



Jean Sibelius in the 1930s. Photograph by Fred Runeberg. Reproduced courtesy of Kristian Runeberg and the Sibelius Museum.

THE SIBELIUS COMPANION

Edited by
Glenda Dawn Goss



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6

The Essence of Sibelius: Creation Myths
and Rotational Cycles in *Luonnotar**James Hepokoski**Luonnotar*

Olipa impi, ilman tyttö,¹¹¹
 Kave *Luonnotar korea. . . .¹¹²
 Ouostui *elämätään¹¹⁸
 Aina yksin ollessansa. . . .¹¹⁹
 Avaroilla autoilla. . . .¹²²
 Laskeusi lainehille. . . .¹²⁴
 Aalto impeä ajeli. . . .¹³²
 Vuotta seitsemän *sataa. . . .¹³⁹
 Vierä impi veen emona. . . .¹⁴³

 Uipi luotehet, etelät,¹⁴⁵
 Uipi kaikki ilman rannat. . . .¹⁴⁶
 Tuli suuri tuulen puuska. . . .¹²⁷
 Meren kuohuille kohotti. . . .¹²⁹
 "Voi, poloinen, päiviäni! . . ."¹⁵³
 Parempi olisi ollut¹⁶¹
 Ilman impenä *elää. . . .¹⁶²
 Oi Ukko, ylijumala! . . .¹⁶⁹
 Käy tänne *kutsuttaissa! . . ."¹⁷²
 Tuli sotka, suora lintu. . . .¹⁷⁹
 Lenti¹⁸³ kaikki ilman rannat. . . .¹⁴⁶
 Lenti luotehet, etelät.¹⁸⁴
 Ei löyää¹⁸⁵ . . . pesän *sioa. . . .¹⁸¹
 Ei! Ei!¹⁸⁵
 "Teenkö tuulehen tupani,¹⁹¹
 Aalloillen *asuinsiani?¹⁹²
 Tuuli kaatavi, tuuli kaatavi, . . ."¹⁹³

[Feminine] Nature-Spirit

There was a maiden, a girl of the air
 A slender Nature-Spirit, beautiful. . . .
 She sensed the strangeness of her life
 Of always being alone
 In the vast voids. . . .
 She descended, down to the waves. . . .
 A wave drove the maiden
 For seven hundred years
 The maiden, mother of the water,
 turned round and round. . . .
 She swam to the northwest, to the south,
 She swam around all the airy horizons.
 There came a great gust of wind
 It raised the sea to a surge. . . .
 "Oh, miserable, my days!
 It would have been better
 To live as the maiden of the air
 Oh, Ukko, highest god!
 Come here when I summon you! . . ."
 There came a duck, an honest bird.
 It flew around all the airy horizons.
 It flew to the northwest, to the south.
 It did not find places for its nest.
 No! No!
 "Shall I make my home on the wind,
 My dwelling on the waves?
 The wind will upset [it]

Aalto *viepi *asuinsiani!¹⁹⁴
 Niin silloin ve'en emonen . . .¹⁹⁵
 Nosti polvea¹⁹⁷ . . . lainehesta. . .¹⁹⁸
 Siihen *sorsa* laativi pesänsä. . .²⁰⁹
 Alkoi hautoa. . .²¹³
 . . . Impi²¹⁸
 Tuntevi tulistuvaksi. . .²¹⁹
 Järkytti *jäsenehensä.²²⁴
 Pesä²¹¹ vierähti veteen. . .²²⁵
 Katkieli kappaleiksi. . .²²⁸
 Muuttuivat²³¹ *munat* . . . kaunoisiksi²³²
 Munasen yläinen puoli²³⁵
 Yläiseksi taivahaksi. . .²³⁶
 Yläpuoli valkeasta . . .²³⁹
 Kuuksi kumottamahan,²⁴⁰
 Mi . . . kirjavaista . . .²⁴¹
 Tähtiksi *taivaalle.²⁴²
 Ne tähtiksi *taivaalle.²⁴²

A wave will ruin my dwelling!"
 So then, the mother of the water
 Raised her knee . . . out of the waves.
 There the duck made her nest.
 She began to brood.
 The maiden
 Felt the growing heat.
 She jerked her limb:
 The nest tumbled into the water,
 It broke into pieces.
 The eggs began to change, to grow beautiful.
 The egg's upper half
 became the sky, up above.
 The upper half of the [egg-]white
 [Became] the gleaming moon;
 That which was in the mottled part
 [Became] the stars in heaven.
 They [became] the stars in heaven.

* * *

Generically identified as a “tone poem for soprano solo and orchestra,” *Luonnotar*, op. 70, emerged at a crucial moment in Sibelius’s compositional career (1913, publ. 1915). This was the precise point between the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies at which he was anxiously rethinking the interrelationships of his own musical modernism and the aggressive challenges posed by the younger generation’s dissonant new music. Moreover, except for the little-known *Väinön virsi* (“Väinö’s [Väinämöinen’s] Song,” op. 110, for mixed chorus and orchestra), from 1926, *Luonnotar* was the last of his compositions to be based explicitly on the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*.¹ Following this setting of a significant portion of its creation story, he sought in the next decade and a half to evoke the concept of a more generalized, primeval, or unfiltered nature: that which had been “born” in the *Luonnotar* narrative.

Within Sibelius’s oeuvre *Luonnotar* has traditionally been considered a connoisseur’s piece, and commentators have argued that it ranks among the composer’s most impressive and extreme utterances. I would like to make an even further claim. It is in *Luonnotar* that the core of the composer’s mature thought is most clearly revealed. It is here that one encounters the clearest, most essential paradigm of Sibelian “difference”—the configuration of values, tensions, and conflicts distinguishing him from his contemporaries. Yet in its sheer strangeness *Luonnotar* has been a puzzling work “especially dear to the *cognoscentii*,”² but one that seems a sealed book for many performers and listeners. Apart from the music’s uncompromising starkness, concentration, and “cruel vocal demands,”³ its reputation for inaccessibility also stems from its verbal text, whose rugged syllables and grim, impersonal flavor are difficult for non-Finnish speakers to perform convincingly. And yet the spirit and sense of the text are inseparable from the impact of those stark syllables. No translation can adequately convey their compact, archaic, and rough-hewn qualities.

Sibelius’s text, along with my translation, is given above. The numbers after (and occasionally within) the Finnish lines refer to the corresponding line numbers of the poetic text as it appears in Runo 1 (“Poem 1”) of the standard edition of the fifty-runo *Kalevala* in circulation at the time that *Luonnotar* was composed.⁴ The symbol (*) indicates slight discrepancies of spelling or grammatical formation between Sibelius’s text and that of the “original”; italics signal larger deviations (word replacements, repetitions); bold print locates the two parallel first-person utterances within the text, that of the nature-spirit (the “luonnotar”) and that of the mystical bird. One should also observe the frequent occurrence of the poetic “Kalevala meter”: a plodding, nonrhyming trochaic tetrameter (‘-’-’-’-’, imitated by Longfellow in *The Song of Hiawatha* and particularly noticeable here in lines 118, 119, 122, 124, 127, 146, 153, 172, 179, 191, and so on). The occasionally differing accents and syllable counts within certain lines (*Olipa impi, ilman tyttö*: ‘-’-’-’-’) serve to vary this underlying pattern. Neither Sibelius’s chosen text nor the longer original is disposed in poetic stanzas. While several editions of the *Kalevala* do subdivide the epic into unequal poetic paragraphs normally ranging in length from about six to fifteen lines, more structural, patterned organizational line groupings are lacking.

