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DE-NARRATIVIZATION AND (RE-)NARRATIVIZATION OF MUSICAL LANGUAGE AND MUSICAL FORM IN ALEXANDER SCRIABIN'S CREATIVE EVOLUTION.

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Abstract
Tonal musical language is intrinsically narrative because of the linearity of its harmonic syntax. The disintegration of tonality in the early 20th century has discarded this primary level of narrativity. From this perspective, Scriabin represents a highly interesting case. This paper proposes an analysis and mapping of de-narrativization and compensatory (re-)narrativization processes in his creative evolution. Among the numerous works mentioned, two are discussed in more detail: Poème fantasque op. 45 No. 2 and Poème op. 71 No. 2. According to the hypothesis put forward in the paper, the contradiction between de-narrativization of musical language and persistence of a rhetoric and narrative model of composition in Scriabin's work would result from a combination of several factors, notably of his propensity for solipsism and passion for occultist theories on the one hand, and his belonging to a culture that favors collectivist values on the other.
Key words: *Scriabin, Narrativity, Linearity, Musical language*

1. Introduction
1.1. Musical narratology and musical language[*]

Since their emergence in the 1980s, systematic studies of musical narrativity have been strongly influenced by literary narratological theories. Musical narratology has been in large part constituted as a transposition to music of the approaches developed in literary studies, linguistics, and semiology. Among the most important authors who have contributed to these studies are Eero Tarasti, Márta Grabócz, Robert Hatten, Kofi Agawu, Carolyn Abbate, Byron Almén, Joan Grimalt.

However, literary narratology does not study verbal language itself, which is a subject of other disciplines. And musical narratology reproduces this situation, as it rarely discusses the problems of musical language, i.e. the lower level of musical organization. Most of the musical narratological corpus focuses on the higher levels, ranging from musical topics to macro-form.

However, from a narratological perspective musical language raises questions which are not relevant to verbal language. Firstly, the question of the very capacity of musical language to "narrate", while verbal language "narrates" by definition. And secondly, the question of different mechanisms and means of narration that are supported by different musical languages. The dissimilarity between classical tonal language and the atonal language of Schoenberg's school pertains not only to the harmony (morphology and syntax), but also to the character of quasi narrative meanings and time structures that it is able to generate.

The inclusion of this deepest level of musical narrativity in narratological analyses can enrich our understanding of musical perception, of compositional strategies in different musical styles, and of the broader historical evolution of music. Among studies that have

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[*] In this paper, the term "musical language" is used in the sense of morphology and syntax of harmonic elements, including the rhythmical organization of these elements.

already implemented such an approach, I will mention those of Christian Hauer [1][2], Raphaël Baroni [3], as well as the seminal work of Michel Imberty [4][5].

1.2. Musical narrativity and linearity

Considering the relationship between musical narrativity and musical time, Imberty [5, 134–135] suggests that musical narrativity at its primary level is determined by musical linearity as defined by Jonathan Kramer. The following is Kramer's definition: "[linearity is] the determination of some characteristic(s) of music in accordance with implications that arise from earlier events of the piece." [6, 20]. On the other hand, according to Kramer, non-linearity involves "the determination of some characteristic(s) of music in accordance with implications that arise from principles or tendencies governing an entire piece or section" [6, 20].

The perceptual mechanism of musical linearity is based on expectations that occur during the unfolding of music in time. "We hear subsequent events in the context of these expectations, which are fully or partially satisfied, delayed, or thwarted" [6, 20]. It is important, that Kramer establishes a link between the linearity of music and "linear thinking" in general, which from our perspective is none other than narrative thinking. He argues that "In music, the quintessential expression of linearity is the tonal system. Tonality's golden age coincides with the height of linear thinking in Western culture" [6, 23].

The same conclusion about a connection between narrativity and linearity can be drawn from Tarasti's general definition of narrativity [7, 24]:

> Finally, narrativity can be understood in the very common sense as a general category of the human mind, a competency that involves putting temporal events into a certain order, a syntagmatic continuum. This continuum has a beginning, development, and end; and the order created in this way is called, under given circumstances, a narration. With this view, the logic of narration appears to be very abstract and of a fairly general level. It turns out to be a certain tension between the beginning and the end, a sort of arch progression.

