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The Fire Sermon: Program and Narrative in Einojuhani Rautavaara's Second Piano Sonata

Committee:

Robert S. Hatten, Co-Supervisor

Andrew Brownell, Co-Supervisor

Alison Maggart

Anton Nel

Michael C. Tusa

Brian Marks

The Fire Sermon: Program and Narrative in Einojuhani Rautavaara's Second Piano Sonata

by

Zachary Matthew Ridgway

Treatise

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Preface

A number of years ago, I was loaned a CD by a friend, Matt Pargeter. Matt is not a pianist or otherwise a specialist in musical repertoire, but somehow or another he had come across an album of Finnish pianist Laura Mikkola performing works of Chopin and Einojuhani Rautavaara. I listened skeptically, intending only to humor my friend; but found myself unexpectedly blown away by one piece included on the disk, Einojuhani Rautavaara's Sonata no. 2, "Fire Sermon."[1] It was dynamite.

I ordered a score, which was hard to come by at the time. (At the time of this writing, in 2018, scans of the score are readily available, legally or otherwise, online.) I searched online and through various databases for articles on the subject of the sonata or on Rautavaara's piano music in general, and found precious little. I eventually learned the sonata with the help of my applied teacher at the University of Texas, Prof. David Renner, and performed it at several venues. Audience reactions were generally quite positive, if somewhat baffled.

In fairness, I was as baffled as my listeners: I had put in many hours of study and analysis, and felt that I had a fairly good understanding of the first and last movement; but I could never quite get my head around the second movement. The second movement finally made sense to me only very recently, when I discovered what I think is its program: the composer's account of his mystical experience as a child on a journey to a monastery at Valamo.

The following chapters result first of all from my own curiosity: in Rautavaara's "Fire Sermon" I had found an enigma that I needed to resolve. What solutions I have found, incomplete as they may be, are here. A second motivation for this research is to assist fellow pianists hoping to approach Rautavaara's piano music: I have written the document that I went

[1] Rautavaara's title in Finnish is "Tulisaarna." Finnish has no definite article: throughout this treatise I will refer to the piece with or without definite article as best fits the grammar of the individual context.

looking for when first trying to understand the piece's complexities. While the treatise focuses on just one piece, the second sonata, it should be relevant to the study and performance of any of Rautavaara's piano works. A final motivation for this document is musical proselytization: more pianists should play and record Rautavaara's works. Thus far, there are two excellent recordings available on CD, by Izumi Tateno and Laura Mikkola, respectively. There should be more: no two recordings can exhaust the expressive or interpretive possibilities of Rautavaara's piano music.

Thanks are due to many individuals who have assisted me in this project specifically or in my musical and academic development generally. I am grateful first of all to Matt Pargeter, who had no idea how he was impacting me when he introduced me to this wonderful music. I am also grateful to the inestimable David Renner, who was my primary teacher for two years of my doctoral study; Prof. Renner stepped with me out of our respective comfort zones to approach the Rautavaara, offering much support and encouragement on the way. I am grateful also to Jane Abbott-Kirk, who taught me so much of what I know of how and why to play; to Brian Marks, who gave me my first real introduction to the music of Scriabin and of Messiaen; and to Robin Wallace, to whom I owe much of my ability to think and write about music.

I have had stimulating conversations about Rautavaara's music with several friends, colleagues, and teachers; these include Elliott Antokoletz, Carl Leafstedt, Brian Bondari, Benjamin Eldon Stevens, and Ed Knoechel. Sami Froncek is the only other pianist that I know personally who plays the Rautavaara sonata: she was a great resource as a reader and sounding-board. Byron Almén was very encouraging in my process of writing this treatise, and was kind enough to read and comment upon large swaths of this treatise while he was on leave. Kevin Salfen gave me many insightful edits - my first chapter is much stronger for having responded to

his criticisms. Alison Maggart's comments and editorial advice have been invaluable: I am very grateful for her going abover and beyond to assist me in this project. I am also immensely grateful to Dr. Robert S. Hatten, from whom I have learned so much – first through his books, then in his classes, and finally in this process of treatise-writing. His conceptual and editorial guidance have meant more to me than I can say.

Finally, I am grateful to my family. My mother always encouraged my curiosity, and my father introduced me to lots of wonderful music. I am grateful to my wife Sara: for her presence and companionship and encouragement and patience through these last two years of graduate school and the process of writing this treatise, and for motivating me throughout by frequent reminders that she had a doctorate and I didn't. And to our dogs Hugo [the] Wolf and Whiskey River, for their comforting companionship and salutary distraction while I wrote, despite their tendency to skitter out of the room when I would practice Rautavaara.

The Fire Sermon: Program and Narrative in Einojuhani Rautavaara's Second Piano Sonata

Zachary Matthew Ridgway, D.M.A.
The University of Texas at Austin, December 2018

Co-Supervisors: Robert S. Hatten, Andrew Brownell

Einojuhani Rautavaara's second piano sonata, op. 64, titled "Fire Sermon," is a masterpiece of neo-Romantic piano writing. This treatise is meant as a performer's and listener's guide to the sonata. My analysis explores Rautavaara's compositional techniques in this piece, especially his pervasive use of axes of symmetry, symmetrical scales, and a submerged tonal center. I also situate the piece within the macrotext of Rautavaara's output for the piano, noting strong intertextual similarities across the piano works and detailing performance pragmatics for the use of pianists wanting to approach this music.

My analysis then proceeds to discuss the title "Fire Sermon" and its implications, compiling and assessing the paratext of the composer's brief statements and the relevant literary texts. I also present a possible program that I have discovered for the second movement of the sonata, in Rautavaara's account of his early mystic experience on the way to the island of Valamo. Using this discovered program and structural analysis following the work of Robert S. Hatten, Michael L. Klein, and Byron Almén, I analyze the whole sonata as an overarching narrative structure. My narratological approach reads the sonata as a whole as a mystic narrative or as a cosmology.

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Introduction

Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.
- W. H. Auden[1]

The "Fire Sermon" sonata of Einojuhani Rautavaara, Finland's most prominent composer since Sibelius, is an emotive, powerful, and impressive piece of music. The sonata appears to have become Rautavaara's most popular solo piano work, and it is finding itself a place on the international concert stage. However, very little has yet been written about it; in English, at least, no extended analysis of the sonata has been published. The would-be performer who wants to learn more about the sonata can find brief remarks in liner notes and interviews, but not much more.

This treatise is meant to fill a void in the literature by approaching the "Fire Sermon" sonata analytically, and also attempting to explore its potential meanings. This treatise is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with issues of materials, techniques, form, and the sonata's submerged tonal center. The second chapter deals with all things referential, including the piece's suggestive title, its use of topics, its intertextual references to piano works of Messiaen and Scriabin, and its macrotextual relation to other piano works of Rautavaara. This second chapter is heavily indebted to the work of Robert S. Hatten and Michael Klein. The third chapter takes a narratological approach in which the sonata is characterized according to its narrative structure, according to paradigms applied to music by Byron Almén. The third chapter also suggests a program for the sonata's second movement. The possible program comes from Rautavaara's own writings, but has not previously been explicitly connected to the "Fire

[1] W. H. Auden, "Anthem for St. Cecilia's Day," 23-24.

Sermon."[2]

In the body of this study I have strongly privileged analysis over historical, biographical, or sociological concerns. That is, my discussion is heavily grounded in what I can hear and play and see, namely the piece's sounds and physical gestures and of course the score itself. Two factors have contributed to this bias towards immanent critique. First is my ignorance of Finnish: being unable to read Rautavaara's autobiography, my access to biographical information on the composer is limited. The second factor is that this treatise is meant to be grounded in the phenomenal, in the experience of the listener and the performer: a "guide for the perplexed."

The stakes are upped by the composer's singular importance for Finnish music: in terms of his international presence and pedagogical legacy, Rautavaara is almost certainly the most important Finnish composer since Sibelius. Since Rautavaara's death, this title may have passed to the worthy Kaija Saariaho; but Rautavaara's legacy within Finnish music of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first is difficult to overestimate. Rautavaara's status as successor to Sibelius is due in part to Sibelius having selected the young Rautavaara for a scholarship in 1955.[3] This scholarship allowed Rautavaara to study with Copland, Sessions, and Persichetti. Rautavaara later taught composition at the Sibelius Academy, from 1966-1971 and from 1976-1988.[4]

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[2] My claim to be the first to have discovered the program requires an important qualification: I do not speak Finnish. I have attempted to do due diligence by reading and assessing every relevant source in English. However, if Rautavaara's autobiography, or the biography of the composer by Samuli Tikkaja, are eventually translated into English, I may well find my conclusions about the program are gainsaid by those sources. Perhaps worse, I may find that my discovery of this program is *passé*, having been known to Finnish-speaking music scholars for some time. In either case, I am not sure that either of these negative results would matter very much. In the first instance, I would argue for structural correspondence between the programmatic text and the music, irrespective of the composer's conscious or stated intentions; and in the second case, I may have proved the success of Rautavaara's musical narrative by discovering its literary correlate independently.

[3] Kalevi Aho, Pekka Jalkanen, Erkki Salmenhaara, and Keijo Virtamo, *Finnish Music*, trans. Timothy Binham and Philip Binham (Keuruu: Otava Printing Works, 1996), 93.

[4] Aho et al., 94.

Like Sibelius, Rautavaara was self-conscious in his Finnishness, composing on subjects from the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. Rautavaara's works explicitly related to the *Kalevala* include *The Myth of Sampo* and *Marjatta*. Matti Raekallio describes an early piano work of Rautavaara's, *Pelimannit*, as having "something very consciously and emphatically Finnish in it."[5] Raekallio continues,

> Perhaps it is the deliberately Finnish nature of *Pelimannit* that makes it so attractive. There is something of the unique twilight of northern Finland in the music. On the other hand, the first piece for instance is expansive and magnificent in the traditional "grand style," and there are also obvious connections to Bartók that link the music to the general European classical tradition.[6]

Finland was relatively late to embrace modernist music; Kimmo Korhonen cites a concert given in 1956 by the Contemporary Music Society as the first time that Berg and Webern were performed in Finland.[7] Rautavaara was at the forefront of the Finnish musical avant-garde when in 1957 he went to Darmstadt to study serialism, following his fellow Finn Erik Bergman.[8] Finland caught up quickly:

> With the presentation of clusters, field technique, aleatorics, 'happenings' and improvisation at the 'nursery concerts' of the early 1960s, Finnish music finally closed the gap that had existed between Finnish music and international Modernism since the 1920s.[9]

Modernism seems to have had a relatively short run as a major force in Finnish musical culture. "The wave of Modernism crested in the 1960s and began to retreat. Many composers who had been working with Modernist techniques turned to free-tonality or otherwise more traditional

[5] Tuomas Mali, ed., *Pianists' Edition: Finnish Piano Works* (Jyväskylä, Finland: Finnish Music Information Center, 2009), 78.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Kimmo Korhonen, *Inventing Finnish Music*: *Contemporary Composers from Medieval to Modern* (Jyväskylä, Finland: Finnish Music Information Center, 2003), 90.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

styles."[10] Rautavaara is among the composers that Korhonen lists as having remained influenced by the techniques of Modernism, even as he turned towards more traditional composition.[11]

Aho et al. remind us that Rautavaara has never progressed in a straight line: "Rautavaaa's development has never been consistent or straightforward; he has jumped straight from one extreme to another."[12] At various times "[Rautavaara's] personae have. . .included the traditionalist. . .the modernist and constructivist. . .and the romantic and mystic."[13] At the time that Rautavaara wrote the "Fire Sermon," he is best described as a post-serialist or a neo-Romantic. There may be vestiges of serial technique in the sonata, but tonality plays a far more significant role than do serial procedures. Despite Rautavaara's many changes of style over the years, his piano works have a great deal in common with one another, even ones written decades apart. Rautavaara was regrettably not prolific as a composer for the piano; his solo piano output fits on a single compact disc. However, this relatively small output for solo piano includes some truly exceptional pieces, among which the "Fire Sermon" sonata is (in my estimation) foremost. The "Fire Sermon" sonata is impressive, emotionally powerful, and appealing to audiences. Juhani Lagerspetz describes the sonata as "a very performer-friendly piece of music. . . . It has magnificent sonorities and grand drama, guaranteed to keep the audience hooked."[14] An additional advantage for the young pianist is that the work has not already been recorded by Rubinstein, Kissin, Gavrilov, Sokolov, and the pantheon of great pianists for whom these serve as exemplars. In short, the "Fire Sermon" is a work that is extraordinary, but not yet over-played: a dream-piece for the aspiring performer.

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[10] Ibid., 91.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Aho et al., 94.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Mali, *Pianists' Edition: Finnish Piano Works*, 80.

Chapter 1

Fearful Symmetry: Materials, Techniques, and Form

> It is as if a painter said: look, here I'm going to show you not the painting of a landscape, but the painting of different ways of painting a certain landscape, and I trust their harmonious fusion will disclose the landscape as I intend you to see it.
>
> -Vladimir Nabokov[15]

In his second piano sonata, titled the "Fire Sermon" (1970), Einojuhani Rautavaara utilizes an eclectic array of compositional techniques. At the stage at which Rautavaara wrote the "Fire Sermon" sonata (in 1970), he is best described as a neo-Romantic. Conceptually, and also gesturally (as will be discussed), Rautavaara's position is not unlike that of Messiaen in the 1950s. Having spent some time in the avant-garde of serialism after his studies with Wladimir Vogel, Rautavaara knowingly returned to a musical language laden with meaning, including triads with vestiges of tonal function.

Rautavaara's eclectic compositional approach almost gives the impression that the composer intended to write a piece cataloguing the techniques available to him – a *Harmonielehre* in the form of a didactic piece. I have in fact used the sonata didactically, in teaching twentieth-century music theory: in the span of the sonata's few pages, one can find planing of triads and seventh chords, seventh chords treated as consonant, non-functional harmonic successions, whole-tone scales, octatonic scales, serial techniques, neo-classical counterpoint, extended techniques including clusters that require palms and forearms on the keyboard, and pervasive multiple symmetries (especially mirror images).

Some of the elements included in the sonata are strikingly heterogeneous. Vestiges of

[15] Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: Vintage, 1941), 93.

serial technique are made to coexist with tonal elements, including prominent major and minor triads; clear tonal arrivals co-exist with octatonic and whole-tone scales. In respect to its melding of tradition and modernity, the "Fire Sermon" sonata is not unlike some of Messiaen's works – for instance "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus" or "La première communion de la Vierge."[16] In the Rautavaara sonata, there are some passages where the incongruity of Romantic and Modernist elements may appear jarring, for instance the harsh juxtapositions of the second movement. These juxtapositions seem calculated, however: they are intentional disturbances of the surface of the sonata, rather than lapses of the composer's ability to synthesize his materials into a harmonious fusion.

For all the didactic possibilities of the piece and for all its panoply of techniques, the sonata is compelling and expressive music: it does not sound like a didactic work written to make a point about the possibility of integration. The piece is not merely an amalgamation of heterogeneous techniques; it coheres as an aesthetic whole, even if that whole is to some degree fragmented and post-modern. In this chapter, I will explore the work's technical means: symmetrical constructions, both rhythmic (non-retrogradeable rhythms) and tonal (especially axes of symmetry); symmetrical scales, including whole-tone and octatonic; traditional forms, including sonata form, ABA', and fugato; and traditional harmonic language, including major and minor triads. In chapter 3, I will explore the expressive motivations for the work's heterogeneity and its coherence, especially the narrative element that catalyzes the sonata's synthesis.

[16] These pieces are chosen from among many possibilities since I will argue that they were particularly important models for Rautavaara.

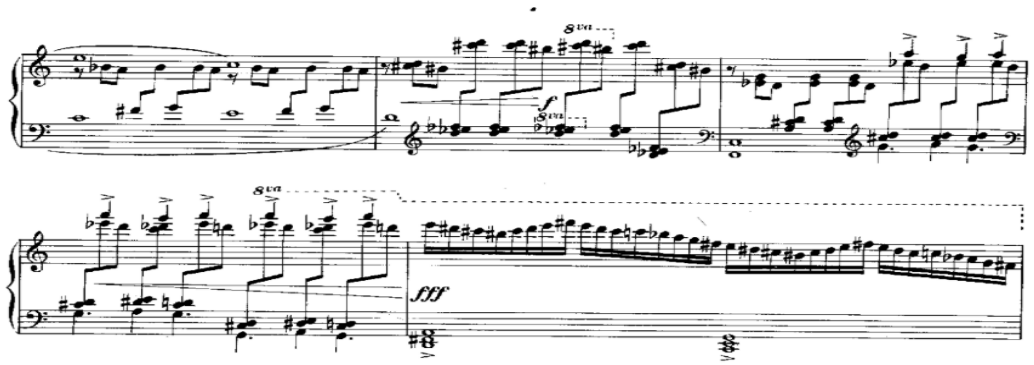
Form

"The Fire Sermon" is divided into three movements, with tempo relationships typical of Classical sonatas (fast-slow-fast). The movements trigger the expectations of classical sonata cycles, without quite fulfilling them. Each movement swerves dramatically from its apparently intended trajectory, and potential hierarchies of form that would be implied by key relationships within and between movements are not present.

It is probably not meaningful to refer to the sonata as tonal, since although triads are quite frequent, no movement bears a key signature and there are few harmonically functional elements. However, there are vestiges of tonality within the piece: the note D serves in a quasi-tonal function as an extended axis of symmetry, with numerous structurally significant arrivals on D major or D minor confirming the gravitational implications of the axis.

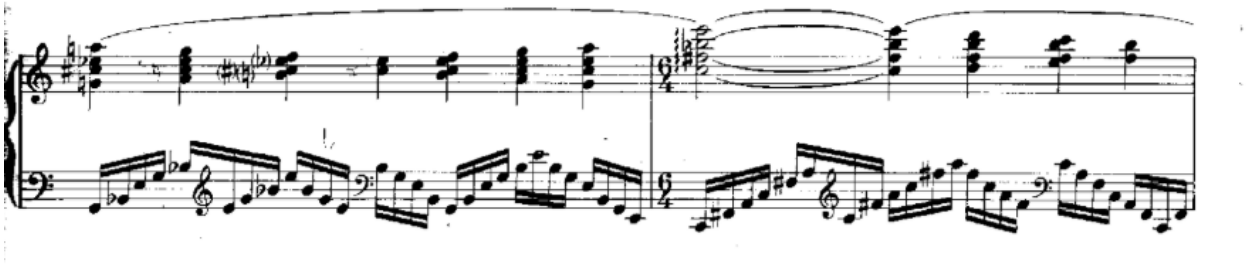
First Movement, and Swerves

The first movement is recognizable as a sonata form, albeit freely treated: it has a clear exposition, with a stormy first key area and a more lyrical second key area (beginning at m. 52 – see example 1.15). A development section begins at m. 68; however, the sections elide without double bar, obvious modulation, or rhetorical fanfare. The material of mm. 77-78 may be a sort of incipient developmental core, despite the passage's relative harmonic stasis. The material is not sequential in a tonal sense, but its expanding iterations of short fragments of material from earlier in the sonata generate a quasi-sequential increase in intensity. A clearer sequential core, at m. 83 and following, confirms the developmental function of the section.



Example 1.1. First movement, m. 75ff. A dynamic and registral pseudo-sequence.

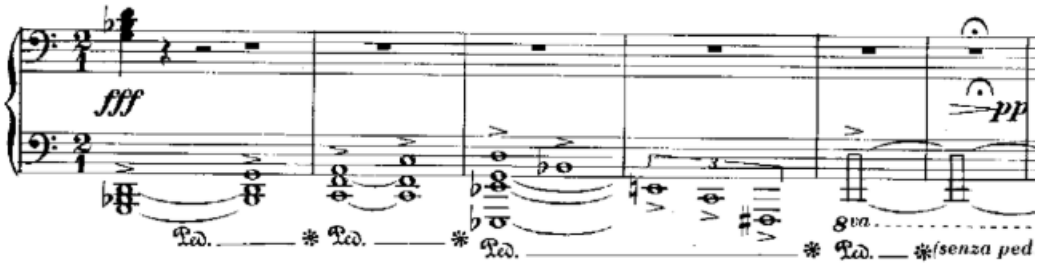
It is difficult to conjecture a point of furthest remove, given the post-tonal context. Certainly the sonorities at mm. 100-101 are far removed from the registral center implied by the first theme and the triads evident in the second key area. These bars do, however, recall the pitch centers established previously in the sonata; mm. 83-103 use D and G# as axes of symmetry, and thus exhibit tonal homeostasis rather than a tonal area of departure.



Example 1.2. First movement, m. 100-101.

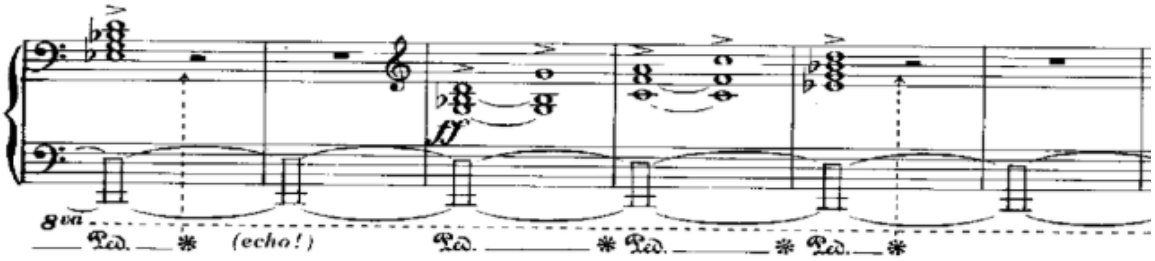
A recapitulation follows, but is so truncated that it seems almost vestigial in terms of the time that it occupies. However, its function is hardly insignificant: it is a major component of the sonata's dramatic trajectory. The recapitulation begins at m. 104 with the return of the first theme at its original pitch level, but all that is presented of the first theme is a two measure fragment. This two-bar chunk of the first theme is obsessively repeated, the damper pedal is added (m. 108), and the dynamic level builds to *fff*. A massive outward expansion leads briefly to

G minor (as at the beginning of the development section) before arriving with a violent impact on a cluster in the piano's lowest register.



Example 1.3. First movement, mm. 119-124.

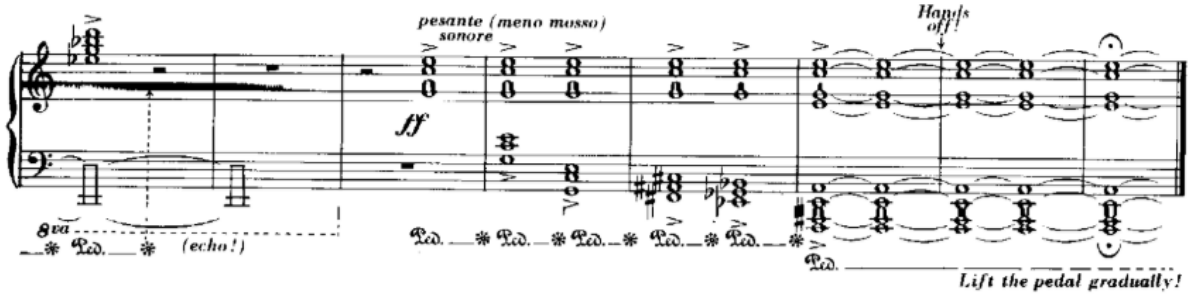
While the left hand (or forearm) holds this cluster, the right hand plays ascending fragments of the chordal version of the sonata's second theme. The right hand's rests and the precisely marked pedal releases set off an unusual effect of booming or echoing overtones, as indicated by Rautavaara: *"(echo!)"*. I have made no attempt at an exhaustive search through piano literature utilizing extended techniques, but this is the only "(echo!)" marking of which I am aware.



Example 1.4. First movement, m. 127ff: "(echo!)"

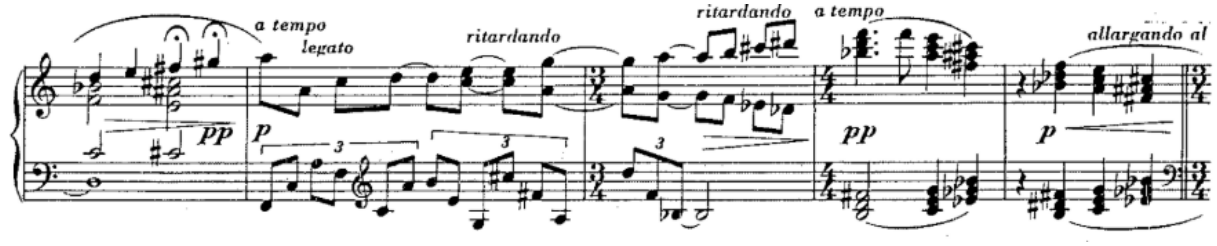
The final notated sonority is a collision of A major below and C major above; the composer instructs that the performer release the chords ("Hands off!") and lift the pedal. The unpredictability of the dampers' descent in the slow release of the pedal, along with variance in

the strength of the strings' vibrations, will determine the final audible sonority.



Example 1.5. First movement, m. 135ff: "Hands off!"

The last notated harmony seems at first glance to have little connection to the piece – neither of its constituent triads has been featured in the sonata thus far. The triads themselves however may be a bit of a red herring; if considered not as two triads but as one sonority, the ending chord is roughly symmetrical on the axis G#. The symmetry is slightly approximate, since both triads are major (one should be minor for the symmetry to be exact). The symmetrical doubling of otherwise unrelated triads strongly anticipates the transition to the B section in the second movement.



Example 1.6. Second movement, m. 20-24.

It is particularly significant that the first movement swerves from its apparent trajectory,

breaking off into something other than the recapitulation that seems to be promised: a two-bar unit of the first theme is repeated obsessively before fragments of the chorale theme take over. A truncated recapitulation is of itself no particular oddity, though in more traditional truncations of sonata recapitulations it is typically the first theme that is omitted.

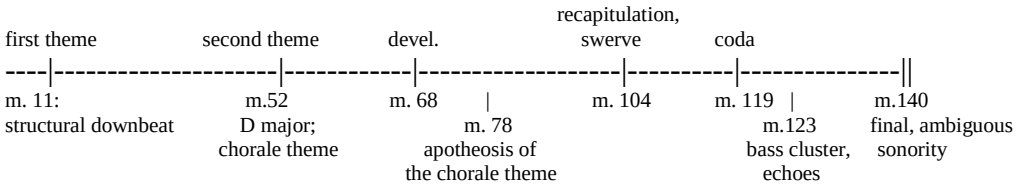
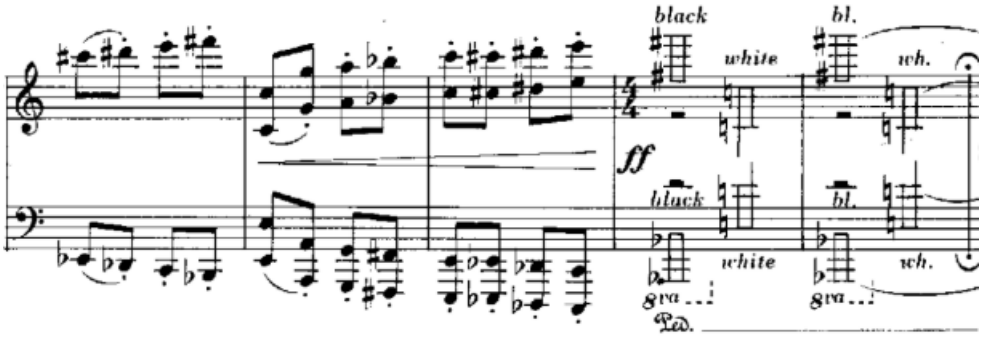


Figure 1.1. Formal diagram, first movement.

Rautavaara's procedure seems qualitatively different, however; this swerve of the recapitulation in an unexpected direction, with extended techniques highlighting its strangeness, could scarcely have been motivated by a reduction in repetitiveness (not recapitulating a first theme already worked over thoroughly in the development). And so short a sonata form could hardly have been truncated for the sake of brevity. Something else motivates the swerve, whether we hear it as an overwhelming growth from within or as an impact from outside the music.

The swerve at the end of the first movement is not an isolated phenomenon; each of the three movements swerves unexpectedly, dramatically violating its formal promises. The flow of the second movement is violently interrupted at m. 11, and its return of A at m. 35 is abortive, succeeded by unrelated material. The form of the third movement also has a breaking point, almost exactly halfway through the piece, when a fugato-toccata is interrupted by long clusters and then succeeded by something quite different.



Example 1.7. Third movement: mm. 62-66.

These interruptions are never just surface-level phenomena such as harmonically deceptive moves or cadenzas; each is structurally significant, re-routing each movement from its implied trajectory. The structural significance of these inorganic moments invites narratological interpretation (the subject of chapter 3).

Second Movement

Listeners familiar with typical sonata cycles may expect the slow movement to be ABA; and the nocturne-like texture of the movement's opening would also seem to predict an ABA as the quintessential form for nocturnes since the time of Chopin. In support of ABA form we find a strong sense of departure leading into m. 25 (see example 1.27), and a strong sense of [thwarted] return at m. 35ff (see example 1.59). Yet this ternary form is not unproblematic; the first A may be a rounded binary, and the return of the A section is truncated (as mentioned above) with the interruptive interpolation of new material. The movement may be sufficiently modified from ABA form as to be difficult to hear as such; if the movement is not heard as ternary, it may be experienced as a sort of rondo form, AB(A)C(A)D.

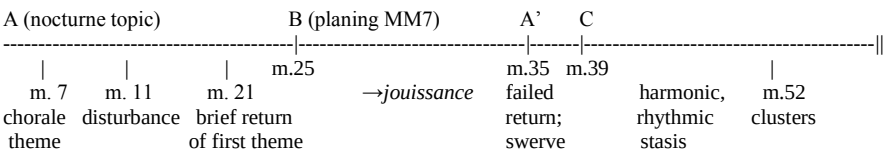
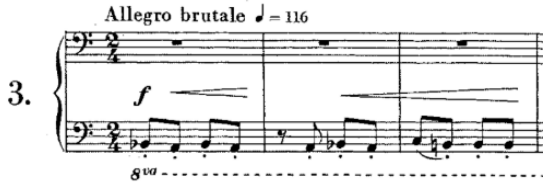


Figure 1.2. Formal diagram, second movement.

The material that begins at m. 38, replacing the return of A, is tonally unrelated to what has preceded it (see example 1.28). Something *other* has obtruded here in lieu of the failed return of A; again, this violation of formal or generic expectations seems to invite narrative interpretation.

Third Movement

The third movement opens as a *fugato* on the name BACH, which soon yields to a largely homophonic texture. The exposition includes five subject entries – in the bass (m. 1), tenor (m. 8), alto (m. 15), soprano (m. 32), and bass (m. 39). Each voice except the last enters a tritone above the entrance that preceded it; thus Bb and E alternate as initial pitches for the subject material, and the entrances (again, excepting the last) cause the fugue to sweep upward on the piano.



Example 1.8. Third movement, opening: BACH.

In Rautavaara's treatment of *fugato* it is not meaningful to discuss traditional elements like the use of a counter-subject or *Fortspinnung*. The first subject entrance devolves into

octatonic scale fragments in the lowest register of the piano; the other entrances follow suit, accumulating in the bass as the left hand plays the octatonic scale first in single notes, then in thirds, and finally in planed diminished triads. No voice, then, develops independently in any traditional sense; rather, the lower voices aggregate into one entity as new ones are added above.

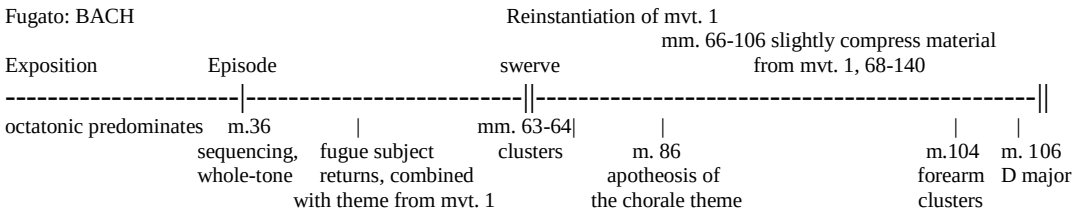
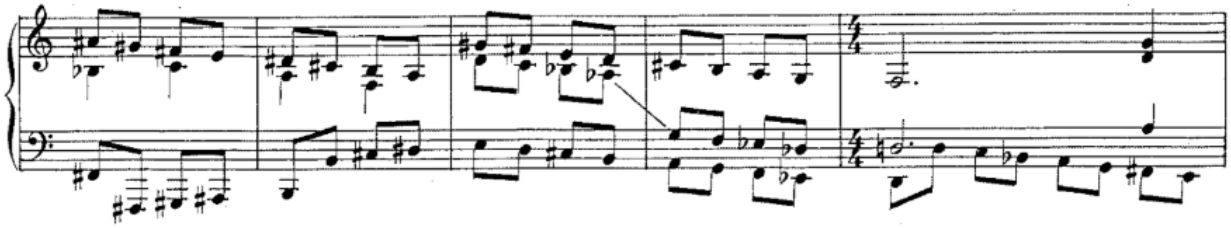


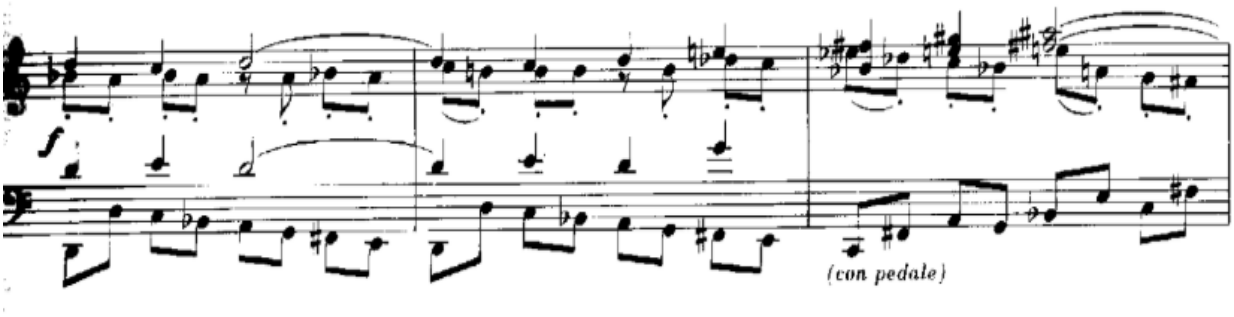
Figure 1.3. Formal diagram, third movement.

The exposition of the fugue ends with a clear episode beginning at m. 36. This episode is, as one would expect, highly sequential. The sequencing in mm. 40-43 is particularly unusual, though, since the element being sequenced in the right hand is a whole-tone tetrachord.



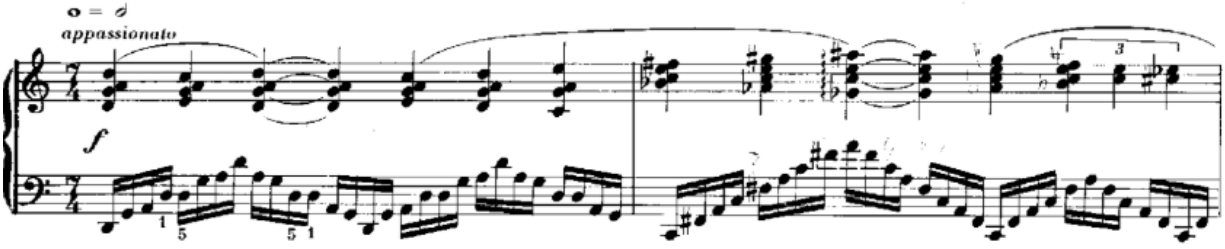
Example 1.9. Third movement, mm. 40-43. An episode: whole-tone tetrachords in sequence.

The fugue subject returns in the alto voice at m. 45. Surrounding this fugue subject, the soprano voice and tenor quote the mirror-image theme of the first movement (I., m. 96).



Example 1.10. Third movement, m. 45-7. The return of the fugue subject in the alto voice.

Rautavaara makes the cyclical recurrence of this theme quite apparent by its prominent placement at the top of the texture; though clear perception may be confounded by the concurrence of the fugue subject and the scale fragments in the bass. In the first movement, this material was used at a moment of extreme stress, at the end of the development section.