The most important thing to notice is that Sibelius’s text includes only a selection of lines from Runo 1. Before proceeding further, we should emphasize that the notion of a stable “original” folktext here is fraught with problems. The *Kalevala* itself—and certainly this opening myth—was something of a manufactured product that had been assembled, organized, shaped, and expanded into several versions before 1850 by the nineteenth-century Finnish folklorist and ethnographer Elias Lönnrot.* (What would become the standard version is Lönnrot’s enlarged *New Kalevala* of 1849.) As the Finnish folklorist Juha Pentikäinen put it, “[The reality is that] the *Kalevala* is both a national epic and Lönnrot’s epic.”⁵ To this we might add that, although it was indisputably grounded on authentic folk poems, poem fragments, magic charms, and the like—collected mostly from around the White Sea Karelian region—it nevertheless exemplifies what Eric Hobsbawm has referred to more generally as the characteristically modern impulse for “the invention of tradition” for self-consciously political, ethnic, or sociocultural purposes.⁶ In this case Lönnrot’s twenty-year project was allied to the politics of cultural identity: that of legitimizing a distinctively Finnish language and culture, then seen, accurately, as imperiled in a slowly modernizing region whose centers of political power had been long dominated by Swedish and Russian cultures. We might also recall that when Sibelius completed *Luonnotar* in 1913, Finnish national independence from Russia was still some four years away. Thus the tone poem continued to have its role to play in the ongoing struggle of Finnish ethnic politics. Given the intense, international music-cultural politics of the period, however—into which this work was also drawn—one should not isolate the distinctively Finnish factor as the only significant one.

What is this tone poem about? Our first inroad into *Luonnotar* must be through its verbal text. But entering into this text is no easy matter, and we shall

have to be prepared to spend some time with it before turning to the music. Table 6.1 summarizes the differences between the plots of the tone poem and that of the much longer tale (lines 111–344) in the standard *Kalevala* available to Sibelius. As Lönnrot had fashioned it by 1849, this section of Runo 1 sprang from an intricate *bricolage* of separate textual sources and personal invention that ultimately told the story of the birth of “steadfast old” Väinämöinen (*vaka vanha Väinämöinen*, his standard epithet throughout the epic). The most venerable of the three heroes of the *Kalevala*, the long-bearded Väinämöinen was a perpetual wife-seeker and singer of legends, a personage tinged with a supernaturally primal ancestry and quasi-Orphic musical powers. In Runo 1 he is introduced as the son of a preexisting feminine air-spirit named *Ilmatar* (*ilma*, “air,”; *-tar*, feminine suffix) and certain apparently masculine, generative features of the wind and water: the lonely *Ilmatar* is described as being impregnated by a wind-whipped wave or surge in the middle of a storm, perhaps as part of the will of the supreme (but never clearly defined) god Ukko. The *Kalevala* recounts *Ilmatar*’s achingly long pregnancy—lasting around 740 years—in bluntly physical terms: “Swimming round the whole horizon / In the anguish of her birth pangs, / In her belly’s bursting pains. / Yet the birthing was unborn, / Still the fetus undelivered” (lines 146–50).⁷ Apart from the Väinämöinen question, the pregnancy was also eventful for a quite different reason. After the completion of its seventh century, the constituent elements of the natural cosmos were created by a separate (though metaphorically parallel) process involving the incubation of seven duck eggs on *Ilmatar*’s knee, which she had conveniently raised out of the primal waters. Once the raw cosmic elements had emerged, the still-pregnant *Ilmatar* then swam and stirred her limbs about to fashion the coastal features of the Finnish world. Shortly thereafter, “steadfast old” Väinämöinen began once again to stir in her womb and aggressively effected the strenuous bodily processes of his own birth. As for *Ilmatar*, nothing more is heard of her from this point onward.

On the face of it, Sibelius’s shorter version ends halfway through the original story. Here the maiden/virgin (*impi*) or girl (*tyttö*) is not identified with her *Kalevala* name, *Ilmatar*. In the epic, *Ilmatar* had been characterized as a *luonnotar*, a nature-spirit (*luonto*, nature; *-tar*, feminine suffix), and the word also appears with this general meaning, though unconcerned with *Ilmatar* herself, in later runos. It was the composer who elevated this description into the composition’s title; doubtless many listeners have concluded (wrongly) that it was also her name. More important—and much of the remainder of this essay will revolve around the implications of this central problem—Sibelius suppressed all explicit references to the gestation of Väinämöinen, that is, to the pregnancy of the *luonnotar*, which lasts beyond the events recounted in the tone poem. By shifting the five lines selected from 132–46 (from *Aalto impeä ajeli* through *Uipi kaikki ilman rannat*) to a position before lines 127–29, part of the impregnation passage from the *Kalevala*, he seems to have invited a reading (or misreading?) in which the nature-spirit’s 700 years of aimless drifting were an expression of her extreme state of loneliness, not of the painful burden of pregnancy (See Table 6.1).

Table 6.1
Comparative Order of Creation Events

<i>Luonnotar</i> , Sibelius	<i>Kalevala</i> , Runo 1
Unnamed spirit of nature/air.	<i>Ilmatar</i> , spirit of nature/air.
Loneliness.	Loneliness.
Descends to the waters.	Descends to the waters.
Driven about by a wave.	Strong wind/storm.
For 700 years.	Driven about by a wave.
Swims aimlessly.	Wind raises sea to a surge: impregnation.
Strong wind/storm.	700-year gestation.
Wind raises sea to a surge.	Swimming aimlessly, burdened.
Calls on Ukko for deliverance (from?).	Calls on Ukko for deliverance (childbirth charm).
Duck descends; flies aimlessly, burdened.	Duck descends, flies aimlessly, burdened.
Duck: nest on Nature-Spirit’s knee.	Duck: eggs (6 golden; 1 iron) on <i>Ilmatar</i> ’s knee.
Eggs heat up; Nature-Spirit jerks knee.	Eggs heat up; <i>Ilmatar</i> jerks knee.
Eggs fall into water, break.	Eggs fall into water, break.
Magic transformation of eggs: Sky / Moon / Stars	Magic transformation of eggs: Earth / Sky / Sun / Moon / Stars.
	9 1/2 years pass (<i>Ilmatar</i> still pregnant).
	<i>Ilmatar</i> stirs, raises head out of water, creates the shorelines, sea-bottoms, islands, etc. 30 more years pass.
	Shift of narrative focus to Väinämöinen (in <i>Ilmatar</i> ’s womb), now desiring to emerge.
	Väinämöinen summons the moon, stars, and Great Bear to help him emerge: to no avail.
	Väinämöinen claws himself out, opening the “bony lock” by means of his left toe.
	Once born, Väinämöinen falls into the water, which nurtures him for 8 years.
	Väinämöinen climbs ashore to view the world.

Curiously, in apparently eliding the matter of the pregnancy, Sibelius took at least one step back to the original cosmogonic story on which Runo 1 had been based. (This may have been inadvertent: one wonders whether Sibelius was aware of it.) Much of the “standard” Runo 1, in fact, is Lönnrot’s substantial rewriting of the tale that he had first heard sung in White Sea Karelia in Septem-

ber 1833 by the folk singer Ontrei Malinen.⁸ In Malinen's version it was not Ilmatar who had descended to the primal waters, eventually to receive the bird's eggs on her knee; instead it was "old Väinämöinen" himself, wounded by an arrow shot by a "slant-eyed Lapp" who had held a "week-long grudge" against him. The earliest version, which Lönnrot first noted down in the pre-*Kalevala* poem "Väinämöinen" of 1833 follows this general shape:

Väinämöinen fell into the water for seven years, and plowed the sea bottom. . . . The goose, bird of the air, flew in search of a place to nest. Väinämöinen raised his knee from the sea as a green hillock. The goose made a nest on Väinämöinen's knee, and laid six eggs, the seventh one of iron. As the bird brooded her eggs, Väinämöinen felt his knee grow warm and moved it. At this point, the eggs rolled into the sea. Väinämöinen said: "What's in the bottom half of the egg, that's the bottom mother earth / What's in the upper half of the egg, that's the upper sky."⁹

Thus no "Great Goddess" bearing the cosmos, no pregnancy, and no gestation—only the bird's brooding. Originally, the principal agent of creation was Väinämöinen. This was essentially the version of the tale included both in Lönnrot's *Proto-Kalevala* of 1834 and, somewhat expanded, in the *Old Kalevala* of 1835. To summarize the tale's subsequent complex history: it was only in the final, 1849 version of Runo 1 that Lönnrot changed the story to include Ilmatar—a figure largely of his own invention—and to imagine her as simultaneously pregnant with Väinämöinen (by means of the wind-raised sea surge), who was then born at the end of the now double-story runo. Moreover, as Pentikäinen argues, the origins of Lönnrot's conception of Ilmatar were not distinctly Finnish. She seems instead to have been the result of his self-conscious adaptation of certain primordial goddess figures and feminine principles from various sacred Indian texts that also involved a generative, cosmic egg: these included the *Satapathabrahmana* and the *Rig Veda*. In short, by the time of the *New Kalevala* "Väinämöinen was no longer the primary creator: he now had a smaller role. . . . The [masculine] deity of creation had . . . [now] been lowered to earth from his celestial role. He was now born of a woman. . . . Although Ilmatar remains undefined, she represents the feminine principle of creation."¹⁰