Once it has been established that the effect of musical narrativity arises as a result of linear processes, it is necessary to point out that these processes can take place at different levels: at the level of musical language (tensions-resolutions), at the level of other primary elements of music (crescendo-decrescendo, accelerando-rallentando, etc.), at the level of phrase curves, at the level of topical narrative "programs" [7, 138–154] [8] [9], at the level of global formal arches.

For example, the freely atonal musical language of Schoenberg's *Klavierstück* op. 11, No. 1 is syntactically non-linear and non-narrative. But at higher levels of organization, the piece is to some extent both linear and narrative, since it features very clear and evolving phrasing, contrasting and gradually developing thematic elements with dialogical interactions; sections of exposition, development and recapitulation; and an overall dramatic profile with a general climax in bar 50. Kramer categorizes such cases as "nondirected linearity" [6, 170–183].

Another interesting example is the narrativity in electroacoustic works, which Michel Chion has defined as "cinema for the ear" [10, 62–70]—as for example in Luc Ferrari's *Presque rien* series. The raw sound material, and the musical syntactic rules that it implies, correspond to non-linearity, but nonetheless, such works have a clear narrative dimension, which springs from the semantic level of the material.

Lastly, in repetitive music—typically in the pieces such as Steve Reich's *Come out* or *Piano phase*—the composition consists of slow linear processes; however, the listener's experience is not that of linearity, but that of stasis, of "vertical time" [6, 55–57]. This can be explained by the apparent absence of goal-directed motion, by the absence of phrases, the slowness of the processes, the speed of which is closer to some slow physical phenomena of the external world than to a narration or any type of inner psychological linear experience.

1.3. Intrinsic and extrinsic narrativity of primary expressive means

To enhance the following discussion I will also introduce a differentiation between two types of narrativity—intrinsic and extrinsic.

Let us define narrativity determined by specifically musical features as **intrinsic narrativity**. By specifically musical features I mean scales, harmony, and functional attractions, as well as some metro-rhythmic characteristics, such as hierarchy of beats, periods and other regular time structures.

In contrast, let us define as **extrinsic narrativity** the narrativity which is determined by features that can occur in all kinds of temporal processes: crescendos/decrescendos, accelerandos/rallentandos, upward/downward movement, texture densification/rarefaction, rests, dialogical elements, and so on.

In this light, the narrativity of musical language *stricto sensu* is to be identified with intrinsic narrativity.

1.4. Narrativity of musical language in a historical perspective

As it seems, the early period of introduction of narrative effects in Western music covers the 15th and 16th centuries. This process took place essentially in secular vocal music (madrigals, motets, polyphonic *chansons*, etc.). However, instrumental dance music also contributed to it by developing and stabilizing metro-rhythmic and harmonic elements, which strengthened linear musical expectations.

More intense evolution in this direction began in the 17th century with the Monteverdian *seconda pratica*, as well as with the emergence of musical rhetoric and *Affektenlehre*. At this point, music came to be consciously conceived, composed and theorized as an imitation of verbal rhetorical expression. In fact, it was an imitation of gestural and intonational profiles of the expression of emotions, passions, and "feelingful thoughts" (term coined by Robert Hatten [11, 24]), with an addition of dialogical, theatrical and pictorial effects.

All subsequent development was directed towards a progressive linearization covering all compositional levels, from musical language to macroscopic form. One can distinguish three major phases in this process:

1) The formation of tonal language by the end of the 17th century;

2) The development of large-scale instrumental form (sonata) in the second half of the 18th century, which dramatized instrumental music and maximized the efficiency of the principles of tonal functionalism and linearity, extending them to the macro-level of composition;

3) Further elaboration and enrichment all along the 19th century of principles developed during the previous stage.

The outcome of these processes was a system in which linearity and narrativity manifested themselves at all levels of musical structure: musical language, motives and their transformations, phrases, spaced-out cadences that respond to each other, sentences, sectional forms (binary, ternary, etc.), large developmental forms, and cycles. Linear harmonic syntax became the basis of intrinsic musical narrativity, and the structures of linear functional attraction reproduced themselves at each level, with a sort of *mise en abyme*. The end of the romantic era was marked by the dissociation of this accordance.