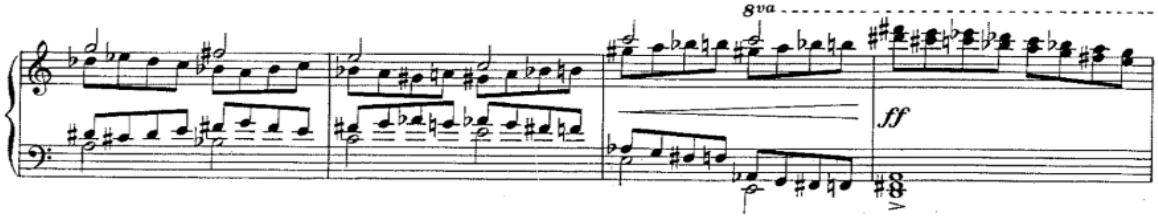
Example 1.11. First movement, mm. 96-7.

When Rautavaara quotes it here in the third movement, he reengages with that previously unresolved stress and foreshadows the extreme intensity that shortly follows.

The ending section of the third movement is set off by the eruption (or irruption) at the end of a massive crescendo: the fugue subject and its inversion play against each other at the extreme ends of the piano, exploding into chromatic clusters played by palms of the hands or forearms (mm. 63-64). From this point, the octatonic tail of the fugue subject underlies the first movement's second theme, at its original pitch level (more or less in D major).

As in the first movement, this theme is succeeded by a four-bar segment in mirror image

(mm. 83-86). In the first movement, this material launches the development; it is repeated before arriving at the climactic statement of the main theme. In the third movement, the material is not repeated, but arrives at a grand apotheosis of the main theme, at m. 87.

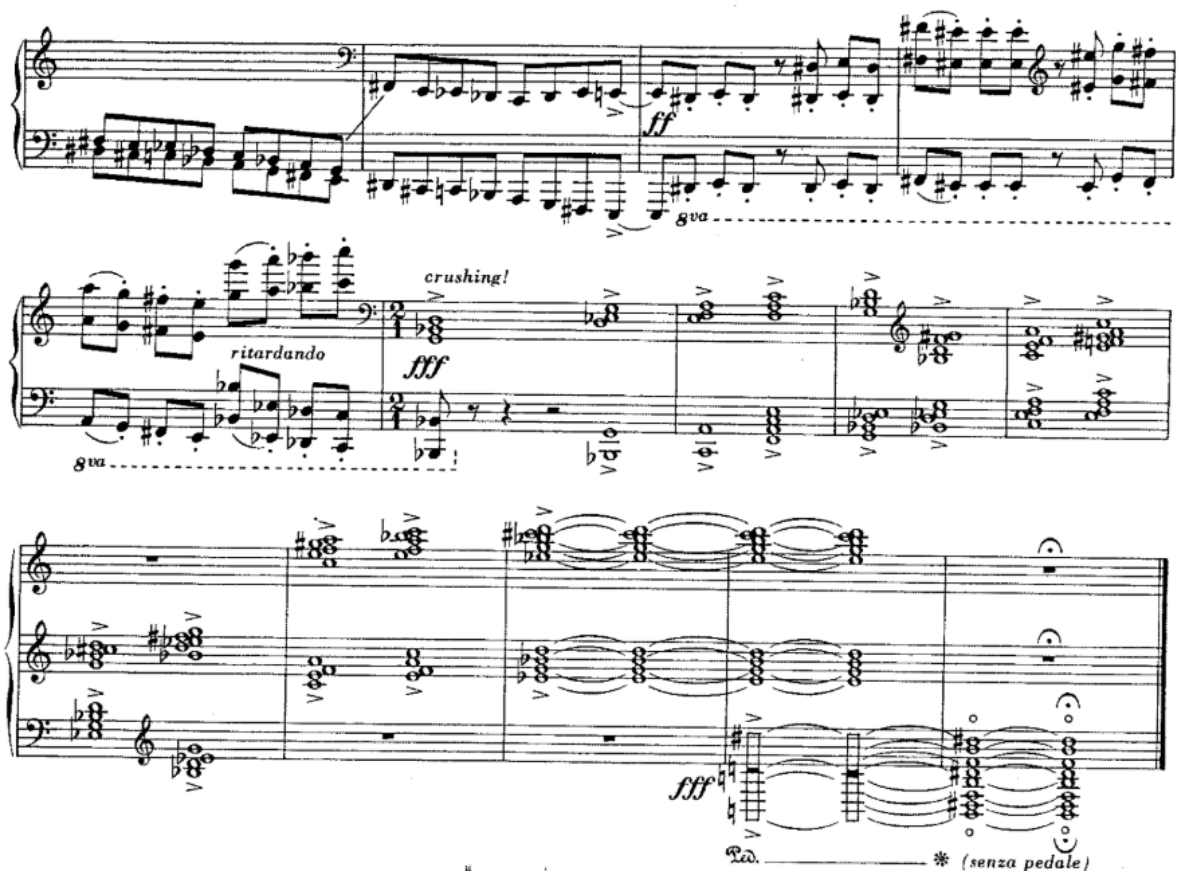


Example 1.12. Third movement, m. 84-87.

This arrival point on D major, and grand statement of the main theme with octatonic scales in double thirds, is strongly analogous to the re-entry of the theme at m. 79 of the first movement.

The third movement returns briefly to its own material – a final entrance of the fugue subject, doubled between the hands, at m. 94. As in the first movement, the material that we would expect to take us to the end of the piece is interrupted by a massive upward eruption of chords beginning on G minor. In the third movement this chordal material is to be even louder than before; it is labeled *fff* and "crushing!"[17] The chords' ascent is uninterrupted by rests or echoes; the chords gain harmonic intensity as they career upwards, adding more and more dissonant pitches as they go.

[17] The exclamation point is the composer's.



Example 1.13. Third movement, conclusion.

The third movement thus does far more than just briefly quote the first movement, or make cyclical reference to its themes. The music of mm. 66-94 almost exactly recapitulates, albeit in slightly compressed form, the music of the first movement, mm. 52-83; and the third movement's mm. 97-103 are a compressed version of the first movement's mm. 119-136. One could say that the music of the third movement even *reinstates* the first movement, as if in a sort of mythic anamnesis;[18] or that the sonata has returned to a previous conflict left unresolved. The strangeness of this reinstantiation seems to be another element of the sonata that invites narrative

[18] "Anamnesis" is a powerful bringing of the past into the present, or an obviation of the distinction between the two. The term is frequently used to describe mythic re-enactments, including and especially the Catholic mass, in which the priest's "sacrifice" of bread and wine at the altar is understood as a sacramental reenactment of Christ's death. The term "anamnesis" has also been used in literary theory by Laurent Jenny. Laurent Jenny, "The Strategy of Forms," 34-63 in Tzvetan Todorov, ed., *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44-5.

interpretation.

The sonata ends, or nearly ends, with forearm clusters at the bass end of the piano (see example 1.13). The sheer volume level of the sound and the violence of the physical gesture may be startling to an audience, despite anticipation by the preceding loud clusters in the piece. After the shock of the forearm clusters, D major emerges ephemerally from out of the chaos. Or it should: the composer asks that the triad be retaken silently, and the pedal released. The spectral triad that emerges may not be clearly audible in live performance or in recording. The piece's ending then is, in a very pragmatic sense, fundamentally ambiguous.[19]

Symmetries

If there is any one defining feature of Rautavaara's compositional technique in his second sonata, it is symmetry. Within Rautavaara's output for the piano, the "Fire Sermon" is hardly unique in its obsessive symmetries: his *Symmetrical Preludes* also deploy symmetry extensively. The sonata is unique, though, in its successful integration of symmetry with other techniques. The sonata's use of symmetry is primarily found in its mirror-image arrangement of pitches: in any number of passages in the piece, an upper and lower voice move in exact mirror inversion. Notably, this pitch-based mirroring engages with symmetry at two levels: first, in terms of half-step relationships (as is customary in serial manipulations of pitch), and second (given the recurring axes of G# and D) with respect to the black and white keys of the piano. This double

[19] In my experience of performing the piece, I am not sure that the soft emergence of D major has always been clearly audible for audiences. I personally know only one other pianist who performs the "Fire Sermon," Sami Froncek. Froncek corroborates my experience, since she thinks that audiences have missed the final chord when she has performed the piece. When I first listened to the piece (on CD), I had turned the volume down during the preceding buildup and missed the emergence of the triad entirely. My impression in live performance has been that the audience often misses the emergence of the spectral D major: it really can be soft enough to escape notice.

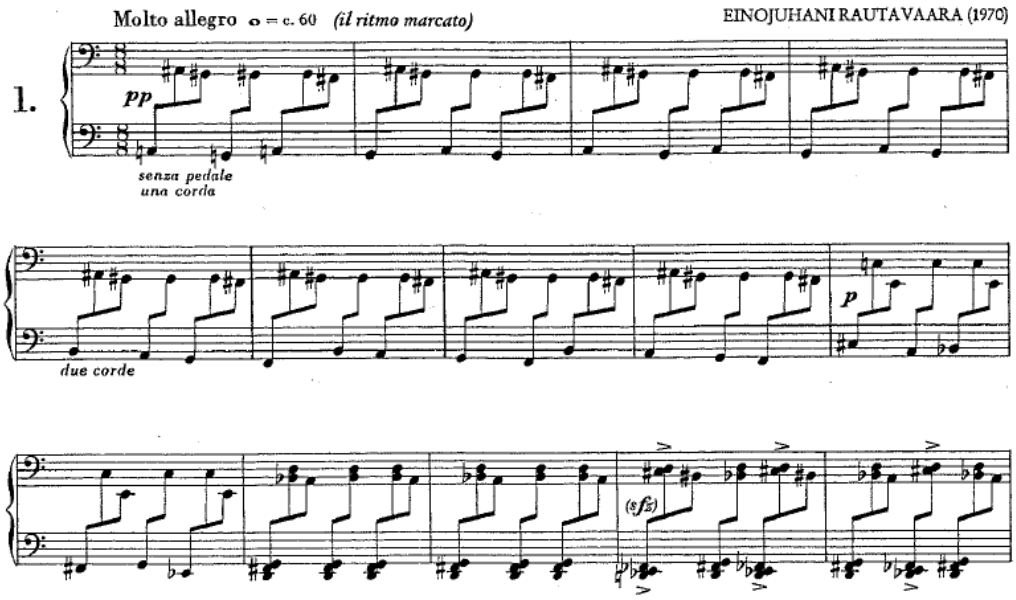
mirror-imaging is unmistakably foregrounded in all three movements of the sonata (see for instance examples 1.12, 1.25, and 1.26).

In addition to the extensive use of pitch-based symmetry, Rautavaara occasionally features rhythmic symmetry (following Messiaen), in the form of rhythmic palindromes (in the first movement) and symmetrical halves of measures (in the second movement). Additionally, Rautavaara makes extensive use of symmetrical scales, especially whole-tone and octatonic. The following discussion will deal first with temporal symmetries (rhythm and phrase-construction), then with symmetrical scales, and finally more extensively with the deployment of mirror images.

Rhythmic Symmetry

The first obvious example of symmetry in the piece is rhythmic: the 8/8 time of the opening is rendered as 3+2+3 rather than the more common 3+3+2. Each measure is thus a rhythmic palindrome. The palindrome may or may not be clearly audible in performance; a fast performance tempo risks obscuring the meter entirely, making the material sound like a low rumble on the piano. (Lagerspetz notes that most performers play the sonata significantly faster than Rautavaara's original tempo marking.)[20] In order to make the 3+2+3 clearly audible, the performer must give careful attention to the beat accents.

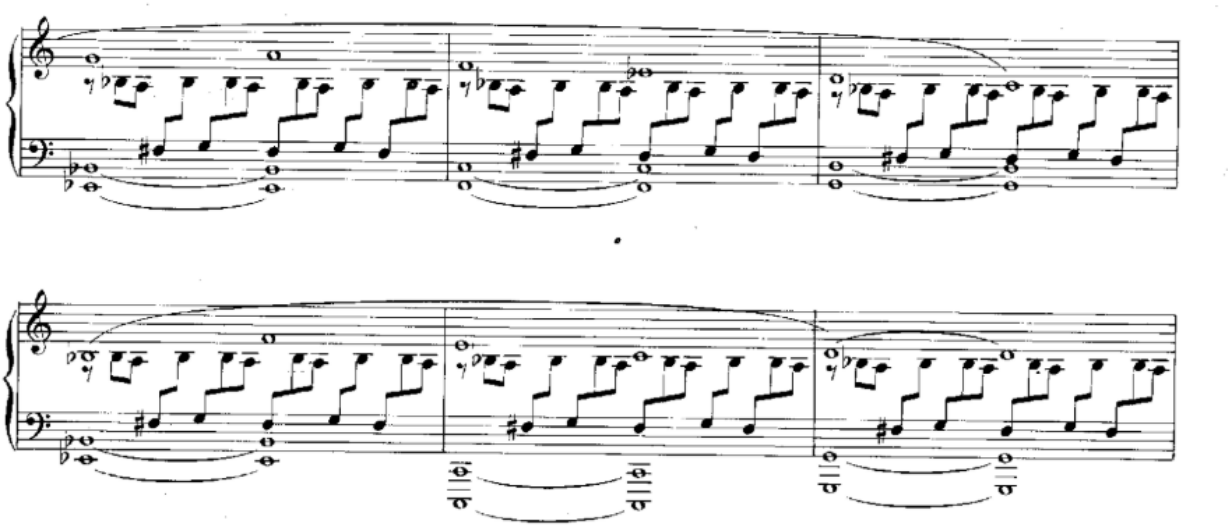
[20] Mali, *Pianist's Edition: Finnish Works for Piano*, 80.



Example 1.14. The 8/8 opening of the first movement.

This 8/8 time is used through much of the first movement as a source of rhythmic drive and energy. The first key area (mm. 1-51) uses the 3+2+3 exclusively. The second key area (mm. 52ff) shifts to the meter 2/1, but maintains the 3+2+3 patterning in the accompaniment; each measure is thus a larger palindrome, 3+2+3+3+2+3, corresponding to two measures of the preceding material. To the pianist well versed in twentieth-century repertoire and theory, this is a clear homage to the "non-retrogradeable rhythms" of Olivier Messiaen.[21]

[21] See Messiaen's *The Technique of My Musical Language*, 20-21.

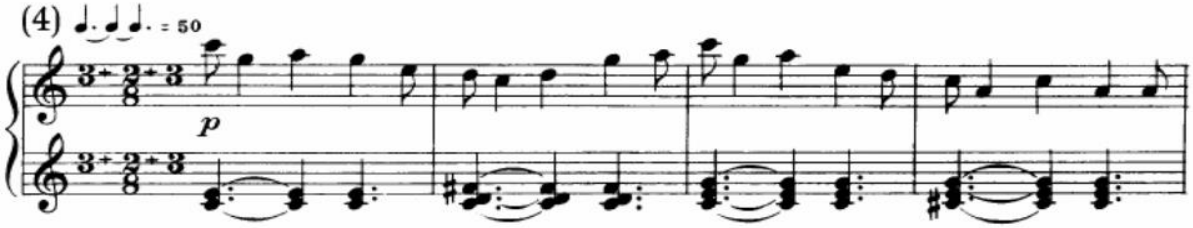


Example 1.15. First movement, second theme: mm. 53-58.

The 3+2+3 arrangement continues until m. 79, when it is interrupted by a climactic statement of the second theme; it returns later in the development section (mm. 83-95). The symmetrical rhythm makes its final reappearance at m. 104 at the heavily truncated recapitulation, and continues until the music crashes to a halt at m. 119. Thus, the rhythmic palindrome is present in 105 of the first movement's 142 measures – just over two-thirds of the movement. The palindrome does not recur in the remaining two movements, so perhaps it is a relatively weak structural determinant for the sonata as a whole; but its ubiquity in the first movement indicates that it is extremely significant.

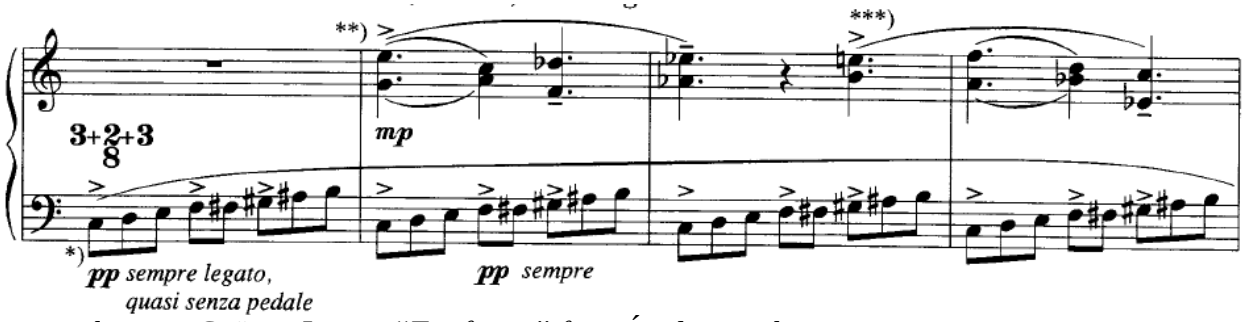
Pieces in 8/8 time are not particularly rare in the modern piano repertoire, but the 3+2+3 configuration thereof is fairly unusual. A few other pieces in the 20th-century piano repertoire make similar use of the 3+2+3 metric configuration. One is by Béla Bartók, the fourth of his *Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*.[22]

[22] I suspect that Rautavaara's use of this meter is an evocation of Bartók's use of folk music, rather than folk music



Example 1.16. Bartók, Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*, no. 4.*

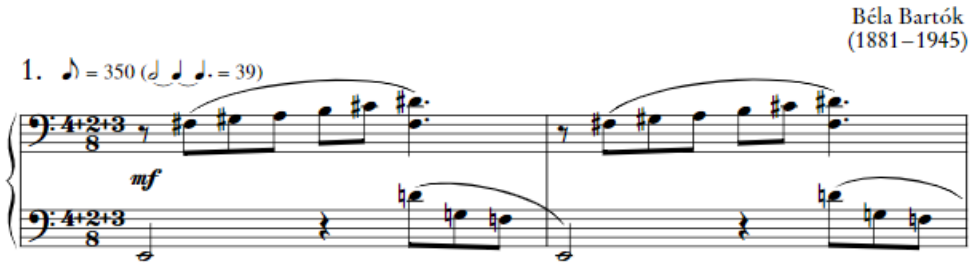
Another example is an etude by Ligeti titled "Fanfares."



Example 1.17. György Ligeti, "Fanfares," from Études *Book 1.*

Ligeti wrote his etudes well after Rautavaara composed his sonatas, so "Fanfares" is not a possible source for Rautavaara's materials; but interestingly, the sparse, scalar texture of the Ligeti seems to pay homage to another of Bartók's *Bulgarian Dances*, no. 1.

as such. This is a characteristic "shift in the relationship between signal and signification," per Saussure: the same metric feature that in Bartók is a signifier of the Bulgarian folk is in Rautavaara a signifier of Bartók. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehye, trans. Roy Harris (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986), 74-6.



Example 1.18. Bartók, Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm, *no. 1.*

Rautavaara's own piano music makes use of 3+2+3 quite frequently, in *Ikons*, *Passionale*, and in both sonatas (see discussion in Chapter 2).

Axes and Mirror Images

Symmetry of pitch configurations is used extensively in all three movements of the "Fire Sermon" sonata. Most instances of bilateral symmetry center about one of two axes. The first axis to appear is G#, and it is present as the center of gravity when the sonata begins (see example 1.14). As the initial few notes expand outward, they do so as a mirror image with the axis of symmetry on G#, and with the ambitus D3-D4.

The other axis of symmetry used in the sonata is D, a symmetrical tritone away from the original G#. This axis can be found throughout the three movements: in the first movement this axis is clearly in operation at m. 73ff; in the second movement, the opening right hand melody uses D as its axis of symmetry for the first four bars; and in the third movement, the mirror image material at m. 55ff makes use of D as its axis.

In a tonal idiom, G# and D (being a tritone apart) are typically treated as harmonic antipodes. Here, however, these pitches are strategically "related."[23] G# and D are the two axes

[23] For tritone contrasts as structural relationships, Victoria Adamenko's research into binary oppositions gives us important precedents in the work of two composers. The first is Hindemith, whose *Harmonie der Welt* establishes

of symmetry which on the piano are matched not only for relationships as measured by half steps, but also as seen/felt on the topography of black and white keys. Thus, mirror-image material that is written with G# or D as axis is symmetrical not only by interval relationship but also by visual and tactile locations on the keyboard.

It seems probable that the symmetry of black and white keys that results from these axes is an extension of the juxtapositions of black and white keys that pervade the piece. Since as axes of symmetry both G# and D produce double mirror images (on the piano keyboard and in acoustic space) and thus contribute to the white versus black juxtaposition, these two axes are essentially opposite poles of the same magnet. This second aspect of symmetry, with respect to the topography of the piano, is unlikely to be clearly visible or audible to the audience; it is addressed instead to the performer. In a sense quite different from Bakhtin's, the "Fire Sermon" is double voiced: an element is addressed to the performer which without unusual prosthetics (e.g. a camera over the piano keys, or a keyboard visualizer) the audience can probably not experience.[24]

In addition to its important role as one of two axes, G# is featured melodically at several structurally significant moments. Two of these are in the second movement. The first is at m. 7 (example 1.19); G# is conspicuously isolated, serving as a pivot that moves us into a new key

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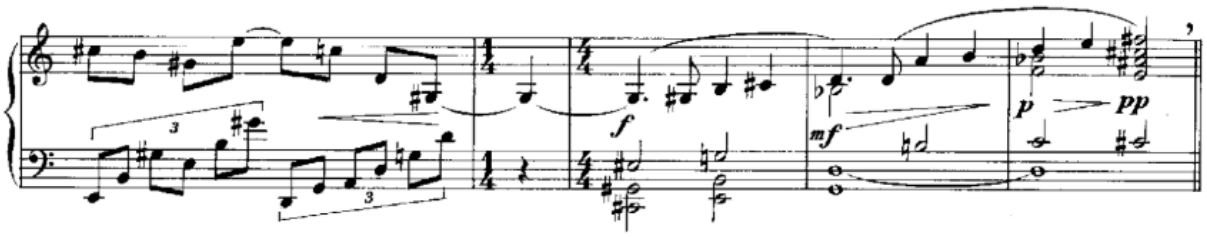
dichotomies within three pairs of tritones: E as universal harmony and Bb as earthly imperfection, C# as Kepler and G as his opponents on earth, and C as heaven and F# as earth. The second composer that Adamenko discusses as using such tritone relationships structurally is Alexander Scriabin: "Tritonal key relationships emphasize the opposition as an independent constructive principle on which Scriabin relies heavily." Adamenko discusses the tritonal opposition in Hindemith and Scriabin as exemplifying the binary oppositions of mythic thought – productive tensions between one realm and another. As appealing as I find this concept to be (and Rautavaara certainly knew the respective compositional styles of Scriabin and of Hindemith), I do not think that the two key areas as such are important for the meaning of Rautavaara's second sonata.

[24] See discussion of Bakhtin's term "doubled voiced" in Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd ed. (Routledge: New York, 2011), 14-30.

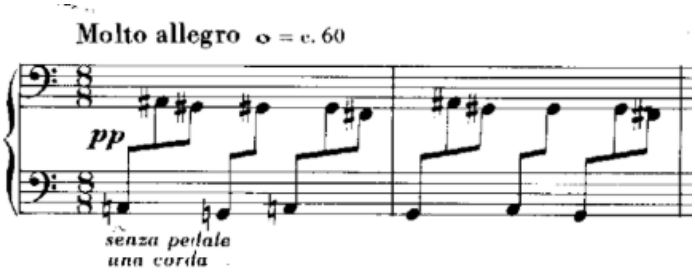
area or modal field, predicated on an octatonic instantiation of C# major, and new material. The G# recurs at m. 18 as the first melodic note of that theme's return.



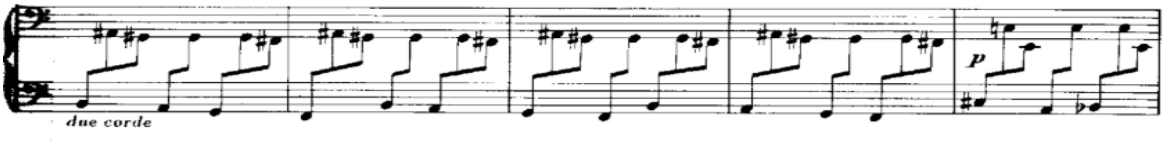
Example 1.19. Second movement, mm. 6-10.

The role of D as a pitch-center will be examined further below; D is embedded extensively into each movement of the sonata as an axis, harmony (prominently placed, structurally significant D major triads), or melodic arrival point.

The opening tonal material is symmetrical around the axis G#. The right hand is initially assigned a group of three black keys (example 1.14), and expands outwards to include the E below and C above (example 1.23): thus far in the right hand we find whole-tone 0.



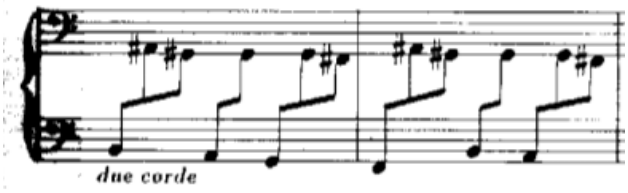
Example 1.20. First movement, opening.



Example 1.21. First movement, mm. 5-9: expanding whole-tone collections.

Also in example 1.8, the left hand's notes, initially A and B, expand to FGAB, then add C#: the left hand thus plays whole-tone 1 while the right hand is playing whole-tone 0.

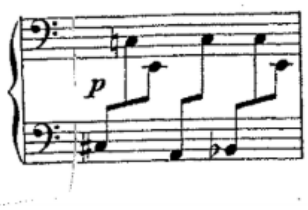
Since the two whole-tone scales are played at the same time, one by each hand, it is difficult to hear the passage as motivated by the whole-tone scale (though the left hand's metrically accented descent B-A-G-F may be enough to emphasize a whole-tone coloration despite the right hand's interference); rather, a chromatic collection emerges.



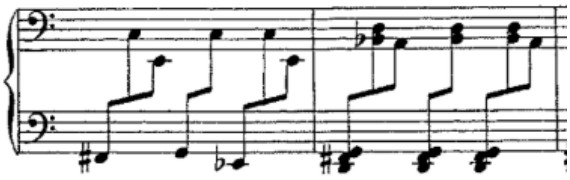
Example 1.22. First movement, mm. 5-6.

Whether or not the presence of the two whole-tone collections is clear to a listener, the stratification between the hands makes it clear to the performer.

This whole-tone flirtation is short-lived: in m. 9-10, the left hand expands to the C# above and the Eb below, and the right hand expands to C and E. The coloration is now octatonic (all still symmetrical on the G# axis): from the bottom up, Eb-E-F#-G-A-Bb-C-C#. Only a D is missing to complete the collection; the C# and Eb expand outwards to an octave D on the piece's structural downbeat at m. 11.



Example 1.23. First movement, m. 9.



Example 1.24. First movement, mm. 10-11.

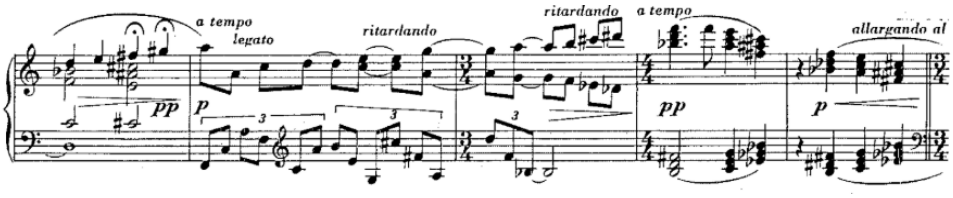
The sonority that obtains on the piece's structural downbeat, at m. 11 of the first movement (where a first tonic would be expected), adumbrates D major (all pitch classes of the D major triad are present), but it is also a symmetrical construct:

W B W W B W
D – F# – G – A – Bb – D
4 1 2 1 4

At this point the (unsounded) axis of symmetry is G#, with its tritone boundary D serving as pedal point in the bass and the soprano. As a pragmatic consideration, any pianist learning the Rautavaara sonata should attend to the symmetry of keyboard geography in otherwise confusing passages. In first learning the piece, I spent many fruitless hours of practice and analysis attempting to memorize passages or make sense of progressions that were best described not by traditional tonal means but by systematic deployment of bilateral symmetry.[25] One case in particular stands out as a memory of the frustrations of my initial learning process, unaware as I

[25] For the term "bilateral symmetry" as applied to Rautavaara''s piano music, I am indebted to an article by Brandon Paul titled "Bilateral Keyboard Symmetry in the Music of Einojuhani Rautavaara," *Ohio State Online Music Journal* 1 no. 2 (Autumn 2008). Available online at http://osomjournal.org/issues/1-2/paul/ (accessed August 21, 2018).

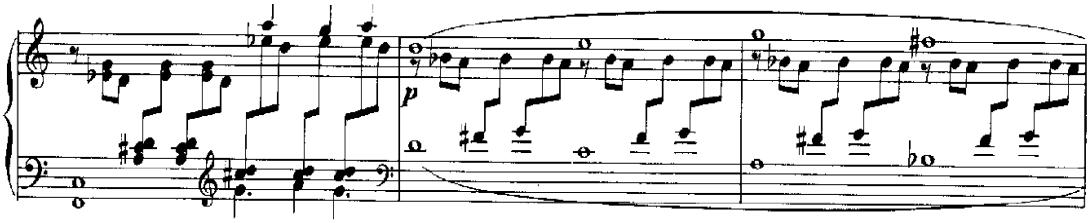
was then of the sonata's pervasive symmetry: the second movement's transition to B (beginning in m. 23).



Example 1.25. Second movement, mm. 20-24.

The material of mm. 23-24 is exclusively triadic. As such, I expected to find some sort of functional rationale for the passage. There is, however, no functional rationale for this particular passage: the notes result from symmetrical positioning and motion of triads on the black and white keys of the piano.

Symmetries of melody, in the form of exact mirror images (on the staff and on the keyboard), abound in the piece. Here is one example from the first movement:

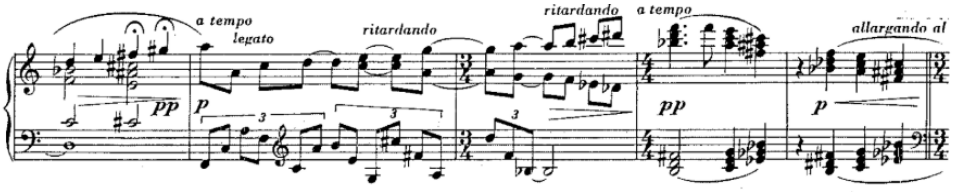


Example 1.26. First movement, mm. 72-74.

The outside voices, in whole notes, move opposite each other in an exact mirror image. They arrive on D in m. 73, and end by returning to D (not shown here). In this case the mirror image is not only clearly visible to the performer but also very clearly audible to the audience. The other mirror image that is present in this example is inexact, and less obvious, since it is rhythmically disguised: the inside voices are also operating in mirror image. The right hand plays Bb-A

repeatedly, and the left hand F# and G. They are symmetrical around the axis G#.

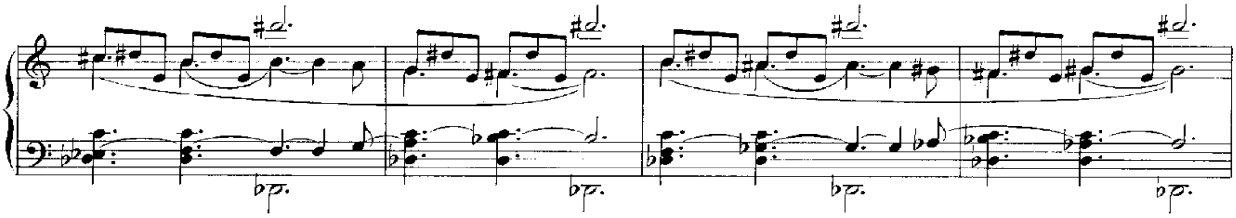
Mirror images are also structurally significant in the second movement of the piece, as evidenced in mm. 22-24.



Example 1.27. Second movement, m. 20ff.

In attempting to learn and memorize the Rautavaara sonata, I found this Ives-like, almost bitonal harmony to be bizarre until I became aware of its symmetrical motivation. I had been trying to find any rationale for the usage of major or minor triads, or the collisions of particular triads between the hands; it was a profound relief when I discovered this symmetry.

Here is one more example of mirror imagery in the piece, from the end of the second movement:



Example 1.28. Second movement, mm. 39-42.

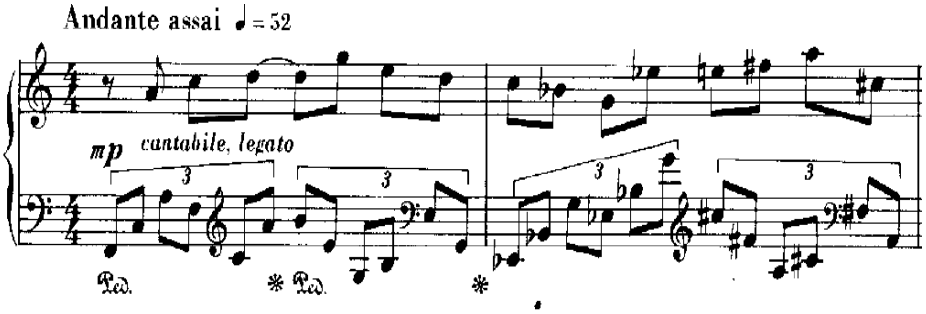
The right hand's upper voice is a pedal-point on D#, which is doubled in the moving eighth notes an octave below. The left hand's lower voice is a pedal-point on Db, which is doubled an octave above. Both are symmetrical to the axis D. The inner voices are also mirror images of each other:

B W B W B
RH: C# – B – A – G – F#

B W B W B
LH: Eb – F – G – A – Bb

These inner voices are also symmetrical about the axis D; this symmetry is maintained for two and a half systems. Almost any system of the sonata will afford further examples of mirror images.

Linear inversions are also present in the piece, typically within one voice rather than distributed between voices, as in the typical Baroque usage of this learned technique. The clearest example is the opening of the second movement, where the second half of each right-hand measure inverts the first half. The axis is still D: the right hand's first notes A-C-D ascending are answered by G-E-D descending. In the second measure C-Bb-G-Eb is answered by E-F#-A-C#.



Example 1.29. Second movement, mm. 1-2.

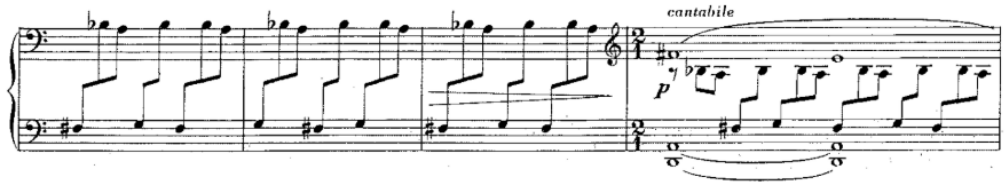
The melodic symmetry in which the second half of the measure is a transposed inversion of the first is then continued for a further three measures.

D Major as Submerged Tonic

For all of the piece's obsessive symmetry, there are moments of actual tonal function. At

m. 11 we have the arrival of a sonority resembling a tonic, with the preceding measures beginning on A and expanding outward toward D. This approximation of D major is approached by a figure that includes an augmented sixth: the C# in the left hand in m. 9 and the Eb in the left hand in m. 11. If the G and Bb are taken as chord tones, then the sonata's first "tonic" is approached by a complete German augmented sixth. The description of the harmony as an augmented sixth chord is strengthened by Rautavaara's notation of the interval as an augmented sixth (Eb-C#) rather than a minor seventh (Eb-Db), which would have been more efficient by saving a natural sign on C in m. 9. The motion of an augmented sixth chord directly to tonic is not exactly traditional usage, but has ample precedent in the music of Alexander Scriabin.[26]

D major as quasi-tonic is foregrounded in five other passages in the sonata. The first instance is the entrance of the chorale theme in the first movement (m. 52), beginning on a D major triad.

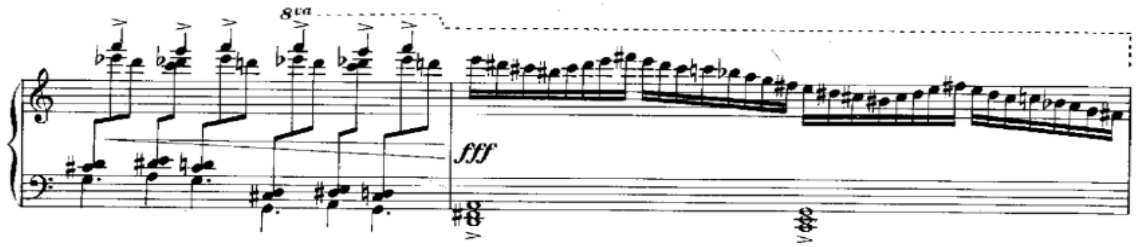


Example 1.30. First movement, mm. 49-52.