As if to complicate the gender switches and tangles that were emerging from his comparative-mythological alteration of the tales, by 1839 Lönnrot had developed a theory (now no longer accepted)¹¹ that the masculine Väinämöinen's name was derived etymologically from *vein emonen* (in various spellings), "mother of water(s)." This Finnish phrase was apparently his own concoction, and he pointedly interpolated it into the final version of 1849; it appears twice in the text that Sibelius selected for his tone poem. Pentikäinen's commentary on Lönnrot from the perspective of 1987 lays out the essential issues even further:

Thus, according to Lönnrot's etymology, even Väinämöinen derives from the secret power of feminine creation—he is shown to be a hero whose name has a feminine root. Ultimately, Väinämöinen is defined as the impersonal, unique element of power in water. According to Lönnrot's [original explanation] as well as contemporary comparative my-

thology and Freudian analysis, water is the manifestation of female sexuality. Could Ilmatar, then, be considered the offspring of Ukko, the masculine god of air and thunder, and of Väinämöinen, defined as *vein emonen*, the feminine element of water? In this case, Väinämöinen, born of Ilmatar, turns out to be her reincarnation.¹²

To return to the tone poem: As we have pointed out, Sibelius's text, though seemingly based solely on the 1849 *Kalevala*, appears to have passed over any consideration of the *luonnotar*'s pregnancy. But things are not so simple. Because Sibelius was adapting a celebrated Finnish text, its culturally normative reading lay outside his power to refashion as he pleased. The words inescapably would have meant more than any naïve surface reading might suggest. To what extent is the never-mentioned fact of pregnancy to be understood as implied—or to be read into—Sibelius's text? Did he expect his listeners to fill the tone poem's ellipses with their knowledge of the *Kalevala*? Or, on the contrary, did he hope that they would not, and that his textual rearranging would be accepted at face value?

Those attempting to confront the tone poem's most basic narrative content soon find that this becomes a substantial problem, one easier to confront within the Finnish context in which it was composed than in the alien markets in which the work was initially performed and subsequently circulated. It is hardly a negligible consideration, for example, that *Luonnotar* was proximately occasioned by the soprano Aino Ackté's* engagement at the 1913 Gloucester Festival, at which an early version of the piece was performed on September 10, 1913 before an audience that understood not a syllable of Finnish and that probably had only the vaguest notions of what the *Kalevala* was. What meaning can *Luonnotar* be expected to have had in this foreign, consumerist context? We should also recall that in 1915, in a revised form, the work was published and distributed in Sibelius's piano score by Breitkopf & Härtel (with an inadequate German translation printed above the Finnish).¹³ Thus, our urge to grapple with the interaction between the production aesthetic (Sibelius's unrecoverable compositional intentions) and the various readings that *Luonnotar* must actually have received encounters substantial obstacles from the start. This matter may ultimately prove unresolvable. It may be that the work has never been adequately attended to, much less grasped, outside of certain circles in Finland. In this sense, the utterance's striving toward a "meaning-event"—residing in a significant production/reception transaction, one both sufficiently reflective and concrete—has rarely, if ever, been encouraged to occur.

Is Sibelius's *luonnotar* to be understood as pregnant? The crux of the matter resides in the two lines that the composer extracted and resituated from the beginning of the impregnation passage, *Tuli suuri tuulen puuska. . . / Meren kuohuille kohotti* (lines 127 and 129). In the longer source poem it is clear that the wind raises the sea to this seminal surge or foam to effect the conception of Väinämöinen. (For example, Sibelius omitted lines 135–37: "Where her womb the wind awakened / And the sea-foam impregnated. / Thus a full womb now she carried.")¹⁴ Why did Sibelius alter the order of the lines that he did select? It

may be that the composer was concerned only with the story's recounting of the creation of the cosmic elements, not with the birth of Väinämöinen himself. Those favoring this explanation might argue that this larger concern also reveals Sibelius's shift away from a specifically Kalevalaic nationalism toward the more generalized nature mysticism that would dominate this final phase of his compositional career. And yet such a response begs the fundamental question of the residual meaning of the text apart from the composer's volition. As recent literary theory has convincingly insisted, there is no such thing as a neutral text. And certainly we cannot pretend that an adopted text (much less such an ethnically resonant one as this) can be reshaped in a way that obliterates its preexisting connotations.

If Sibelius had wished not to include the concept of a pregnancy at some interpretive level, why did he include lines 127 and 129 at all? Moreover—and, as will emerge, this is the tone poem's crucial textual moment, triggering its sonorous climax—lines 191–94, supposedly uttered by the duck in flight, manifestly reinvigorate with an even higher tension the image in lines 127 and 129. Now in high distress and seeking a nesting place, the duck fears to nest in the primal waters for fear of a destructive, wind-swept wave that will “ruin my dwelling”; the parallel with the seminal ocean surge destroying Ilmatar's virginity and setting in motion the earliest phases of creation itself could scarcely be clearer. We shall reconsider this central image below.

The reason that all of these things merit the attention given to them here is that by implication they also drive to the heart of the mature Sibelius's aesthetic and music-structural practice. As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁵ at least from the last two movements of the Third Symphony (1907) onward, Sibelius seems to have embarked on one of the most remarkable (and least understood) formal projects of his age. As he proceeded into the last half of his career, he grew dissatisfied both with the received notions of musical form as identified in the reified schemata provided in the various *Formenlehre* textbooks (architectonically balanced sonatas, rondos, themes and variations, and so on) and with the various standard *de facto* families of formal deformation that had become common practice among the early modernist composers around the turn of the century (characteristic ways of expanding, contracting, or altering a sonata, for example).¹⁶ Consequently, he began to explore original modes of compositional structuring. These “content-based forms,” as I have called them, are not easily summarizable, but many of them—including that found in *Luonnotar*—are concerned with two fundamental principles, *rotation* and *teleological genesis*.

The first principle, rotation, refers to the presence of an extended, patterned succession of musical events (often a collection of “themes”), which are then revisited one or more times (recycled or “rotated through”) with internal variations in intensity, motivic growth, interpolated or deleted material, and so on. (Such structures are obviously related to, but not always identical with, the *Formenlehre* notion of strophic variation.) But Sibelius's rotational forms are not an end in themselves. Rather, the circular rotations typically function as a gestational matrix: They serve as a medium within which a different idea is planted,

“grows into life,” and is eventually revealed or “born” in a fully formed *telos* (or goal) that is normally the climactic utterance, the single point toward which the composition has been moving. Once this process of teleological genesis has reached its end-point with the revelation of the *telos*, the gestational matrix, its purpose having been served, normally decays or recedes gradually into the background, signaling the end of the composition.

That such a basic, metaphorically “maternal” structure could be interpreted as suggesting some sort of *ur-feminine* principle is obvious enough, once the fundamental process is grasped. And yet, as I will suggest below, to argue on behalf of only a single, simplistic set of images (for example, a set controlled only by the duality masculine/feminine) collapses the actual complexity of the utterance and misses the larger point. For now, we might say only that in Sibelius's later works we confront compositional strategies that themselves strive to sink deeply into the mythic, archetypal, or primordially psychological. These are structures that have, from at least one perspective, resolutely gendered implications at the deepest layers of human consciousness.

To understand this matter regarding successive gestational rotations and the process of teleological genesis is to cross the threshold into a realm where a productive consideration of Sibelius's mature musical thinking becomes possible. Nowhere is this clearer or more paradigmatic than in *Luonnotar*. Most tellingly, the structural process that we also find so prominently in the set of pieces to which *Luonnotar* belongs (and apart from which it cannot be understood)—*The Bard*, *Oceanides*, the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Symphonies, and *Tapiola*—is here underscored with a text that itself concerns mythic conception, gestation, and birth. As such, *Luonnotar* may be understood as the principal metaphorical illustration in Sibelius's oeuvre of the entire mature system. Though itself manifold in implication, it may be regarded as a master key that can help to unlock the whole. It is fitting, then, that we turn to an overview of how this piece unfolds musically.

