although each two-dimensional sonata form proposes a highly individualized formal layout, together they form a background against which each individual example can be interpreted.

4. *Tasso*: Second Approach

The main advantage of approaching a composition such as *Tasso* as a two-dimensional sonata form rather than as a (one-dimensional) sonata deformation is that the apparent deformations in one dimension can be interpreted using the requirements of the other. The presence of two dimensions being a standard prerequisite of this type of form, those features that initially appear to be deformations lose their deformational quality: they are there precisely because a given piece is a two-dimensional sonata form. The result is not merely that apparent deformations can be given a place in a more comprehensive analytical argument; they even turn out to be constitutive characteristics of this specific type of form. I will demonstrate this in the following analysis of *Tasso*, proceeding in two steps. First I will revise the analysis of *Tasso* as a sonata form. Then I will show how this sonata form simultaneously functions as a multi-movement sonata cycle, and that it is exactly because of this additional function that the sonata form has such an unusual formal organization.

Revisiting the overarching sonata form in *Tasso*, one wonders why previous analysts have been so fascinated by the question of where the introduction ends and where the exposition begins. It seems impossible not

to consider the *Allegro strepitoso* in mm. 27ff as part of the exposition. Not only is a fast (and furious) unit following an initial slow unit a generically strong signal for the beginning of a sonata-form exposition; it also is the only portion from the initial stages of the composition that returns unaltered near the place where, given the overall proportions, the recapitulation may be expected to begin. Put the other way round, an interpretation of mm. 27–53 as part of a multi-tempo introduction fails to account for either the strong sense of "beginning" these measures express or their return in mm. 348–74. As for their lack of harmonic stability—arguably the main reason for Hamilton not to include them in the exposition—this need not preclude a function as part of the exposition, and even as part of its main theme group.[13] Far more problematic is that the first tonic chord in the exposition enters only in m. 62, the very spot where Kaplan suggests that the subsidiary theme group begins. Indeed, the entire passage in mm. 62–90 is firmly rooted in the tonic, and even if one is willing to accept a more relaxed handling of key relationships in mid-nineteenth-century sonata-form expositions, it is most unlikely that a theme will function as a subsidiary theme when it is presented in the very key traditionally reserved for the main theme. This, then, emerges as the first serious problem posed by the formal organization of *Tasso*: not that the *Allegro strepitoso* defies an interpretation as part of the main theme, but rather that mm. 62–90 are difficult to understand as a subsidiary theme.[15]

In the context of Liszt's Weimar period, this situation is less exceptional than it initially seems. In this group of works, main themes and main theme groups that begin off-tonic are not at all uncommon. In both the B-Minor Sonata and the symphonic poem *Hamlet*, for instance, the main theme—in either case preceded by a slow introduction—fails to express the tonic key in an unambiguous way, the first tonic chord (in the Sonata the first tonic chord in root position) entering only at the beginning of the transition.[16] A situation that is even more similar to *Tasso* occurs at the beginning of the symphonic poem *Die Ideale*. Here, a slow introduction (mm. 1–25) is followed by an extensive formal unit in a fast tempo. The latter unit, however, defies any swift interpretation as a main theme. Syntactically, it is too fragmentary to function as a thematic entity; from a tonal-harmonic point of view, it has a distinct preparatory character, comprising two failed (mm. °26–64 and 65–88)[17] and one successful (mm. 89–110) progressions towards the tonic. Only in m. 111 does the actual main theme enter. Although it is only half as long as its preparation, it firmly expresses the tonic and reveals a sentential structure, with mm. 111–19 as a huge model, mm. 120–28 as the repetition of that model, and mm. 129–57 as a continuation. The main theme is concluded by a tonic arrival eliding with the beginning of the transition in m. 158.