The second instance is in the statement of the chorale theme at m. 79, which voices the triad

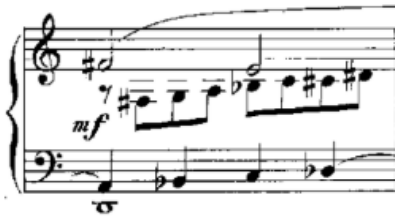
[26] Scriabin's Op. 45 #2, for instance, closes with this progression. See discussion in Roy J. Guenther, "Varvara Dernova's System of Analysis of the Music of Skryabin," 165-216 in Gordon D. McQuere, ed., *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 177-9. The progression has become a jazz staple known as a "tritone substitution." Anatole Leikin believes this connection to be causal: "Scriabin was an idol and inspiration for Joseph Schillinger, a Russian theorist and composer. After [Schillinger's] arrival in the United States in 1928, he taught and advised many prominent composers and arrangers, such as Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, George Gershwin, Tommy Dorsey, Vernon Duke and Oscar Levant. These musicians incorporated a great deal of the Scriabin-Schillinger harmonic language into their works. . ." Anatole Leikin, *The Performing Style of Alexander Scriabin* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 282.

more densely in a very low register.



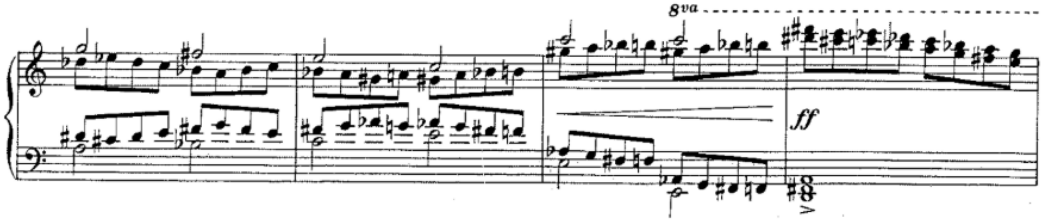
Example 1.31. Third movement, mm. 78-9.

The third instance is in the cyclical return of this theme, at m. 66 of the third movement, which replicates the original voicing.



Example 1.32. Third movement, m. 66: the return of the chorale theme.

The fourth instance occurs in the third movement, which replicates the first movement's narrative trajectory by building to an apotheosis of the main theme, at m. 85. This statement of the theme replicates the voicing at m. 72ff of the first movement.



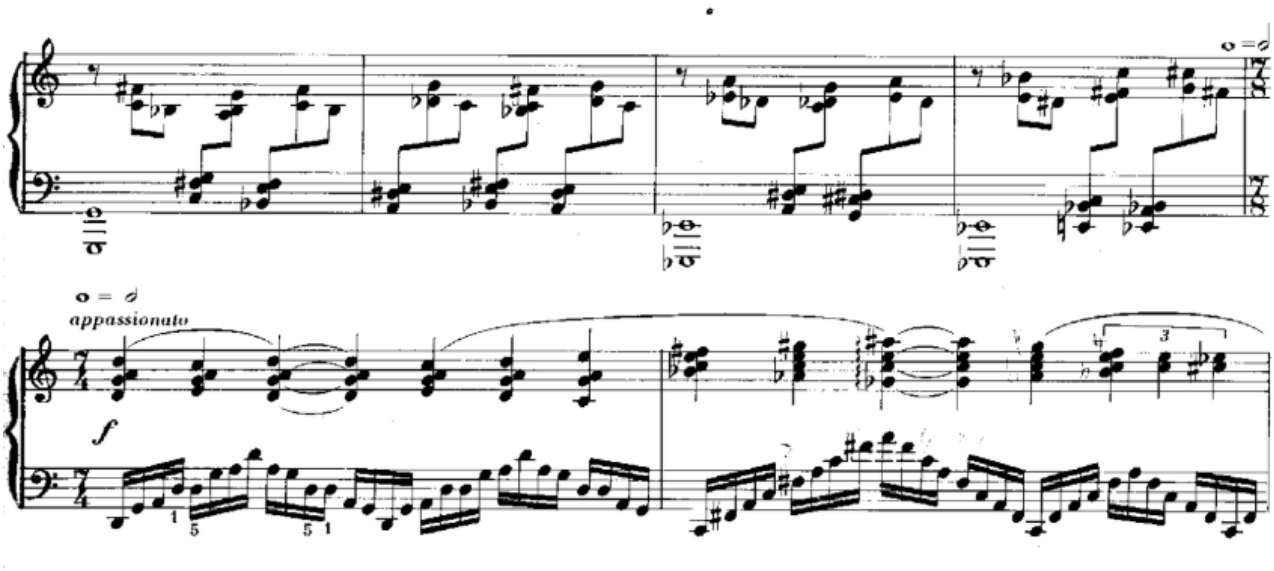
Example 1.33. Third movement, mm. 82-85: the apotheosis of the chorale theme.

The arrival of the fifth structurally significant D major chord, at the very end of the piece after the forearm-clusters, should in this sense then not seem surprising, but rather inevitable. In no instance is D major tonicized by a traditional dominant, but its strong rhythmic and phrasal placement at all of these points gives the triad a sense of structural significance – like a still point of the turning world.[27]

All five of these D major triads are placed in a very low register on the piano. The lowness of the register in each of these may help our experience of settling onto a harmonic arrival point. Steve Larson's concept of a "platform"[28] as a stable ground toward which melodies are drawn "gravitationally" may be useful here if extended to encompass registral bases. Such bases would assist in the establishment of a tonal center in the absence of more traditional harmonic tonicization. Additionally, "spatiality" – in this case the recurring low register of D major arrivals – is recognized as particularly significant in Eero Tarasti's theoretical approach.[29]

At m. 96 of the first movement, D is treated clearly as an axis, with the melodic segments at the top and bottom of the right hand chords in mirror image. D is treated as more than an axis here, though – it is a clear harmonic arrival point. D arrives in the bass and in the soprano by half step, from a sonority that foregrounds an augmented sixth in the outer voices.

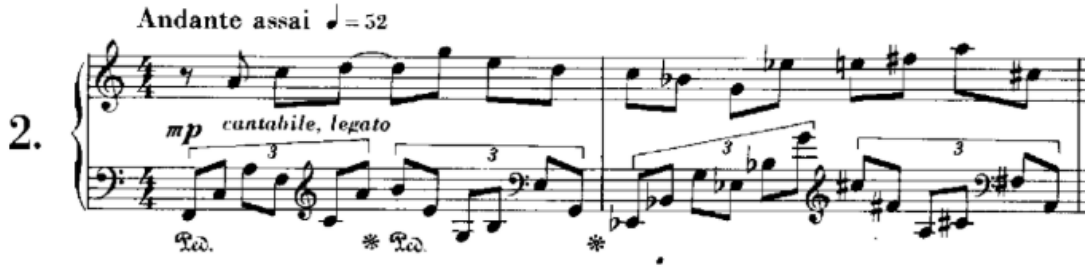
[27] To echo a phrase from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, "Burnt Norton," line 62.
[28] Steve Larson, *Musical Forces: Motion, Metaphor, and Meaning in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 83.
[29] Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994). For a helpful summary, see Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 59.



Example 1.34. First movement, mm. 92-7, with an outer-voice augmented sixth in the final beat of m. 95 resolving quasi-functionally to D in m. 96.

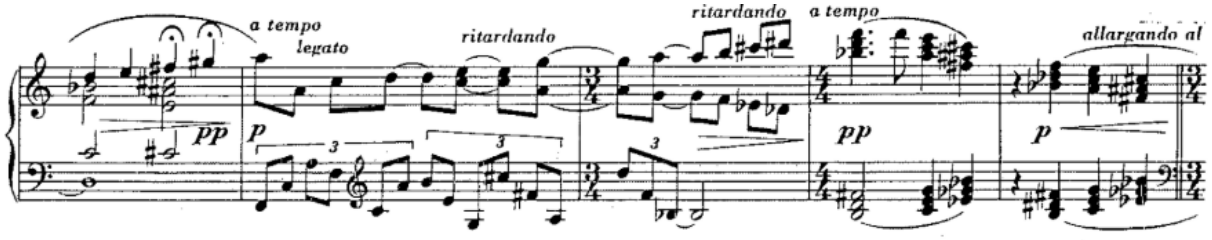
The melodic material in the top voice and its alto mirror image is whole-tone, without harmonic function; but as if to drive home the point of this arrival as unambiguous, the C# and Eb used previously as an augmented sixth recur in the outside voices of the right hand a mere two bars later. In this context they are presented as a diminished third rather than an augmented sixth, and contract towards D rather than expanding towards it.

We can find structurally significant placements of D in the other two movements as well. In the opening melody of the second movement, D serves as the tonal axis on which each measure laterally pivots (as discussed before, the second half of each measure in the right hand is an inversion of the first half).



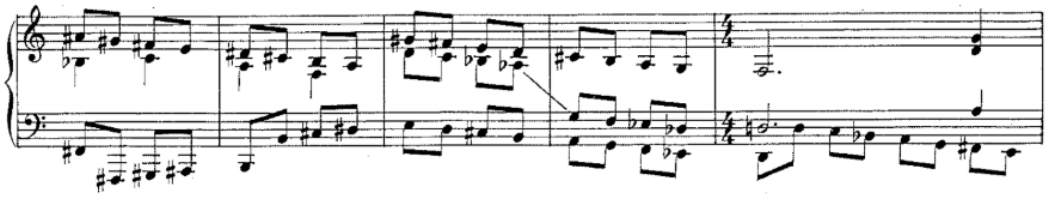
Example 1.35. D as axis of melodic symmetry in the inversions at the half-measure of the right hand melody.

D returns as axis when this theme is briefly reprised (m. 21-2), and in the strange chords that follow (example 1.36).



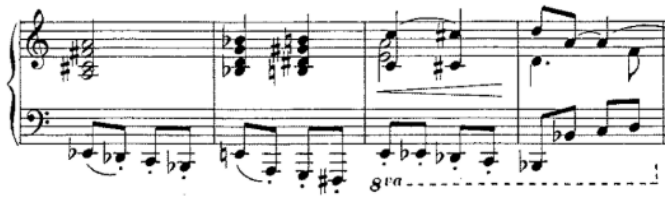
Example 1.36. Second movement, m. 20ff: the transition to B, with D returning as an axis.

In the third movement, D minor arrives conclusively at m. 44 (Example 1.32), again approached by a sonority containing an enharmonic augmented-sixth interval expanding outward to the octave in the left hand.

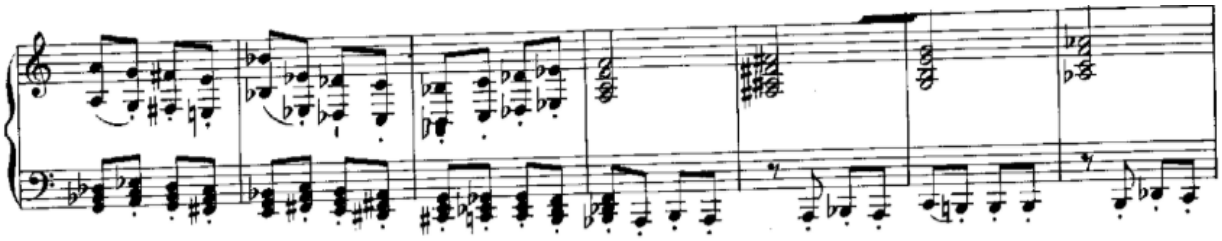


Example 1.37. Third movement, mm. 40-44. An arrival at D minor.

The Bb major sonority at m. 36 (example 1.38) may even function as a deceptive cadence on the way to D minor. The preceding melody's long chromatic ascent from F3 to D4 makes clear that D is the arrival point..

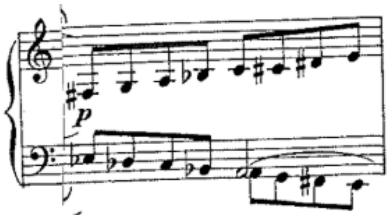


Example 1.38. Third movement, mm. 33-36: an arrival on Bb major on the way to D minor, functioning as a deceptive cadence.

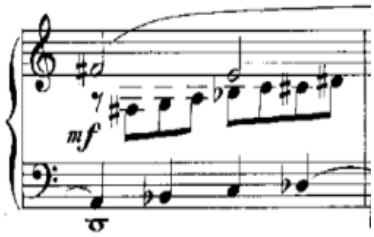


Example 1.39. Third movement, mm. 26-32: in m. 29, the F launches a long chromatic ascent towards D.

D major is also established in the third movement at m. 66, anticipated by a prominent fifth scale degree in the bass/tenor on the third beat of m. 65 and a subsequent 5-4-3-2-1 descent.

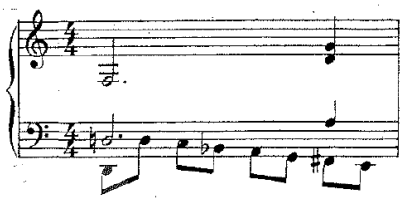


Example 1.40. Third movement, m. 65.

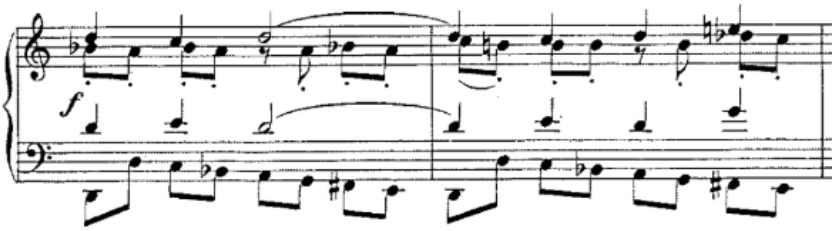


Example 1.40, continued. Third movement, m. 66.

Additionally, a repeating passage with an ambitus of D2-D3 dominates the left hand's material in the third movement's mm. 44-46. The material is presented as a descending scale combining major and natural minor; or, since it includes C-Bb-A-G-F#-E, it may be predominantly an octatonic 0-1 that is framed by D.



Example 1.41, continued. Third movement, m. 44. Left hand plays modally mixed descending scales beginning and ending on D.



Example 1.41, continued. Third movement, mm. 45-46.

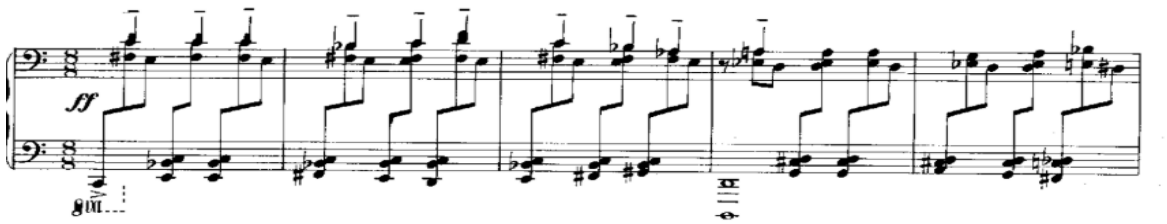
The passage above continues with the left hand in what appears to be a modally mixed scale on D. A synthetic scale on D would be a weak explanation of the left hand's pitch content; but the

consistent use of pitch classes D-E-F#-G-A-Bb-C is framed by strong arrivals on D. Lastly, D serves in the third movement as an axis of melodic symmetry from m. 45 (recapitulating material from the first movement, m. 96) all the way to m. 118 – well over half of the piece's duration in measures.

Symmetrical Scales

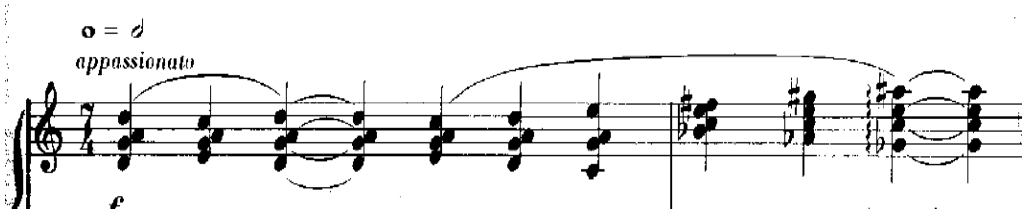
Whole-Tone

I have already mentioned Rautavaara's extensive use of symmetrical scales, namely whole-tone and octatonic, in the second sonata. In particular, I have mentioned the concurrent use of the two whole-tone scales, split between the hands, at the opening of the first movement. The whole-tone scale is also foregrounded at two other spots in the first movement. One is at m. 83, where the top and bottom voices mirror each other on whole-tone 0:



Example 1.42. First movement, mm. 83-87.

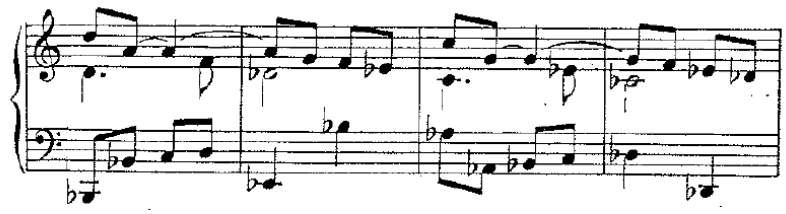
Another instance comes from near the end of the first movement:



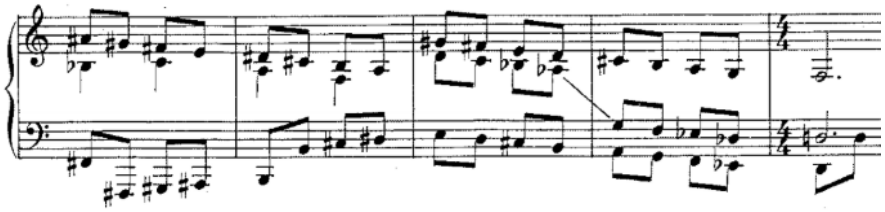
Example 1.43. First movement, mm. 96-7: whole-tone in the outer voices of the right hand with G# and then D axes.

As in the previous example, outside voices (this time in the right hand only) mirror each other on the whole-tone scale.

The whole-tone scale is also present in the third movement of the sonata, at two levels of a sequence starting at m. 36. The first of the two simultaneous examples is a whole-tone structure potentially perceptible as a step-progression on the downbeats of every other measure – m. 36, m. 38, m. 40, m. 42. Of the six pitch classes of whole-tone zero, four are foregrounded as part of this step-progression.



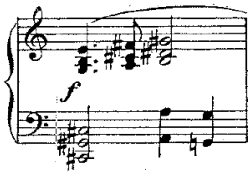
Example 1.44. Third movement, mm. 36-39: the beginning of a whole-tone descent in the top voice.



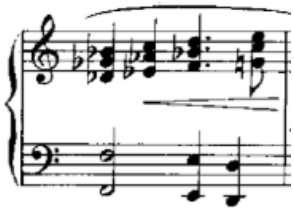
Example 1.44, continued. Third movement, mm. 40-44. Continuation of the whole-tone descent.

Simultaneously but more rapidly, at a level that is quite apparent at the surface of the piece, the whole-tone scale is also present within the right hand in most measures of the sequence: m. 37 includes A-G-F-Eb (WT1), m. 39 includes G-F-Eb-Db (WT1), and m. 40 includes A#-G#-F#-E (WT0). The two whole-tone scales alternate at every measure: m. 41 switches back to whole-tone one with D#-C#-B-A; m. 42 is WT0 with G#-F#-E-D; and m. 43 is whole-tone one with C#-B-A-G.

Other examples of the whole-tone scale can be found within the piece, for instance in the second movement:



Example 1.45. Second movement, m. 13.

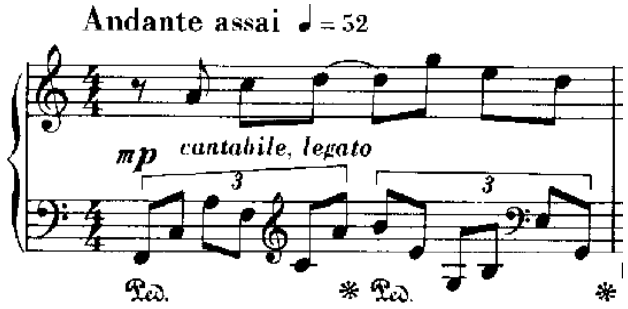


Example 1.45, continued. Second movement, m. 14.

The triadic planing in the right-hand in the example shown gives a complete iteration of whole-tone 0, from E to E, in the upper voice; and a complete iteration of whole-tone 1, in the lower voice.

Pentatonic

The pentatonic scale is also featured in Rautavaara's second sonata. One example is at the opening of the second movement, in the right hand:

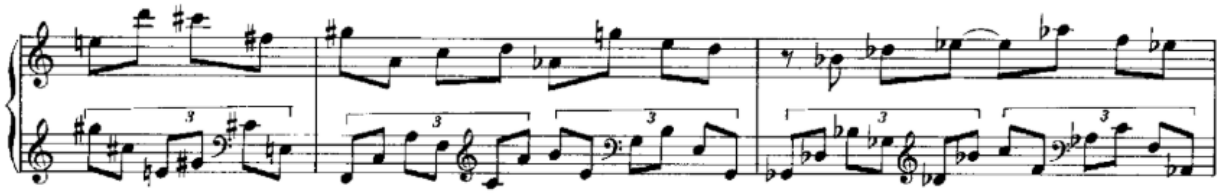


Example 1.46. Second movement, m. 1. The right-hand melody is pentatonic.

This usage of the pentatonic places it in its symmetrical position, about D:

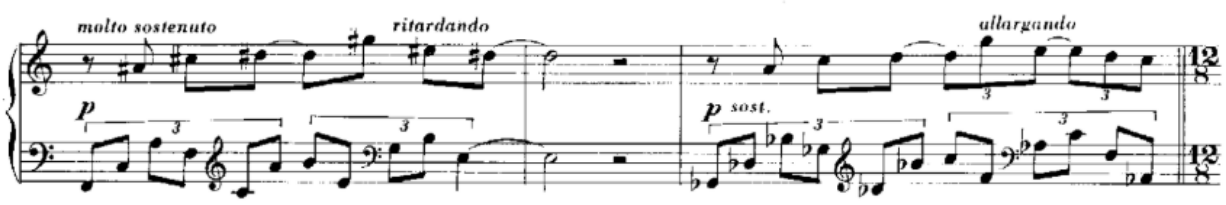
Pitches: A - C - D - E - G
Half steps: 3 2 2 3

The pentatonic scale recurs within the second movement. One instance occurs at m. 5, where the opening theme is transposed up a half step:



Example 1.47. Second movement, mm. 3b-5.

Another instance of the pentatonic is found at the abortive or thwarted return of A, at m. 35 (enharmonically equivalent to m. 5 of the right hand) and m. 37 (on the same transpositional level as m. 4 in the right hand).

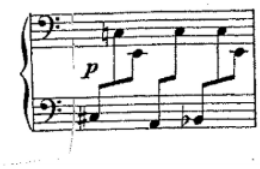


Example 1.48. Second movement, mm. 35-37.

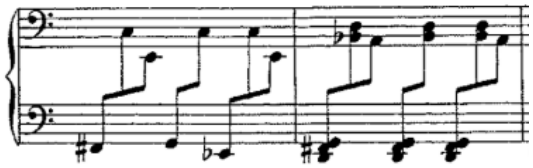
Other instances of the pentatonic scale can be found throughout the sonata. These, however, are generally not symmetrically positioned; and since these passages are all exclusively on black keys I suspect that the usage of the pentatonic is motivated by the thematization of the juxtaposition of black and white keys rather than by the pentatonic scale as such.

Octatonic

We have looked thus far at whole-tone and pentatonic scales, but it is the octatonic scale that predominates in the sonata. It is ubiquitous in "The Fire Sermon" – almost any two- or four-bar excerpt would provide examples. It is first introduced near the opening of the first movement:

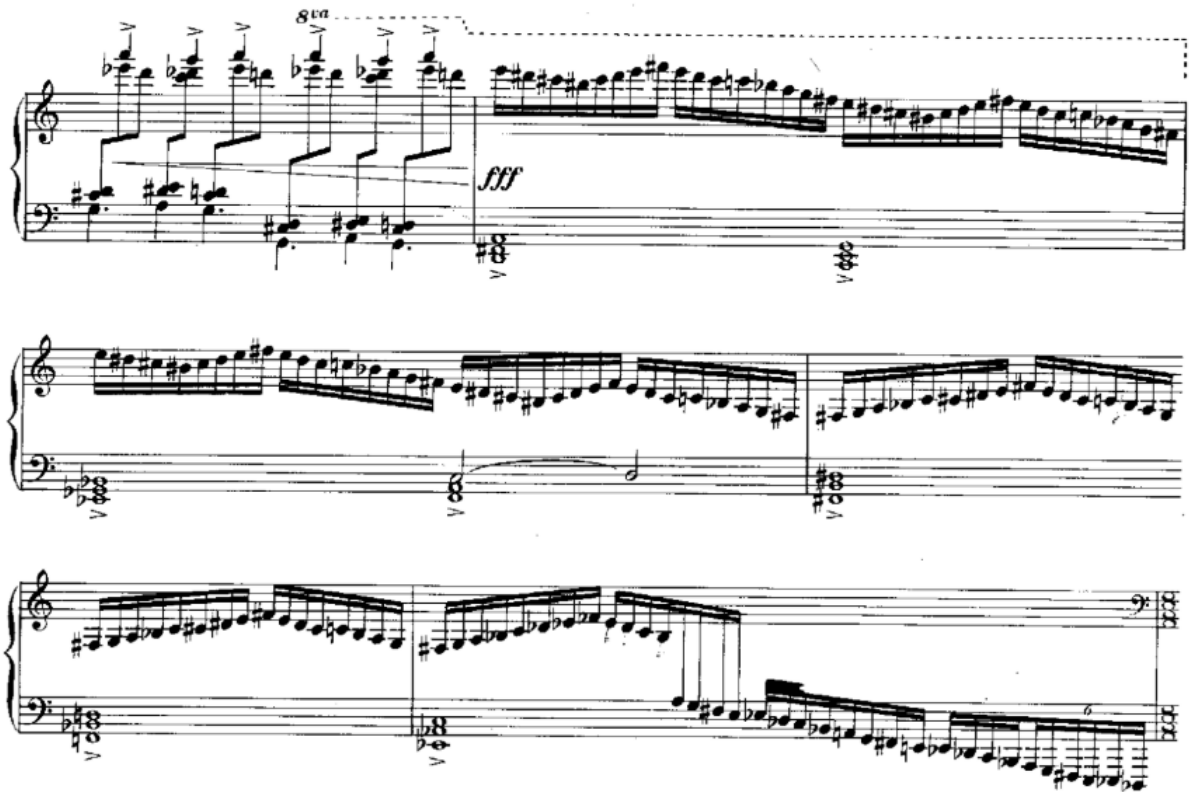


Example 1.49. First movement, m. 10.



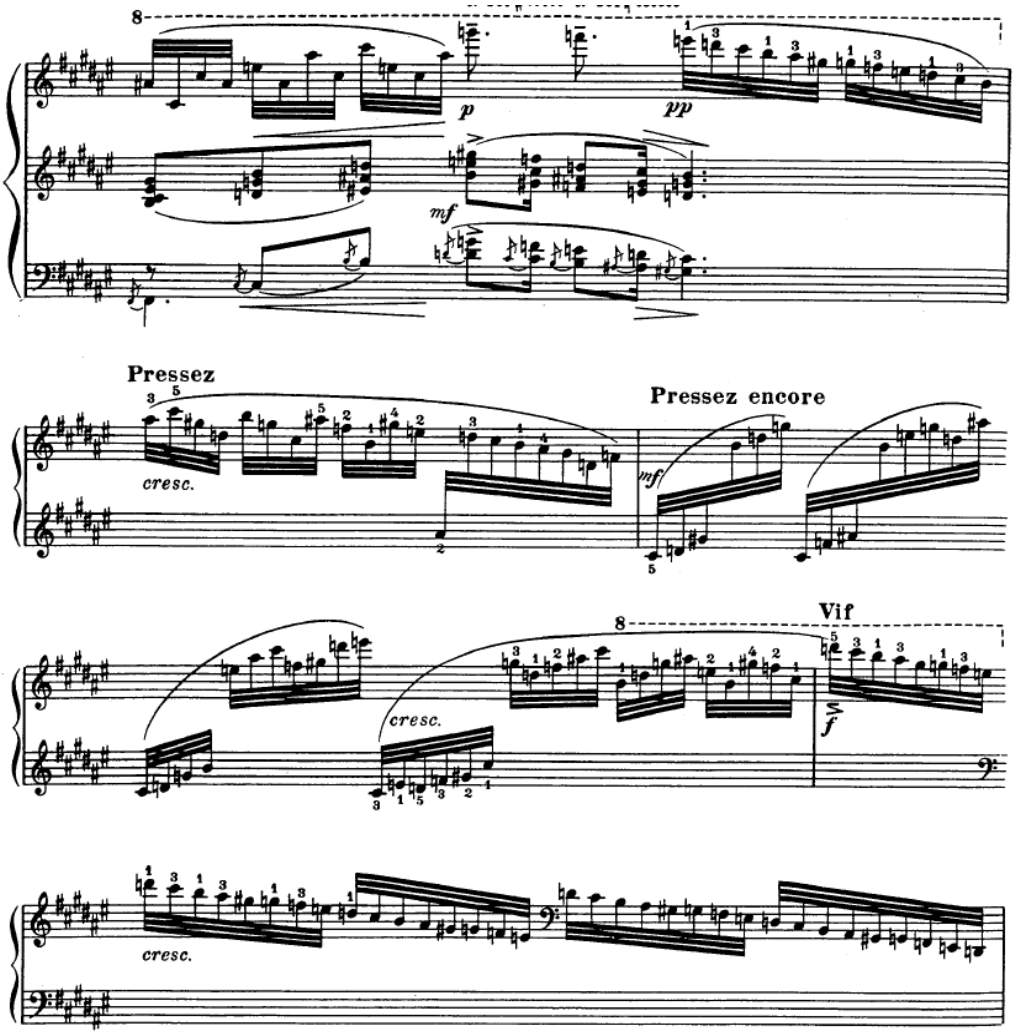
Example 1.49, continued. First movement, mm. 11-12.

In mm. 10-11 we see the pitch classes C-C#-Eb-E-F#-G-A-Bb, constituting the complete octatonic 0-1. Many measures that follow that introduction include pitch classes that appear to be components of incomplete octatonic scales. The complete octatonic scale reappears unambiguously at m. 79, at which point the right-hand begins a long, spiraling octatonic run.



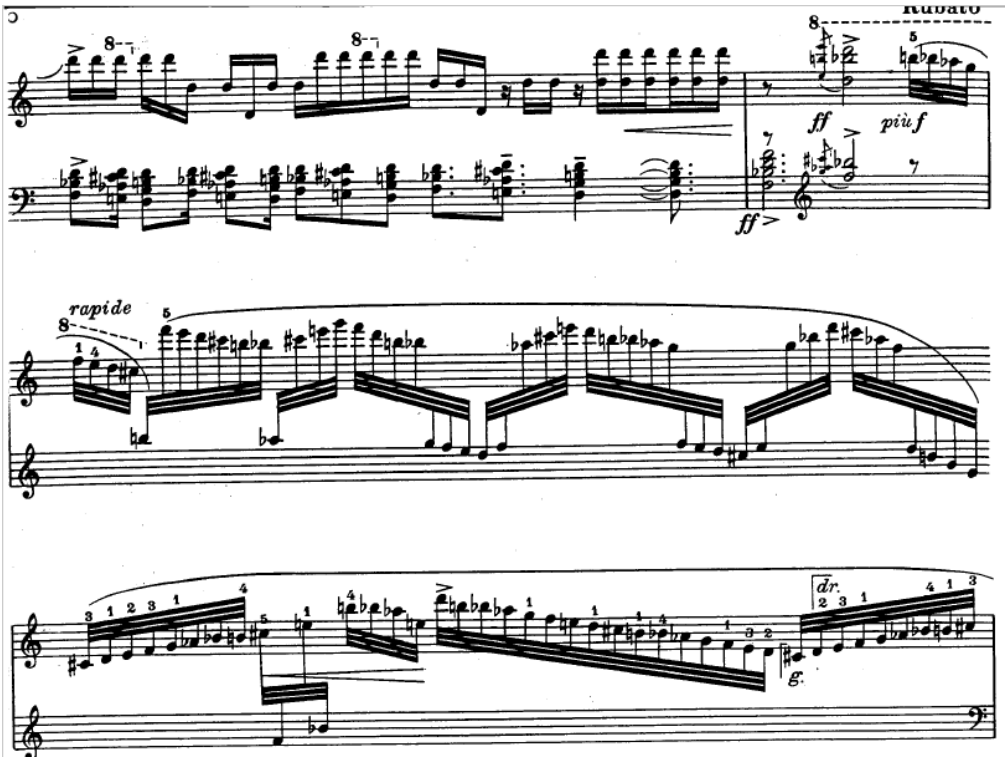
Example 1.50. First movement, m. 78ff.

This climactic moment invites comparison to specific spots in two pieces by Olivier Messiaen. The first is found in "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus," in which an octatonic cadenza dramatically extends the expected length of a variation on the main theme.



Example 1.51. An octatonic cadenza in Messiaen's "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus," m. 55ff.

The second example by Messiaen is to be found in his "La première communion de la Vierge," also from *Vingt regards.*



Example 1.52. An octatonic cadenza in Messiaen's "La première communion de la Vierge," m. 34ff.

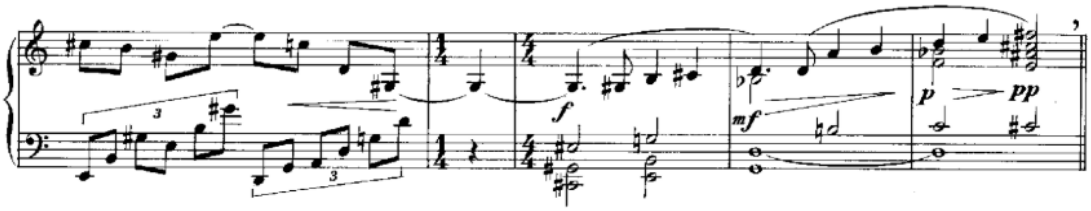
It seems clear that Rautavaara modeled his octatonic usage, at least in this instance, on Messiaen's example.[30]

At the cadenza-like passage in the Rautavaara sonata, the left hand planes major triads – also not unlike a favorite procedure of Messiaen. However, Rautavaara's triads are planed in a loose sense only (unlike Messiaen's typical usage): the upper, melodic notes of the triads do not all fit into the octatonic collection in use (octatonic 0-1), though the bass note and root of each triad (even when the two do not coincide) are part of a single octatonic collection. In order, the bass notes are D, C, Eb, F, F#; and the roots of the second-inversion triads in m. 81 and

[30] As obvious as this connection to Messiaen's use of the octatonic seems to be, I am as far as I am aware the first commentator to remark upon the similarity.

following add B, Bb, and Ab. (See Example 1.50, above.)

The octatonic scale appears less frequently in the second movement than it does in the first (or third), but it is present in the A section in two iterations of the chorale theme.



Example 1.53. Second movement, mm. 6-10.

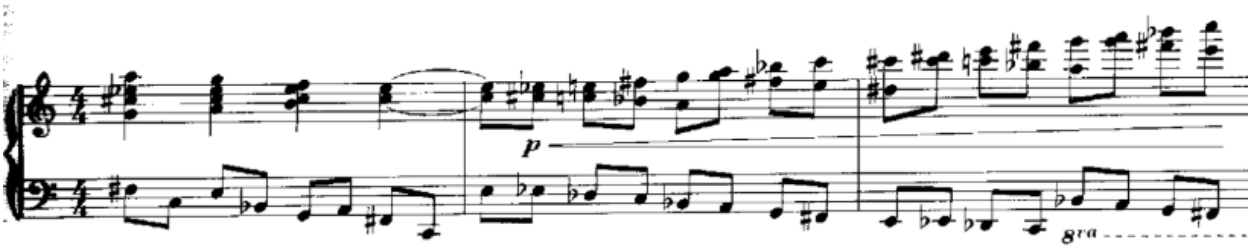
The chorale theme, beginning in m. 8, presents three triads in succession, each a minor third higher than the previous one: C# major, E minor, and G minor. These triads (and the melodic voice moving over them) are built from octatonic 1-2.