* * *

Composed in 1913, *Luonnotar* and its immediate predecessor, *The Bard*, were the first two major works that Sibelius produced after vowing in his diary the preceding year that he would make a decisive break with the *Formenlehre* patterns as currently conceived. From this point onward, he was determined to fashion works structured primarily on a more intuitive, ad hoc basis.¹⁷ Although secondary references to aspects of the *Formenlehre* patterns were by no means to be ruled out (quasi-symmetrical tonal resolutions, and so on), he no longer considered them mandatory. Each work was now to be guided more essentially by the will of the selected material itself, a ramifying volition that the composer was proposing to uncover through deep listening or meditation. “The musical thoughts—the motives, that is—are the things that must create the form and stabilize my path,” he wrote on April 23, 1912. A little over two weeks later, on May 8, 1912, he added, “I intend to let the musical thoughts and their development determine their own form in my soul.”¹⁸ Both *The Bard* and *Luonnotar* may be understood as Sibelius's commitment to enter more decisively into this

uncharted formal world, to which he had been intermittently attracted since the Third Symphony. With the subsequent *Oceanides* and the Fifth Symphony, *The Bard* and *Luonnotar* are its first manifestos.

The music of *Luonnotar* may be structurally read as unfolding in two large rotations. Textually, the first consists of eighteen poetic lines (not in any sense a “stanza”), through the final line of the Kalevalaic childbirth charm, “Käy tänne kutsuttaissa!” (line 172). The second, twenty-five lines in length, begins with a reworking of the first’s orchestral introduction (9 1/2 mm. before rehearsal letter D) and soon leads from the first textual reference to the bird, “Tuli sotka, suora lintu” (line 179), to the end of the piece.

Each of the two large rotations is further divisible into two thematic and tonal zones. These may be represented schematically as A A’/ B and A A’ A’’/ B. The first rotation’s first zone (A, A’) is centered around F-sharp “dorian”; the second rotation initially echoes this but shifts to a B-flat minor center for its third, A’’ subrotation. In the first rotation the second zone (B) articulates an “out-of-focus” B-flat minor (beginning with line 153, the first person “Voi, poloinen, päiviäni!”); in the second rotation this music (line 195) shifts downward successively through various tonal levels (G-sharp minor, F-sharp minor, E minor) before reascending to settle on the “tonic” F-sharp. Considered together, the two rotations may be heard as engaging in a *secondary* dialogue with the principle of sonata deformation. (It is secondary because the piece’s *primary* structural principle is that of rotation/teleological genesis, which in itself does not necessitate such a dialogue with the sonata.) In other words, the first rotation secondarily suggests a bithematic, two-key expositional space, and the second a varied but ultimately resolving recapitulatory space. This secondary sonata deformation contains no elaboration of a developmental space.

Along with this broad scheme, two other structural factors are crucial. First, Sibelius subjects both large rotations to constant “inner” motivic growth and expansion. This principle of *crescit eundo* (progressive enlargement) is doubtless a musical image of the gestational process inferable in the text. Second, the ever-expanding rotations nurture a separate *telos* figure. This appears in three increasingly powerful manifestations: promise, or a mere stirring/near approach/culmination. The first, a mysterious figure on F-sharp minor (though obviously motivically related to the opening of the first rotation’s A-zone) serves as the opening impulse of the second rotation (10–13 mm. after C, Example 6.1). *Telos* 2 (Example 6.2) is stated shortly into the second rotation, following its brief, fifth line, “Ei! Ei!,” mm. 1–6 before H, thus introducing the subsequent four textual lines personifying the bird, “Teenkö tuulehen tupani.” Here the figure has grown into a much stronger triple statement on B-flat minor. The climactic *telos* 3—or the piece’s *telos* proper—begins to swell under the last and most anguished of the four first-person lines assigned to the bird still in anxious flight (“Aalto viepi asuinsiani!”). Here the triple statement of its earlier appearance in *telos* 2 is expanded into a climactic triple sequence, the image, it seems, of a powerfully cresting and breaking wave (from 5 before I to 7 after I: see Example 6.3, whose elusive tonal implications will be mentioned further below).

Example 6.1

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Example 6.2

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Example 6.3

The musical score for Example 6.3 consists of four systems. The first system shows a vocal line with lyrics "kaa - - - ta - vi, aal - - - to vie - - -" and a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "pi a - suin - si - a - nil" and the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the piano accompaniment with dynamic markings "ffz" and "dim.". The fourth system shows the piano accompaniment with dynamic markings "fff" and "dim.". The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

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The successive, growing *telos*-utterances belong exclusively to the A-zone of Rotation 2, which may consequently be regarded as the piece's *zone of action*: the production of an increasingly tense, swelling, decisive force. The preceding Rotation 1 (including both A- and B-zones) is largely expositional, a composite *zone of situation*, although it does contain the pointed reference to the ocean surge (lines 127 and 129) at the point at which the recitational, third-person A-zone gives way to its first-person successor. Rotation 1 concludes with the nature-spirit's summons of Ukko. It would seem that *telos 1* is a direct response to this: It must represent the irruption of Ukko's dark force into the piece (unless we have already sensed his presence in line 129) and the onset of the chthonic activity (Rotation 2, A-zone) that will eventually give rise to the cosmos. Clearly, this intervention rises to a peak with breaking-wave *telos 3* at the end of the *zone of action*: the moment that articulates the bird's fear of destruction, "Aalto viepi asuinsiani!" (simultaneously linking back to the impregnation surge in line 129) and its subsequent descent to the nature-spirit. After *telos 3* no more external intervention is necessary: Once everything has been set in place, the future becomes inevitable, impersonal, mechanical—and it requires only a flat, third-person recitation recounting "what has happened." The concluding B-zone of Rotation 2 is therefore a *zone of consequence*, the resolution both of the creation myth and (tonally) of the secondary sonata deformation.

This much established, let us touch briefly on some of the piece's musical details. (Readers less concerned with following a closer textural, motivic, and harmonic reading of the piece may wish to proceed directly to the final part of this chapter.)

Rotation 1, A-zones (from the beginning to 8 mm. after B, through line 129, "Meren kuohuille kohotti"). This section subdivides into two subrotations, A A' (the division occurs at letter A, m. 22, after line 122, "Avaroilla autoioilla"); the second subrotation varies and expands the music of the first (34 as opposed to 21 measures), principally through melodic variants, brief interpolations, and inner repetitions. Each subrotation begins with an atmospheric glimmering or "rhythmic stream"¹⁹ in the *con sordino, divisi* violins, and violas. This "air" figure (Finnish, *ilma*; cf. the original name *Ilmatar*)—or the vibrating orchestral element—suggests the ether in which the now materialized nature-spirit (or singer) is to sustain herself. Harmonically, it articulates essentially an "F-sharp minor 6/4" sonority—the chordal position that suggests a forward vector, an urge toward resolution, action, and potential—and it flutters with brief echoes and repetitions. Example 6.4 shows the opening measures' leading idea in the first violin, and with the viola's momentary shift underneath to D-sharp in m. 4, immediately echoed in m. 6, the "F-sharp dorian" tonal orientation is clear. Finally, of course, the opening figure is what will grow motivically into the separable *telos* at the climax of the piece. Thus, from its opening sounds *Luonnotar* is concerned with teleological genesis. The gestational matrix, whose first

sounds we perceive here, is intimately related to that which it nurtures and ultimately bears.

Example 6.4

Tempo moderato
[Vln. I]
con sord.
p

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Example 6.5

9 mp
13 poco a poco cresc.
18

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With the entrance of the voice (m. 9, Example 6.5) nearly everything heard thus far converts into its sonorous opposite. This effect may be intended to represent both the “strangeness” of the nature-spirit’s existence (her otherness from the space in which she exists) or the vastness and universal emptiness in which she dwells. Although the vocal line is a varied motivic extension of the opening figure (the process of teleological genesis, reshaping, and growth is clearly underway), the accompanying orchestration drops the upper strings entirely in favor of sustained notes in the winds (underpinned at one point by the contrabasses). Similarly, the passage also illustrates a harmonic slippage into otherness: The initial F-sharp dorian flavor tilts away through a remote, unstable “E minor” (mm. 17–19, “Aina yksin ollessansa,” “always being alone”). Once touched upon, this fragile E-sonority slips down almost immediately to a maximally remote C major chord (“Avaroilla autoilla,” “vast voids,” whose fathoms are chillingly measured by a rising arpeggio in the “bardic” harp). Here the polar

opposition of the tritone-related roots (F-sharp, C) is further underscored by a shift of mode (dorian/“minor,” major).