Taking the cue from *Die Ideale*, mm. 27–90 in *Tasso* might be described as one large and internally contrasting main theme group, comprising a fast off-tonic part (mm. 27–53) and a slow part in the tonic (mm. 62–90). Obviously, there are significant differences between both main theme groups. In *Tasso*, the contrast between a stable and an unstable entity is accompanied by a contrast in tempo, as well as by a separation of both parts of the main theme group by a return of the beginning of the slow introduction. This is not the case in *Die Ideale*. The unstable part of the main theme group in *Tasso*, moreover, is far more than a mere preparation of what follows, displaying a distinct thematic profile itself: at least initially, it even suggests a sentential construction. Nonetheless, it remains more plausible to interpret mm. 27–90 as a main theme group that comprises an unstable and a stable unit and is preceded by a slow introduction than to consider mm. 1–61 as a multi-tempo introduction followed by a slow main theme. I will return to the significance of this extraordinary layout of the main theme group for the organization of *Tasso* as a two-dimensional sonata form below.

The remainder of the exposition is less problematic: mm. 91–130 function as an internally modulating subsidiary theme that resembles a period with dissolving continuation. Mm. 91–99 can be described as an antecedent, but the consequent that seems to begin after a two-bar lead-in (m. 102) is never rounded off. Instead, it enters a modulating texture, ending on a dominant in E major. The E-major passage in mm. 131–44, which is nothing but a thematic transformation of the tonic subsegment of the main theme group, is not an episode that marks the beginning of the developmental space, but a closing group that rounds off the exposition. It returns in an analogous position at the end of the recapitulation (mm. 533–57), now transposed to the tonic.

From the point of view of the overarching sonata form, the *Quasi Menuetto* section occupies the position of a development, followed by a patently obvious recapitulation in m. 348. This recapitulation is, however, restricted to the fast, off-tonic subsegment of the main theme group. The partial return of the slow introduction that led to the slow, tonic subsegment in the exposition is followed here by an *Allegro con molto brio* section that is, as mentioned before, largely based on a transformation of the *Quasi Menuetto* theme. The parallelism to the exposition is re-established only at the beginning of the closing group. The *Stretto* from m. 558 onwards, finally, can be heard as a coda.

While many of the features described above qualify as deformational from the perspective of sonata form, they no longer do so from the perspective of two-dimensional sonata form. On the contrary: many of the seeming deformations are essential to make the two-dimensional sonata form work in the first place. Several units of the overarching sonata form

have been modified in such a way as to be able to fulfill a simultaneous function in the other dimension of the two-dimensional sonata form, namely as a movement of the sonata cycle. Most notably, the demands of the two-dimensional sonata form account for the unusual layout of the main theme group and, by extension, the exposition as a whole. At least as far as its tempo and character are concerned, the group of units in mm. 62–144—the slow tonic subsegment of the main theme group, the subsidiary theme, and the closing group—corresponds to a slow movement. In a similar way, the *Quasi Menuetto* development substitute (mm. 165–348) corresponds to a scherzo—or, more exactly, a minuet that takes the place of a scherzo—and the passage from the transformation of the minuet theme through the end of the composition (mm. 397–584) corresponds to a finale.

In all three instances, the relationship between the movement of the sonata cycle and the unit or group of units of the overarching sonata form can be described in terms of identification. The slow movement is identified with the tonic subsegment of the main theme group, the subsidiary theme, and the closing group; the scherzo is identified with the development substitute; and the finale is identified with the later segments of the recapitulation and the coda. As a consequence of its identification with part of the exposition of the overarching sonata form, the slow movement conforms to the tonal plan of the exposition, although it is interesting to note that in terms of thematic entities, it is organized as a ternary form. The identification of the *Quasi Menuetto* section with the development of the overarching sonata form is less self-evident. Given its size and the contrast with its environment in terms of key, meter, tempo, and—because of the transformation—thematic content, it might rather appear to be a self-contained scherzo movement that merely substitutes for the development of the overarching sonata form. Although this interpretation is not impossible, I prefer to conceive of the relationship between the scherzo and the development as an identification, because the scherzo hardly displays an autonomous formal organization. Its formal openness, in other words, may be interpreted as a requirement of the development with which it is identified.