Octatonicism is also strikingly present in the opening of the third movement. The primary tones of the fugue subject's head – Bb-A-C-Db-Eb-E – are members of one octatonic collection, octatonic 0-1. (See example 1.8.) The purity of the octatonic collection is broken only by the presence of a B♮ in the second bar. This B♮ is not, however, included to disrupt the prevalent octatonic; it is present for a special historical reason. As detailed above, the fugue subject is formed on the name of Bach (B-A-C-H = Bb-A-C-B♮), necessitating the B♮ despite the prevailing octatonic scale from which it is a clear departure. The tail of each fugue subject feeds into the left hand, which plays scalar material in the octatonic underneath the right hand's subject entries. The scalar material takes on the second voice to become a series of parallel minor thirds, and the third voice to become a series of diminished triads in root position planing relentlessly up and down the octatonic scale.

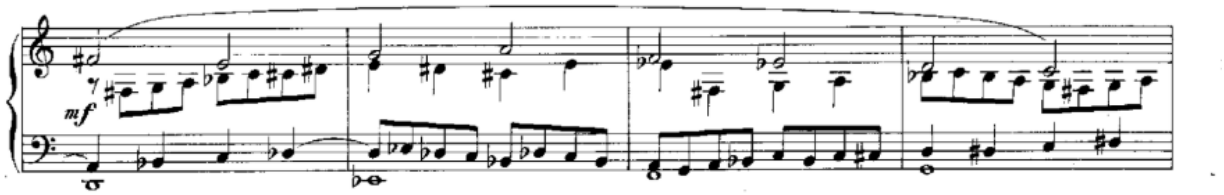
Each subject enters at the tritone: the first is at Bb, the second at E, then Bb again, and again E. This anti-tonal ordering of subject-entries is certainly strange, but is not without

precedent: Messiaen's mighty fugue "Par Lui tout a été fait" also uses a tritone between subject entrances.

Octatonic collections continue to appear throughout Rautavaara's third movement, with material from m. 52 to the end consisting largely of octatonic 0-1.

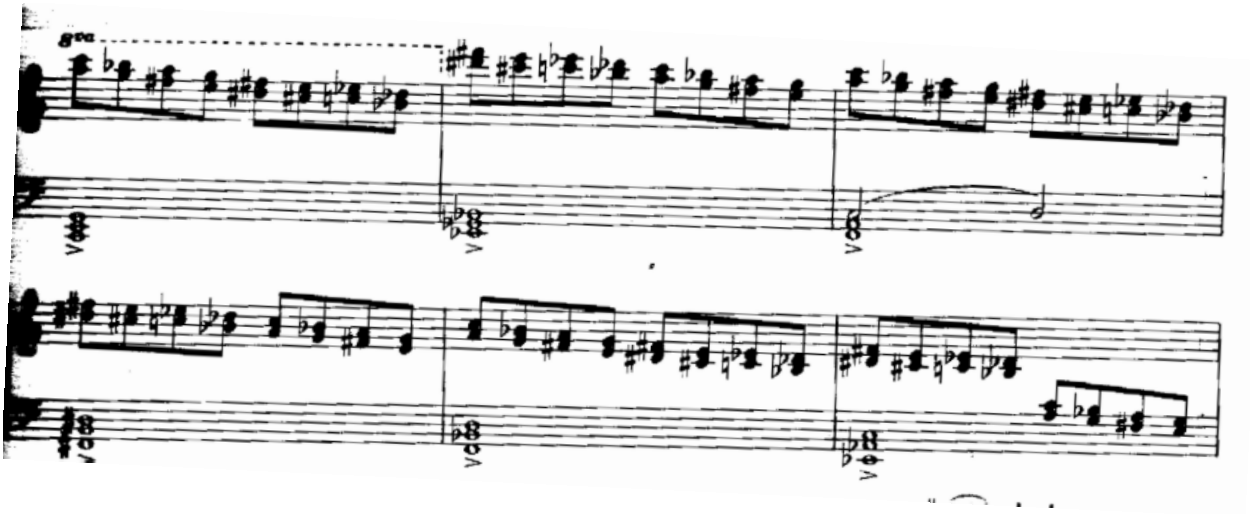


Example 1.54. Third movement, mm. 50-52.



Example 1.55. Third movement, m. 65ff.

The soprano voice shown in example 1.55 is in octatonic 0-1 for mm. 65-66, but shifts to octatonic 2-3 for mm. 67-68. The bassline is in octatonic 2-3 from 65-68, while the alto and tenor use octatonic 0-1.

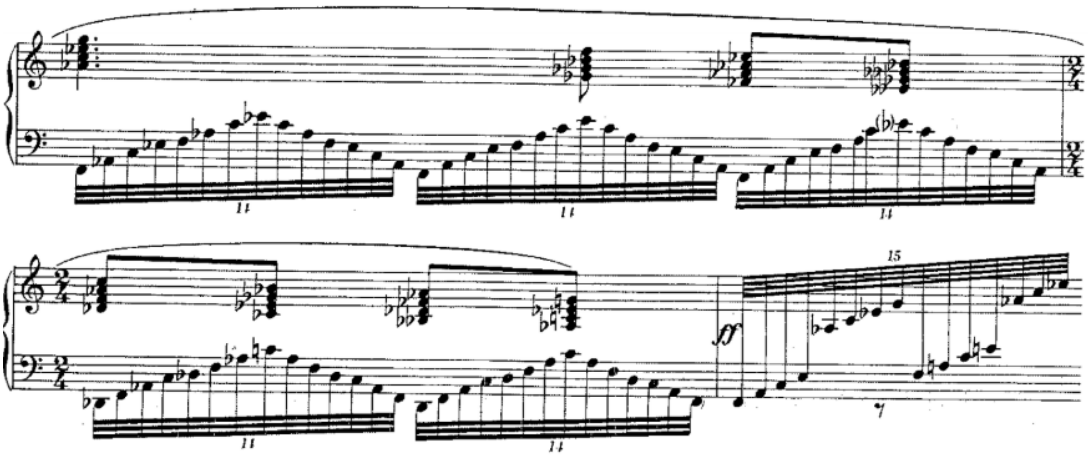


Example 1.56. Third movement, m. 85ff.

The double thirds in the right hand that begin at m. 84 are an unmistakable example of the octatonic, here used to recapitulate the first movement's apotheosis of this theme.

Planing

We have already looked at the sonata's planing of diminished triads in the octatonic scale (opening of the third movement), and planing of major triads whose roots fit the octatonic scale (climax of the first movement). One more sonority in the piece is conspicuously planed, namely the major-major-seventh chord. The major seventh is planed extensively in the middle section of the second movement, without apparent tonal function. The major-major-seventh sonority is treated as consonant in this context.



Example 1.57. Second movement, mm. 29-30b.

Planing of the major seventh chord is foregrounded in the right hand, where its distinctive quality is clearly audible.

The left hand meanwhile alternates minor-minor-seventh and major-major-seventh chords underneath the right hand, Fm7 and DbM7. Two major-major-sevenths collide in a vehement fortissimo in the last measure of the above example: an F major-major-seventh chord is juxtaposed with an Ab major-major-seventh, arpeggiated rapidly by the hands in alternation.

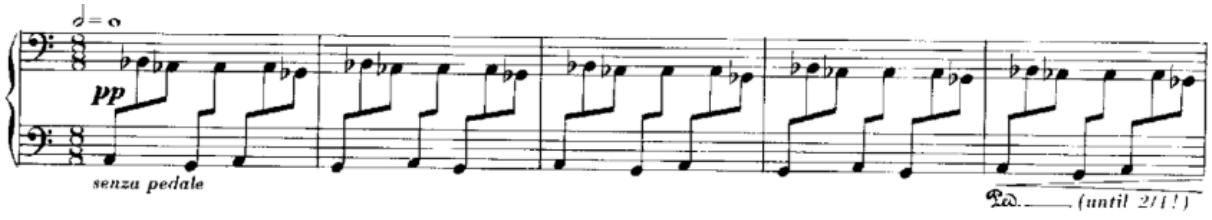
Juxtaposing Black and White Keys

Black keys against white is a frequent juxtaposition in Rautavaara's second piano sonata. The collision is present at times strongly (and quite apparent to the ear) and at other times more subtly, but it is a cyclical element common to all three of the piece's movements. This thematizing of black keys versus white keys is a means of creating a basic opposition for the sonata as a whole.

The initial figuration of Rautavaara's sonata includes a collision of sorts: a grouping of half-steps in the low register of the piano. The left hand has the white keys A and G, and the

right hand has the black keys Bb, Ab, and Gb (see example 1.58). This pattern of black keys in the right hand and white keys in the left continues until m. 10 (see example 1.49) , where the hands shift position dramatically: the left hand has been beneath the right hand, but now switches to the top. At this point the collection shifts to octatonic 0-1, with G# still present as its axis.

The beginning of the sonata on black keys in the right hand and white keys in the left could be just a product of positional convenience (one hand above, the other below), but this juxtaposition is thematized throughout all three movements of the sonata. The opening material described above is recapitulated at the same pitch level (and thus with the same configuration of black and white keys) at m. 104ff.



Example 1.58. First movement, m. 104ff.

This time, however, the material is repeated with a crescendo and the sustain pedal down (beginning in m. 108); the right hand plays black keys up the black-key pentatonic scale, and the left hand plunges downward from A2 to A1. The left hand is given one black key, Ab, as a passing tone which pulls down chromatically to the arrival on G, mimicking the voice-leading in the exposition at m. 10.

A significant arrival on a white-key collection also occurs in the first movement: at m. 96, both hands play white keys only (a white-key pentatonic scale centering on D). The theme is

in the right hand, with the outside voices in that hand mirroring each other. The G and A in the middle of the chord function as pedal points. The material here is symmetrical about the D axis. (This material is deployed similarly to both the theme that enters at m. 68 and which is reiterated at m. 73, and the theme at m. 83.) In the next measure (m. 97), the right hand's mirror-image lines continue by whole steps on whole-tone 0 onto the black keys. Thus the melodic elements of the passage are on white keys for a measure, and then black keys for a measure.

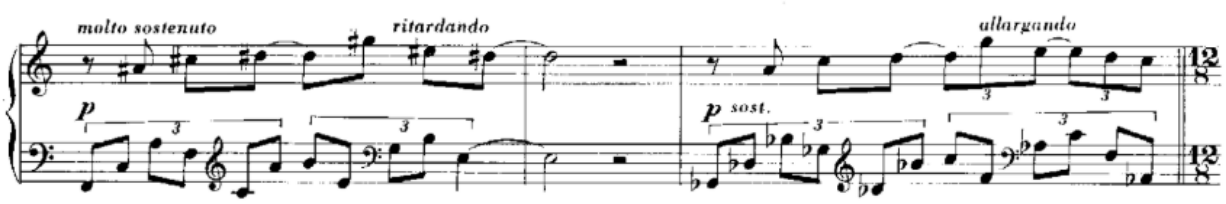
The second movement's nocturne-like texture begins on a white-key collection: it is initially the same pentatonic collection as at m. 96 in the first movement, and still symmetrical about D, but this time with an apparent tonal center of F major, thanks to the left hand's triadic accompaniment. The collection shifts on the third beat of the measure to an apparent Em7 chord. At m. 5, the theme recurs, though it is shortly to be interrupted (as discussed below). At its reappearance, though, the theme has modulated upward by a half-step to an apparent center of Gb major, using a pentatonic collection. Thus, the theme and its accompaniment begin on all white keys and are restated on all black keys.

The interruption of the theme is significant within this black vs. white schema: namely, the second half of measure six has returned to a white-key collection centering on D. This collection and the accompanimental figuration are (again) familiar from m. 96 of the first movement. The interruption is a foreign pitch that intrudes into the collection, namely G#, which signals a significant change. G# is held on its own for one beat (highlighted by being marked as a 1/4 measure – see example 1.19).

The next iteration of the second movement's main theme, at m. 21, returns to apparent F major: the same pitch level and collection as at the opening of the movement. This statement also

is interrupted by the insertion of black keys, but this time somewhat more gradually, as the accompaniment shifts to a different collection. This shift goes through whole-tone 1 to a triadic passage where each hand planes triads in inversional symmetry. These interruptions are possible because they are experienced as Other, as external to the prevailing discourse because of the foreignness of the pitches to the established collection.

The next appearance of the white-and-black juxtaposition is at the return of the main theme.



Example 1.59. Second movement, mm. 35-37.

Here the left hand appears to have returned to the original F-pentatonic collection (white keys); but the right hand is set against it on F# major (black keys – enharmonically equivalent to m. 5). The piece comes to an uncertain halt, as if realizing that something is wrong. The left hand shifts up a half step to the black keys, as if to accommodate the right hand; and the right hand shifts down a half step to the white keys, as if to accommodate the left. Thus we have two bitonal, partial statements of the theme, with the relationship of black and white immediately inverted.

The second movement contains one more iteration of the black-against-white idea, at the very end. In the last five measures of the piece, the juxtaposition appears in the form of clusters: the right hand plays clusters in the pattern black-white-mixed, marked "(with the hand…)"; these clusters are then taken over by the left hand alternating black and white, but ending each measure with a larger cluster of mixed black and white keys.

The sonata's third movement also makes use of the black-white juxtaposition in a limited way, namely by using clusters of black and white keys. These collisions are not presented sequentially or melodically, just as blocks. Unlike the soft depression of the black keys in Ives's famous "*Concord" Sonata*, these clusters are created by forceful impacts of the hands or forearms on the keys. These may or may not be chosen by the composer as expressions of the black vs. white juxtaposition; more likely they are just forceful clusters chosen as black, white, or both for the sake of sonority and drama.

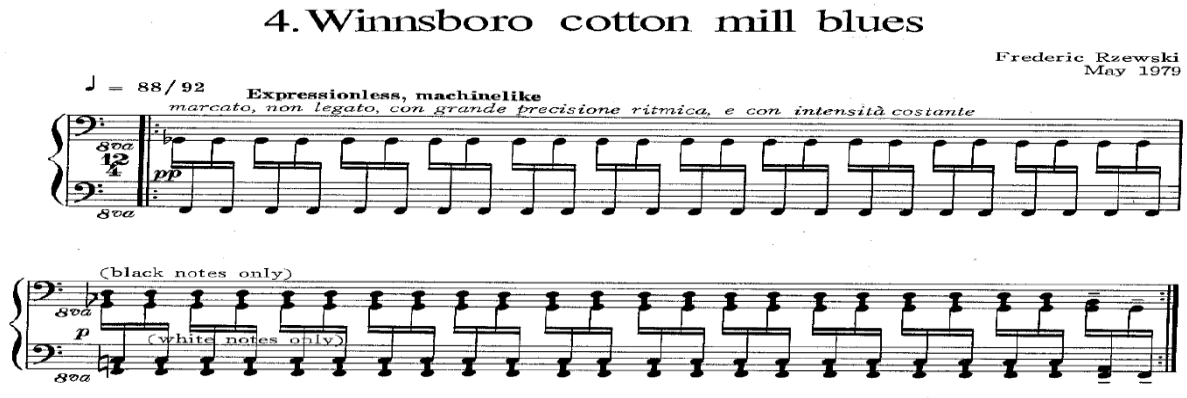
This thematicizing of black keys vs. white is thus one of the most striking and pervasive features of Rautavaara's second sonata. This fundamental black-white opposition is foregrounded in all three movements of the piece, and thus can scarcely have been accidental. However, in the same way that the sonata's obsessive symmetry in respect to keyboard topography may not be clearly visible to the audience, the juxtaposition of black keys and white may not be clearly visible or audible as such to the audience.

What, then is the significance of this binary opposition? What was Rautavaara's motivation in composing music utilizing a device that cannot readily be heard? As with the other devices that we will discuss here, this binary opposition invites us to seek an explanation; and whatever explanation we find will contribute to whatever we can understand of the piece's overall meaning.

There are a few apparent precedents for Rautavaara's systematic juxtaposition of black keys and white, most notably Stravinsky's "Petrushka chord." Adamenko describes Stravinsky's usage: "In its original piano version, [the "Petrushka chord"] employs a visually perceived opposition of white versus black keys, coordinated with the opposition of the right hand against

the left."[31] Adamenko notes that "the universal black-and-white opposition constitutes one of the most elementary structures widely employed in myth."[32] Adamenko also notes conscious use of black keys versus white in the works of George Crumb, in particular *Makrokosmos II*, citing the analytical work of Robert Shuffet, who notices "a dichotomy of black-key pentatonic versus white-key pentatonic, [which] often dominates [over] other textural considerations."[33]

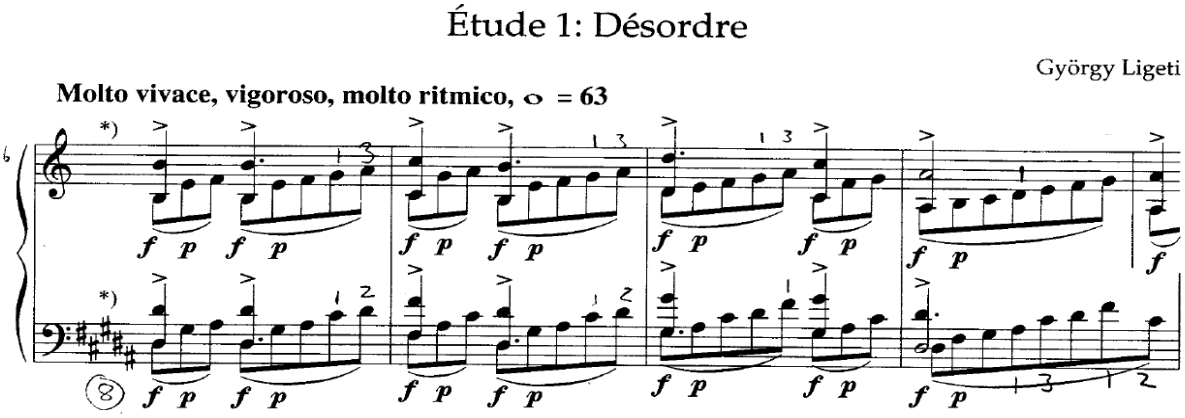
Another example of the black-white opposition is to be found in Rzewski's "Winnsboro cotton mill blues," in which the left hand on white keys and the right hand on black keys alternate first single notes and then clusters. "Winnsboro cotton mill blues" strongly resembles the opening of the Rautavaara sonata; both pieces begin with motoric rumbles low on the piano. Rautavaara's sonata was written in 1970, and was published in 1972. Rzewski's "Winnsboro cotton mill blues" was published later, in 1980. I suspect that Rzewski was not borrowing from Rautavaara, since it wasn't until a number of years after its publication that the sonata was first recorded in 1987, by Izumi Tateno.



Example 1.60. Frederic Rzewski, "Winnsboro cotton mill blues."

[31] Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism*, 40,
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 41.

One of Ligeti's etudes, "Désordre," also foregrounds a juxtaposition of black and white keys. "Désordre" was written in 1985 as part of Ligeti's first book of etudes.



Example 1.61. Ligeti, "Désordre."

Finally, black and white keys are systematically opposed in a number of Messiaen's piano works, especially *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus.* Messiaen's usage is the closest analogue to Rautavaara's; the comparison will be discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

Vestiges of Serialism

"The Fire Sermon" was written after Rautavaara's departure from serialism, but some set classes frequently featured in serial works are present in the sonata. In example 1.26, for instance, we see a passage from the first movement in which the right hand and left hand both play pitch class set [015] for the first half of m. 72, and alternate [015] with [016] in the second half. However, Rautavaara does not seem to subject these cells to the procedures of serialism.

The most significant residue of Rautavaara's earlier explorations of serialism is found in the opening the second movement. The melodic symmetry seen in example 1.54 is created by cells being inverted : in the first measure of the second movement, the right hand plays [025]

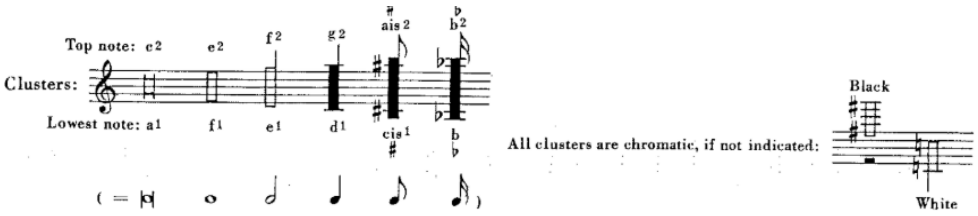
twice, pivoting on D. In the next measure, the cell acquires another pitch class to become [0259]. The right hand in m. 2 avoids duplicating pitch classes, yielding a potential tone-row of eight pitch classes. If this procedure is serially motivated, it is a very free interpretation of serial techniques in that its manipulation of cells is limited and no complete row occurs.

It may well be that Rautavaara's use of pitch-class sets and partial tone rows in the "Fire Sermon" may not be particularly significant to the listener's or performer's experience of the piece as a whole. I suspect that these instances of what could be serial techniques may instead be incidental by-products of the symmetrical constructions that pervade the sonata. Had Rautavaara not experimented extensively with serialism in his career, these small vestiges of serial techniques might appear to be entirely coincidental.

Performance Pragmatics

The "Fire Sermon" sonata presents any number of problems for the performer. One of these problems is the difficulty of voicing complexly interacting lines that may be independent or parallel: there are always multiple melodic levels requiring attention. Another difficulty is the piece's use of extreme dynamics, whether loud or soft. For example, the sonata includes a rare indication of "crushing!" used as an expression marking for extreme loudness. And I have already mentioned the possibility of D major failing to emerge at the end of the piece due to extreme softness.

Rautavaara's use of extended techniques is fairly limited here, consisting of clusters and silent retakes. These may give brief pause to the pianist unfamiliar with extended techniques, or may require a modicum of extra attention to determine the boundaries of the clusters; but Rautavaara gives in an endnote a diagram indicating his intentions.

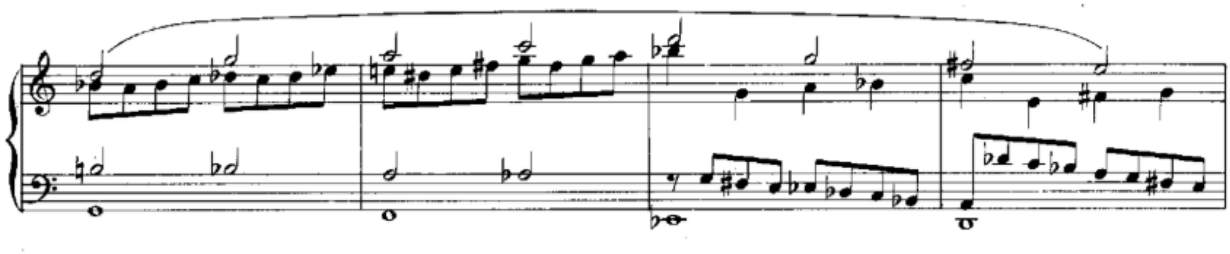


Example 1.62. Rautavaara's table of clusters.

In general, Rautavaara's clusters are not particularly difficult; they are much simpler than the ones deployed by Rzewski in his "Winnsboro cotton mill blues," which require simultaneous use of palm and elbow in different spots. The one area of Rautavaara's sonata in which the clusters present significant difficulty is in the B section of the second movement. The leaps are challenging; if the performer divides the accompanimental voice between the hands (and I recommend doing so), the arpeggios will be significantly easier, but the leaps must become all the more rapid.

The sonata's extended reaches are quite difficult: they gave me a good deal of trouble when I was first learning the piece. In the first movement, at m. 96-103, the right hand is to play tenths at several points (see example 1.43). A few of the tenths which are held as arrival points are marked as rolled, though the roll seems to weaken them as arrival points; I redistribute instead. Other tenths, as in m. 96 in the preceding example, simply cannot be redistributed.

In several other passages, the hands cannot hold onto the material indicated to be sustained – m. 76 of the third movement, for instance.

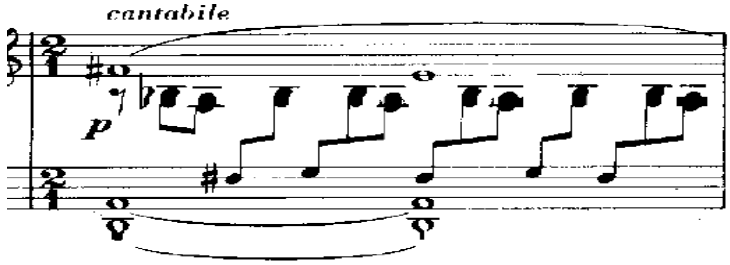


Example 1.63. Third movement, mm. 74-77.

In this passage the performer must abandon the downbeat pitches D and F# in the soprano, and the Eb and D in the bass. Under most circumstances this is not particularly difficult, since the damper pedal can be employed to sustain the notes; but the running accompaniment here will be quite dissonant if sustained in the pedal. The performer will probably be required to accept a certain level of blurring in the pedal in order to sustain the melody and bass, or work out use of the sostenuto pedal.

Redistribution has already been mentioned, in connection with the second movement's B-section. Redistribution is also necessary in several passages where the two hands negotiate three voices, with the middle voice exchanging between the hands. An example is found in m. 52ff in the first movement, where the inner voice in 8/8 time is exchanged between the hands, and at m. 66ff in the third movement. The points of exchange are not generally indicated in the score as redistributions, so the performer must spend some time determining which notes will be played by which hand.

The three-part texture at m. 52ff in the first movement also requires a quite unusual pedaling.



Example 1.64. First movement, m. 28: the entrance of the second theme. This texture continues for several phrases.

The bass is to be sustained, requiring pedal; the middle voice however is a continuation of a figure marked "*senza pedale*" ("without pedal"). In order to sustain the bass while keeping the middle notes *secco*, I recommending using the middle (sostenuto) pedal once per bar. In order to highlight the distinction between the sustained notes and the detached ones, I take a relatively slow tempo here for this second theme. At a fast tempo, the toccata-figure turns into a blur; it may be a more effective counterpoint to the *cantabile* if it is more clearly defined by the performer at a measured tempo.

The sonata's panoply of compositional techniques might make it seem intimidating to the would-be performer at first glance or at first listening, particularly in the domain of memorization. In my own experience, though, I found that the sonata was not nearly as difficult to memorize as I expected it to be. If the performer attends to the piece's patterns, in particular its symmetries, the difficulty of memorization is greatly mitigated.

Chapter 2
Forms of Reference:
Topics, Codes, and Macrotext

On the first day, Ilmarinen
Downward bent and well examined,
On the bottom of his furnace,
Thus to see what might be forming
From the magic fire and metals.
- *Kalevala*, Rune 10

In this chapter, I will examine three types of intertextuality with which the music of Rautavaara's "Fire Sermon" sonata engages. The first of these is an assortment of topics: stylistic elements imported recognizably into the sonata from other musical genres. Several of the topics that are present in the sonata are particularly significant because, as I will argue, they have implications for any overall narrative embodied in the piece. One of the most important uses of topical characterizations is to "define musical agents,"[34] and I will indeed describe the topics of the piece as agential (but not all actorial).

The second aspect of intertextuality of the piece is Rautavaara's adoption of a semiotic code used in the piano works of Scriabin and of Messiaen: gestures, figures, or devices common to the works of all three composers, and recognizable to the astute listener, even if less clearly defined than topics. The encoding common to Scriabin, Messiaen, and Rautavaara utilizes dynamic and registral "sequencing" of tonally static material, juxtapositions of black keys and white, and characteristic use of the octatonic scale. They are particularly prominent in piano works with strong drives towards ecstasy, transcendence, or *jouissance*.

The third aspect of intertextuality that I will examine here is Rautavaara's pronounced, lifelong proclivity toward self-quotation. Rautavaara's musical self-obsession led Anne Sivuoja-

[34] Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 86-7.

Gunaratnam to refer to the composer as "*Narcissus musicus"*[35] and to his output as a "macrotext."[36] If Rautavaara's oeuvre can be considered a macrotext, then it is likely that some useful perspective will be gained by successfully situating the "Fire Sermon" sonata in relation to the composer's other piano works. The "Fire Sermon" sonata bears particularly strong resemblance to Rautavaara's first sonata, titled "Christ and the Fishermen," and the set *Icons.* The two sonatas were written around the same time, and *Icons* was written many years prior.

I will examine representative examples of these resemblances across pieces, and offer hypotheses for their motivation. I will also attempt to speculate about the semantic accumulation of recognizable quotations.[37] This last is probably most important and most intuitive, even within the intratextual quotations of the "Fire Sermon": any listener or performer must at least wonder at the symbolic significance of the cyclical recurrences of chorale themes in all three movements of a sonata. If we listen to Rautavaara's other piano works, we find many chorale textures in association with religious imagery; our hypotext for the "Fire Sermon" expands, not only within the European or specifically Finnish chorale traditions, but within the composer's own macrotext. This line of inquiry is a necessary preliminary to the narratological synthesis that will be presented in the third chapter of this treatise.

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[35] Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, "'*Narcissus Musicus*,'or an Intertextual Perspective on the Oeuvre of Einojuhani Rautavaara," 7-25 in Tomi Mäkelä, ed., *Topics, Texts, Tensions: Essays in Music Theory* (Magdeburg: Otto-von-Guerike-Universität, 1999), 7.

[36] Ibid. Since any composer's total output might be considered a macrotext, it might be more meaningful to refer to Rautavaara's works as a particularly strongly connected macrotext. For an analogous usage of the word "narrative" shifted to a quantitative rather than qualitative claim, see chapter 3.

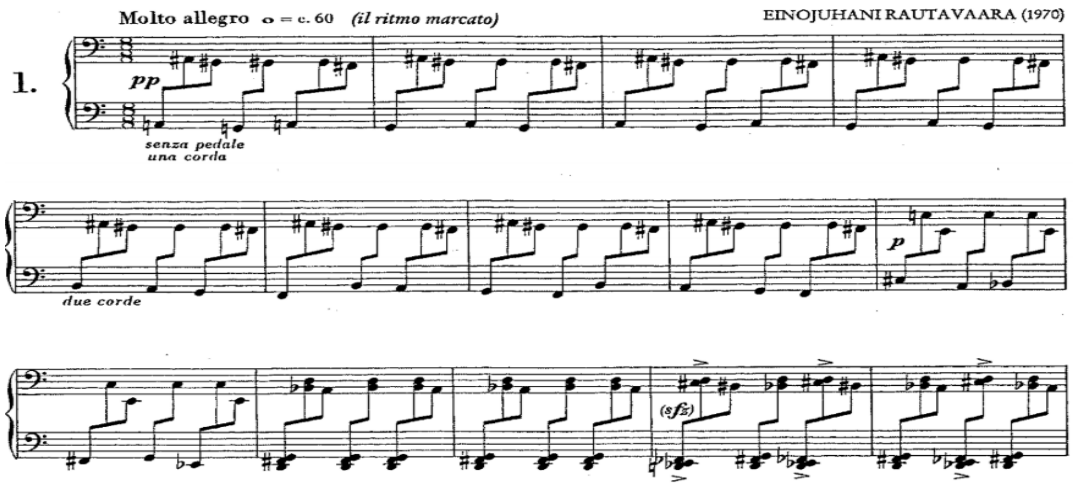
[37] See Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 97. "These fictive referents form an increasingly complete heterocosm of referential totalities by means of a process of semantic accumulation."

Topics

A handful of topics feature prominently in the "Fire Sermon" sonata: *toccata*, chorale/oration, nocturne, bells, the learned style (*fugato*), and musical representations of fire. Several of these topics – especially the cyclically recurring chorale topic and the second movement's nocturne topic – are particularly important for any speculations on the piece's meaning, since they are heavily entangled in the piece's structure. These topics will be discussed under several headings in this chapter and the next.

First Movement

The first movement opens in a *toccata* topic, with frenetic energy. It is unrelenting, and its placement in the low register of the piano makes it seem machine-like.



Example 2.1. First movement: toccata-like opening.

This material could represent a firebox or engine or factory – or the chthonic churning of an inexhaustible low blaze periodically flaring up. No "fire" topic is listed in Danuta Mirka's *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (2014), and admittedly this music has little in common with

the playfully destructive brightness of the "magic fire music" associated in Wagner's *Ring* with Loge. To differentiate from Wagner's fire and other lighter treatments, it might be worth naming this particular combination of elements – low register, percussive attacks, obsessive toccata-like rhythm, jagged explosions – as "firebox" with its connotations of barely-controlled power and inhumanity (mechanization). The opening of Rzewski's "Winnsboro cotton mill blues" is less intense in terms of speed, but is otherwise a close textural analogue (see example 1.60).

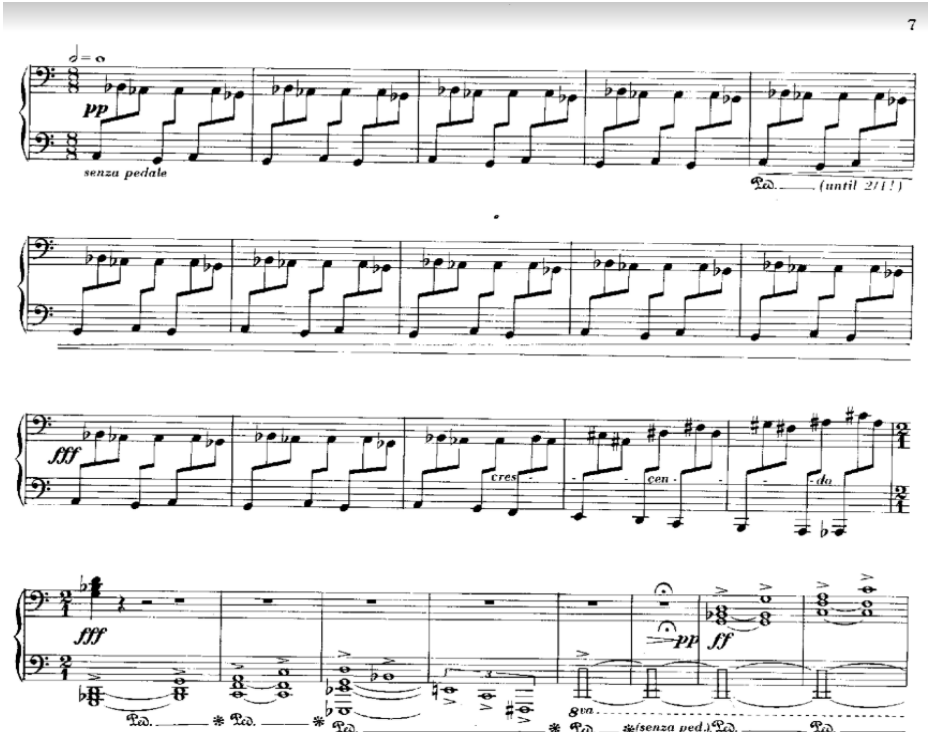
The next clearly defined topic in the first movement is a chorale-theme that enters grandly at m. 79. In keeping with most representations of chorales at the piano, the music is strongly triadic; but the harmony is decidedly non-functional and predicated upon octatonic planing rather than tonal or modal counterpoint. Chorales such as this occur frequently in Rautavaara's music; indeed, Wojciech Stępień refers to "the quasi-religious chorale topic [as] typical of the composer's style."[38]

The melodic content of this material is derived from the second theme (m. 52ff – see example 1.15). Its climactic return at m. 79 is set very low on the piano, indicating (if we may be so literal) a chorus of male voices: and indeed, it seems that male choruses are of great significance to Finnish culture and to Rautavaara specifically.[39] According to Stępień, discussing Rautavaara's "angel" pieces: "the peaceful chorales, which frequently appear in [Rautavaara's] instrumental compositions concerning angels as monolithic chords, can be read as representations of the male choir in instrumental terms, such a choir having mythical and ritual signification in Rautavaara's music."[40] We need not be so literal about the gender encoding of

[38] Wojciech Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels: Musical Signification in Five Instrumental Compositions by Einojuhani Rautavaara* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2011), 144.
[39] Ibid., 234.
[40] Rautavaara, "Choirs, Myths, and Finnishness," *Finnish Music Quarterly* 1 (1997), 3.

our topic to understand that the choir is meant to be powerful and implacable. This mighty oration may indeed represent the "sermon" of the piece's title.