The disintegration of tonality first weakens the primary level of linearity, i.e. the system of expectations linked to tonal attractions. This prompts a search for new constructive solutions at the higher levels of organization. All composers of the first generation of radical modernists went through this process, which became a shared characteristic of musical revolutions of the 20th century, regardless of differences between schools and personalities. Debussy, Schoenberg and his disciples, Ives, Bartók, Scriabin, Ravel, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Varèse, Hindemith, developed their own musical idioms and compositional techniques,

challenging the traditional narrativity of musical language. In many cases, this involved a search of a more or less powerful alternative means of narrativization. This dynamics of de-narrativization and (re-)narrativization can be considered as one of hidden factors that resulted in the creation of new aesthetics and new approaches to the organization of musical form.

From this standpoint, Scriabin's oeuvre represents one of the most interesting cases. Below I propose an analysis and mapping of de-narrativization and (re-)narrativization processes throughout his creative output. In the final section, in the form of a very short essay, I set out a hypothesis about the cultural and psychological conditioning of this complex and contradictory evolution.

2. De-narrativization and (re-)narrativization in Scriabin's oeuvre
2.1. Narratological aspects of musical language evolution

Scriabin's oeuvre can be roughly divided into three periods. The first, which goes up to the *4th Sonata* (1903), is purely tonal. The second makes a transition towards a new harmonic language and covers the span from the *4th Sonata* to the *5th Sonata* and *The Poem of Ecstasy* (both from 1907). The third, in which the principles of his new individual non-tonal language take definitive shape, starts with *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* (1908–1910). A much finer periodization is possible, but for the purposes of this paper a broad tri-partition is sufficient.

The first period exhibits a typical set of characteristics of late romantic tonality. It begins with an idiom close to Chopin's and evolves towards an advanced chromatic post-Wagnerian harmony. Scriabin's tonal language is, of course, intrinsically linear and narrative, but it possesses some specific qualities: the functional logic at the meso- and macro- level is almost didactically clear and linear, but at the micro-level, linearity tends to be weakened by harmonic ambiguities resulting from auxiliary notes and chromaticisms embedded in chords, the extensiveness of the subdominant region, and prominence of harmonic color. One of the most striking examples of this is *Fantaisie* op.28. The composer also makes use of a full range of resources of extrinsic narrativity, which linearizes and dynamizes the music—dynamics, upward and downward passages, agogics, textural evolution, dialogical effects, etc.—as well as gestural vividness. By gesture I mean here specifically the association of music with expressive body movements. Scriabin himself has stated several times, that his music was internally pantomimic, choreographic, and almost translatable into gestural language [12, 131, 188]. His statements referred to his late style, but in my opinion, this can also be applied to his first period.

Scriabin's musical form is organized following traditional linear principles, with conventional narrative functions of form sections and of corresponding musical material (exposition, development, contrasting episode, transition, climax, recapitulation, conclusion, and so on).

In the second period Scriabin's language undergoes deep transformations. The role of minor keys and subdominant harmonies conspicuously diminishes in favor of major keys and dominant harmonies, which become more and more complex and altered. These processes are observable already in the *4th Sonata*. However, the proliferation of dominants does not increase intrinsic linearity. On the contrary, the latter is weakened, despite the fact that the harmonic evolution at the meso- and macro- level retains to a large extent the functional logic. The causes are as follows: unequivocal resolutions are systematically avoided, chord progressions are often composed solely of dominants in different keys, and sustained ambiguous chords are used extensively. Among numerous possible illustrations, see the two fragments of the *4th Sonata* in example 1 and example 2. See also the chains of dominants in works that are closer to the last period, such as *Three pieces* op. 52 and *Four pieces* op. 56.

Example 1. Scriabin, *4th Sonata* op. 30, beginning.

Example 2. Scriabin, *4th Sonata* op. 30. Chain of dominants in bars 26–34.

Note in addition that in the first movement of the 4th *Sonata* there is no single tonic triad. In the second movement, there are several very ephemeral resolutions to tonic and dominant triads, but a real affirmation of the tonic occurs only at the very end.