The whole A-process is then recycled and submitted to growth and expansion (“Laskeusi lainehille”). At the end of the subrotation an appended pair of linking lines (the important impregnation lines 127 and 129, 4 mm. after letter B) effects a tonal color-shift—one can hardly speak here of common practice tonality—from F-sharp minor sonority (here also with a dissonant raised seventh) to B-flat minor. This is accomplished in a characteristically Sibelian manner: the C-sharp and E-sharp function as enharmonic common tones (D-flat and F) and the triadic materials around them are reconfigured by chromatic motion.

Rotation 1, B-zone (*Tranquillo assai*, from 8 after B to 10 after C, merging into *telos 1*, 10–11 after C; the text is the five-line Kalevalaic childbirth charm, the supplication of aid from Ukko, beginning “Voi, poloinen, päiviäni!”). The *misterioso* B-zone is underpinned throughout by an only rarely altered, throbbing pedal-chord: an “elemental” open fifth B-flat-f in the lower strings (beat 1; the doubling in the harp also includes a dissonant, sustained lower A natural, transcribed in Sibelius’s piano reduction as a grace note to the B-flat) against which a second open fifth in the violas, g-flat—d-flat¹, presses dissonantly on beat 2 (see Example 6.6).

Example 6.6

56 misterioso p
“Voi -
60
po - - loi - nen päi - - vi - ä - ni!

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The resulting “static” blur may be understood from several perspectives. From one, the sonority is simply a minor triad 5/3 above B-flat to which two additional pitches, 7 below and 6 above—“frozen” neighbor notes to the triad—have been added. Another hearing might suggest that the 5/3 above B-flat is striving unsuccessfully to convert itself into a 6/3: the resulting “G-flat⁶,” were it to be then underpinned by a G-flat “root,” would represent the major-mode resolution into which the initial F-sharp dorian seeks to be liberated. (This interpretation refers,

of course, to the standard *Erlösung* plot of nineteenth-century minor key works, and indeed we should notice that *Luonnotar* will ultimately conclude on F-sharp major.) In this reading the persistent lower neighbor A natural suggests a further anchor in this process of color transformation: a low register, sludgy natural-third of the F-sharp (G-flat) triad, drowsily resistant to inflection upward; it is also, simultaneously, a reference to the continued presence of F-sharp minor (dorian) in this B-flat minor section, underscoring the unbroken line of gestation or teleological genesis that is underway in the piece. Still another interpretation might single out the bipolar spacing of the elemental open fifths: a refracting or decentering of one's normal sense of tonal stability, as though one were simultaneously pulled in two directions. Such an emphasis might further suggest a correlation to the inner stress, the pulsating and inevitable "natural" motion beyond individual control, the gradual expansion, and the potential opening up of the gestation process itself—the gestation, that is, of a mysterious other destined to come into its own life and go its own way.

Above the throbbing pedal, the ritualistic, incantatory vocal line (Example 6.7, this time transcribed from the printed orchestral score, which differs in some details from the vocal score), for the most part, traces out its broad, floating arcs in weary, two-note rhythmic repetitions, perhaps evoking on one level a strained or exhausted panting, or perhaps, on another, a strangely flat, "expressionless" submission to the inevitable.

Example 6.7

[Sop.]
 57 *Misterioso*
piano

Voi - - - - - po - loi - nen päi - vi - ä - ni.
 Pa - - - - - rem - pi o - li - si
 ol - lut il - man im - pe - nä e - lää
 Oi Uk - ko
 y - li - ju - mala! Käy lämme kut - sut - tais - sa

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The motivic links of its incipit (the three-note upbeat and its continuation) both to the opening of the A-zone and to the *telos*-to-come are also clear enough, but what we should especially notice is its high-tension continuation of the process of tonal decentering—or blurring of focus—as the B-zone proceeds. While the blurred pedal chord persists underneath (Example 6.6), the vocal line (Examples 6.6 and 6.7) soon dislocates (at mm. 59–60, “*poloinen, päiviäni!*”) from the scalar elements of B-flat minor to suggest—now with a maximized friction of dissonance—those of other diatonic collections (Example 6.8). These collections—for instance, from m. 61 onward—are essentially Lydian on B double-flat (mm. 61–64, “*Parempi olisi ollut,*” centered a half-step below B-flat minor; the initial D natural—a chromatic lower neighbor—does not belong to this collection); a fleeting refocusing around B-flat minor (m. 65, “*Ilman im-*”); Lydian on F-flat (mm. 66–67, “*Openä elää,*” centered a tritone away from B-flat minor); Lydian on B double-flat again (mm. 69–71, “*Oi Ukko, ylijumala!*,” the moment of the invoking of the god himself—as has been noted, an extraordinarily difficult entrance for the soprano against its B-flat minor bass²⁰); and, once again, Lydian on F-flat (mm. 72–73, the direct summons of Ukko, “*Käy tänne kutsutaisa*”).

Example 6.8

1) B^b Harmonic Minor
 2) B^{bb} Lydian
 3) F^b Lydian

Rotation 2, A-zones (nine textual lines, beginning “*Tuli sotka, suora lintu*”). This important *zone of action* is triggered by the sounding of *telos 1* (Example 6.1) in the clarinet and bass clarinet—as suggested earlier, a response to the nature-spirit’s summons. In every way the subsequent *three* (no longer merely two) A-zones of Rotation 2, centered textually around the sudden appearance of the mystical bird and the urgent anxiety of its search for a nesting place, are larger, more active, more tensely expectant, and more “alive” than those of Rotation 1. Here what was initially separate (the introductory rhythmic stream now varied and expanded further, reinforced by winds, and infused with what would seem to be additional, “avian” flutters descending in parallel 6/3’s) persists to be joined to the voice as its agitated accompaniment. The color shift toward the C chord, the outcome of the tonal motion of Rotation 1’s A-zone, is unattained here, and a second subrotation begins with a ten-measure block repetition of the “new” orchestral introduction (which begins under the words, “*löyä pesän sioa*”: letter D,

mm. 1–8 and proceeding into letter E, mm. 1–2 = m. 1–10 before G). This second subrotation, however, has picked up enough energy soon to plunge into a varied course, driving through the soloist's exclamations, "Ei! Ei!" ("No! No!"—referring syntactically to the bird's inability to nest, but interjected here also with the connotation of a sudden fear or impulse to try to draw away from the inevitable process that is now about to ensue) to the second grand event of the piece, the appearance of *telos* 2, swerving toward B-flat minor (near approach, Example 6.2).

An additional, third subrotation now sets out from this B-flat minor (letter H). The tonal color revisits that of Rotation 1's B-zone and, one may presume, reinvigorates the implications thereof—the childbirth charm, the tonal and textual decentering, the compulsion for deliverance, and so on, all of which serves to underscore the metaphorical identity of the *luonnotar* and the bird. Moreover, the shift of narrative voice to the bird is decisive here, and the anxiety of the text rushes forward to produce the piece's sonorous, climactic goal, *telos* 3, beginning unstoppably to emerge under the cry, "[Aalto] viepi asuinsiani!" (culmination, or the decisive event from which there is no drawing back; Example 6.3), whose important implications we have dealt with earlier. In terms of tonal color, the climactic *telos* 3 sequences through three tonal levels (A-flat minor, F-flat major, G-flat major), each with irregular outcomes resulting from Sibelius's characteristic half- and whole-step alterations of expected triads. These unusual outcomes are shown in the simplified, schematic reductions in Example 6.9 (which may be compared with the vocal score reduction in Example 6.3). The final *fortissimo* surge through G-flat, of course, momentarily passes through the "tonic major" chord—an electrifying event foreshadowing the end of the piece, although it is unsustainable here and moves toward an open fifth on G-sharp (= A-flat) to enter a short transition passage, *diminuendo* and *allargando*, leading to zone B.