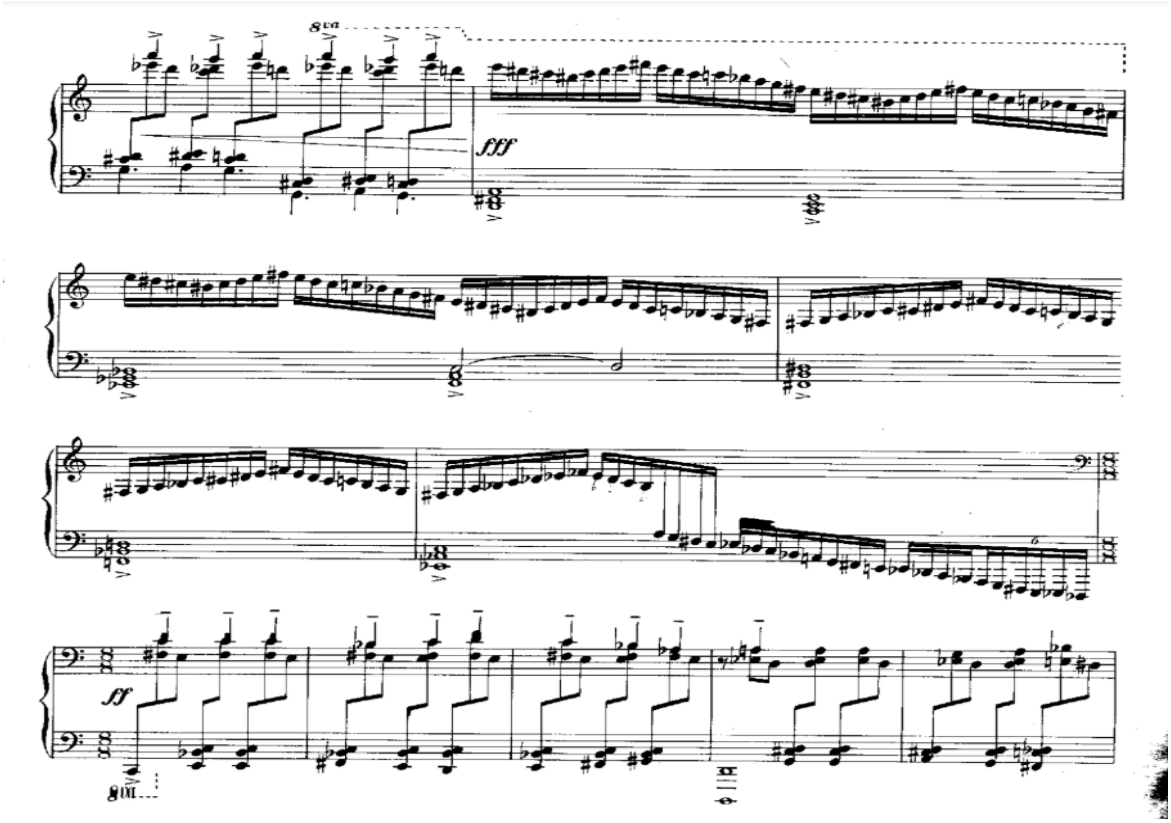
The toccata theme returns at m. 104, as a sort of vestigial recapitulation. It retains much of its former dynamism, in that it crescendos from *pp* to *fff*; but is now confined in some sense, as it is registrally quite static, without the surges that characterized it at the opening of the movement. The chorale theme returns at m. 119 in the low bass, plunging down to a low cluster that is sustained for an improbably long time as the chorale theme progresses upwards. Our chorale has now transcended any genre to which its first appearance may have been assigned.



Example 2.2. First movement: the vestigial recapitulation of the first theme, m. 104ff.

In addition to the dark fire of the first movement's opening, there is another, brighter fire topic in the first movement. In m. 79 we find a prolonged octatonic scale figure that plunges in

serpentine fashion from near the top of the piano to near the bottom. Its explosiveness is clearly meant to portray or evoke maximal intensity, and its contour could perhaps be meant to represent the dance of an uncontrolled blaze or the jagged downward plunge of a lightning bolt.



Example 2.3. First movement, m. 78ff.

This material recurs cyclically in the third movement, at m. 85: this time the jagged octatonic scale is doubled at the third, and as a concession (one supposes) to the physical limitations of a single hand, is written in slower note values. As before, the jagged blazes accompany a grandiose statement of the chorale theme. I have concluded that each of these passages is an instantiation of a trope[41] combining a topic of fire with a topic of oration: namely,

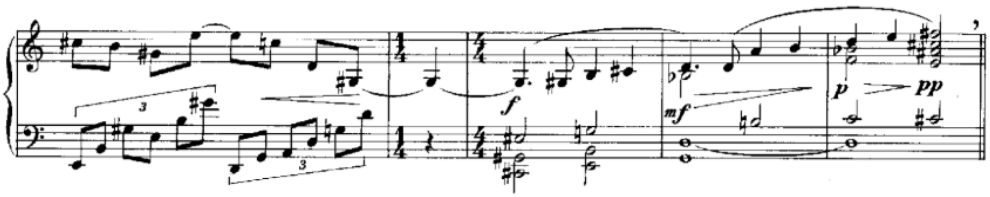
[41] For discussion of the term, see Robert S. Hatten, "The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works," 514-36 in Danuta Mirka, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Briefly, a trope is a productive concatenation of two topics: in the case of the Rautavaara sonata, a topic

a fire sermon. (See examples 2.3 and 2.8.)

Second Movement

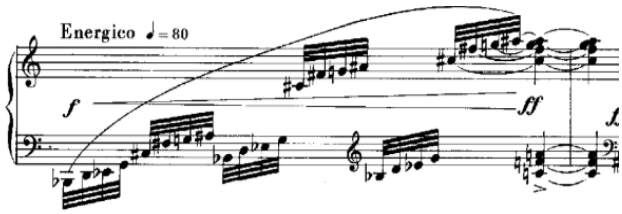
A nocturne topic is in evidence at the beginning of the second movement, with a singing melody over a widely distributed left-hand accompaniment (see example 1.29). The topic and the formal/generic expectations that the nocturne topic implies are discussed in more detail below.

The new material at m. 8 appears to be also a chorale topic.



Example 2.4. Second movement, mm. 6-10. A chorale topic intrudes at m. 8.

The material beginning at m. 11 may suggest an *empfindsamer* cadenza (example 2.5).



Example 2.5. Second movement: an intensely disruptive gesture at m. 11.

The material beginning at m. 12 has a chorale-like aspect to it, with strong triadic implications in the three voices played by the right hand (see example 2.21). The bass line's motion, in contrary motion to the other voices, strengthens the impression of a chorale; but the harmonic mismatch between the hands means that we are in the harmonic realm not of Bach but

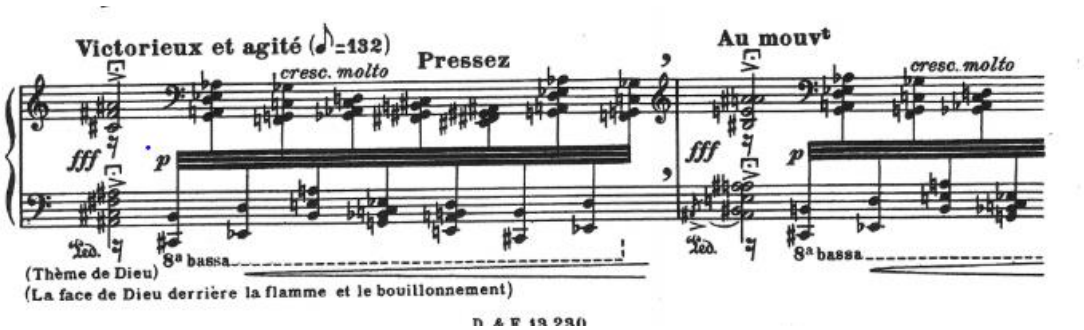
connoting "fire" with a topic connoting "sermon."

of Hindemith.

The sonata's second movement also evokes the sound of bells in its coda. The Db2 in the bass and D#4 in the soprano serve as bells in low and high registers, respectively. The high and low clusters in the B section may also be representative of bells. Meanwhile, a sailing topic may be evidenced by the moments of bitonality at the abortive return of A. The topic is established in the work of Bartók (see example 3.1, and discussion in chapter 3).

Third Movement

The third movement introduces only one new topic, the learned style, or more specifically, the *fugato*. This fugato is based on the famous B-A-C-H motive, the "H" (B natural) of which is the subject's one departure from octatonic 0-1. (See example 1.8.) A *fugato* with subject entrances at the tritone almost necessitates comparison to a work of Messiaen, "Par Lui tout a été fait," from *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus.* It is worth noting that Messiaen's fugue is intended to evoke the blazes of primordial creation, with explicit reference made in the expression markings to fire: "the face of God behind the flames" (see example 2.6).

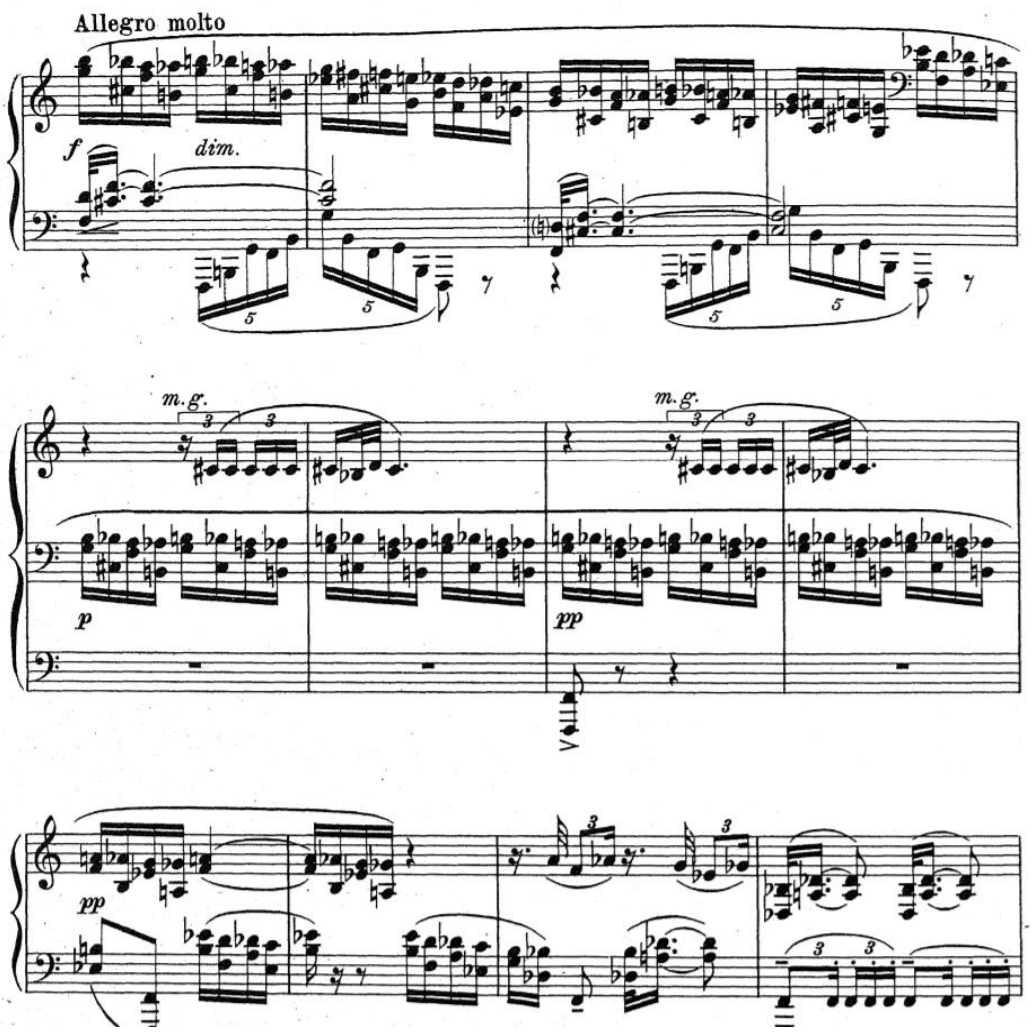


Example 2.6. Messiaen, Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus, "Par Lui tout a'été fait," p. 38.

The relative paucity of new topics in the third movement of the "Fire Sermon" may seem

surprising, but it is easily explained. Except for the *fugato* with which the third movement opens, the finale simply presents no new material. It is probably not particularly unusual for a final movement to make reference to previous movements, but the extent to which the final movement is predicated upon or determined by the first movement is remarkable. We are clearly dealing with an unusual degree of cyclicity, which is yet another element of the sonata that invites narrative interpretation.

The recurrence of the chorale theme has already been mentioned, as has its combination with what I take to be a fire theme (the double thirds in the right hand at m. 85ff). This climactic explosion of thirds has one clear precedent within the piano literature, namely the climax of Scriabin's ninth sonata.



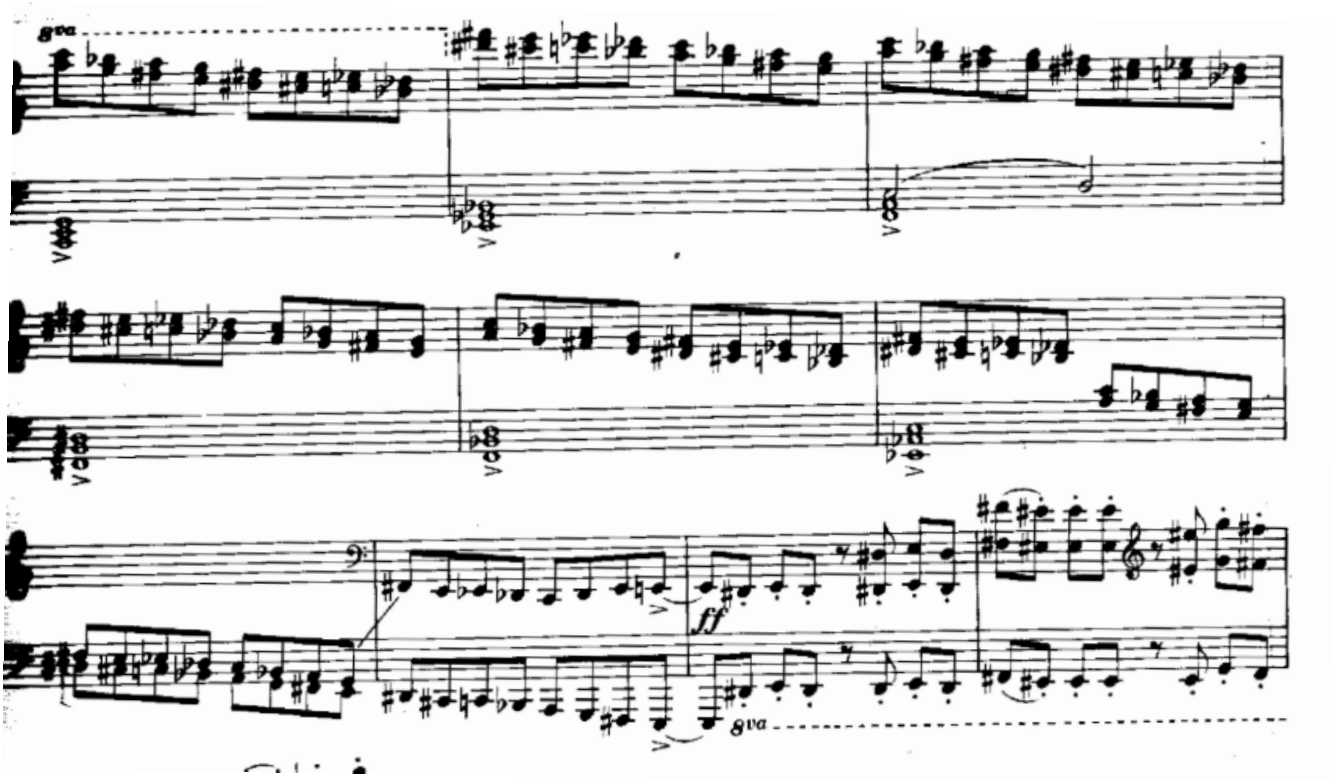
Example 2.7. The apotheosis of Scriabin's ninth sonata, mm. 163-167.

Scriabin's ninth sonata is nicknamed "The Black Mass," with strong connotations of diabolism and a plot archetype of purity becoming corrupted.[42] The moment in question in the Scriabin sonata represents the triumph of evil.

In the Rautavaara, however, I don't hear any representation of evil – just a blaze that is chthonic-primordial (and thus amoral), or perhaps a purging sacred flame. Unless I misunderstand the emotional valence of the Rautavaara, this passage differs from the Scriabin in that it is not meant to connote the triumph of evil. It may, however, resemble the Scriabin in its

[42] See Susanna Garcia, "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetypes in the Late Piano Sonatas, *19th-Century Music* 23 no. 3 (Spring, 2000), 273-300.

apotheosis of flame, although this flame is valorized very differently from Scriabin's.



Example 2.8. Rautavaara, "Fire Sermon," third movement, m. 86ff: a final apotheosis in double thirds.

Musical Representation of Mystic Beliefs: Or, Three Cosmogonic Composers

I have already drawn comparisons between the piano works of Scriabin, Messiaen, and Rautavaara. The resemblances between them strike me as more than passing, and more than coincidental. The impression of a basic similarity of pianistic vocabulary is strengthened by the fact that all three composers were mystics of one sort or another, and they are known to have

encoded their beliefs within their piano music.

Between Messiaen and Rautavaara, dozens of examples of strikingly similar gestures or deployments of pianistic vocabulary suggest themselves: I will examine a number of these to establish their fundamental similarity. The connection between Messiaen and Rautavaara seems strong, as does the connection between Scriabin and Messiaen. It is harder to demonstrate a direct connection between Scriabin and Rautavaara – there are at least a few examples that can be put side by side to illustrate clear resemblance – but I suspect that if Rautavaara has absorbed some of Scriabin's vocabulary, that vocabulary has been mediated by the music of Messiaen.

Scriabin's highly idiosyncratic religious beliefs are well documented, as are the expressions thereof in his compositions.[43] Messiaen, meanwhile, was a devout Catholic, and much of his music is motivated explicitly by his faith.[44] It seems well enough established that one cannot write about Scriabin's music or Messiaen's without some understanding of their respective personal beliefs as encoded in their music; I suspect that serious study of Rautavaara's music may similarly need to account for the composer's beliefs and any extent to which they are represented in his music.

The English-speaking reader does not have full access to Rautavaara's own account of himself in his autobiography, *Omakuva*,[45] which is regrettably available only in Finnish as of this writing. However, a general understanding of his beliefs can be assembled from the sources

[43] For a synchronic view capturing the thoughts and beliefs of Scriabin's late years, see Boris de Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic,* trans. Nicolas Slonimsky (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1987). For a broader view extensively documenting Scriabin's evolving beliefs over the course of his lifetime, see Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography* 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1996).

[44] See Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Contemplations of Covenant and Incarnation: Musical Symbols of Faith in the Two Great Piano Cycles of the 1940s* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2007).

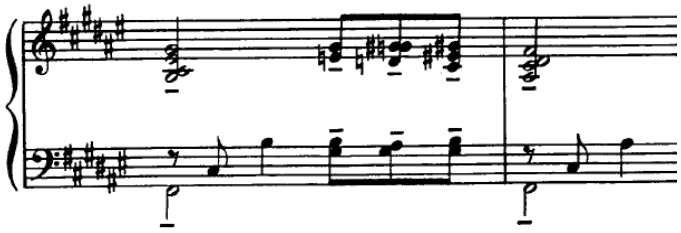
[45] Rautavaara, *Omakuva* (Helsinki: Söderströms, 1989).

available in English. Rautavaara grew up Lutheran,[46] but considered himself to be "ecumenical": "My background was Lutheran, but I never really worried about different 'creeds.' I fear that my ecumenical relationship to the various churches meant indifference to their dogmas and theology."[47] Rautavaara has written works inspired by the pagan *Kalevala*[48] (as Sibelius and other Finnish composers did before him) but also by the Catholic faith, for example *Laudatio Trinitatis*. Rautavaara has also written at least one substantial work inspired by Eastern Orthodox Christian faith – the cycle *Icons* for solo piano.

Rautavaara's beliefs appear to have been fundamentally experiential: Stępień writes that Rautavaara "believes in religiousness as a feeling for and affinity with infinity."[49] A more succinct definition of "mysticism" could scarcely be written. "Affinity with infinity" is applicable both to Messiaen (even if Messiaen understood "infinity" less abstractly, as Deity) and to Scriabin.

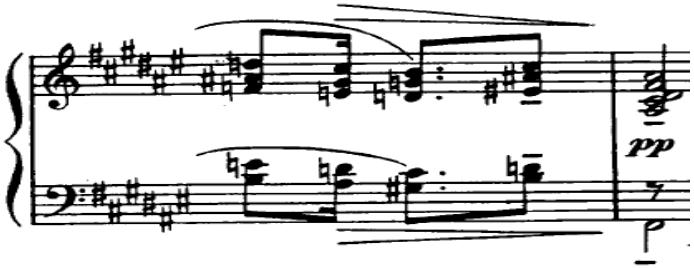
Some of the musical parallels between the composers' respective works are clearly audible or visible, without requiring any sort of deep analysis. This is especially true for resemblances between Messiaen's music and Rautavaara's. For instance, Messiaen in "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus" makes pervasive use of the sort of dual symmetry that Rautavaara uses throughout his "Fire Sermon" sonata. The chord that functions as a tonic in the Messiaen – an F# major chord with D# added – is symmetrical first inversion (A# C# D# F#, as in the right hand of m. 7 in ex. 2.9), and also symmetrical in relation to the piano keys, with an axis on D.

[46] Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 69.
[47] Rautavaara, "On a Taste for the Infinite," *Contemporary Music Review* 12/2 (1995), 112. See also Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 69.
[48] Stępień, ibid., 69.
[49] Ibid., 70.



Example 2.9. Messiaen, "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus," mm. 6-7.

This chord often also occurs in a somewhat expanded format in m. 10.

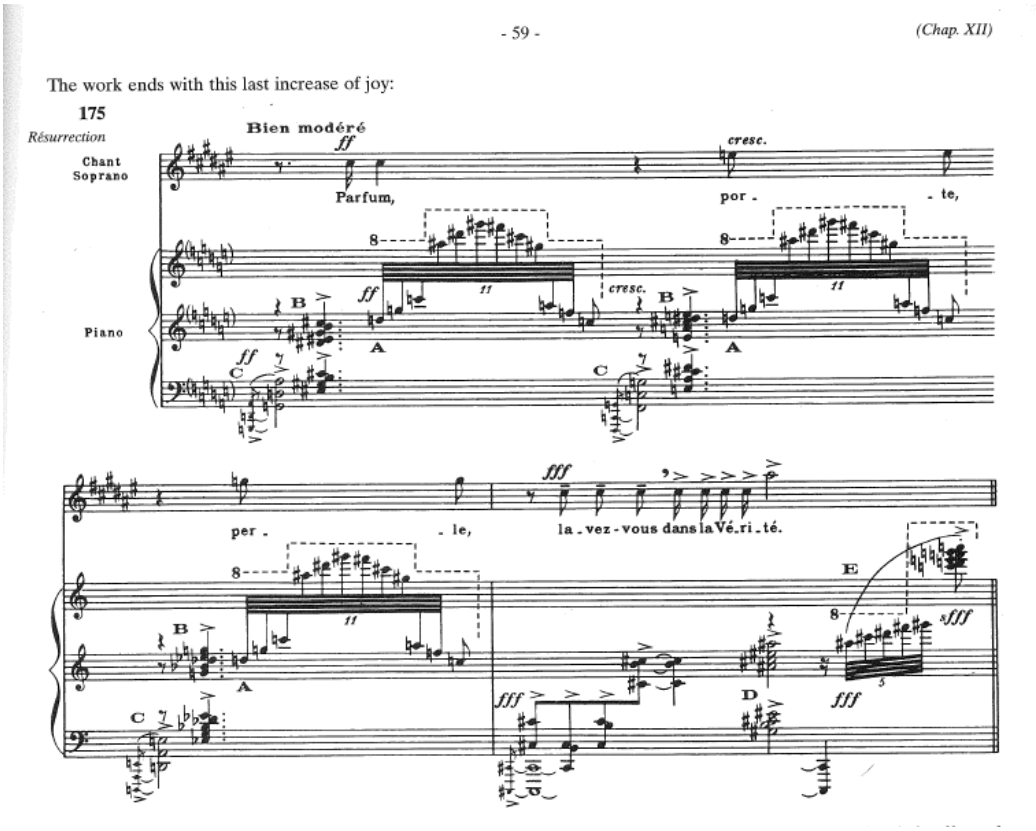


Example 2.10. Messiaen, "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus," mm. 9-10.

The chord reads, from top to bottom, F#-A#-C#-D#-F#-A#. Disregarding the octave displacement of the bass-note, all of the tones are symmetrical about D. As in example 2.9, the harmony can be heard as a tonic (F# major) triad with added sixth; but in this form the chord also makes audible the presence of two triads, F# major and D# minor. The resemblance to the symmetry of the double triad that ends Rautavaara's first movement is clear.

Messiaen's tonic triads described above consist entirely of black keys. This may have been intentional on his part, or may just be an artifact of the key signature (F# major). We do, however, find in Messiaen's music, especially in *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, systematic use of the opposition of black and white keys. Messiaen provides examples of such in *The Technique of My Musical Language.* In example 2.11, we see a passage that could practically be from the piano writing of Rautavaara: the piano's 64th-notes create collisions of black keys

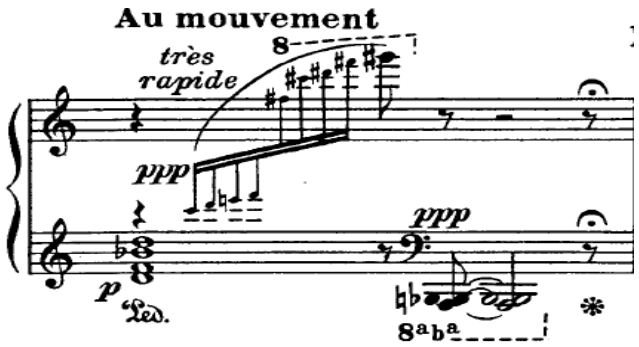
against white, and the example ends on an upward-surging gesture that includes the black-white juxtaposition. Messiaen describes this moment as a "last increase of joy."[50]



Example 2.11. Messiaen, The Technique of My Musical Language, *59.*

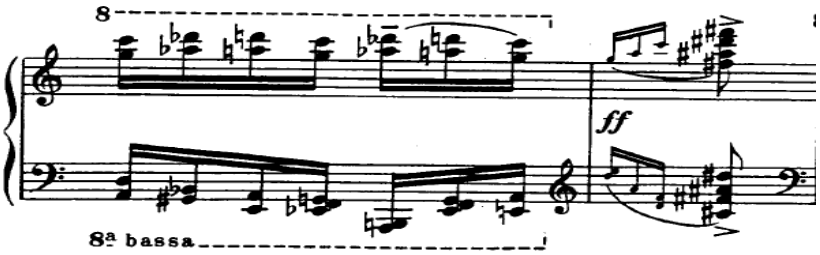
Messiaen uses a similar (if inverted) juxtaposition of black and white keys in "La première communion de la Vierge" ("The First Communion of the Virgin") from *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus.* The moment is at a cadence point preceding an ecstatic depiction of Mary's "Magnificat."

[50] Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language: Text with Musical Examples*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1966), 59.



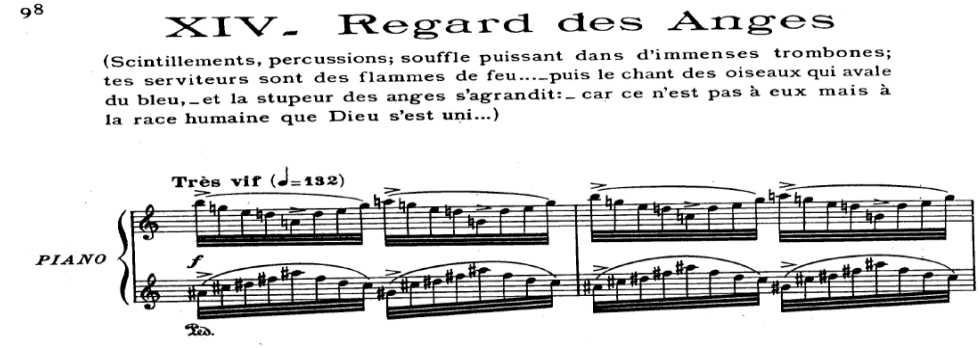
Example 2.12. A black and white juxtaposition in Messiaen's "La première communion de la Vierge," m. 20.

Another example from *Vingt regards* presents itself, from "Regard de l'Esprit de joie."



Example 2.13. An ecstatic juxtaposition of black and white keys, in "Regard de l'Esprit de joie," mm. 188-189.

Finally, "Regard des Anges" is predicated upon the opposition of black keys and white: the opposition is clearly a structural motivation for the work.

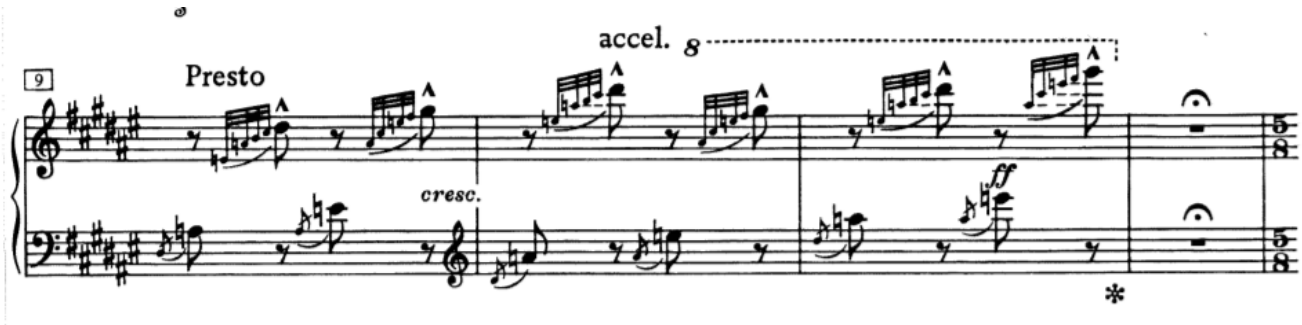


Example 2.14. Messiaen, "Regard des Anges."

Should some of the preceding examples seem ornamental or be mistaken for incidental

similarities, the presence of "Regard des Anges" in the cycle (*Vingt Regards*) from which most of these examples are taken should indicate that the composer's use of the device is conscious, structurally significant, and a cyclical element that is strongly thematized.

The three Messiaen examples that I have included here exhibit the black versus white contrast while rocketing upward (or outward) in a striking gesture. Scriabin, in his fifth sonata, writes upward-surging figures that are gesturally similar to these examples. The juxtaposition of black and white keys is also present in Scriabin's surging gestures, though the key groups are not so starkly stratified in Scriabin's writing as they are in Messiaen's or Rautavaara's. The left hand's recurring D#-A opposes a black key and a white; and each right hand burst begins on a white key and ends on a black. As a third layer of connection to Rautavaara's "Fire Sermon," this passage by Scriabin intensifies through quasi-sequential use of register.



Example 2.15. Scriabin, Sonata no. 5 in F# major, mm. 9-12.

Scriabin's fifth sonata has been discussed by Jason Stell as representing a cyclical cosmology.[51] In his article correlating the piece to Scriabin's written expressions of his mystical beliefs, Stell quotes Scriabin himself in support of the equivalence of his music and his philosophy: "The purpose of music is revelation. What a powerful way of knowing it is!"[52] Stell

[51] Jason Stell, "Music as Metaphysics: Structure and Meaning in Skryabin's Fifth Piano Sonata," *Journal of Musicological Research* 23 no. 1 (2004), 1-37.
[52] Ibid., 3.

follows James M. Baker in attempting "to trace through [Skryabin's] music programmatic depictions of particular concepts."[53]

Scriabin deploys narratives in his piano music not just to tell a story but to convey (or even proselytize for) abstract philosophical concepts: "Making music a materialization of the occult in sound and a restoration of magical powers so common in antiquity (according to myth and legend), was left for Scriabin to accomplish. Or so, at least, he thought."[54] Scriabin also told his teacher Sabaneeff that his music belonged to the "theurgic arts of lost, ancient, mystic cultures."[55] I suspect that such use of the piano is qualitatively new in Scriabin's work, albeit with likely influence from Wagner. However, Wagner's music-dramas have clearly defined characters and plots, and the leitmotifs are much more concrete than Scriabin's themes in their relatively straight-forward attachments to characters or situations in the drama unfolding onstage. Obvious pianistic predecessors like Liszt's "Deux légendes" are explicitly narrative (and particularly Catholic), but far less abstract: each tells a definite story, and one that would have been well-known to his nineteenth-century audiences at that.

This qualitative distinction – the use of the piano to convey mystical meanings – is Scriabin's most important contribution to the music of Messiaen. This is not necessarily to say that Messiaen was *influenced* by Scriabin's music directly; Messiaen might well have conceived his music in much the same way had he been unfamiliar with the works of Scriabin. I suspect though that Messiaen's heavily symbolic, semantically saturated *Vingt regards* would have had a quite different reception history had audiences not been prepared to some degree by the

[53] Ibid., 6. Stell is referring to James M. Baker, "Scriabin's Music: Structure as Prism for Mystical Philosophy," 53-96 in James M. Baker, David W. Beach, and Jonathan W. Bernard, eds., *Music Theory in Concept and Practice* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 74-5.
[54] Bowers, *The New Scriabin: Enigma and Answers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 107.
[55] Ibid.

ideological if not technical conventions of Scriabin's pianistic mysticizing. Likewise, I suspect that Rautavaara's musical mysticism would have been received quite differently if audience expectations had been unaffected by the music and beliefs of Messiaen.

At an expressive level, there is certainly a resemblance between the works of the three composers. Each composer makes extensive use of materials and techniques that are characteristic of the 20th century, and thus they share a certain modernist aesthetic. Each also seems to be participating in the archetypally sacerdotal role of the artist as conceived by nineteenth-century Romantics. Each has a tendency towards hyperbole, both musical and verbal: I have coined the term "hyperbolic Romantic Transcendentalism" to describe all three composers.

Causality?

The attempt to prove a history of influence between the works of Scriabin, Messiaen, and Rautavaara, is certainly tempting. Messiaen, after all, credits Scriabin directly.[56] Rautavaara, meanwhile, studied at one point with Wladimir Vogel, a former student of Scriabin;[57] and the similarities between Rautavaara's mystic music and Messiaen's could not have been accidental. Rautavaara's study of serialism at Darmstadt in the 1950s could hardly have left him ignorant of Messiaen's piano works.

Despite all of my above emphasis on Rautavaara's music and beliefs, Messiaen's music and beliefs, and Scriabin's music and beliefs, the intentions of these individual human agents may be less relevant than the "general use of typical patterns or templates that are part of the

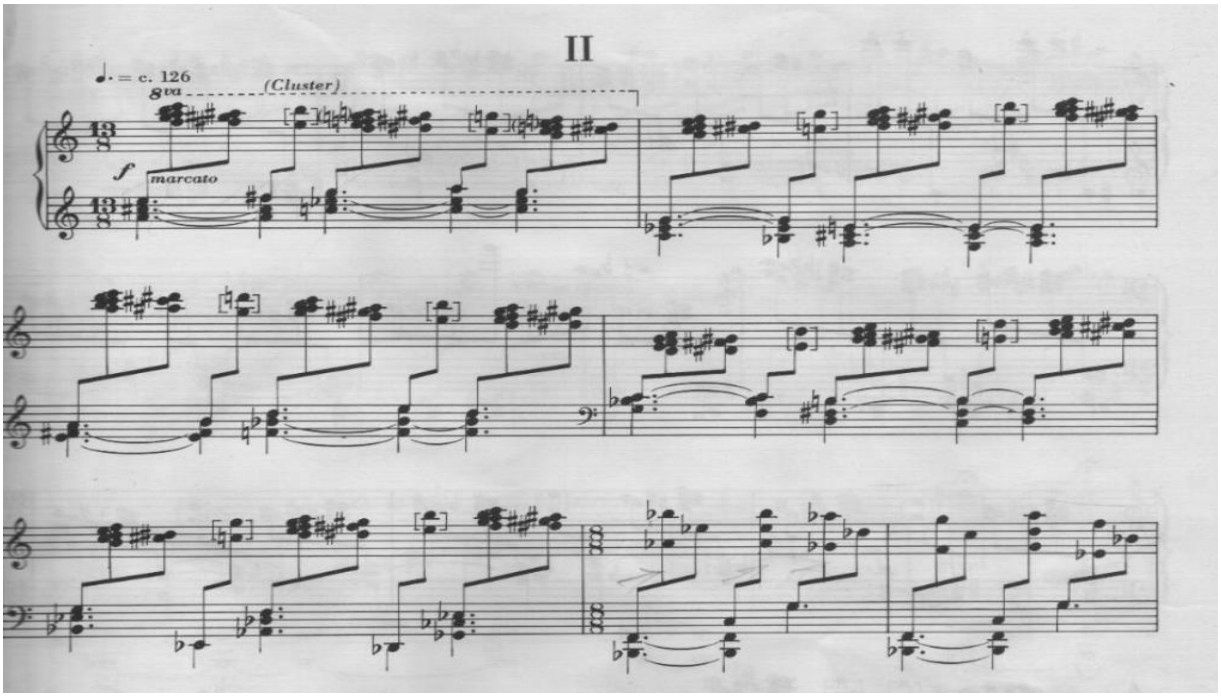
[56] Messiaen, *The Technique*, p. 87.
[57] Aho et al., *Finnish Music*, 90.

anonymous heritage of a stylistic language."[58] It is possible that composers including Scriabin and Messiaen (and probably Liszt), had established a gestural code for hyperbolic Romantic transcendentalism at the piano that functions similarly to the gestural codes established by composers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera.[59] However, the subtleties of issues of influence and imitation may not be particularly important here. For the performer and listener, the phenomenal and conceptual resemblances among these composers matter far more than any proof of direct derivation or theory of influence could.