The wide use of unresolved complex dominants without predictable directionality leads to a permanent state of tension, a suspension of linear functionalism and static harmonic "iridescence". To compensate this stasis and to re-narrativize musical flow, the composer increases the role of extrinsic means: dynamic waves, register contrasts, vigorous gestures, dialogical elements, etc. The 5th *Sonata* offers numerous remarkable examples of this.

However, in short works the role of extrinsic narrativity is less significant, since these pieces are generally based on a single textural formula. For Scriabin, they served essentially as a field of experimentation with pianistic texture, harmonic language, new artistic imagery and personal musical topics.

With the levelling of tonal functionalism, the basic narrative functions (beginning, development, ending) of material become much less distinct. For example, almost any passage of such pieces as *Poème* op. 44 No.2 or *Poème fantasque* op. 45 No.2 (example 3) may serve as expositional, developmental, or ending material in the given style. The narrative evolution within the form is mainly determined by the temporal structure of phrases, thematic development, and caesuras. In *Poème fantasque* this is: exposition—6 bars (3+3), development—6 bars (2+2 | 1+1), recapitulation—3 bars, ending—1 bar. The principle of development is a progressive shortening of phrases and a compression of the expositional thematic material.

After the great achievements of the second period—the 5th *Sonata* and *The Poem of Ecstasy*—Scriabin begins to work on *Prometheus*, which is entirely based on a new concept of a "mystic chord", or, otherwise, "Prometheus chord", or in Scriabin's own terms "synthetic harmony" [12, 265]. This harmonic structure, generating all the material of the composition, embodies the crucial outcome of Scriabin's musical and philosophical thought of the previous years. Its implementation marks the beginning of his third period, which, in its turn, was full of intense creative exploration, leading to new experimentations with harmony that appeared in the composer's very last works. However, from a narratological perspective, these developments do not add anything substantially different to the musical language of *Prometheus*.

The explanation of the structure of the six-pitch mystic chord (C, F♯, B♭, E, A, D) and its various versions has been the subject of countless discussions and publications. It originates from the class of altered dominants but represents a totally self-sufficient entity, without any residues of its primitive tonal function. Scriabin himself considered it as a new sort of consonant tonic [12, 54].

For the new morphology of harmony, the composer endeavored to set up a new syntax. In the second period the typical intervallic relationship between the fundamentals of two succeeding dominant chords was that of fourth/fifth, which is obviously a residue of tonal language. By contrast, in the new syntax of mystic chords this relationship was replaced by that of a tritone, of a minor third, or a major second. Scriabin treated the tritone relationship as the closest, that does not change the "tonality", but allows moving between neighboring forms of chords and their corresponding scales. The minor third and the major second relationships (the latter by tritone relation gives also the major third) are those of usual "modulations". Other intervals between consecutive fundamentals—the minor second and fourth/fifth—are rare.

Chord progressions and "modulations" in the new language turn into simple shifts from one pitch collection to another without any effect of tonal gravity. Instead of movement driven by gravity, there are slight changes of color inside a permanent state of harmonic tension generated by more or less dissonant sound structures. In such a harmonic environment intuitive predictability is practically non-existent, if we do not take into account

the expectation of a continuation of sonorities of the same nature. The chord changes and "modulations" are determined essentially by the composer's intellectual calculation and arbitrary will. Therefore, the musical language is intrinsically non-linear and unable, by its nature, to generate any narrative function (beginning, development, ending). Moreover, the rhythmic structures in Scriabin's late style are also more capricious and more unpredictable than in previous periods.

The composer counterbalances this intrinsic non-linearity and non-narrativity to some extent by various extrinsic means: texture changes, dynamic curves, dynamic and register contrasts, agogics, dialogical, rhetorical, and recitative moments, etc. Everything that had gained more importance by the end of the second period, now definitely acquires the highest compositional and expressive significance. And naturally, these resources of re-narrativization appear much more saliently in large forms. An absolutely striking example of this is *Vers la flamme* op. 72, in which by means of textural, dynamic, and register expansion the composer succeeds in creating an intense linear evolution throughout the entire piece.