The finale has a very strong autonomous profile as well. It is clearly separated from the recapitulation of the off-tonic subsegment of the main theme group and contrasts with it in tempo, meter, key, and character. For this reason, one might be tempted to hear it as an interpolated movement. However, that the finale would be an interpolation is out of the question because it occupies the place of the subsidiary theme group, the closing group, and the coda of the sonata form. Without the units that function as a finale in the dimension of the sonata cycle, the sonata form would be incomplete. It is more difficult to determine whether the finale is actually

identified with the final units of the sonata form or merely functions as their substitute. Identification seems to be the more plausible option, given the formal concessions on the part of the finale. If it were operating as a substitute for the final formal units of the sonata form, there would be no reason for it to lack a form of its own.

Finally, the several returns of the slow introduction too can be interpreted from the perspective of two-dimensional sonata form. In order to further emphasize their function as movements in a sonata cycle—and not merely as formal units in a sonata form that happen to look like movements of a sonata cycle—each of the three movements is preceded by a varied return of material from the overarching sonata form's slow introduction: in mm. 54–61 before the slow movement, in mm. 145–64 before the scherzo, and in mm. 375–382 before the finale. To interpret mm. 54–61 as the first form-articulating return of the slow introduction seems more plausible than hearing it, with Hamilton, as the third part of a ternary multi-tempo introduction.

Although the interpretation of *Tasso* as a two-dimensional sonata form rather than as a one-dimensional sonata deformation answers many questions urged by the piece's extraordinary formal organization, it seems to generate one important additional problem. *Tasso* seems to contain an overarching sonata form, a slow movement, a scherzo, and a finale. A first movement in the dimension of the sonata cycle, however, appears to be missing. Nothing in the portion of the overarching sonata form that precedes the slow movement indicates a simultaneous function as a first movement in the sonata cycle. Given the unambiguous presence of all three subsequent movements of the sonata cycle, however, these units might plausibly be heard as a substitute for the missing first movement. The sequence of slow movement, scherzo (substitute), and finale strongly suggests the presence of a complete sonata cycle, to such an extent that what precedes the first of these movements will be perceived as contributing to the cycle as well. Formulated in terms of the projection model explained above, the projection of the main theme group of the sonata form onto the first movement of the sonata cycle is so strong that it erases every trace of that movement. The most likely candidate to function as a substitute for the first movement is the off-tonic subsegment of the main theme group, which thus undergoes a functional mutation in the course of the composition. In the exposition, it simultaneously functions as the first movement of the cycle, while its return in the recapitulation plays a role only in the dimension of the overarching sonata form. Table 2 gives an overview of the formal organization of *Tasso*.

Many of the most striking characteristics of the formal organization of *Tasso*—the unusual organization of the exposition, the several returns

Table 2: Formal overview of *Tasso*.

mm.	1-26	27-53	54-61	62-90	°91-130	131-144
form		Main theme: off-tonic subsegment		**EXPOSITION** Main theme: tonic subsegment (period)	Subsidiary theme (period with dissolving consequent)	Closing group
	Introduction		*Introduction varied return*			
cycle		**[FIRST MOVEMENT]** (substitution)		**SLOW MOVEMENT** (identification)		
key	**(c)**		**→ c: V**	**c**	**A♭**	**→ E: V E**

mm.	°145-164	165-347	348-374	375-382	383-532	533-557	558-584
form		**DEVELOPMENT**	**RECAPITULATION** Main theme: off-tonic subsegment		~~Subsidiary theme~~	Closing group	**CODA**
	Introduction varied return			*Introduction varied return*			
cycle		**SCHERZO/MINUET** (identification)			**FINALE** (identification)		
key	**→ F♯**	**F♯**		**→ c: V**	**C**		

of introductory material, the absence of an actual development, and the modified recapitulation—can be explained in a more satisfying way when the work is understood within the context of two-dimensional sonata form than by referring to the broader set of conventions of sonata form in general. Once again, this does not necessarily imply reservations about the value of the concept of deformation as an analytical tool as such. My approach is a refinement of or elaboration on the notion of deformation that seems necessary in order to come to an adequate understanding of certain compositions from the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