Macrotext

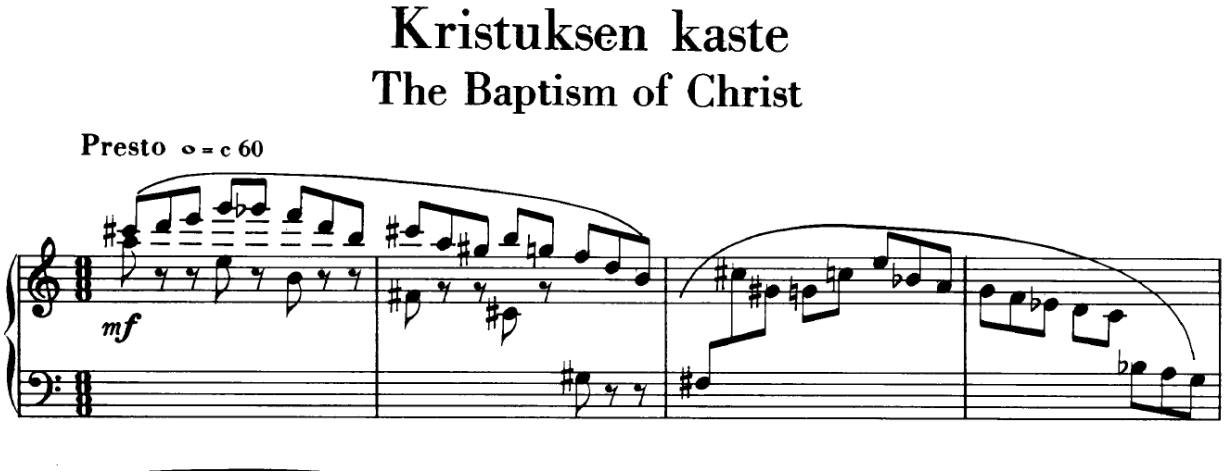
Rautavaara self-references prolifically, almost compulsively, throughout his musical works. I note relationships between the "Fire Sermon" and a number of other piano works, including the first sonata, titled "Christ and the Fishermen," as well as the sets *Icons*, *Etudes, Seven Preludes,* and *Three Symmetrical Preludes.* One of the most striking resemblances among the piano works is between the first movement of the "Fire Sermon" and the the second movement of Rautavaara's other piano sonata, "Christ and the Fishermen." The piece opens as a *toccata* in 13/8, arranged symmetrically as 3+2+3+2+3. This meter lasts only five measures before becoming 8/8, arranged symmetrically as 3+2+3. The tonal material makes reference to octatonic 0-1, especially in the left hand; the left hand's pitches in the first measure are C-C#-Eb-E-F#-G-A. Only a Bb is missing to complete the octatonic collection.

[58] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 196-7. See discussion in Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 62.
[59] See Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,1996), xiii.



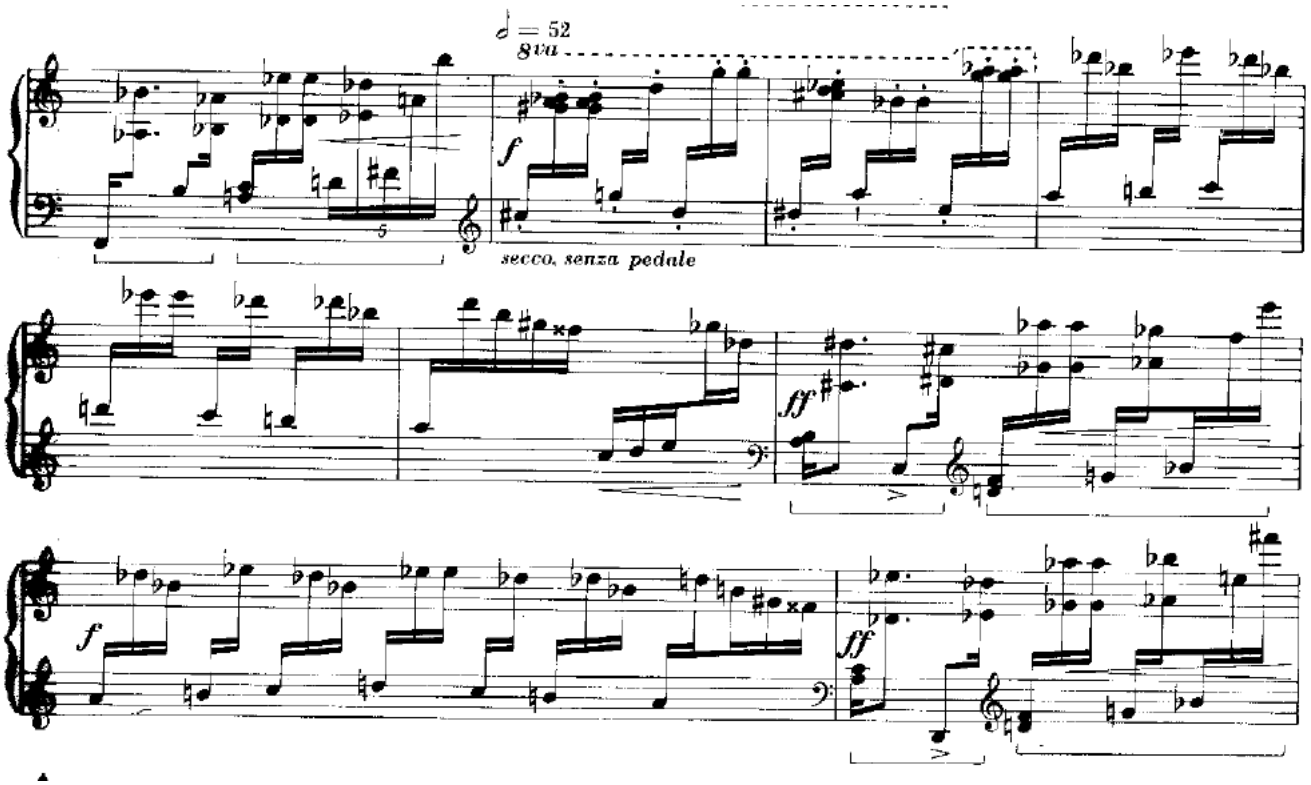
Example 2.16. Rautavaara, Sonata #1, "Christ and the Fishermen," second movement, mm. 1-7.

Material in 8/8 time, arranged as 3+2+3, is also present in *Icons*, in the piece titled "The Baptism of Christ." As in the first movement of the "Fire Sermon" and the second movement of "Christ and the Fishermen," the left hand notes of the figuration fall on the accented beats.



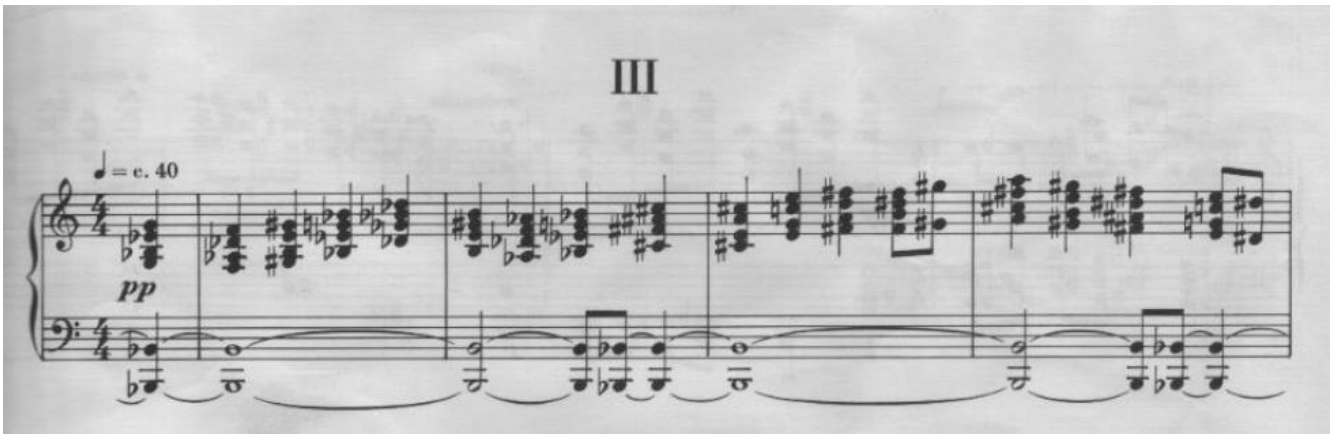
Example 2.17. "The Baptism of Christ," opening: 3+2+3.

Finally, the first of the *Seven Preludes* affords an example of a similar meter, but in a more complex configuration. No time signature is notated, and rhythmic groupings change constantly; but a number of them are some combination of groups of 3 eighth notes and groups of 2, with the left-hand note accented. Rautavaara's paradoxical expression marking for the prelude is "elastically hammering."



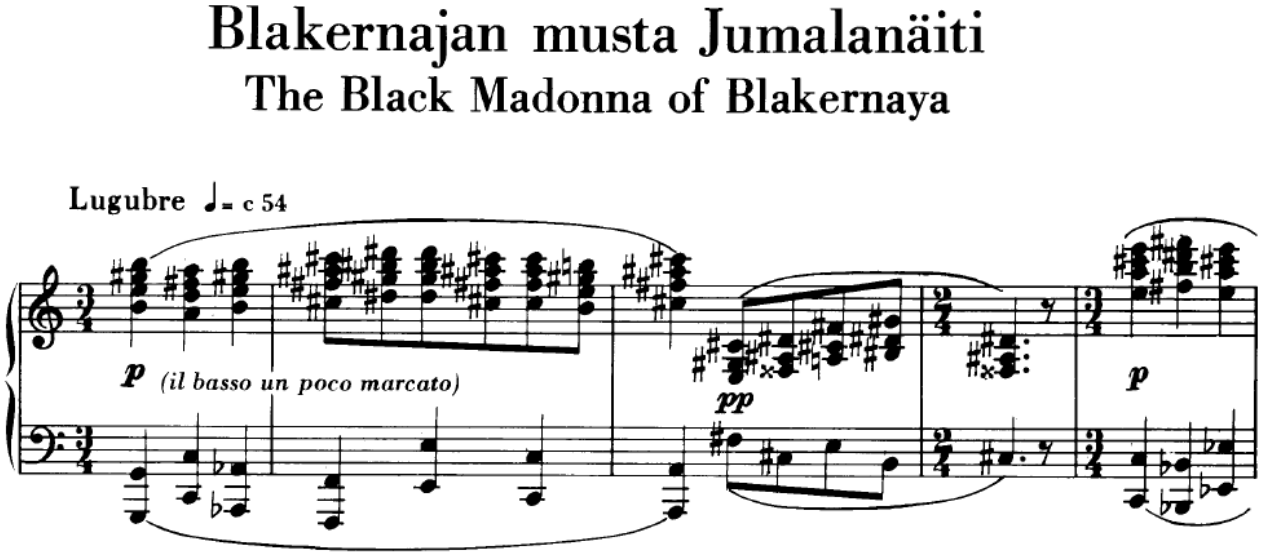
Example 2.18. Seven Preludes, *no. 1, m. 4ff.*

Chorale topics are also to be found in a number of Rautavaara's piano pieces. The third movement of "Christ and the Fishermen" opens by planing inverted triads. The melodic note of each triad is derived from octatonic 0-1; likewise the root of each triad. Rautavaara's triadic deployment of octatonic is thus extremely similar here to his deployment of the same in the first movement of the "Fire Sermon" (see example 1.32).



Example 2.19. Rautavaara, "Christ and the Fishermen," third movement, mm. 1-4.

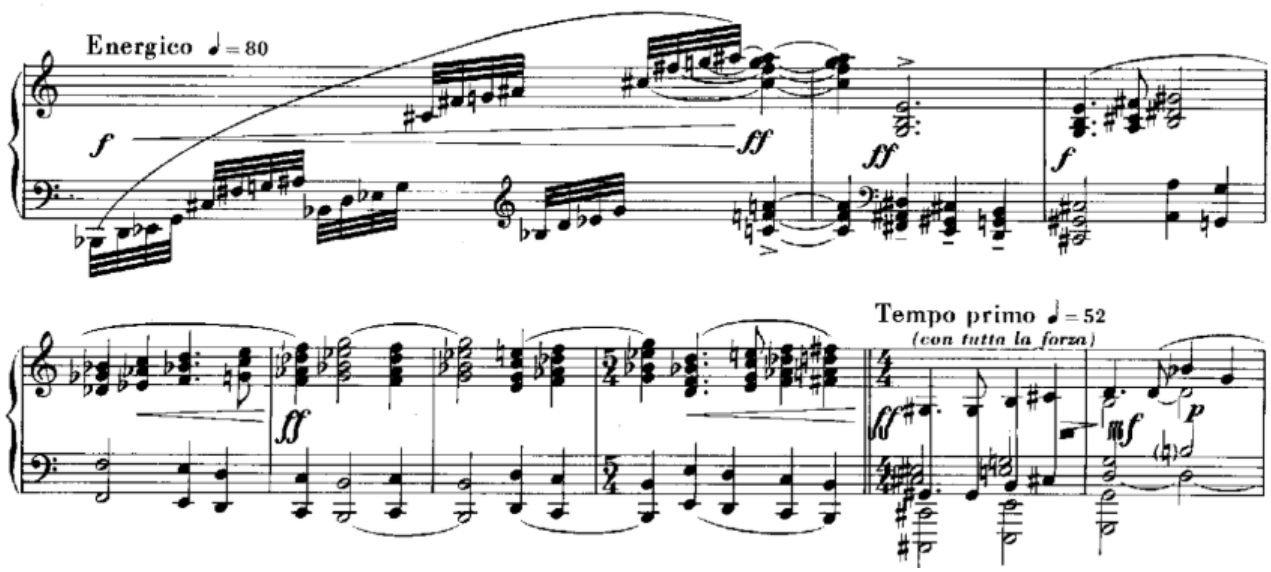
A chorale topic account is also foregrounded in one of the *Icons*, "The Black Madonna of Blakernaya." The approximately bitonal chorale planes inverted triads in the right hand, against which the bass moves in predominantly contrary motion.



Example 2.20. Rautavaara, Icons*, "The Black Madonna of Blakernaya," opening.*

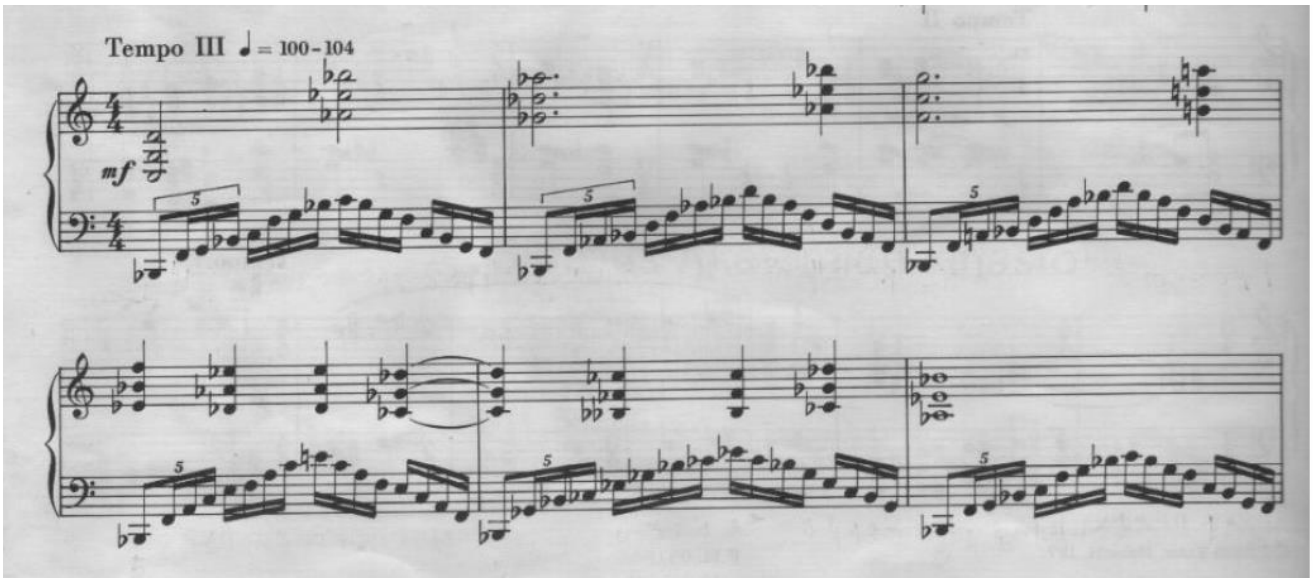
The resemblance to the "Fire Sermon" second movement, m. 12-17, is striking. The example

from *Icons* even adumbrates the whole-tone scale found in the chorale topic of the second movement of the "Fire Sermon" second movement. Additionally, the *Icons* example includes pentatonic coloration like that found at the opening of the second movement of the "Fire Sermon."



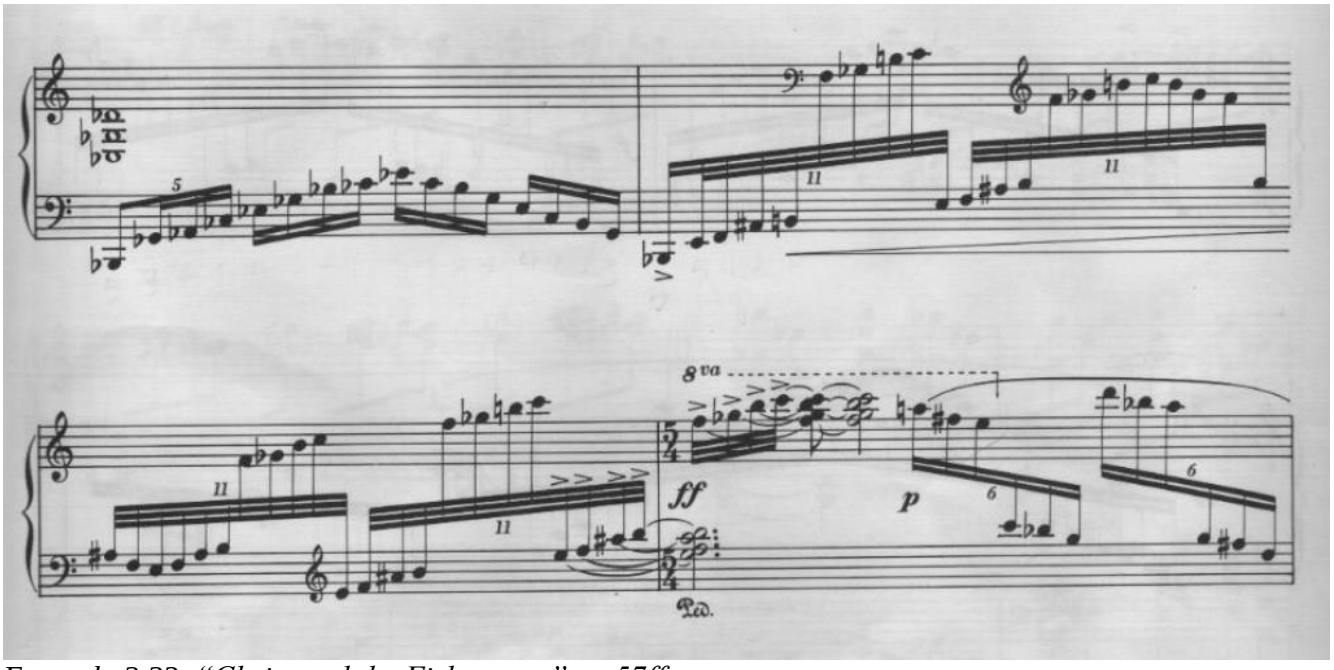
Example 2.21. "Fire Sermon," mm. 11-19.

The first movement of "Christ and the Fishermen" includes a left-hand accompaniment that is strikingly similar to the arpeggiations in the first movement of the "Fire Sermon" at m. 97 (see example 1.34).



Example 2.22. "Christ and the Fishermen," first movement, m. 48ff.

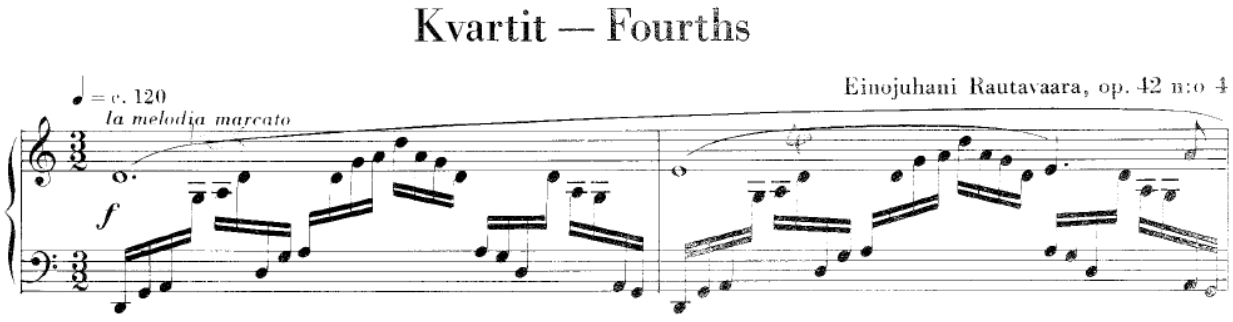
This accompaniment grows throughout the section. By its climax it has come to resemble the accompaniment in the "Fire Sermon" sonata in the second movement at m. 25ff (see example 1.42).



Example 2.23. "Christ and the Fishermen," m. 57ff.

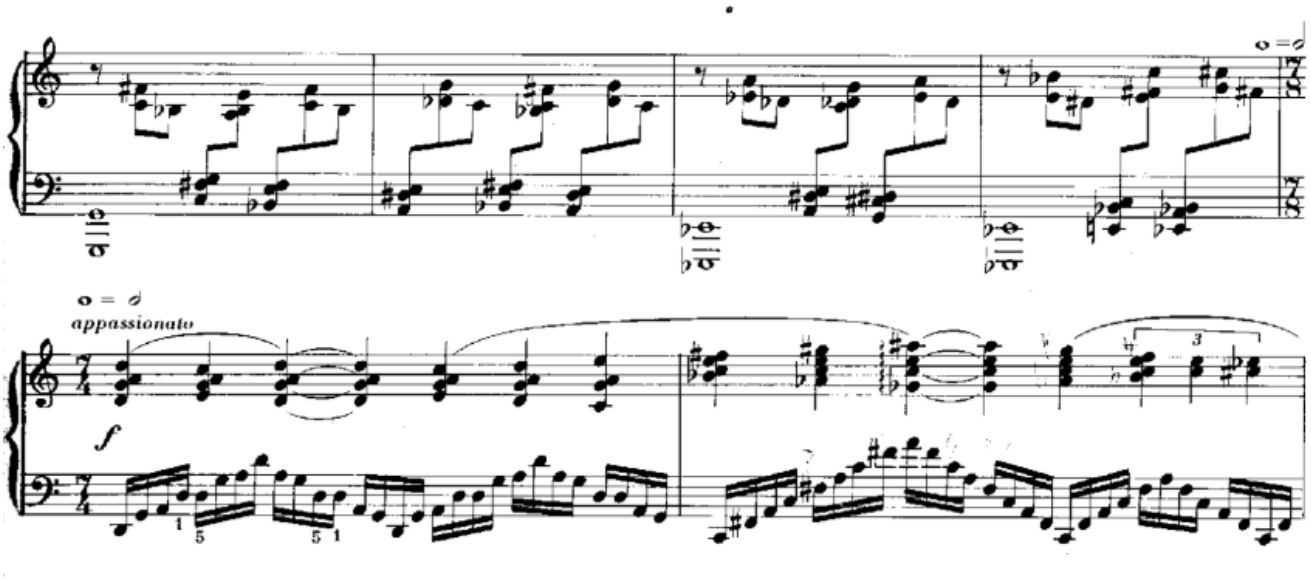
A noteworthy harmonic feature of example 2.23 is one that I have looked for and not found in the "Fire Sermon," namely the presence of z-cells.[60] In m. 57 of the first movement of "Christ and the Fishermen," the left hand plays Bb-E-F-B, and the right hand plays F-Gb-B-C.

Another accompanimental pattern is found through several of Rautavaara's works. The etude titled "Fourths" utilizes an accompanimental pattern strikingly similar to one in the first movement of the "Fire Sermon." This accompaniment is split between the hands, unlike the similar passage in the "Fire Sermon." However, both passages use the same pitch classes (a quartal configuration or pentatonic scale built on D) in the same octave, and are symmetrical about the axis G#.



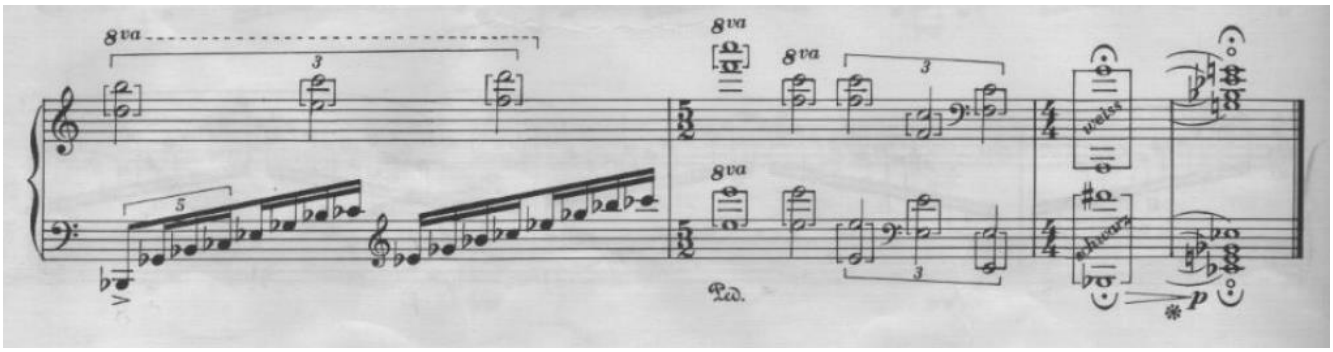
Example 2.24. "Fourths," opening.

[60] The term "z-cell" was coined by George Perle, but primarily described in the work of Elliott Antokoletz. Z-cells consist of tritones a half step apart, e.g. C-F#-G-C#. Z-cells are a major component of the music of Bartók, and also feature in the works of Schoenberg and Berg. Berg's Piano Sonata op. 1 opens on the melodic notes G-C-F#, with a C# in the bass on the downbeat. See Elliott Antokoletz, "The Musical Language of Bartók's 14 Bagatelles for Piano," *Tempo* New Series no. 137 (June, 1981), 8-16.



Example 2.24. "Fire Sermon," first movement, mm. 92-97.

Even one of the most unusual features of the "Fire Sermon" has been recycled from "Christ and the Fishermen." Like the third movement of the "Fire Sermon" sonata, the first movement of "Christ and the Fishermen" ends on a silently retaken sonority after large clusters. Example 2.25, from "Christ and the Fishermen," also includes in m. 72 the juxtaposition of black ("schwarz") and white ("weiss") clusters that is familiar from the "Fire Sermon."



Example 2.25. "Christ and the Fishermen," mm. 70b-73.

The two sonatas and the set of etudes were composed within a year of each other –

"Christ and the Fishermen" and *Etudes* in 1969, and the "Fire Sermon" in 1970. Some similarities between the pieces could reasonably be expected. *Icons* on the other hand was composed a good bit earlier, in 1955, when Rautavaara was a young student in New York; and the *Seven Preludes* in 1956.

It is tempting to claim a filial relation between the two sonatas: that "Christ and the Fishermen," being written first, is the source material ("hypotext," in Gerard Genette's terms) from which the "Fire Sermon" derives (as "hypertext," per Genette).[61] That is, the "Fire Sermon" has taken material from the earlier sonata and transformed it. Sini Rautavaara, the composer's wife, encourages the idea of a relationship between the sonatas: "The mystery and the awe of the first sonata seem in the second sonata to have changed into a view charged with pessimism, a continual vain struggle."[62] The composer corroborates: "The mysticism and devotion of the First Sonata have here given way to pessimism, to a repeated and frustrating struggle."[63]

However, I would describe the relationship of the two sonatas as fraternal rather than filial: fancifully put, the two sonatas may be thought of as the two unruly children of the much earlier *Icons.* As with the resemblances between Rautavaara's music and that of Scriabin and Messiaen, what ultimately matters is almost certainly not the etiology of the resemblance, but the resemblance itself and what it may signify.

What, then, do these resemblances between Rautavaara's piano works signify? One possible answer is that the resemblances signify nothing: that Rautavaara is simply deploying a compositional language that he has developed, and that noting similarities between respective

[61] For discussion of these terms, see Allen, *Intertextuality*, 104-107.
[62] Sini Rautavaara, notes to "Einojuhani Rautavaara: Works for Piano," Izumi Tateno, Ondine 710-2 CD, 1987.
[63] Einojuhani Rautavaara, quoted in liner notes to "Einojuhani Rautavaara: Works for Piano," Laura Mikkola, Naxos 8.554292, 1999.

deployments of the same pianistic vocabulary is little more productive than tabulating instances of Alberti bass in the piano works of Mozart. And yet, this explanation seems intuitively unsatisfactory. One of the topics in common between the first sonata, the second sonata, and the *Icons* is the meaning-laden chorale-topic. That three major piano works are religiously titled and prominently include a topic with strong religious connotations can hardly be a coincidence. The following chapter will explore the meaning of this topic for the "Fire Sermon," as well as the sonata's other invitations to narrative interpretation.

Chapter 3:
Narrative Structure, Program, and Meaning

"Fire worship wasn't the dumbest thing ever invented," he murmured to himself.
- Hermann Hesse[64]

Art, following the decay of magic, has taken upon itself the transmission of images to posterity.
-Adorno[65]

The goal of this chapter is to explore possible narrative interpretations of Rautavaara's "Fire Sermon" Sonata in light of its suggestive title, topics, thematic unfolding, and formal discontinuities. I will discuss the sonata's narrative properties at two formal levels, one in which each movement can be taken as an instantiation of a narrative archetype, and one in which the sonata as a whole embodies a larger, overarching mythic or mystic narrative. My narratological analysis will be guided by theories of musical narrativity and myth in the works of Byron Almén and Victoria Adamenko, respectively. I will also make use of two excellent studies, by Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam and Wojciech Stępień, on musical meaning specific to Rautavaara.

I will furthermore set forth the program that I have discovered for the sonata's second movement: the composer's repeated and detailed descriptions of his early mystic experience *en route* to a monastery at Valamo. Over the course of this chapter I will also attempt to compile the sonata's paratext: the associations invoked by the title, relevant interviews with Rautavaara, and other sources. I will also contribute to this paratext by describing my own network of associations with the sonata. This associative network includes poetry of T.S. Eliot, Edwin Muir, and Czesław Miłosz; prose of Thomas Mann; piano works of Scriabin and Messiaen; and an occasional movie or video game. Although the composer may have known some of these works,

[64] Hermann Hesse, *Demian: A Dual-Language Book*, trans. and ed. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 2002), 147.
[65] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (New York: Verso, 2005), 226.

I do not claim that these associations were in the composer's mind, or that any were hypotexts in Genette's sense.[66] Some of these are explicitly anachronistic; I include them simply because they may be useful to the perplexed listener or performer, as they have been to me, in providing paratextual support for interpretation.

The Composer's (Complicated) Authority

Rautavaara has invited hermeneutic discussion by providing the piece with such a connotation-laden title, but in various writings and interviews he has also downplayed the importance of his titles' meanings. Per Stępień, Rautavaara "has emphasized that his music has no program, story, or fixed imagery," but he "has nevertheless provided a large number of commentaries to his works in which he explains their titles with reference to literature, paintings, and philosophy."[67] Samuli Tikkaja's pithy understatement is that Rautavaara's music is "often at least mildly programmatic."[68]

On the one hand, Rautavaara explains that "the impulse for a work often comes from some text with a strong atmosphere. The text may be just a couple of words, like 'fire sermon,' 'angel of light,' or 'annunciation.' The words are often used as the title for the piece born around them."[69] On the other hand, Rautavaara defensively states: ". . .the information in music is very exact, but it is not expressible in words, in concepts. It is another reality, a very exact reality, but it has nothing to do with this reality, and it can not be expressed in terms of this reality."[70] In this sense the titles may be just evocative rather than programmatic, connotative rather than

[66] See discussion in Allen, *Intertextuality*, 104-8.
[67] Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 85.
[68] Ibid., 85.
[69] See Einojuhani Rautavaara, "Seven Questions for Einojuhani Rautavaara," *Highlights* 22 (2007): 7. See also Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 84.
[70] Ibid., 81.

denotative, atmospheric rather than determinants of form or content.

Rautavaara may then be (understandably) resistant to the *reduction* of his music to mere program, or the forcing of his music's *meaning* into a single (or simple) *narrative:* "This music seems to be clearly epic in tone; it is a 'narrative continuum.' But if the narrative could be transformed into words, it would tell about this reality, and that is not the case; these works do not have a 'program.' They are absolute music by a composer whose mindscape has been crossed by strong, archetypical [sic] associations. . ."[71]

There may be no simple explanation for the correlation between titles and pieces, since Rautavaara himself appears to have been paradoxically both resistant to programmatic interpretation and volubly encouraging of it. The situation is not unlike that of Gustav Mahler in relation to his own music, with programs omitted or lengthily expounded at the whim of the composer. Perhaps for Rautavaara as for Mahler there is a certain anxiety in revealing a program – a fear of being misunderstood, a fear of being taken too literally, or a fear of being pigeon-holed as a "programmatic" and therefore less serious or authentic composer.

Rautavaara would not be the first composer to have been coy about the highly personal programmatic content of his works. Rautavaara's music, however, communicates meaning in its own way: "Central to Rautavaara's mystical beliefs is the conviction that the composer as a 'messenger' helps the passage of messages from a realm beyond this world, concretizing it in his music, which is then transformed into a message for other people during performance."[72] In Rautavaara's own words (in interview with Robert Reilly), "I am not the father or mother of my music but a mediator helping it down from somewhere where it already exists. . . . What the

[71] Einojuhani Rautavaara, quoted in Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels,* 104.
[72] Ibid., 89.

music tells you to do, you have to do."[73] Rautavaara's finding an external Other as source for his music is not unlike Scriabin's finding an internal Other:

> [Scriabin] always expected music to arrive spontaneously, although it did not always do so, emanating as he thought it did from some source within himself. He would ultimately call this source his "HE," as if his soul were inhabited by someone else, an even mightier creator.[74]

In either description, music *arrives* and has a will of its own.

In espousing these mystic beliefs about his own compositional process, Rautavaara may have abdicated what authority he as composer could have claimed about interpretation of his works. If Rautavaara considers himself not to be an author in a traditional sense but a transcriber of metaphysically pre-existing music, then he as composer is merely a medium. I am not sure whether the composer so conceived can claim authority to dictate the perceived meaning of work that he claims not to have created, or to insist that its meaning must remain unspoken or undescribed by critics, audiences, and performers. Few modern critics would cede absolute authority to an author or composer in any case,[75] but if Rautavaara himself rejects what Barthes calls "the myth of filiation," then we may proceed to narrative interpretations with relatively few qualms about the composer's authority.

"Narrative"

That the "Fire Sermon" sonata can be described as narrative is hardly a great insight in

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[73] Robert Reilly, "Einojuhani Rautavaara: The Composer of Angels," in *Surprised by Beauty: A Listener's Guide to the Recovery of Modern Music*, https://books.google.com/books?id=oFVgDAAAQBAJ&pg=PT396&lpg=PT396&dq=rautavaara+valamo&source=bl&ots=qWE2TstR6I&sig=8s2eVKcF6KqeruLEiaR5e0zj7Os&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjozsLSmfzcAhVLKawKHfIeDFsQ6AEwB3oECAEQAQ#v=onepage&q=rautavaara%20valamo&f=false (accessed Aug. 20th, 2018)

[74] Bowers, *The New Scriabin*, 48.