Example 6.9

Rotation 2, B-zone (from letter K, "Niin silloin ve'en emonen" to the end). In terms of its sonority and diminished physical impact following the surging wave of *telos* 3, the *pianissimo* B-zone is all aftermath—the flat, ritual recounting of the inevitable cosmic event, "what has happened." Here the blurred ("added-

sixth") pedal chord, carried essentially by *divisi* violas, cellos, and harps—and again further decentered by the soprano—slumps downward through various levels. Setting aside for the moment the encroaching low, dissonant contrabass drones, what we find are: (1) twelve measures of "G-sharp minor" for the initial laying of the eggs and their incubation ("Niin silloin"); (2) six measures of the tonic "F-sharp minor" for the *luonnotar*'s jerking of her knee ("Järkytti jäsenehensä"); the falling of the eggs into the primal waters and their consequent breaking; (3) three mysterious measures, *quasi niente*, *ppp* followed by *pppp*, of the subtonic "E minor" (here underpinned by a preset C drone in the contrabasses, which simultaneously—in the manner of "double-vision"—also pulls the entire sonority strongly toward a "C⁷" interpretation) for the announcement of the onset of the eggs' miraculous changes ("Muutuivat munat kaunoiksi"); and (4) back to "F-sharp minor" for the more detailed recounting of the specific changes (letter L, "Munasen yläinen puoli"). In all this, reckoning from the beginning of Rotation 2, one may discern a tonal wave-like motion moving through whole steps: F-sharp / B-flat [to wave-breaking *telos*-3 sequences] / G-sharp / F-sharp / E / F-sharp. It is the eventual undulation back into the governing F-sharp levels that is most significant, for it provides something of a quasi-recapitulatory "resolution" within a secondary sonata deformation.

But, as suggested above, much of this undulation is crosscut by intermittent, (usually) three-pitch, sustained drones in the *pianissimo*, *con sordino* contrabasses. These tonally "contradictory" drones suggest a mysterious force "pulling apart" the governing sonorities, just as the eggs are maturing toward an inner separation that will bring forth the raw cosmic elements. One such drone, for example, occurs just before letter K ("hautoa," "brood"), where in the context of the blurred "G-sharp minor" throbbing pedal-chord (G-sharp-D-sharp/E-B) the lower strings sound a three-measure E-B open-fifth (itself a doubling of the upper fifth of the blurred G-sharp minor chord) along with a D natural underneath. (Here the D and E may be construed as decentering double leading tones to the "G-sharp minor chord tone," D-sharp.) A similar event, down a step (C-D-A), occurs at the ensuing blurred F-sharp level, at the moment that the nest tumbles into the water. In this case its low C alone is prolonged for five measures further—and even temporarily reinforced with gleaming "C-chord" members in the upper strings—well into the point at which the voices above it have shifted to the blurred "E minor" level and back to the "F-sharp level" (by which time the gleaming upper strings have settled into F-sharp reinforcers).

Once the music settles on the final F-sharp level (still blurred: the F-sharp-C-sharp fifth is juxtaposed with the D-A fifth, and the lower-neighbor E-sharp is also present), Sibelius continues to pull tonally at it from various vantage points above and below. The mention of the moon's emergence, for example, calls forth a "contradictory" $c^2-d^2-a^2$ drone in the violins, answered several octaves below by the *divisi* contrabasses, then by even higher a-d fifths, played in harmonics in the high violins. With the repetition of the final word, "Ne tähiksi taivaalle," "([the stars in] heaven)", the governing blurred F-sharp minor sonority, along with some of its decentering tonal pulls, begins to reconfigure into the

long-sought F-sharp major. The effect here is something of a *tierce de Picardie*, though it is sounded as an F-sharp dyad only, with pitch-classes F-sharp and A-sharp—the sonority has no fifth. In these concluding four measures the lingering contradictory elements (the C-D-A in the lower strings, for example) fade away into silence. This permits the final measure, fixed into place with a *fermata*, to shine through as a pure F-sharp-major dyad in the high strings.

* * *

Considered as a whole, *Luonnotar* is best approached as a constellation of musical and verbal connotations, an arena of contending processes and tensions that may be approached from a variety of legitimate perspectives. The work should not be reduced to a single, coherent “meaning.” Rather, when we consider the prehistory of its text, the manner in which Sibelius reshaped his source, and the non-normative musical design to which he then submitted it, *Luonnotar* is more likely to strike us as a set of multiple layers of suggestion and possibility. Several of these connotation-layers may be viewed as conflicting, a feature that perhaps recalls Mikhail Bakhtin’s well-known concept of a centrifugal, disunifying “heteroglossia,” or “polyphonic” multiplicity of differing voices, a central feature of any communicative utterance. Still, even though those connotations in the work that most concern us here do not admit of a unified, coherent resolution into a “correct” reading, they do tend to orbit around (or define themselves in relation to) a central theme.

That theme is the quest for being, the attempt to bring into consciousness “that which is.” This drive to become aligned with the ontological essences of nature is the defining feature of Sibelius’s mature works. (It is especially to be contrasted with the urban, desacralizing atmosphere of the European marketplace of “art” and its surrounding context of power politics, public opinion, and commodity exchange.) This is evident both from the numerous and consistent comments to this effect in his diaries—“Nature mysticism and life’s Angst!”²¹—and from the topics taken up in his post-Fourth Symphony works. *Luonnotar*, therefore, should not be explicated as an isolated, “autonomous” piece. Instead, it is one element of a series of works composed with a “nature-mystical” intent. To adapt one of Sibelius’s remarks, it is only one provocative sector of a grand, mystical “mosaic” to whose reassembly he believed he was contributing, tile by tile.²² The *Kalevala* creation myth in *Luonnotar* takes up the problem quite literally from the perspective of the gestational production of being. Conversely, the mosaic’s other reassembled sectors (especially *Oceanides*, the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Symphonies, and *Tapiola*) seem primarily concerned with the *uncovering* of being. In them, Sibelius accepted the notion of “pure nature” as a given, but then attempted through the processes of music to work his way back into the earth, water, and sky to unlock the essential animating forces believed to lie therein. Briefly put, the procedures of rotation, teleological genesis, and the meditation on the elemental nature of sound itself take on something of the character of a grand, neo-pagan rite. To listen to the later Sibelius apart from such considerations is to miss the point altogether.

Still, the existence of such a central theme does not lead us inevitably into a single interpretation. Much depends upon the conceptual framework within which we choose to hear these works. In *Luonnotar*, even if we should wish to accept the structural analogy of rotation/teleological genesis with the process of gestation and birth, this hardly “solves” the piece. It does not permit us, for instance, to isolate a single, most probable reading of the arrival of *telos 3*, the crux on which any interpretation must rest. According to the reigning metaphor we might expect that this moment would signal birth or new arrival (as the same process seems to do in the finale of the Third Symphony and portions of the Fifth).²³ But the literal text at this point hardly supports such a conclusion: the verbal recounting of the “birth” itself occurs only after *telos 3*.

One solution to this problem might be to suggest that the musical narrative proceeds asynchronously with the text. If this is plausible, it may be important to recognize that in the piece’s first B-zone, texted entirely with a first-person childbirth charm, the nature-spirit may be understood to be heavy with child. This heaviness seems conspicuously absent—perhaps already “emptied”—in the second rotation’s post-climactic B-zone, which is more impersonally presented, with its shift back to the third person, its reduction in dynamic force, and so on. This in turn might suggest that Sibelius confronted the problematic double-story of Runo 1 (Ilmatar’s pregnancy/cosmic bird) in an enticingly abstract way, one in which the *luonnotar* is to conceive and deliver her child entirely in the music, not in the text. This, at least, could be proposed as one explanation of Sibelius’s suppression of the key textual lines from the *Kalevala*. In this reading, we are told nothing concrete about the presumed child (Väinämöinen). He remains a provocative cipher, his gestation and birth a structural metaphor or, better, a generalized presence or musical principle suffusing the tone poem as a whole. The possible representation of his physical birth, coinciding with *telos 3*, would in some sense be set out of the way at this point to permit the second story’s denouement, the incubation and breaking of the cosmic eggs.