5. Form and Genre

The possibility of interpreting *Tasso* within the referential framework of two-dimensional rather than one-dimensional sonata form has consequences for our understanding of the symphonic poem as a genre. In 1862, shortly after the completion of the twelve symphonic poems from his Weimar period, Liszt explicitly claimed to have "solved the greater part of the symphonic problem set to me in Germany."[18] For most of the twentieth century, the implicit *communis opinio* among music scholars was that by supplanting the symphony by an ostensibly inferior genre of orchestral music whose roots lie in the functionally affiliated genre of the (concert) overture, he had done exactly the opposite. The symphonic poem was seen as the epitome of a period of decay in orchestral music, a view obviously fed by prejudices concerning its apparent lack of autonomous musical consistency and its (subsequent) recourse to extra-musical narratives.

Over the past few decades the climate has gradually changed. With the emergence of more nuanced views of the dichotomy between program and absolute music, the symphonic poem has increasingly gained appreciation as a positive alternative for the symphony that—at least temporarily— offered a way out of the impasse in which the symphony found itself by the middle of the nineteenth century. For that purpose, it was not enough for Liszt simply to rename the genre of the concert overture to symphonic poem. Rather, the overture had to be transformed into a genuinely new genre that was fit to replace the symphony at the top of the hierarchy of genres of instrumental music.

In the present context, it is worth emphasizing that this transformation from concert overture into symphonic poem is not a mere aesthetic move, but has considerable formal implications as well. To be sure, several of Liszt's symphonic poems—including *Tasso*—were overtures in their earlier versions. Yet although they clearly inherited the sonata-form framework from the overture as a basic generic convention, at least a number of them

tend towards a degree of formal complexity greater than that of the single-movement and usually sonata-form based overture. Some displayed this formal complexity right from their inception and may thus have prompted Liszt to change their generic designation from overture to symphonic poem; others acquired their new genre name only in the course of the—often complicated—revision process, possibly because Liszt wanted them to correspond formally to the aesthetic level of the new genre. Sometimes, it even appears to have been the need for growing complexity that urged Liszt to rework his symphonic poems.

The notoriously complicated genesis of *Tasso* is particularly telling in this respect. Liszt first used its main theme for a variation cycle intended as the opening piece of the original but never published version of *Venezia e Napoli* (only a second version was published as a supplement to the second *Année de pèlerinage* in 1859). The first sketches for an orchestral composition on the same theme date from 1847, and the work was completed in 1849—with the help of Liszt's assistant August Conradi. From 1851 to 1854, Liszt worked on the transformation of the overture into a symphonic poem, which was eventually printed in 1856. When it was first performed as the overture to a festival performance of Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso* in Weimar in 1849, *Tasso* still lacked the *Quasi Menuetto* section. Only in 1854, when it had been reworked and renamed as a symphonic poem, the piece came to include this section, which arguably is one of the key features of its identity as a two-dimensional sonata form.[19]

The increased complexity in comparison to the overture, the tendency to problematize musical form and to experiment with it, not only as a vehicle for programmatic content, but also because of the value of the experiment as such, seem to become central generic conventions for the new genre of the symphonic poem. Several of Liszt's symphonic poems combine a sonata-form layout with a concurrent strain of formal organization. They merge sonata form with variation form (e.g., *Mazeppa*), with an entire sonata cycle (e.g., *Tasso*, but also *Les préludes* and *Die Ideale*), or with elements thereof (e.g., *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*).