[75] See discussion in Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 505ff; and Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 142-148 in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. and. ed. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

itself. “Narrative,” Sivuoja-Gunaratnam tells us, “is not a conclusion”;[76] I take this to be true in two senses. First of all, “narrative” can be defined so broadly as to be applied to virtually any coherent musical work: almost any sonata or character piece could fit. If any piece, or practically any piece not meticulously crafted to avoid narrative implications – Messiaen’s “Mode de valeurs et d’intensités,” aleatory works of John Cage, examples of “moment-form” in Boulez or Stockhausen – can be called “narrative,” then the application of the term is virtually meaningless.

Sivuoja-Gunaratnam effectively formulates the problem in her *Narrating with Twelve Tones*:

> Narrativity is viewed in this study as an innate human response to being in the world and a way of processing mental content, experiences, and the like. This situation applies to music, too, for musical narrativity permeates the Western musical tradition, and its absence is rare. But if almost all music is narrative, then how can narrativity be other than a trivial concept?[77]

The same problem is posed by Carolyn Abbate: "Broad definitions of narrative . . . are so broad as to enable almost all music, all parts of any given work, to be defined as narrative.”[78] It may be better to replace a generalized, qualitative claim about narrativity in the “Fire Sermon” with a stronger, quantitative one: *Rautavaara’s second sonata exhibits narrativity to an extraordinary degree.*

Second, “narrative is not a conclusion” in the sense that it is not an end but a beginning of a particular type of exploration. To quote again from the work of Sivuoja-Gunaratnam:

> It is simply not very interesting whether something – a piece of music, a literary work, a dance performance, a painting – is conceived as narrative. The really interesting questions concerning narrative of any kind are...how the narrative is constructed, how its boundaries are defined, how it is mediated, how the

[76] Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones: Einojuhani Rautavaara’s First Serial Period (ca. 1957-1965)* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1997), 138.
[77] Ibid., 137.
[78] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xi. See also ibid., 28 and 45-6.

> subjective identities become transformed, how time is manipulated. What counts is the elaboration of the narrative model and its skillful application.[79]

Thus, it is important to go beyond merely labeling a work as narrative. The analyst must explore the deployment of the narrative, its relative complexity, and the specific interactions, manipulations, developments, and discontinuities that constitute the piece's semantic content.

We are aided in this task by the work of Almén,[80] who (following Vera Micznik) encourages us to look at *degrees* of narrativity. If we can describe virtually all music in the *qualitative* category of "narrative" – reducing the meaning of "narrative" then to something much more like "coherent" – we can still at least make the sort of *quantitative* distinctions that allow us to hear Liszt's Sonata, for instance, as a meaningfully more narrative work than any given sonata by Scarlatti.

Accepting then Sivuoja-Gunaratnam's assertion that "narrativity" as a binary category is less important than the specific contents of any given piece, and Almén's insight (following Micznik) that narrativity admits of a wide range of quantitative distinction, we may be able to discuss Rautavaara's second sonata as a substantially narrative work.

For purposes of the present discussion, we can simply disambiguate the adjectives "narrative" and "programmatic": "Narrative" will refer to the total effect of structural elements (agential themes and discontinuities, topics and tropes) and the phenomenal experience of a cohesion linking the music as a whole. "Programmatic" will refer to the presence of a script for the music, a verbal story written by the composer, that correlates to the music. All three movements of the "Fire Sermon" sonata are narrative to a high degree; only the second

[79] Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 138.
[80] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 120. See also Vera Micznik, "Music and Narrative Revisited: Degrees of Narrativity in Beethoven and Mahler," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 126 no. 2 (2001), 193-249.

movement is in this sense programmatic.

Invitations to Narrative Interpretation

Several strands of evidence converge to indicate that Rautavaara's second sonata invites, if not necessitates, a narrative interpretation; the sonata is complex in its narrative deployment, and quantitatively quite high in factors indicating narrativity. The most obvious indicator of these qualities is the sonata's evocative title, "The Fire Sermon." Umberto Eco discusses in the postscript to *The Name of the Rose* the inescapable importance of titles:

> A title, unfortunately, is in itself a key to interpretation. We cannot escape the notions prompted by *The Red and the Black* or *War and Peace*. . . .The title [*The Name of the Rose*] rightly disoriented the reader, who was unable to choose just one interpretation. . . . A title must muddle the reader's ideas, not regiment them.[81]

"Regimented" readings of Rautavaara's title might make the listener attempt to correlate them to the famous sermon of Buddha, or to the well-known section of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* titled in reference to Buddha's sermon. Perhaps in order to prevent such a literal reading, the composer's wife, Sini Rautavaara, demurs as to the specificity of these associations: "There is no apparent connection between this title and the poem by T.S. Eliot or the sermon by Buddha; Rautavaara was attracted by the phrase – he felt it contained a magic and a mystery that asked to be transposed into music."[82]

The title then is an instance of mythology in Barthes's sense, in that it is defined by its intention rather than its literal meaning;[83] or in the sense that its semantic meaning is stolen, only

[81] Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (San Diego: Harcourt, 1983), 505-6.
[82] Sini Rautavaara, notes to *Einojuhani Rautavaara: Works for Piano*.
[83] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (Hill and Wang: New York), 124.

to be restored by the music.[84] In any case, the title is not nearly so securely withdrawn as to obviate the need for programmatic interpretation. Rautavaara's choice of title indicates an intent laden with meaning, and calculated to evoke strong literary associations; even if these associations are atmospheric, gestural, or ethical rather than some sort of isomorphic correspondence between text and music. Even if we set Buddha and Eliot aside entirely, we need to ask at least how the phrase's "magic and mystery" is represented by the music.

A second strand of evidence comes from generalization across Rautavaara's piano music. The vast majority of his output for piano is titled. Both sonatas bear programmatic titles, as does third piano concerto, titled "Gift of Dreams." The second piano concerto has no overall title, but its first movement is labeled *"In viaggio*" ["traveling"] and its third "*Uccelli sulle passioni*" ["birds on the passions"]. The set *Icons* consists of character pieces which are ekphrases of icons that Rautavaara saw in a specific collection:[85] "Once again, let the icons be painted, this time in music."[86] Among the large piano works, only the first concerto and the set of etudes are without programmatic titles.

Aho, et al., extend this claim to Rautavaara's total output:

> The romantic, mystical aspect of Rautavaara's personality is reflected in the titles of many of his compositions, such as the piano sonata *Tulisaarna* (The Fire Sermon; 1970) and the unusual *True and False Unicorn* (1971) for choir and chamber orchestra, the orchestral work *Angels and Visitations* (1978), the organ concerto *Annunciations* (1977) and the concerto for double bass *Angel of Dusk* (1980), while the extensive, two-part *Vigilia* (1971-72) interprets Orthodox mysticism in a highly personal and impressive manner.[87]

If this generalization holds across Rautavaara's *oeuvre* – and a glance at these and other titles

[84] Ibid., 125.
[85] See discussion in Eila Tarasti, "Icons in Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Icons, Suite for Piano,*" 549-62 in *Musical Semiotics Revisited*, ed. Tarasti (International Semiotics Institute, 2003).
[86] The quotation is from Rautavaara's notes to the performer in the score of *Icons*, on an unnumbered page in the back.
[87] Aho, et al., *Finnish Music*, 124.

seems enough to support such a claim – then Rautavaara's compositional output tends to be laden with extramusical connotations.

Finally, and most importantly: the phenomenal experience of the second sonata seems to demand a programmatic interpretation. It tells, or is, a story. Robert Scholes defines narrative as ". . . the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time."[88] Certainly within the phenomenal unfolding of a piece of music, relation by time is evident; and I would say that in response to Rautavaara's sonata an intuition of connectedness by subject matter is almost inescapable. As listeners, we are unable to enter into a detached mode of listening:[89] we ask questions as we go, whether or not they are initially well-articulated; we try to find explanations for the strange emotional outpouring that we have experienced; we try to find the thread of continuity that will guide us through the labyrinth; in short, we instinctively engage in a hermeneutic response upon hearing music this unusual.

My immediate reaction upon hearing the piece was confusion: "What just happened?" However, it was clear to me that even if I did not understand what had happened, something had indeed occurred; events had taken place. It was not difficult to articulate what had created this impression: the form made no sense at all on its own; themes from the first movement recurred prominently in the second movement and third; stark discontinuities created a strong sense of fragmentation. And yet, the work cohered in some way: a drama or narrative had unfolded, and, though I could not articulate how, it all made sense.

The perplexity with which I first experienced the sonata did not resolve when I first learned and performed the piece, but instead deepened. I felt strongly that I as the piece's

[88] Robert Scholes, "Language, Narrative, and Anti-Narrative," *Critical Inquiry* 7 no. 1 (Autumn, 1980), 209.
[89] See Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: 43, referencing Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 288.

performer needed to grasp the thread of this sonata, to understand its coherence myself in order to convey it successfully to listeners. The discussion that follows is an attempt at articulating my discoveries in preparing an effective performance.

The Title and the First Movement

First, let us look briefly where we have been told not to: the eponymous sermon by Buddha and poem by T.S. Eliot. "The Fire Sermon" as a Buddhist text is found in the Pali canon which is the basis for Theraveda Buddhism.[90] In this sermon the Buddha likens attachment to burning:

> All is burning. And what is the all that is burning? The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning. . . . Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion. I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.[91]

In his notes to *The Waste Land*, Eliot compares the Buddha's sermon to the Christian "Sermon on the Mount" not in terms of content, but in terms of importance.[92] At the conclusion of the section entitled "Fire Sermon," Eliot consciously[93] enmeshes words of the Buddha with words of St. Augustine, as synthesis of Eastern and Western asceticism:

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

[90] Theravada, which is predicated upon the Pali canon, is in some sources referred to as "Hinayana," but this term is subtly pejorative. "Hinayana," as "lesser vehicle [of salvation]," is contrasted with "Mahayana," "greater vehicle of salvation." Mahayana Buddhism is based on the Buddhist canon of texts in Sanskrit, and includes Tibetan Buddhism and Zen.
[91] Siddhartha Gautama, "The Fire Sermon," Access to Insight https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.028.nymo.html (accessed August 13, 2018).
[92] Eliot, "Notes on *The Waste Land*," in Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (Penguin: New York, 1998), 74.
[93] Ibid., 74.

burning[94]

What could the Buddha's condemnation of sensory attachment and Eliot's poetic pastiche have to do with Rautavaara's sonata? The connection to Buddha is certainly unintuitive; Rautavaara's sonata does contain a great deal of burning (as I discuss further below), but as a work addressed to the sense of hearing, it would itself probably earn the Buddha's censure. I do not hear in Rautavaara's sonata anything that sounds like condemnation or advocacy for asceticism. I cannot hear the Rautavaara as a sermon *about* fire – but rather as a sermon *of* fire, as if delivered from a burning bush or the column of fire.

As for Eliot's poem, I can find no meaningful connections to Rautavaara's sonata that are not plausibly explained by coincidence. Perhaps the sense of futility and fracture in the lines quoted above could be understood to correspond to the abortive, thwarted return of A in the sonata's second movement. This connection seems weak, however, and such fracture and pastiche is not unique to the sonata or to the poem. Fragmentation is deployed quite similarly in Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men," where lines from the *Pater Noster* are truncated until they transform into a fatalistic parody of a children's song:

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.[95]

[94] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, lines 308-11. The paragraph breaks are the author's.
[95] Eliot, "The Hollow Men," V.

It seems then that Sini Rautavaara has not led us astray: despite the obvious apparent references of the title, it is difficult to see how the sonata could correspond to its literary namesakes in any isomorphic way.

What then, does the title evoke? In what sense are the words of the title translated into music, and how should that inform our interpretation, whether as listeners or as performers? Let's take each of the title's words individually before treating them as conjoined:

Fire

If we search the piece for what may be musical representations of fire, a glance at the first movement will suffice to locate several possible instances. The opening measures' low rumblings in 8/8 time with jagged upward surges connote fire to me. (See discussion on p. 66.) The continuation of this material into the second theme, as accompaniment, may be meant to depict the dance of flame receding briefly into the background. The massive, volcanic explosion at m. 79 is certainly intended to be perceived as fiery.

What sort of fire is this? Is this fire the intensity of sensuality, relating it to the Buddha? The torment of hellfire, a destructive blaze, a purifying glow? I don't think that any of these fit. I hear Rautavaara's fire-depiction as being more metaphysical and symbolic – perhaps the fire that Goethe calls "the creative blazes,"[96] the fire of primordial creation.

The fire might be a separation between human and divine worlds. Quoting Czesław Miłosz upon his wife's cremation:

[96] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Anchor Books, 1961. "Envisage the creative blazes / Instead of rummaging in phrases" is Walter Kaufmann's somewhat free but effective translation of *Faust* part 1, lines 394-5. The German reads "Schau alle Wirkenskraft und Samen / Und tu nicht mehr in Worten kramen."

Beyond the fire-curtain,
A lamb stands in the meadow of the immutable forms.[97]

or again:

–All form – says Baudelaire –
Even the one created by man,
Is immortal. There was once an artist
Faithful and hard working. His workshop
Together with all he had painted, burned down.
He himself was executed. Nobody has heard of him.
Yet his paintings remain. On the other side of fire.[98]

Finally, this fire could be the symbol of the irruption of divinity into the world; quoting another poem by T.S. Eliot, which layers the descent of a dove at Christ's baptism with images from a night-time air raid in World War II-era London:

The dove descending fills the air
with flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.[99]

This fire of irrupting divinity might also connote the burning bush of Exodus 3 as a locus for the presence of God. As a symbolic source from which the voice of God can speak, this last image may prove especially useful to explicating Rautavaara's sonata, since it is such a familiar and powerful meeting-point of "fire" and "sermon."

Sermon

The chorale texture that occurs at several points in the sonata certainly bears religious connotations, and thus could be meant to represent a sermon. The term "sermon" typically

[97] Czesław Miłosz, "On Parting with my Wife, Janina," in Czesław Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)*, trans. Robert Hass (New York: Ecco, 2003), 469.
[98] Miłosz, "At Yale," ibid., 517.
[99] T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets.* Little Gidding, IV, lines 200-3.

implies one speaker, whereas "chorale" of course implies many voices, but I think that the chorale may be understood as a single agency singing a sacred exhortation. Alternatively, the "chorale" texture could be understood to be one voice amplified by surrounding triads, a collective voicing-together that is not unlike the grand concatenation of voices used to represent the voice of God in Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron.* In the sonata's second movement, the right-hand chords planing through the B section certainly suggest a single agency: the planing seems to imply a single voice augmented, rather than the multiplicity of voices that would be implied by equivalent counterpoint. The material that I have identified as a chorale topic (especially in measure 78ff of the first movement) enters in the first movement as the melody of a homophonic texture (m. 52). Though this melody could be considered to be planing along with the left hand chords, the melody is moving twice as fast as the bass; and is registrally far enough apart that I hear the melody is quite distinct from the remainder of the texture.

An outgrowth of this melody at m. 73 provides a symmetrical bassline that is close enough to the melody to be heard in more direct relation. I conceive of this bassline not as a second independent voice, but as a doubling in mirror image (as at m. 83ff). When this theme recurs in the third movement of the sonata, at m. 66, it is again presented with its melody registrally distinct from the bassline. The possibility of a chorus representing a single narrator or commentator is strengthened by the cultural proximity to Rautavaara of Sibelius's "Kullervo" Symphony, with its male chorus in unison.[100] Sibelius was an influence on the young Rautavaara, so a direct connection may in fact be possible.

[100] Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, especially that of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (Suomen Muiikitieteellinen Seura, Helsinki: 1978), 252.

The Fire Sermon

If the symmetrical 8/8 material represents fire, and the melodic material that enters at m. 52 is oratorical (at m. 79 it becomes a grand chorale), then at m. 52 we have a trope produced by the productive tension of these two topics. We have, in short, a fire sermon. If the fire sermon seems understated at m. 52, or is presented too subtly to be a truly productive trope (since the chorale-theme has not yet become a chorale), then at m. 79 a blazing oratory should be clear. Cascades of flame descend in rapid right-hand scales on octatonic 0-1, while the left hand plays sententious triads. Something here is being mightily orated through the flames. Furthermore, as noted above, Rautavaara's concatenation of "fire," again represented by driving octatonic scales, and "sermon," represented by cyclical return of the chorale theme, recurs in the third movement at m. 66. The first movement and the third are thus strongly related, which must have significant implications for any programmatic reading of the piece.

Can we know what it is that is being said? I suspect that we cannot; without extensive further information from the composer, ascribing a clear, denotative meaning to the voice or voices intoning here seems impossible. It is not so important that we know what the linguistic content here might be, as long as we are aware *that* someone is mightily orating through these gestures.

There are a few literary correlates for titanic but humanly incomprehensible narrations. One of these is found in the chapter "Mynheer Peeperkorn (Conclusion)" in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*.[101] A party has ventured from the sanitarium in which they dwell to a waterfall that is a local attraction.

[101] I do not necessarily consider this analogy to have been Rautavaara's intent, though he did have at least some familiarity with the works of Thomas Mann. In interview with Reilly, Rautavaara alludes to Mann's famous essay on Wagner. See Reilly, "Einojuhani Rautavaara: Composer of Angels."

> Mynheer desired to eat in sight, in thunderous hearing of the waterfall, it was his mighty will. Who did not wish to go hungry must acquiesce. . . . Peeperkorn sat with his coat collar turned up and his hat on the ground beside him, drinking port out of a monogrammed silver cup, which he emptied many times. And suddenly he began to speak. Extraordinary man! It was impossible for him to hear his own voice, still more for the others to catch a syllable of what he let transpire without its in the least transpiring. But with the wine cup in his right hand, he raised his forefinger, stretching his left arm palm outwards toward the water. They saw his kingly features move in speech, the mouth form words, which were as soundless as though spoken into empty, etherless space. No one dreamed he would continue; with embarrassed smiles they watched this futile activity, thinking every moment it would cease. But he went on, with tense, compelling gesture, to harangue the clamour that swallowed his words. . . .[102]

The analogy is imperfect: in Mann the cascade is of water, and in Rautavaara the cascade (m. 79) is of fire; and the water drowns out Mynheer Peeperkorn, whereas the "voice" of the chorale is clearly audible. I include the description not as a supposed discovered program, but as a narrative image of stentorian silence that I have personally found useful as a performer.

A second literary correlate comes from another section of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "What the Thunder Said:"

Then spoke the thunder
DA
Datta: what have we given? . . .

DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door and turn once only . . .

DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily to the expert hand with sail and oar . . .[103]

The words spoken by the thunder are scarcely comprehensible to the reader not proficient in

[102] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (Franklin Center, Pennsylvania: The Franklin Library, 1981), 618-9.
[103] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, "What the Thunder Said," lines 74ff.

Sanskrit. A modern reader equipped with footnotes may do no better: apparently these strange syllables exhibit extensive polysemy even within Sanskrit, and may have been no less meaningful if left untranslated as cryptic but mighty utterances.

Even if Eliot's "Fire Sermon" was not, beyond its title, a direct influence or source of inspiration for the sonata, Eliot and Rautavaara certainly shared a number of aesthetic values. Eliot's poetry and Rautavaara's music are both predicated on mythic symbolism, erudite allusions, and narrative discontinuity.

Agential Discontinuities

Discontinuity is one of the most important features of the second sonata. Strong discontinuities are present on the surface of the piece: one can hardly listen to the music without an awareness of sudden changes or harsh juxtapositions; and one must strive, when performing the piece, to play those sudden changes with sufficient ferocity. In the respective works of several theorists, discontinuities such as these are taken as particularly significant to narrative interpretation. These inorganicisms fit what Riffaterre terms "ungrammaticalities,"[104] which Riffaterre takes as a basis for poetic hermeneutics. Hatten meanwhile suggests that such intrusions into the "flow of ideas of a musical work" may indicate the functions of a narrator, and thus a high degree of narrativity.[105] Almén, discussing Hatten's work, explains:

> Extreme contrasts in style or topic, the cuing of self-referential topics (recitative, for example) or quotations, or certain disruptions of the temporal norm (such as introductions, cadenzas, or interpolations) might be employed to achieve in musical discourse effects similar to those marshaled by a narrator.[106]

[104] Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 96.
[105] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 289, discussed in Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 35.
[106] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 35, citing Hatten, "On Narrativity in Music: Expressive Genres and Levels of Discourse in Beethoven" *Indiana Theory Review* 12, 75-98 (1991), 90-95.

The second movement of the sonata affords one of the piece's most extreme examples of sudden juxtaposition, clearly calculated by the composer to create a jagged effect. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the movement opens with a nocturne-like texture: it has a clearly triadic, Chopinesque left-hand accompaniment underneath a registrally distinct "singing" melody consisting primarily of small intervals. (As also discussed in Chapter 1, each measure of this melody is symmetrically constructed: the second half of each measure is an inversion of the first half.) The melody establishes a predictable four-measure phrase, its a-segment eliding into an A1 that begins in m. 5 up a half step from the original. Contrasting material is introduced in m. 8; but this contrasting material is not a harsh juxtaposition. It is connected to the preceding theme by a carefully exposed common tone, and its registrally rich triads exude a certain warmth that is not out of place in a nocturne. Furthermore, this material sounds familiar on the basis of its resemblance to the theme in the left hand in mm. 80-81 of the first movement.

Drastically contrasting material is then introduced not suddenly but by careful elision, affirming the movement's initial promise of smoothness and warmth. This newly reaffirmed sense of continuity and elision is rather viciously broken just a few bars later with a tempo change marked "Energico": a rapid anacrustic gesture grows from *forte* to *fortissimo* in thirty-second notes split between the hands. The harmony here is difficult to classify by any traditional means. It could conceivably be characterized as an EbMM7 with enharmonically notated extensions, but that hardly seems like a useful label in this context. The crashing dissonance of G minor and F# major give the harmony of the ascent a bitonal character reminiscent of Stravinsky's "Petrushka" chord. The sonority on which the ascent arrives (on beat four of m. 11) juxtaposes an F# major triad with an F major triad (both in second inversion) and including a G

natural: it is as vicious a crash as one could ask for. This sonority is a continuation of the black vs. white dichotomy thematized throughout the sonata, and anticipates the F major-Gb major bitonality that disrupts the return of the A theme.

This may be the starkest of the calculated discontinuities in the piece, but it is hardly the only one. The organic flow of the music has been interrupted – not genially intruded upon by a familiar theme or topic, as at m. 8, but by an interruption of the music's flow. This interruption is perceived as something morphologically Other, with a decidedly disruptive function – in short, by *something else*.[107] This harsh, inorganic grafting seems to indicate the presence of a motivation contrary to the music's natural flow, namely the impact of something outside the music: hence, a narrative motivation.

Rautavaara has certainly indicated that he is conscious of discontinuity's expressive function in his works, using the term "disturbance technique."[108] Stępień explains the term as a "conflict between two instrumental planes."[109] The importance of this conflict between planes is clear when the instruments are understood as virtual actors, which, as Stępień describes, is common in Rautavaara's work: "Rautavaara often treats instruments as vocalists, giving them specific roles."[110] Analyzing *Angel of Dusk* in Greimassian terms, Stępień identifies the strings and basses as "helper," the soloist as "subject," the brass as "opponent," and *chord come un flageolet* as "object."[111] The piano alone can clearly not provide two actual instrumental planes, let alone the four that are analyzed there. However, he piano is certainly capable of using register and texture to create productive tensions and quasi-instrumental oppositions, and thus also

[107] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 44.
[108] Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 173.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 175.
[111] Ibid., 176.

capable of representing more than one agency at a time. In the fugato of the third movement, multiple agencies are formally thematized.

Cyclicity as Narrative

Another component contributing to a narrative interpretation of the sonata is the cyclical return of thematic material. It is of course possible to argue that the motivation for these returns may be thematic unity or an extension of the concept of "symmetrically resolved dissonance" across the entirety of a sonata instead of just one movement. It is also not hard to imagine a composer throwing his listeners a metaphorical life-raft in the form of a recurring theme that helps compensate for the work's unusual form and dazzling materials. If this was indeed Rautavaara's motivation in writing cyclical elements into his second sonata, he certainly went to an extreme: as mentioned above, something like half of the third movement is recapitulation of earlier materials.

Cyclicity is inherently referential. This does not necessarily mean that cyclicity is programmatic – in order to be programmatic, cyclical recurrences must be externally as well as internally referential – but cyclic recurrence has been strongly associated with programmatic music at least since Berlioz's use of an *idée fixe* in his *Symphonie fantastique*. In *Symphonie fantastique*, the recurring theme is associated with a character (the Beloved). Its reappearances in different forms correspond to that character in differing narrative circumstances: the theme is effectively anthropomorphized (or has undergone *prosopopoeia*).[112] According to Tarasti, this anthropomorphic tendency is the germ of actoriality and thus a significant component of a potential programmatic structure: "Actoriality in music is represented by all those features that

[112] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 13.

render abstract musical structure as anthropomorphic."[113] Likewise, in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots,* recurrences of a motive derived from "*Ein feste Burg*" correspond to the Huguenots; in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, the motive of the "pilgrims' chorus" introduces the pilgrims at the beginning of the piece, accompanies them at the end of the second act, and reintroduces them in Act 3. We need not explore Wagner's mature deployment of leitmotives in *Götterdämmerung* or *Siegfried* to understand that throughout the nineteenth century large-scale cyclicity generally implied external referentiality.

Furthermore, cyclical deployment of transformed themes tends to create a perception of narrative even in pieces that are not explicitly programmatic. A prominent nineteenth-century example is Liszt's Sonata in B Minor. There seems to be a consensus that the piece's themes *mean* something and that its ambiguous, idiosyncratic treatment of sonata form renders audible some sort of story,[114] even if there is little consensus as to the story's exact content. Many commentators see Goethe's *Faust* as the sonata's subject matter, and not without reason. Liszt's love of *Faust* had manifested in a "Faust Symphony" after all. The Sonata's diabolical topics are (to my ear) hard not to associate with Mephistopheles, and the Sonata's eventual sublimation into quiet sanctity sounds (again, to my ear) unmistakably like "the eternal feminine lead[ing] us onward."[115] On the other hand, Paul Merrick sees the Liszt sonata as corresponding instead to another of the composer's favorite literary works depicting the diabolical and the saintly, *Paradise Lost.*[116] Tibor Szász retains Paul Merrick's emphasis on original sin and a primordial

[113] Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 174; referencing Eero Tarasi, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 106.
[114] My essay "Programs and Problems of the Liszt Sonata" (paper supervised by Dr. Michael Tusa, Summer 2016) attempts to catalog and assess the various programmatic interpretations of the Liszt Sonata.
[115] Goethe, *Faust*, Part 2 lines 12110-1. The German reads "Das Ewig-Wiebliche / Zieht uns hinan."
[116] Paul Merrick, "'Teufelsonate': Mephistopheles in Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor," *The Musical Times* 152 no. 194 (Spring 2011), 7-19 .

conflict between good and evil, but without referencing Milton;[117] and David Wilde reads the thematic transformations in the abstract as reinterpretations of a character according to Jungian archetypes.[118] The factors that allow for such strong (if subjective) narrative interpretations of Liszt's Sonata are also present in the second sonata of Rautavaara. These include formal ambiguity, cyclical recurrences of themes that have anthropomorphic aspects, and conventionally constructed topics that convey meaning to a competent listener.

As I have indicated above, the sonata's second movement is so strange as to necessitate narrative or programmatic inquiry; more even than the strong gestural interruption near the opening of the sonata (discussed above), the sonata's uncanny, unexpected ending requires some explanation. It seems that some sort of story is at work through this music.

The Valamo Monastery and the Second Movement

We can make any number of conjectures about Rautavaara's second sonata on the basis of its topics, form, cyclicity, and title; but the composer has intentionally or otherwise given us a programmatic anchor for our interpretation. This anchor is a strong correspondence between the end of the sonata's second movement and an anecdote from Rautavaara's youth. The anecdote, shared by the composer himself but never explicitly connected to the sonata, tells of a mystical experience in his own life. Thus, I will first explore the music itself in all its unexpectedness, and conclude by relating it to Rautavaara's mystical experience.

The sonata's second movement ends in a way that at a structural level violates our sense

[117] Tibor Szász, "Liszt's Symbols for the Divine and the Diabolical: Their Revelation of the Program of the B minor sonata," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 15 (June, 1984), 39-55.

[118] David Wilde, "Liszt's Sonata: Some Jungian Reflections," in *Analecta Lisztiana II: New Light on Liszt and His Music*, ed. Michael Saffle, 197-224 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997). I am grateful to Dr. Robin Wallace for bringing this article to my attention.

of formal continuity and genre: there is a major thwarting of formal expectations and the piece's teleological direction. The prototypical form for a character piece, especially the genre of nocturnes post-Chopin, is ABA'. The ubiquity of the ABA' form is anticipated in the nocturnes of John Field, for instance in the Nocturne in E minor; and is present in the nocturnes of Chopin, for instance the Nocturne in Bb minor, op. 9 #1 or the Nocturne in C# minor, op. 27, no. 1. Field and Chopin seem to have been much more varied in their treatment of form than their successors; but since their initial efforts, the nocturne genre has tended to ossify into a predictable format. The nocturnes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are typically unproblematic in terms of form: witness Respighi's Nocturne in Gb major, Scriabin's Nocturne "Pour le main gauche," op. 9, no. 2, and Debussy's "Reverie."

When we listen to Rautavaara's nocturne-like second movement and hear its characteristic A-theme, we expect a transition to B; B arrives unmistakably at m. 25, at the mark "appassionato." The B material contrasts strongly with A, as one would expect: B begins with a heightened intensity evoked by a dramatically expanded tessitura, increased speed of accompanimental notes, and gestures of upward struggle that break loose from the A theme's contented folding back in upon itself. This B theme continues in this way, striving upwards as the theme disappears and the accompaniment takes on clusters and explodes ecstatically. The music then comes to a sudden halt. This unfolding of the B section resembles nothing so much as the upward surge with which Scriabin's fifth sonata begins and ends (see example 2.15).

We might expect at this point a return to A, with a renewed sense of tranquility or emotional depth achieved through struggle. Yet, Rautavaara breaks from our expectations: two attempts are made to return, both abortive, with the right and left hands briefly instantiating

bitonality. This moment of bitonality is an extension of the thematized opposition between black and white keys. In this particular instantiation, with its split between fluid accompaniment and singing melody, it may well be an homage to Bartók's "Boating."[119]

Example 3.1. Bartók, "Boating," mm. 1-8. Bitonality, with the right hand on black keys and the left hand on white, represents the tension of a boat against the water.

If we can generalize about the teleology of the nocturne genre, we can say that the piece's implied goal is a suitably varied return of A. Or, as put by Almén, we seek the "restoration of the unmarked": "The intrusion of marked elements [in this case an emotionally charged B-section] motivates a crises that seeks the restoration of the unmarked, whether this actually occurs or not."[120] A is the same as it was, but altered – the same material, perceived by the altered mind of a matured narrator wiser for having traversed through the struggles of B. Referring once more to T.S. Eliot:

[119] Bartók, "Boating" *Mikrokosmos* 125.
[120] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 56.

. . . and the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.[121]

Rautavaara subverts the piece's teleology or breaks its genre-contract at the failed return of A: new material takes us to the end.[122] The static quality of this new material comes as a shock: it is not strong enough material to have broken in from outside. If the material had the violence of m. 8, then it would make more sense as a forced intrusion; instead, we get the feeling that this material has unassumingly *supplanted* the abortive return to A rather than *interrupted* it. The A theme is simply done, and something else – something inscrutable – begins. Sini Rautavaara describes this moment of kenosis in her liner notes to Izumi Tateno's recording of Rautavaara's piano music:

> . . . the cantabile melody endeavours quietly to continue, but it is already crippled, dissonant, vanquished. Now follows a completely new attempt, a peacefully rocking barcarolle, so lyrical that it does not seem to harbour any growing ambitions, yet it, too, becomes dissonant, thickens into clusters, the melody line dims and vanishe[s] into a dense blur of sound.[123]

In this closing material, the moving notes in the left hand are mirror images of the moving notes in the right hand, on the axis D. The right hand leaps up at the end of each measure to strike a D# that sticks out of the texture; likewise, the left-hand leaps down to strike a Db. These registrally distinct tones are, like the moving notes in the middle voices, symmetrically positioned relative to the note D. The upper and lower pedal part, and the pervasive symmetry of the voices, makes the harmony entirely static. The rhythmic motion is also uniform.

Moments of luxuriant stasis are surprising in a nocturne; as in a *barcarolle* or *pastorale*,

[121] Eliot, *Four Quartets*, "Little Gidding," lines 241-42.
[122] For discussion of genre as an implicit contract between composer or performer and audience, see Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3-30.
[123] Sini Rautavaara, liner notes to *Einojuhani Rautavaara: Piano Works,* by Izumi Tateno.

rhythmic or harmonic stasis can be used to indicate comfort or security. But this stasis in Rautavaara's second movement has the opposite effect; it is unexpected and out of place in respect to the overall form. Rautavaara here exhibits the static material as the unfamiliar appearing familiar, or the familiar appearing unfamiliar, recalling Freud's theorizing of the uncanny (as "unheimlich").[124] Meanwhile, the chords seem to evoke Scriabin: excluding the Db pedal-point in the bass, the harmony for the first two measures of the *Andante* is Scriabin's "Mystic" chord (6-34).

As with the accompaniment to the B section, this *barcarolle* material eventually gains intensity and loses comprehensibility: loud clusters provide color too dense to hear and gesture that is expressionistically blurred. Clearly, something has *happened* to the structure of the movement, and allowed something entirely different to succeed the failed return of A; and something has happened to that succeeding material to transform it into something beyond comprehension. All of these meaning-laden materials – symmetrically moving voices, bell-tones, stasis, Scriabin's "Mystic" chord – demand interpretation. We must look for an explanation that both makes sense of the juxtaposition caused by this formal violation and also accounts for the very deliberate deployment of the uncanny.

That the explanation we are seeking may be partly autobiographical is suggested by Sini Rautavaara: "Although the contribution of the biographical element to arts criticism is of varying value, one inevitably feels that there might be possible parallels between the composer's life in the 70's and this resplendent but deeply pessimistic music."[125] Rautavaara has assisted us here, at

[124] See the extended discussion in Richard Cohn, "Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 no. 2 (Summer 2004), 285-324.
[125] Sini Rautavaara, liner notes to *Einojuhani Rautavaara: Piano Works*, by Izumi Tateno.

least obliquely, with an account of his first mystical experience:[126]

> The summer before the Winter War in 1939 my parents took me on a tour of eastern Finland, to Karelia – a land which was shortly to vanish forever. On the islands swimming in the middle of the immense Lake Ladoga there was a monastery – Valamo. One went there in a little ship, early in the morning, so that the ten-year-old boy standing at the prow saw around him only dreary gray morning mist. But then, suddenly without warning the mist dispersed and [the] most wonderful islands sprang forth. They seemed to be floating in the air, and in the midst of the trees rising on them appeared a dome, many domes, towers which in the sun shone full of colors! And suddenly they begin to ring – bells, large and small, high tinklings and deep festive booms. The whole world was at once full of sound and color, so that one's breath caught in the throat and one no longer understood where one was and what could happen. A world full of towers, sounds, visions! And then after landing, black-bearded monks, a strange language, white corridors in the monastery, soaring high arches in the church. Covered with painted saints, kings, and angels . . .[127]

Rautavaara has not explicitly connected this childhood mystic experience with his second sonata. However, we have enough unambiguous similarities to claim a plausible connection between the experience described and the end of the second movement of the sonata.

Working backwards: the mystic experience progressed toward something transcendent that is immensely evocative and grand, but fundamentally incomprehensible ("a strange language"). Likewise, the end of the second sonata's second movement is grand and perhaps austere, but incomprehensible: it devolves into clusters, evoking the sublime through an expressionistic exaggeration of gestures. The mystic experience describes the tolling of bells, which are clearly audible in the piece. Depicting bells with dense chords or clusters is hardly new to Rautavaara. Meanwhile, a "ping" of a registrally displaced high note (the right-hand's repeated D#) is well-established, if not a cliché, as iconically representative of bells.[128] The left hand's Db is consistently struck along with the right hand's D#, indicating the two registers that

[126] Stępień, *The Sound of Finnish Angels*, 199.
[127] Ibid., 200.
[128] See for instance Burgmüller's op. 109, #9, Lefebure-Wely's op. 54, and many others.

the young Rautavaara heard at the monastery: "bells, large and small, high tinklings and deep festive booms." In keeping with the passage's pervasive bilateral symmetry, these bell-notes are equidistant from the axis D.