Very different readings, though, are also possible. One might wish to argue, for example, that the three *telos*-moments are not so much gestational (and in this sense “feminine”) as they are representations of an ever more decisive, non-retractable intervention of the summoned god Ukko, a masculine intervention that sets into motion the now-inevitable production of being. Metaphorically, *telos 3* could be understood as recounting a narrative more analogous to conception—or more graphically, to impregnation—than to birth. Thus, all of Rotation 2’s A-zone could be heard as suggesting a violent, primal ravishing of the nature-spirit. (In turn, this would oblige a different metaphorical reading of the accompanying text, the duck in flight.) A vexing ambiguity within this reading, however, is the presence of the earlier lines 127 and 129 (unmistakably the impregnation lines from the *Kalevala*) linking the A- and B-zones of Rotation 1, the centrally problematic verses whose implications we have already investigated at some length. Was this why Sibelius obscured their original meaning in the isolated context of his tone poem? And how then are we to take the mention of the destructive wave (line 194) accompanying the onset of *telos 3*, which re-

vives in a supposedly different context the central surge image of impregnation in lines 127 and 129? A second challenge within this reading would be to account for the motivic relationship of the *telos*-figures with most of the material from Rotation 1, which might tend to suggest the more suffused gestation-and-growth image than sudden external (masculine) intervention.

But why could not both understandings of the *telos*-moments—perhaps along with several others—coexist as equally legitimate readings in simultaneous tension with each other? There is no need to bring this matter to closure. Indeed, nonclosure, ambiguity, and multiplicity of connotation may be central constituents of the constellation of conflicting traditions and tensions that come together to make up the experience that Sibelius would have us call *Luonnotar*.

If we do wish to pursue the notion, however, that the gestational metaphor is in some musically pervasive way appropriate to our dialogue with *Luonnotar*, a number of further issues arise. Some strains of current materialist, psychoanalytical, or poststructuralist thought might wish to develop the argument that this aspect of the work's structural process seems to follow the logic of the body. Once such an observation has been made, it can scarcely escape one's attention that the presumed gestational "logic" is that of woman's body, a representation of an archetypal otherness to the experience of the composer himself. Further, that posited corporeal discourse might in some ways (though not in all ways) be provocatively aligned with Sibelius's self-declared new compositional methods in 1912. (As was also mentioned above, these new principles were to give primacy to nurturing and attending to the growing volitional will of the musical ideas themselves. In this characteristically "romantic" metaphor of the compositional process, what is ultimately brought forth is the art work itself, conceptualized as the *telos* of a patient gestation of ideas.) To follow this particular argument a step further: Some might be tempted to read the *luonnotar* of the tone poem as a metaphorical representation of Sibelius himself. By further extension of the metaphor, the generated cosmos of the narrated tale may then become identified with the completed artwork (the symphonic poem *Luonnotar*), which is literally being brought forth in real time. The act of individual, public performance can thus suggest a striving for the status of the ceremonial, recreative deed that brings its now-*aesthetic* being into our consciousness. And all of this may recall—though of course on a conceptually and socially transposed level—the much-noted type of sacred commemorative experience to which Mircea Eliade referred several decades ago in a classic discussion as the ceremonial "return to the time of origins . . . [the] repetition of the cosmogony . . . the ritual reactualizing of the *illud tempus* in which the first epiphany of a reality occurred."²⁴

It is easy to overlay this provocative hand. In fact, no single reading will suffice for this work, and any attempt to impose a privileged interpretation can only coarsen our perception of its actual complexity and indeterminateness. With regard, at least, to the implications of gender in the preceding argument, one must again point out that Sibelius's narrative "voice" (to the extent that it is legitimately locatable in the piece at all) may be identified either with the *luonno-*

tar or with the "hidden" Ukko—or with both. In a larger sense, in this final period of mythic, ontological quest Sibelius takes on both the role of the masculine, bardic "Väinämöinen" and that of his counterpart or *anima-vein emonen*, the primal mother of waters. When all of this is considered along with the gender tangles in Lönnrot's 1849 alteration of the earlier text—as well as with the final projection of the text's heteroglottal voices through that of a feminine, soprano soloist—one catches a glimpse of some of the knotted, archetypal "gender-related" issues at the center of *Luonnotar*.

And there are still further issues to consider. In the first place, as the text of *Luonnotar* makes clear, woman's body and physical processes are being identified with nature itself—the nature that Sibelius often took as his central topic. This is a common, even generic archetypal identification, one that flourished with special intensity throughout the modern "romanticism" of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this essentially masculine-defined system, both woman and nature had come to be prominent constituents of an interrelated set of parallel redemptive spaces to be kept apart from the increasingly commercialized, competitive, and "fallen" modern world. Thus, for example, Friedrich Kittler's recent suggestion of the reigning nineteenth-century "system of equivalents Woman = Nature = Mother" (to which we might add, among other things, the medium of music itself, typically carrying feminine connotations during this period). According to the conventions of the existing European discourse network, all of these "others" were obliged to rely on men (writers, artists, composers, philosophers, scholars, scientists) to speak for them, to supply them with what was generally considered to be an otherwise unheard, inchoate, or unintelligible voice.²⁵

But for us to be content merely to identify Sibelius's constructions of nature with the generically posited redemptive space of most nineteenth-century musical romanticism also seems inadequate. The key point is not that the image of nature in *Luonnotar*, *Tapiola*, or the Sixth Symphony is in some important sense sacralized; rather, the main point is that for Sibelius it just "is," oblivious to, unconcerned with, and standing apart from any human perception of it. What strikes one about these rotational nature-evocations is how unpeopled they are, or, if we are prepared to concede the presence of a narrative voice setting these visions into motion, how that voice seems to convey the "human" perception of the profound indifference of nature's forces to the matter of individual personality and value. This is an encounter with the deep Dionysian, and, as Friedrich Nietzsche argued in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it carries with it a concomitant collapse of the *principium individuationis*. Here the concerns of merely private personality fall away into an utter, terrible insignificance. This may be another reason for the composer's suppression of Väinämöinen from his adaptation of Runo 1. Compared with the production of a more elemental nature, he scarcely matters.

Sibelius's representation of nature should be distinguished from the picturesque, shimmering, or idealized nature so often found in the musical works of his predecessors. Sibelius's "nature" carries few traces of the liberal-humanist

world view of intellectual assimilation and eventual triumph.²⁶ Instead, we more normally encounter the anxious expectation that a confrontation with the dark pagan forces of pity, pain, and terror may occur at any time. The response to such forces preceding the inbreaking of *telos 2* in *Luonnotar* are especially telling—cries of “Ei! Ei!” (“No! No!”). This is a world capable not only of surpassing beauty and wonder, but also of unreasoning convulsion, spasm, upheaval, and cruelty. Violence lurks not only around its edges but also at its heart. In pursuing such an elemental vision Sibelius seems in quest of a deeper physical principle: a primal burgeoning and bubbling that is not so much gendered as it is caught in the grip of some prior eruptive force, natural and brutal, that uses gender, sexuality, and the inescapable tropes of desire as its blind, hapless instruments. By 1918 Sibelius had developed an aesthetic “credo” that surfaced more than once in his diaries and letters: “Force—and from it, tragedy.”²⁷

To sense the rich, simmering fullness of *Luonnotar*—the essence of the mature composer—is to accept Sibelius’s invitation to sink into the dark chaos of the myth itself, to grapple with the unresolved pull of its contradictory tensions and simultaneous potential meanings, many of them charged with overtly physical metaphors. To experience *Luonnotar* is to wrestle with a work persistently decentering itself from any superficially unifying gestures that we might wish to impose on it. Any adequate discussion of the piece can only lead us into a labyrinth of ambiguity. With *Luonnotar*, as with the “nature” of whose creation it purports to tell, once we wander into it and start asking serious questions, we can neither turn back nor easily find our way out again.

NOTES

1. The series of Sibelius’s emphatically Kalevalaic works extends from the early *Kullervo* Symphony from 1891–1892 through several well-known tone poems: the set entitled *Lemminkäinen, Four Legends*, op. 22, 1895–1897 (comprising *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island, Lemminkäinen in Tuonela, The Swan of Tuonela, and Lemminkäinen’s Return*) and *Pohjola’s Daughter*, op. 49, 1906. It also includes a few settings for chorus and orchestra, such as *Laulu Lemminkäiselle* (A Song for Lemminkäinen, op. 31, no. 1, 1896) and *Tulen synty* (Origin of Fire, op. 32, 1902, rev. 1910).