For the Lisztian symphonic poem—and maybe for large-scale single-movement instrumental music from the second half of the nineteenth century in general—the increased degree of formal complexity typical of two-dimensional sonata form compensates for the absence of an explicit multi-movement design. This means that the characteristics of a two-dimensional sonata form that are at odds with a normative sonata form are an essential aspect of this kind of form. To analyze them as deformations neglects their significance for the way these compositions function formally, both internally and externally. They are constitutive not only for the formal organization of a two-dimensional sonata form, but also for the role this

pattern of formal organization plays in the history of musical form in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is these characteristics, and the complexity they engender, that allowed these works to engage in a dialogue with the tradition of the multi-movement symphony.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Music Analysis, University College Dublin on 25 June, 2005. I thank David Larkin, Pieter Bergé, Julian Horton, and the two anonymous readers of this journal for their comments on various stages of this essay.

1. Several examples from the beginning of the twentieth century through the early 1980s are cited in Kaplan 1984. Instead of repeating Kaplan's survey, I would like to point out that similar views—with varying degrees of nuance—are voiced in a number of influential music history textbooks that have likely shaped the *communis opinio* of entire generations of musicians about Liszt's symphonic poems. An extreme example comes from Donald J. Grout's *A History of Western Music*, where one can read that "[e]ach [of Liszt's symphonic poems] is a continuous form with various sections more or less contrasting in character and tempo, and a few themes which are developed, repeated, varied, or transformed in accordance with the particular design of each work . . . [T]he content and form in every instance are suggested by some picture, statue, drama, poem, scene, personality, thought, impression, or other object not identifiable from the music alone" (Grout 1980: 602). A rather more nuanced expression of the same belief is to be found in Leon Plantinga's *Romantic Music*. Plantinga finds that "[n]one of [Liszt's symphonic poems] is cast in the usual forms of the symphony or overture, and all have a connection of one sort or another with an extramusical program . . . Several are highly episodic in construction, and some make extended use of recitative-like passages" (1984:407–8). Plantinga does add, however, that the connection between music and program often is a tenuous one.

2. The first six of Liszt's symphonic poems were to be published in 1856. The essay on Berlioz and his *Harold Symphony* was originally written in French (most probably in collaboration with Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein), translated into German by Ludwig Pohl, and first published in five installments in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 43 (1855), 25–32, 37–46, 49–55, 78–84, and 89–97, by then the most important forum of the New German School.

3. My translation. "Sie kennen die Hoffnung nicht, welche wähnt auf den von Riesen gemähten Feldern noch Ernten einsammeln zu können, und leben dem Glauben das von ihnen begonnene Werk nur dadurch fortzusetzen, daß sie, wie jene zu ihrer Zeit, neue Formen für neue Gedanken, neue Schläuche für neuen Wein schaffen."

4. Some notable exceptions include Dahlhaus 1979, Kaplan 1984, and Saffle 2000.

5. Particularly the idea that the interpretation of a composition should be guided by the generic context to which it belongs—a core idea in deformation theory—is prominent in Dahlhaus's mode of thought. In his article on Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, for example, he insists: "Generic traditions are a part of history that is present in the matter itself, as a partial moment of both the conception and the musical hearing, which takes as a starting point certain expectations of form" (Dahlhaus 1979:131, my translation). "Gattungstraditionen sind ein Stück Geschichte, das in der Sache selbst—als Teilmoment sowohl der Konzeption als auch des musikalischen Hörens, das von bestimmten Formerwartungen ausgeht—gegenwärtig ist." Already in the much earlier *Analyse und Werturteil* (1970), Dahlhaus stated: " . . . one may establish in analysis the rule that a movement is to be interpreted, within sensible limits,

as a variant of the form characteristic of the genre, and not as exemplifying another schema unusual for the genre" (Dahlhaus 1983:82–83). It is no coincidence that Hepokoski quotes the same passage (1992:144).

6. There is Heinrich Christoph Koch's description of "[d]as erste Allegro der Sinfonie," in volume 3 of his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (Koch [1793] 1969:304–7). It seems unlikely, however, that anyone would have been able to write a sonata form based solely on the information provided by Koch.

7. Because one would have to "explain the remarkable phenomenon of composers 'discovering' sonata form over and over again with each new work" (Bonds 1991:28–29).