Moving further backwards in the story and the music: the young Rautavaara arrived at the monastery by boat through the fog. The abortive, bitonal attempt at a return of A strongly resembles a certain piece by Bartók which uses bitonality to represent the tension of a boat on the water.[129] The connection of Rautavaara's literal boat to the music at the return of A may seem tenuous, but the resemblance to Bartók's musical representation of a boat on the water is striking.

We can confidently assert, then, that we have found in the composer's own writings a meaningful program for the end of the second movement. If there is a program to the second movement as a whole, or to the sonata as a whole, this mystic episode in the composer's early life may be the key or at least a significant reference point. Yet, this is but one reading of the correspondence between the Valamo experience and the second movement of the sonata. Another reading presents itself, thanks to an even more vivid and synesthetic description by the composer of the same experience.[130]

> . . . until something unbelievable and unreal arrives: an island, a whole archipelago emerges from the fog, sailing solemnly; each isle has many churches and towers and golden onions, and colors – sunrise! The world is flooded with light. And then it happens, something definite. It starts to sound, sing, and ring! It seemed to me as if the universe was sounding, singing and ringing. Hundreds of bells, big ones and small ones, quite tiny, so that the color turns into sound, and sounds are color, and finally there are also words (since now the events penetrate into each other), words about a big, crowned man at the altar. The vault is unbelievably high and there are angels on the roof or saints. Are they singing as a

[129] Bartók, "Boating", *Mikrokosmos* 125.
[130] The synesthetic relation of colors and sounds is an additional point of contact between Scriabin, Messiaen, and Rautavaara.

> choir? Then blackbearded monks. They serve food at tables; their gowns murmur in white corridors. Above all bells are ringing, red, red, and their strokes radiate gold – until nothing can keep it together and the world bursts into ecstasy. All this, the entire image, has remained in my mind. Secretly it has been brooding, ripening.[131]

This extended version of the story leads to another possible interpretation of the experience's correspondence to the second movement of the sonata, in which the boat-ride and mystic experience constitute the program for the whole movement. In this second reading, the opening nocturne topic, with its mirror-image melody, correlates to the boat-ride (with the boat mirrored on the water); the grand view of the islands' churches is the motivation for the appearance of the chorale-topic at m. 8; the upward burst at m. 11 correlates to "sunrise!" The universe's "sounding, singing and ringing" correlate to the B section, beginning at m. 25, which careers wildly into clusters high and low that could represent the "big bells and small ones." The brief return of A at m. 35 would then be a return to an awareness of present surroundings (the boat), but with a sense of uncanniness or unreality evoked musically by irreconcilable bitonality. The progressive incomprehensibility of the music at the end, as we lose all tonal points of reference to the density of clusters, represents the continued ringing of the bells and the whole world bursting into ecstasy.

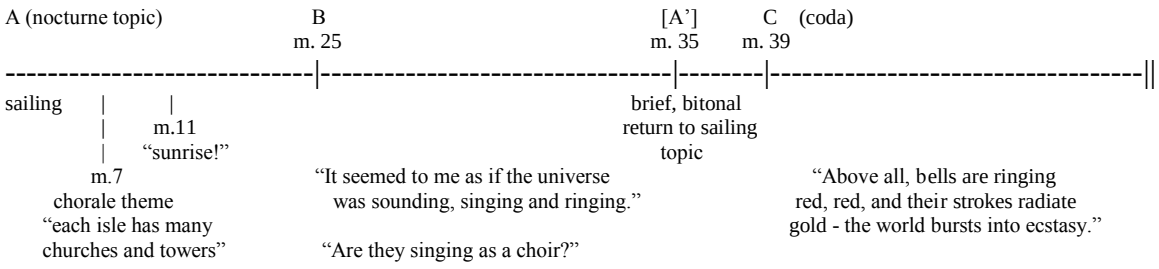


Figure 3.1. Correspondence of the Valamo experience to the second movement.

[131] Eila Tarasti, "Icons," 554. Tarasti connects the Valamo experience explicitly to the subject-matter of *Ikons*, but in a general way rather than as a sequential, isomorphic correspondence.

I prefer this second reading, though either could serve to inform a listener's experience or a performer's decisions. If the correlation seems to be weakened by the fact that two readings are possible – one correlation to the conclusion of the movement, and one to the whole movement – let me note that an almost exact inversion of this dichotomy is to be found in the relationship of Liszt's "Mephisto Waltz no. 1" to its explicit program. Liszt's piece was originally published without the excerpt from Lenau's poem that Liszt had wanted to attach to it. Generations of performers and musicologists had read the music as corresponding to the whole episode by Lenau, rather than the excerpt.[132] Since Liszt's original intention has been revealed, the piece has been understood to correspond more neatly to a smaller section of Lenau's poem. If even the obviously, explicitly programmatic "Mephisto Waltz" can plausibly tolerate two possible expressive interpretations, then a discovered, implicit program for Rautavaara's second movement can tolerate a certain amount of correlative bivalence.

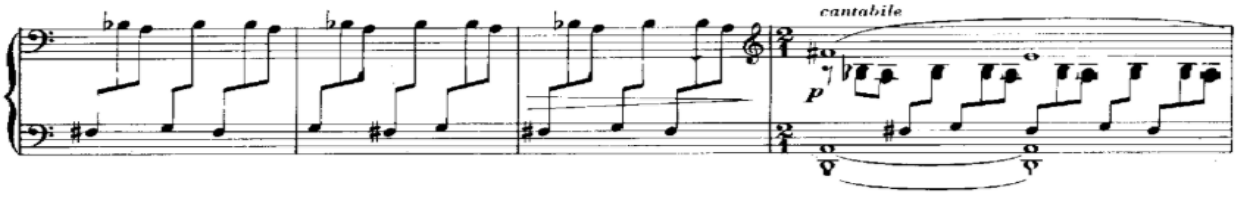
Could the second movement, or even the "Fire Sermon" sonata as a whole, be structured programmatically around this episode? Does the visit to Valamo have something to tell us about the third movement's *fugato*, about the sonata's obsessional symmetry, about the unexpected major resolution at which the sonata finally arrives? Or is this mystic experience on a boat-ride towards a monastery an isolated episode in the piece's overall narrative trajectory? Let us return to the sonata's beginning and work forward.

[132] For thorough discussion, see David Larkin, "Dancing to the Devil's Tune: Liszt's Mephisto Waltz and the Encounter with Virtuosity," *Nineteenth Century Music* 38 no. 3 (Spring 2015), 193-218. I am grateful to Dr. Michael Tusa for introducing me to this essay and its implications for hermeneutics.

Narrative Trajectory

First movement

I see two possible readings for the narrative of the first movement, both compatible to the narrative archetypes applied to music by Almén.[133] The first of these possibilities hears the 8/8 "fire" material as actorial; as a protagonist. This protagonist is characterized by jaggedness, tremendous energy, and by wide registral and dynamic surges; this is a disruptive element. In this reading, the entry of the second theme at m. 52 is a rebuke of that protagonist by a sacred order (compare, in Wagner's *Die Walküre,* Hunding as he orders the uncivilized Siegmund to respect his home as sacred;[134] or an Attic chorus urging Oedipus to exercise caution.)



Example 3.2. First movement, m. 49-52.

In the measures that follow, the original protagonist continues its struggle with that theme. The statement of the sacred rebuke (see example 2.3) is an apotheosis of the theme as a mighty lashing-out of divine power (compare the high priest's condemnation of Radames in Act 4 of Verdi's *Aïda,*[135] or the annihilating austerity of Zeus's self-revelation to Semele as painted by Gustave Moreau). The return of the 8/8 material at m. 104 as a vestigial recapitulation (see example 1.45) could then be the crushed protagonist's attempts to regain footing or re-embark upon rebellious endeavors before the sacred judgment pronounced at m. 79 is enacted, at m. 119 with an improbably slow succession of triads connoting maximal inexorability.

[133] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative.*
[134] Richard Wagner, *Die Walküre*, Act 1.
[135] Giuseppe Verdi, *Aïda*, Act 4.

In this reading, the movement is Promethean: creative fire is struck down for its striving to be free. The dichotomy between the toccata-material and the chorale-material may represent a struggle between nature and culture, which Adamenko calls "the chief opposition in Lévi-Strauss's model of mythic structuring."[136] If we anthropomorphize the "nature" material, then we have the naturalness of Siegmund struck down by Hunding as embodiment of all that is conventionally and traditionally sacred, or the moralistic condemnation of the superlatively gifted Tannhäuser by the good *bourgeoisie* at the Wartburg castle. This first reading is clearly a tragic narrative according to Northrup Frye's narrative archetypes: an intruding protagonist's transgression, his striving against the forces of order, are defeated at the movement's end.

The second reading that I see as possible for this movement is quite different: the violent 8/8 material, in this reading, is a mechanistic, soulless, *status quo,* representing chthonic forces that, to borrow a phrase from Adamenko, "illustrate the primordial chaos."[137] In keeping with this reading, this material can be described as impersonal: the temporality of its unflinching rhythmic persistence and complex rhythmic groupings, and the spatiality of its low register and density, combine to make the material relatively resistant to anthropomorphization. In Liszka's terms, this reading sees the fire material as agential rather than actorial.[138]

This reading hears the musical material as primordial, a raw force of nature. Lawrence Kramer's description of the opening of Haydn's *The Creation* applies: "an *Urklang*, not yet intelligible, not yet even music."[139] The pitch content, just five notes, begins adding new material as it expands symmetrically outward from an axis on G#. This material – and in fact the

[136] Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism in Music*, 32.
[137] Ibid., 164.
[138] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 55-6.
[139] Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism in Music*, 164.

movement – can be heard as cosmogonic.

The claim for cosmological significance or purport is supported by analogous material in other musical works that are explicitly concerned with creation or Genesis. Of these, Haydn's *The Creation* has already been mentioned; Scriabin's fifth sonata is even more relevant: the sonata begins with a few pitches rumbling low on the piano, with rapid, violent surges upwards. The text that accompanies it, namely the "Poem of Ecstasy," is hardly a poetic masterwork but makes clear the piece's generative motivation, the command that the composer's voice issues to primordial forces. Scriabin attaches to the sonata a short epigram from that poem that may suffice to illustrate its content:

I summon you to life,
Hidden longings!
    You, sunken
    In the somber depths
    Of creative spirit,
    You timid embryos
    Of life,
    To you I bring
    My proud spirit![140]

The idiosyncrasy of Scriabin's own cosmology aside, the purport of the material is clear: unshaped forms, "timid embryos," are being summoned into more full existence by the composer. Nikolai Berdyaev understood Scriabin well:

> I don't know in the newest art anybody who would have such a frenzied artistic impulse to destroy the old world and create a new world. The musical genius of Scriabin is so huge that in music he managed to adequately express his new, catastrophic disposition, to extract out of the dark depths of nonexistence sounds that were rejected by old music.[141]

As with the opening of Rautavaara's sonata, the opening of Scriabin's fifth sonata uses

[140] Alexander Scriabin, "The Poem of Ecstasy," trans. Faubion Bowers, with my emendations. A translation of the complete poem can be found in Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography*, 2nd ed., Vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1996): 131-5.
[141] Nikolai Berdyaev, quoted in Leikin, *The Performing Style of Alexander Scriabin*, 2.

symmetrical pitch-content: G#-A-B-C#-D#E centers on the axis C. In keeping with Scriabin's characteristic harmonic/melodic language at this time, the pitch content consists of a series of whole steps bounded by half steps.

Another explicitly cosmogonic musical work is Stockhausen's "Kindheit," which also begins with just a few pitches. Adamenko explains the connection of "Kindheit" to creation: "As in the creation myths that restrict the initial matter to a few primordial elements, such as earth, air, water, and fire, Stockhausen begins with sustained single pitches – C#, Bb, and C – and gradually introduces other intervals and pitches, as if unfolding the process of creation."[142]

Finally, the *Urquell* of musical cosmology from the late nineteenth century onward is of course the prelude to Wagner's *Rheingold*. Like the other works discussed here, *Rheingold* opens with a paucity of pitches – just a sustained low Eb – before expanding upward slowly, "naturally," following the overtone series. These pitches on the overtone series are eventually given passing tones which develop into what is generally known as the leitmotive of the Rhine river – expanding *ex nihilo*, as it were, from a primordial alluvial substance into the created reality of the Rhine. Given these musical precedents by explicitly cosmogonic composers, I do not find it far-fetched to claim that the first movement of Rautavaara's second sonata is also cosmogonic – declaring and developing from a primordial fiery substance.

If this cosmogonic reading can hold, then the first theme is unanthropomorphic, primordial, static in a sense rather than agential. The arrival of the second theme at m. 52 would then be a divine agency, a sacred voice of command declaring a new order predicated on euphony (the emergency of clear triads): a Word of creation bringing the chaotic primordial world into harmony. The chorale-theme's apotheosis at m. 79 is then a more powerful utterance

[142] Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism in Music*, 165.

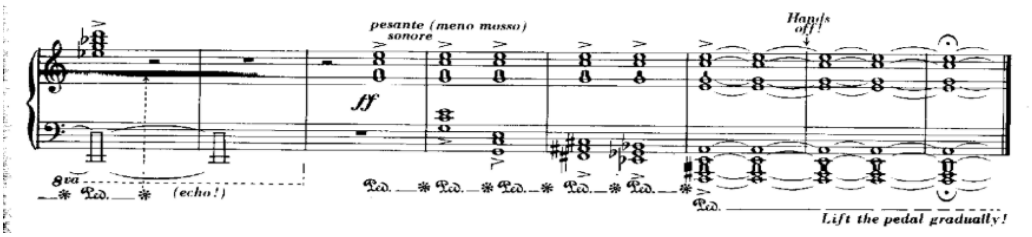
in the vein of Messiaen's "Par Lui tout a été fait" in which (per the notes after the title) "the creation opens to us the bright shadow of his Voice."[143] What follows then is a surge of response, culminating in a final crashing appearance of divinity in the form of chorale fragments that enter at m. 129. In Northrup Frye's sense, as applied to music by Almén, this reading of the first movement represents a Romance narrative: the victory of divine order (the actorial chorale topic) over the primordial blazes of unformed creation (the agential fire-topic).

I find myself strangely unable to commit definitely to reading this movement as a tragic narrative or as a romantic narrative. As may be clear from the vast difference between the two, my emotional responses to this movement have varied wildly: sometimes the 8/8 material seems truly menacing, sometimes heroic; and sometimes the apotheosis of the chorale material at m. 79 has sounded to me like something comforting yet grand, and at other times has sounded like explosively articulated condemnation.

In order for this movement to be amenable to the usual narrative archetypes, the ending should signal defeat (concluding a tragic narrative) or triumph (concluding a romance narrative). I find the movement's ending to be profoundly ambiguous: not that the ending seems perplexing each time, but that each time I play the piece I find the ending either clearly dissonant or clearly resolved.

This ambiguity is clearly intentional on the part of the composer. His instructions – "Hands off!" and "Lift the pedal gradually!" (exclamation points in the original) – mean that the ending will sound different on every piano on which it is performed (example 3.3), and in every performance on the same piano.

[143] Olivier Messiaen, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus*, "Par Lui tout a été fait" (Milan: Durand, 1946): 25.



Example 3.3. The ending of the first movement.

As a performer, I am not able to achieve any consistency with this ending vis-a-vis which notes are the last to stay sounding; depending on the order in which the dampers silence the strings, this ending may sound fairly resolved with a clear single triad or open fifth emerging, or it may retain its bitonal implications. The notation for this ending does not look aleatoric or approximate in the way that a piece by Cage may, or even some of the clusters present in Rautavaara's second sonata may. I cannot help but conclude though that this is a stochastic if not entirely random element; and, perhaps unusually, that a moment of indeterminacy is at the heart of the meaning of a movement that is not otherwise aleatoric.[144]

It may appear quixotic for me not to choose between the archetypes, to describe the sonata as fundamentally ambiguous or polyvalent. Should I as a performer not know what I *intend* to play – what emotion I intend to evoke – even if as a listener I cannot know what I should expect to hear? I can at least unequivocally ascribe to a sense of grandeur, and to the topics of flame and chorale in high-dramatic interaction. I can also subscribe to the presence of a cataclysm whether that event is dreaded and punishing (the first reading) or desired and creative (the second) or, like the paradoxically fiery-redemptive ending of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, both. Similarly, the *Kalevala* strongly relates fire and fertility in Rune 2, "Winamoinen's Sowing:" "Osma's barley will not flourish...if the soil be not made ready, if the forest be not

[144] Milorad Pavić has written a novel that may be structurally analogous. His *Landscape Painted with Tea* is a linear novel (unlike his *Dictionary of the Khazars* or *The Inner Side of the Wind*) except for a strange bifurcation at its conclusion. A few key paragraphs are determined by the gender of the reader.

levelled, and the branches burned to ashes."[145]

My ambivalence may be necessitated by Rautavaara's compositional decisions. It may be that the composer himself was less concerned with the conformity of this piece to any given narrative archetype than he was to the dramatic gesture of release – note the exclamation points in his instructions – and the uncontrolled unfolding that follows it.

A final thought on the first movement: if the second movement has illustrated illumination, as seen in Rautavaara's description of his experience on the way to Valamo; and the third movement can possibly illustrate union (as I will argue that it can); then from these two elements we can triangulate a third that is familiar from (especially) Catholic mystic practice, but the presence of which is also frequently to be found in folk-tales, including Grail legends: purgation.

Using just one term to describe each movement has of course the disadvantage that it ignores the subtleties of development or unfolding in each movement; it is at best reductionist and risks obfuscating the agencies internal to each movement. But something is also gained by this treatment, since it enables the sonata to be treated as a functional whole, by contributing to an explanation of the work's extreme cyclical structure. This trifecta of purgation-illumination-union allows the sonata to be described as one total experience, predicated upon the experience of one human consciousness – whether it be the composer-as-narrator, or a fictive narrator, or the listener as co-agent of the sonata's struggles.

The sonata thus described is personal and emotive in a clearly human rather than

[145] Lönnrot, *Kalevala*, Rune 2. Several relevant passages are to be found in this second rune, for instance: "And the flames shot up to heaven, / Till the windrows burned to ashes, / Only ashes now remaining / of the grasses raked together. In the ashes of the windrows, / tender leaves the giant places, / in the leaves he plants an acorn / from the acorn, quickly sprouting, / grows the oak-tree, tall and stately, / from the ground enriched by ashes."

exclusively mythological dimension. The sonata can operate at both levels: at a mythological level in which each movement depicts primordial, external, mythic components; and at a very personal level, which allows the entire sonata to be understood as a personal, interior, mystic journey.

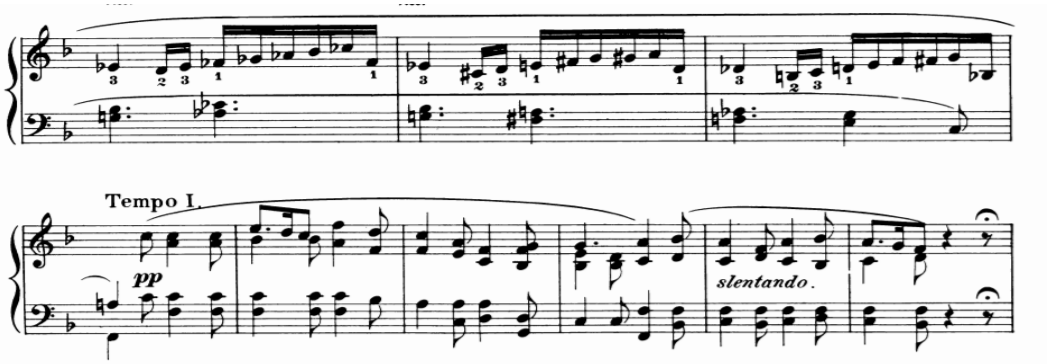
Second Movement

To a large extent, the second movement has already been discussed. It is more or less a nocturne, with a formal/generic violation in which the nocturne genre's expected return of A is subverted and something else takes over. The apparent autobiographical moment represented by that musical something else (Rautavaara's early mystic experience en route to the monastery at Valamo) has also been discussed.

It may be useful to examine this movement more broadly as well, in terms of its narrative archetype. Following Frye's archetypes, I read this movement as an ironic narrative: the defeat of an order-imposing hierarchy. In this archetypal sense I understand the nocturne *topos* to be the hierarchy: its texture has strong formal-generic implications. The movement's sense of order, its nocturnal normativity, is clearly established at the beginning. This hegemony is violated by a violently intrusive gesture (m. 11), and by the B section's expressionistic expansion far beyond the confines paradigmatically established for it. The movement could then be considered a defeat of an order-imposing hierarchy.

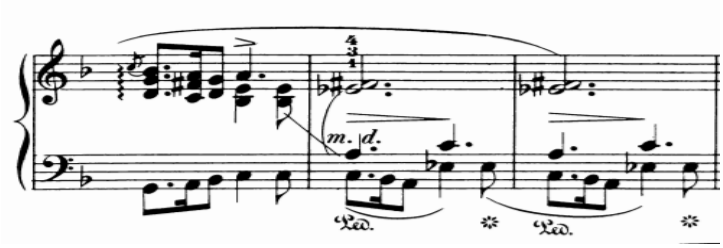
It is certainly possible to hear the ending of the movement as cataclysmically tragic given the first theme's failure to reassert itself in the recapitulation, and the coda's dissolution into chaos; this is even more possible if the listener is unaware of its putative connection to

Rautavaara's Valamo experience. Heard tragically, then, the second movement as a whole is a fairly close analogue to Chopin's second Ballade, in F major/A minor. An expressive trajectory for both pieces could be articulated as comfort-avoidance-conflagration.



Example 3.4. Chopin, Ballade in F, op. 38 m. 80-88.

In Rautavaara's second movement and in Chopin's second ballade, a violent disruption assaults the stability and comfort of the pre-established order; in both pieces, the pre-established order makes a failed attempt to return and re-establish itself before losing to the disruptive forces. In the Chopin, the failed return to the original theme is found at the return to F major, at m. 83. The theme breaks off suddenly on a subdominant harmony, with the truncation highlighted by a dramatic pause. The next statement of the theme is interrupted by its arrival on a deceptive cadence, at m. 96, which leads the piece into unfamiliar tonal territory and a renewal of tragic *topoi*.



Example 3.5. Chopin, Ballade in F major, op. 38, m. 95-97.

The Chopin is more extensively and subtly worked out than the Rautavaara – at somewhat over

twice the length of the sonata movement, the Ballade can afford more syntactic nuance and more attempts at return.[146]

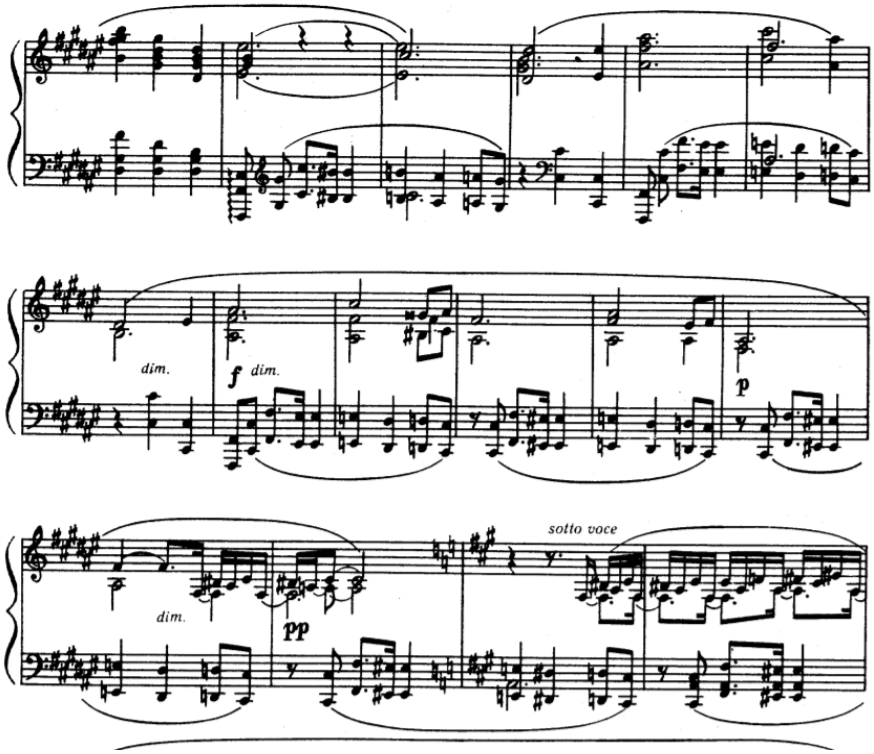
This reading of the second movement as an ironic narrative may require some qualification. If the movement is meant to correspond to the Valamo experience, then the ultimate result of the narrative is transcendence. The movement would then be not an ironic narrative, but simply a subverted ABA that corresponds more closely to Hatten's tragic-to-transcendent expressive genre than to any one archetype described by Frye.

Third Movement

As with the first movement, an understanding of the narrative trajectory of the third movement sonata is complicated by the ambiguity of its ending. If the goal towards which our narrative directs is polyvalent, then conjecturing backwards from it is no easy task. The question of the ending's meaning or valence may need to be settled to a reasonable degree of certainty for the sonata to be described successfully with one of the fundamental narrative archetypes applied to music by Almén[147] and Adamenko.[148]

[146] For more on the subtleties of the powerlessness encoded into Chopin's second Ballade, see Dorota Zakrzewska, "Alienation and Powerlessness: Adam Mickiewicz's *Ballady* and Chopin's *Ballades*," *Polish Music Journal* 2 no. 1-2 (1999), available online at https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/publications/polish-music-journal/vol2/mickiewicz-and-chopin/ (accessed August 13, 2018). See also Jonathan Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade: Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[147] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*.
[148] Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism in Music*.

If we hear the ending as a massive struggle upwards that is cast cataclysmically back down (the chorale theme reaching up before it is interrupted by forearm clusters at the bottom of the piano), then we may hear the whole piece as a tragic narrative. This understanding of the conclusion is basically pessimistic (and Sini Rautavaara describes the sonata as heavily inflected by pessimism[149]). It resembles nothing so much as the striving of the fourth movement of Scriabin's third sonata, where a triumphant cyclical return of the third movement's main theme is cast violently down in defeat.



Example 3.6. Scriabin, Third Sonata in F# minor, fourth movement, mm/ 211-226; reappearance of the third movement's theme.

We will hear a modification of this narrative – not quite so conclusively tragic – if we do

[149] Sini Rautavaara, liner notes to *Einojuhani Rautavaara: Piano Works*, Izumi Tateno.

hear the final, subtle, D major triad and identify it as an emergence of hope after the apocalypse that has preceded it. I suspect that "heaven" is too much to hope to derive from this single chord; this isn't the Apocalypse of John with eternal life in heaven for the blessed. It may instead be Ragnarok, with survivors emerging tentatively afterwards and finding remnants of the overthrown gods. There is such an image in the "Voluspa" of *The Elder Edda*, presented textually immediately after the Apocalypse has reached its consummation:

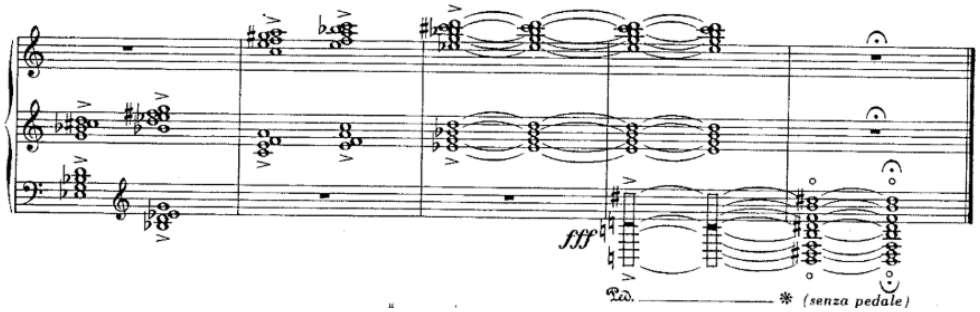
I see green again with growing things
The earth arises from out the sea;
Fell torrents flow, overflies them the eagle,
On hoar highlands which hunts for fish.
. . .
Then in the grass the golden figures,[150]
The far-famed ones, will be found again,
Which they had owned in olden days.
On unsown acres the ears will grow.
All ill [will] grow better. . .[151]

Edwin Muir's "Horses" likewise offers a symbol of hope and regeneration after destruction, in the form of the eponymous creatures.[152] Further analogues can be found in the conventions of science fiction and fantasy: for instance the destruction of the world of imagination in *The NeverEnding Story*, from which a single grain of sand is rescued (and from which grain of sand the world can be rebuilt);[153] or the lonely sentient computer program "Gaia" in the video game *Horizon: Zero Dawn*, tasked with gradual recreation of earth's flora and fauna after total annihilation by machines.[154] These examples may suffice to indicate the recognizable if not outright conventional image of subtle, hopeful return after annihilation.

[150] Lee M. Hollander, in a footnote to his translation of *The Poetic Edda*, identifies these "figures" as draughts. See Lee M. Hollander, trans., *The Poetic Edda*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1962), 12.
[151] *The Poetic Edda*, "Voluspa," lines 58-62, as translated by Hollander (see above).
[152] John Muir, "The Horses."
[153] Wolfgang Petersen and Herman Weigel. *The NeverEnding Story*, DVD, dir. Wolfgang Petersen (Los Angeles, CA: 1984).
[154] Guerilla Games. *Horizon: Zero Dawn*. Dir. Mathis de Jonge. 2017.

If on the other hand we hear the subtle D major triad, rather than the cataclysm, as the teleological goal-point, we will hear a quite different narrative. The resolution to a major triad *feels* harmonically settled even if it is not definitionally tonicized. D has, however, been present as an axis of symmetry through much of the piece to this point, even if it is more implicit than clearly audible, and tonicized by indirect means rather than the traditional relationship of tonic to dominant.

If we hear this D major triad as a harmonic surprise (it is almost certainly a gestural and expressive one) we may also find it uncanny. Michael Klein explains, summarizing a claim by Michael Cherlin: "when we recognize tonality in Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions, we confront the startlement that what ought to have remained in the past has recurred."[155] If, however, we have some awareness of D or even D major as a center, given the number of times the piece arrives on it, we know that the triad is not an unholy ghost of compositional methods that once were, but an integral structuring element of the sonata. In short, the D major triad at the piece's end should not be entirely a surprise.



Example 3.7. Both forearms are brought down on the bass end of the piano keys; the pedal is held and the forearms released. The hands retake, silently, D major; and the pedal is released, exposing the triad.

[155] Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality*, 96, summarizing Michael Cherlin, "Schoenberg and *Das Unheimliche*; Spectres of Tonality," *Journal of Musicology* 11 no. 3, 357-73.

The sense of the *rightness* of the D major triad at the ending is the result of extensive preparation throughout all three movements of the sonata, and especially the third movement. Put succinctly, in large swaths of the piece we have been given anticipations of a harmonic teleology that has largely remained submerged: a clear tonic for the sonata, even if arrived at by means not traditionally associated with tonality. All of this preparation points to the D major resolution, rather than the clustered cataclysm, as final goal.

If the rightness of this final goal is effectively conveyed by a performer's clear structural articulations of the preceding structurally significant D major sonorities and melodic arrivals on D, as well as the performer's gestures and sense of drama, then one might hear the chaos preceding the final D major as the final purgation before a mystical union – with the transcendent, long-standing harmonic goal. I am not sure that this arrival can be brought out quite as effectively in audio recording, which must of necessity omit the performer's physical gestures and runs the risk of recording the resolution too quietly to be meaningfully audible.

This final reading – with D major as the sonata's goal-point – is further strengthened by the composer's mystical beliefs by invoking the already-mentioned trifecta of purgation, illumination, and union. If we take the piece's final chord to invoke *union,* and the struggles and travails and clusters of the first movement as a sort of *purgation*, then from "union and "purgation" we can extrapolate the third component of mystical practice – "illumination."[156] Illumination in a mystic sense is clearly instantiated by the mystic-revelatory program of the second movement, with profound experience but not the dissolution-of-self that is required for

[156] See for example New Advent, "State or Way (Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive)," New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14254a.htm (accessed August 12, 2018).

unity proper.[157]

Finally, given my claim that the first movement of the Rautavaara sonata can be heard as cosmogonic, it may come as no surprise that I claim that this conclusion can be heard as eschatological. Cosmogony as creation and eschatology as destruction are the necessary constituents a complete cosmology; it may then be possible to hear this third movement as a paean of world-ending destruction. The fact that the third movement goes beyond the bounds of normal cyclicity by reinstantiating the first movement rather than merely revisiting it (as discussed in Chapter 1) might be raised as an objection here, since it could imply that the third movement performs the same function as the first, rather than a destructive function to the first movement's creative function. Yet, this objection may strengthen rather than weaken the eschatological description. Creation and destruction are linked in many mythologies: in Norse mythology, as we have seen above, Ragnarok is the destruction of the world but also its rebirth; in Christian eschatology, the Apocalypse inaugurates "a new heaven and a new earth."[158] Meanwhile, the complementary cycles of creation and destruction in Hindu mythology are well known. Cosmogony and eschatology then can be two sides of the same coin, or two formal placements of the same musical trajectory.

[157] Carl Gustav Jung, in a preface to a volume by Suzuki, refers to "the emptying and closing down of the conscious"; Carl Gustav Jung, preface to *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism,* by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (New York: Grove Press, 1964), xxii. See also Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage), 95: "the true mind is no-mind." Finally, let us take words of Saint Teresa: "In the orison of union...the soul is fully awake as regards God, but wholly asleep as regards things of this world and in respect of herself. During the short time the union lasts, she is as it were deprived of every feeling, and even if she would, she could not think of any single thing." Quoted in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 445. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, let me note that in order to emphasize the creed-nonspecific character of unitive mystic experience, I have cited a secular psychoanalyst, a practitioner of Zen Buddhism, and a Catholic saint describing fundamentally similar experiences.

[158] Revelation 21:1.

Conclusions: Two Readings of the Sonata; The Three Movements, and the Phenomenal

The Sonata

At the global level, I understand the sonata as correlated to an approach to mystic experience, with the first movement corresponding to "purgation," the second to "illumination," and the third to "union." In addition to interpreting the sonata in accordance with this mystical progression, I have also discussed the work as cosmological, with the first and last movements representing a cosmogony and an eschatology, respectively; in this reading the sonata is totalizing or all-encompassing, as a functional cosmology must be.

I see no inherent contradiction between a cosmological interpretation and a mystical one. As regards the first movement, a correlation between creative fire and purgation is intuitive, given the images of fire or refining that are prevalent in Christian scripture: faith is "tested by fire" (1st Peter, 1:7), "You have refined us as silver is refined" (Psalm 66:10), "I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10), and "Many will be purged, purified and refined" (Daniel 12:10.)

As regards the second movement – which should be "the order of things" in a cosmology between creation (cosmogony) and destruction (eschatology) – we are, according to various mystic traditions, permitted illumination with glimpses of divinity or eternity or otherwise profound experiences here on earth. We are left then with the third movement, which can function both as an eschatology (as dissolution of the existing world) and as a path to mystic union (as dissolution of self – see footnote 158).

The Three Movements

I have suggested that the first movement corresponds either to a tragedy or a romance, depending on whether we hear its ending as a victory or a defeat; and the second movement as an ironic narrative or an example of the tragic-to-transcendent expressive genre. The third movement is, fittingly, not unlike the first in its ambiguity: depending on how we hear the ending, it may well be comic, in which the chorale theme rejoices in its victory over the fugal material; or ironic, in which the fugal material forces the chorale theme to a transcendent breaking point.

These smaller narratives localized to single movements may seem trivial compared to the narrative correlations that I have suggested for the sonata as a whole. The sense of triviality may be exacerbated by the compactness of the movements; for all that those movements are temporally compact, they are not expressively so. Perhaps even such trivialities as knowing that the second movement may be heard as archetypally ironic will help inform a listener's experience or a performer's decisions.

The Phenomenal

None of this matters in the abstract, of course: it is my hope that these technical and narratological explorations are of significance to the phenomenal experience of the music. Certainly the analysis and research that have gone in to writing about Rautavaara's "Fire Sermon" have affected my experience of the sonata. When I first experienced the music as a listener, I was strongly impressed but baffled; and when I first learned the piece as a performer, I had precious little to hold onto. The second movement in particular was utterly bizarre to me; I took it to my teachers and colleagues in hopes that they could help, and tried to contact other

pianists who had played the piece. Now I feel that I have a grounding of sorts (or a cosmology, if you will) for the piece: and it is my hope that the questions and suggestions, if not the conclusions, that I have included here will be of help to other performers and listeners as they approach this marvelous music.

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