2. Harold E. Johnson, *Jean Sibelius* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 157. For a further sample of the tradition of critical praise, see especially Cecil Gray, *Sibelius*, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 85–86 (“This work represents one of the highest pinnacles in the whole range of Sibelius’s creations, and consequently in the entire range of modern music. . . . It is, indeed, one of the most remarkable scores of modern times, abounding in curious and interesting experiments in sonority”); Astra Desmond, “The Songs,” in *The Music of Sibelius*, ed. Gerald Abraham (New York: Norton, 1947), 134–35; Robert Layton, *Sibelius*, 4th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 108–110; Robert Layton, “Jean Sibelius,” *New Grove Turn of the Century Masters* (New York: Norton, 1985), 300–302; ETL 2: 252–55.

3. Layton, “Jean Sibelius,” 301–2.

4. In all cases I have used as a base text a 1913 printing of the epic produced by the “official” *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura* (Finnish Literature Society): *Kalevala*, toinen stereotyperattu tekstilaitos (Uuden Kalevalan kolmatoista painos) [2d stereotyped

text-edition, New Kalevala, 13th printing], vol. 14 of *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia* (Helsinki: 1913). The question of which edition(s) Sibelius actually used during the composition of *Luonnotar* is a separate, currently unexplored matter. Although this aspect of the problem need not concern us here, an examination of Sibelius’s personal copies of the *Kalevala* might help to resolve some of the textual discrepancies between *Luonnotar* and the *Kalevala* edition that I have been able to consult. Moreover, while the determination of Sibelius’s preferred spellings and punctuation is not critical to the points argued in this chapter, the issue is anything but clear: the two principal editions of the music, Breitkopf & Härtel’s vocal score (1915, No. 8272) and orchestral score (1981, Partitur Nr. 5076) do not agree on all points. I should add that in the preparation of this chapter I have consulted neither Sibelius’s fair copies of the orchestral score (owned by the Kalevala Society in Helsinki) nor the composer’s manuscript of the vocal score arrangement (located in the Helsinki University Library). For the strikingly few manuscript materials available for *Luonnotar*, see Kari Kilpeläinen, *The Jean Sibelius Musical Manuscripts at Helsinki University Library: A Complete Catalogue* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1991), 294. One suspects, however, that trying to defend the small details of any text of *Luonnotar* that one might wish to claim as somehow “definitive” (notwithstanding the datedness of such a concept) would be a challenging—and ultimately empty—task.

5. Juha Y. Pentikäinen, *Kalevala Mythology*, trans. and ed. Ritva Poom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), xiv–xv.

6. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; reprint, 1992). See also Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 105–06. Hobsbawm’s principal concern here, of course, is the invention of tradition in the larger, more powerful, European and American democracies.

7. The translation is from *The Kalevala: Epic of the Finnish People*, trans. Eino Friberg (Helsinki: Otava, 1988), 43. Reprinted courtesy of the Eino Friberg estate.

8. For a recent, close account of the history of the Creation Rune of the *Kalevala*, see the chapter “Cosmic Drama” in Pentikäinen, *Kalevala Mythology*, 131–52.

9. As summarized in Pentikäinen, *Kalevala Mythology*, 131–32.

10. *Ibid.*, 136–52. The quotation is taken from p. 139.

11. More recent scholarship has suggested, for example, that the name seems to derive from the word *väinä*, “slack [or quiet] water,” with the *-mä* suffix suggesting a living being, and the *-inen* being a diminutive suffix (apparently together something on the order of “the little man of the quiet water”). Such, at least, is the explanation provided in *The Kalevala or Poems of the Kaleva District*, trans. and introduced by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 405.

12. Pentikäinen, *Kalevala Mythology*, 143. For a later interpretation of the water imagery implied in Väinämöinen’s name, cf. note 11 above.

13. For the long-delayed orchestral score, published in 1981, see note 4 above.

14. *The Kalevala*, trans. Friberg, 42. Reprinted courtesy of the Eino Friberg estate.

15. In James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially Chs. 1, 3, and 5; and in “Sibelius,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer, 1996).

16. In a series of previous studies of early modernist composers I have categorized some of the most characteristic deformation families as the Breakthrough Deformation, the Introduction-Coda Frame, Rotational Structures (Strophic-Sonata Hybrids), Episodic Developments, Multimovement Forms in a Single Movement, the Non-Resolving Recapitulation, the Off-Tonic Sonata, and so on. See note. 15 above.

17. This is true, at least, in his most ambitious compositions, radically separate in his own mind from the often somewhat cynically produced succession of commercial musical trinkets manufactured out of economic necessity.

18. These and other similar quotations may be found in Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 21.

19. The term *Strom des Rhythmus* (rhythmic stream) is taken from Heinrich Bessler, *Das musikalische Hören der Neuzeit* (Berlin: 1959), 68–69 (*Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse*, vol. 104, pt. 6). The pulsating soundsheet—particularly as an opening gesture, setting the preceding silence into a kind of shimmering motion out of which the main outlines of the piece (along with our own potential for hearing it) must emerge—is a common enough feature of Sibelius (cf. the Violin Concerto) and also, to be sure, of many of his predecessors. (Among seemingly countless examples, one may recall Mozart's G minor Symphony, several *Lieder* of Schubert, various *Lieder ohne Worte* of Mendelssohn, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, and so on.) What is unusual in *Luonnotar* is that the normally "accompanimental" *topos* is not subsequently overlaid with a different melody. Rather, it is isolated, even blocked off, as a self-sustaining sound event.

20. Layton, *Sibelius*, 109–10.

21. From the diary entry of April 21, 1915 (concerning the finale of the Fifth Symphony), in Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 36.

22. Diary entry, April 10, 1915, Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 32–33.

23. Hepokoski, "Sibelius," *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, and *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*.

24. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest, 1959), 80–81.

25. Friedrich Kittler, "The Mother's Mouth," in *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer and Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 25–29. Kittler argues further that (to adopt the language of David E. Wellbery's foreword to the book, xxiv), "Romanticism is a discourse network organized as a productive tension between Mother and State," an observation also relevant, it would seem, to the aspects of *Luonnotar* that are nationalistically concerned.

26. While adhering for the most part to the general rule, the Fifth Symphony may contain certain features that are exceptions.

27. Diary entries, August 12 and 14, 1918, and letter to Axel Carpelan, November 2, 1918, in ETF 4: 298, 308. Cf. also Francesco Tammaro, *Le sinfonie di Sibelius* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1982), 151.

7

"Symphonic Fantasy": A Synthesis of Symphonic Thinking in Sibelius's Seventh Symphony and *Tapiola*

Veijo Murtomäki

Symphonic thinking could never be the same after Beethoven. Whereas in the eighteenth century composers had written dozens of symphonies, most often in a suite-like four-movement structure dictated more by convention than by any specific compositional problem, with Beethoven each symphony meant a new challenge; the unique form of each was a result of the compositional and dramatic idea specific to the individual work. Beethoven once said: "I have always a picture in my mind, when I am composing, and work up to it."¹ For Romantic composers this "picture" was identical to the "poetical idea." According to Anton Schindler, Beethoven greeted with enthusiasm a plan by the Leipzig publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister to bring out the complete piano music with commentaries on "the poetical ideas connected with different works."² Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, and Mahler all believed that Beethoven's music contained "an inner program."³ During the nineteenth century Beethoven's overtures were even regarded as "symphonic poems." Jean Sibelius thought along similar lines; in his later years he made the following statement, which he left incomplete: "One could have said of Beethoven . . . that he wrote programmatic music. For his point of departure was always a specific idea, whereas I . . ."⁴

The view of Beethoven as a programmatic composer was an understandable one, especially as he modified sonata form in such works as his overtures for the theater.⁵ However, it was not only in his works closely connected to dramatic subjects, but also in his more "absolute" compositions that the forms expanded and became more flexible than before, while the motivic integration, supported by "an ideal plot," increased significantly. The need to let his music grow "from the inside out" (*vom innen heraus*), guided only by the material, led Beethoven away from inherited forms and toward new concepts. He found freedom in the