8. This is not to say, of course, that the concept of sonata deformation cannot be fruitfully applied to certain single-movement compositions, including some of Liszt's symphonic poems. See, for a case study, Vande Moortele 2006.

9. "Nous . . . eussions souhaité réussir à formuler cette grande antithèse du génie maltraité durant sa vie, et rayonnant après sa mort d'une lumière écrasante pour ses persécuteurs. Le Tasse a aimé et souffert à Ferrare; il a été vengé à Rome, sa gloire est encore vivante dans les chants populaires de Venise. Ces trois moments sont inséparables de son immortel souvenir. Pour les rendre en musique nous avons d'abord fait surgir la grande ombre du héros telle qu'elle nous apparaît aujourd'hui hantant les lagunes de Venise ; nous avons entrevu ensuite sa figure hautaine et attristée glisser à travers les fêtes de Ferrare où il avait donné le jour à ses chefs-d'œuvres; enfin nous l'avons suivi à Rome la ville éternelle qui en lui tendant sa couronne, glorifia en lui le martyr et le poète" (*Franz Liszts Musikalische Werke, Orchesterwerke, Abteilung 1: Symphonische Dichtungen*, Volume 1, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, reprinted Farnborough: Gregg Press, 1966:146).

10. In many ways, it is as if Liszt's symphonic poem is not telling the story of Torquato Tasso, but enacting Liszt (or any of his cultured contemporaries) thinking of Tasso. I am inspired here by Thomas Grey's approach to Mendelssohn's overture *Die Hebriden* (see Grey 2000:80–84).

11. Hepokoski refers to *Tasso* as an example of this category on at least three separate occasions: 1992a:146; 1992b:78; and 1993:7.

12. Examples from the symphonic music include, for pieces starting in the major mode, *Les préludes* (C–E) and, for pieces starting in the minor mode, the first movement from the *Faust Symphony* (c–E), as well as *Prometheus* (a–D♭). A likely precedent is the first movement of Beethoven's C-major Waldstein Sonata, op. 53.

13. For a detailed theoretical discussion of the concept of two-dimensional sonata form, as well as for a number of elaborate examples and a historical perspective, see Vande Moortele 2006b.

14. Another reason for Hamilton's decision is perhaps the surface analogy between *Tasso* and the first movement of the *Faust Symphony*. Not only does the *Faust Symphony* contain the same expositional tonal progression from C minor to E major, it also begins with a similar apparently multi-tempo introduction. An important difference, however, is that the fast unit in the introduction of the *Faust* movement (mm. 23–65)—which one might also consider to be what William Caplin has called a "thematic introduction," belonging to the main theme group rather than to the slow introduction (Caplin 1998:15)— is, after a short interruption (mm. 66–70), followed by another fast unit (mm. 71ff). Although not the firmest tonic confirmation imaginable either, this unit behaves as a main theme group in every respect. In contrast to *Tasso*, moreover, the introductory fast unit in the *Faust* movement does not return before or at the beginning of the recapitulation. Admittedly, the slow tempo

segment of the introduction returns in the further course of the *Faust* movement (mm. 359–81), but this precedes an interpolated slow episode (mm. 382–420), the recapitulation following only in m. 421.

15. The existence of precedents for a sonata form exposition with a tonic subsidiary theme in early Chopin (e.g., the C-Minor Piano Sonata, op. 4 and the G-minor Piano Trio, op. 8) hardly seems to make this possibility less implausible.

16. For a more detailed discussion of the main theme groups in *Hamlet* and the B-Minor Sonata, see Vande Moortele 2006a.

17. The symbol "°" signifies "with upbeat."

18. Letter from Liszt to Franz Brendel, August 11, 1862 (quoted in Hamilton 1997:142).

19. For a more detailed account of the genesis of *Tasso*, see Torkewitz 1995. Interestingly, in 1866 Liszt composed the final of the *Trois odes funèbres* for orchestra, entitled *Le triomphe funèbre du Tasse*. According to its subtitle, this was intended as an "epilogue to the symphonic poem *Tasso*."

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