The problematics of narrativity are also directly connected with Scriabin's musical dramaturgy in large compositions. As Victor Bobrovsky [13, 130–181] has shown, Scriabin's dramaturgy is based on a kind of narrative scenarios related to his personal philosophical quest. According to Bobrovsky's analyses, which are akin to topical analysis and analysis of "expressive genres" (Hatten), Scriabin's core scenario in his second period is the path from supreme refinement, through flightiness, to supreme grandiosity. This triad was maturing already in the first period, but it comes to its definite and perfect realization only in the *4th Sonata* and *The Poem of Ecstasy*. The dramaturgical principles associated with this triad appear partly in some other shorter works.

The third period, according to Bobrovsky, is marked by the emergence of a new dramaturgical triad—from gloomy vagueness, through motion (agitation), to clarity and determinacy,—which overlaps the first triad, shaping different individual scenarios. Its most typical realization is in *Prometheus* and *Vers la flamme*.

Bobrovsky also uncovers Scriabin's principles of dyadic and triadic thematic construction, as well as principles of motivic-thematic development through the form. Following his study, all these principles imply an eminently narrative idea behind the musical work.

Example 3. Scriabin *Poème fantasque* op. 45 No.2.

2.2. Programs, titles, and expressive markings

The narrative character of Scriabin's musical and artistic thinking is openly manifested in written programs that accompany several of his large works after 1904. His earlier works—the *1ˢᵗ Sonata*, the *1ˢᵗ Symphony*, the *2ⁿᵈ Symphony*, or the *Fantaisie* op. 28—already conveyed rather clear narrative scenarios, but they remained unverbalized (except, partly, in

the *1ˢᵗ Symphony* through the text of the final chorus). The composer certainly found it superfluous to "explain" music, which was based entirely on romantic language, topics and imagery. The programs became explicit when Scriabin's music and philosophy stepped out of this framework.

The first work for which Scriabin wrote a program was the *4ᵗʰ Sonata*, after its edition in 1904. Then, in 1905, the *3ʳᵈ Symphony*, still belonging mostly to the first period, was presented with a program written by Scriabin's then future second wife Tatiana Schlözer and authorized by the composer. For *The Poem of Ecstasy*, completed in 1907, Scriabin composed an extensive program in verse. He even published it as a separate brochure. The beginning of this poem has also become the epigraph of the *5ᵗʰ Sonata*. In *Prometheus* (1910), there is no "official" program, but the composer often commented the narrative content of the work and used verbal labels for its themes and motifs [12, 66, 67, 94, 123, 163, 188]. Finally, during the last year of his life Scriabin wrote a long poem for the unfinished *Prefatory Action*, which is in essence not only a text to be declaimed and sung, but also a program of the symphonic form. The poem was published posthumously in 1919 in the almanac *Russkie Propilei*. Sabaneev's book quotes a number of Scriabin's commentaries about the figurative and quasi narrative content of his other formally non-programmatic compositions [12, 157–163, among others].

The re-narrativization is manifest in the titles of pieces, as well as in the idiosyncratic expressive markings. Both elements are present in Scriabin's second and third period, but not in the first. Only at the very end of the first period there are two titled piano works—*The Tragic Poem* op. 34 and *The Satanic Poem* op. 36—and the *3ʳᵈ Symphony* ("The Divine Poem") with its titled movements (*Luttes—Voluptés—Jeu divin*) and literary program. In the second period the number of titled pieces increases dramatically: *Fragilité*, *Poème ailé*, *Danse languide* (op. 51 No.1, 3, & 4); *Enigme*, *Poème languide* (op. 52 No.2 & 3), *Ironies*, *Nuances* (op. 56 No.2 & 3); *Désir*, *Caresse dansée* (op. 57 No.1 & 2). And in the third period: *Masque*, *Etrangeté* (op. 63 No.1 & 2); *Vers la Flamme* op. 72; *Guirlandes*, *Flammes sombres* (op. 73 No.1 & 2).

Very evocative are Scriabin's unusual expressive markings, which are best examined using the example of large-scale piano works. In the first three Sonatas, the *Allegro de concert* op. 18 and the *Fantasy* op. 28 there are none. In the *4ᵗʰ Sonata* there are only two relatively unusual Italian markings: "con voglia" (bars 7 & 41), and "Focosamente, giubiloso" (coda of the 2ⁿᵈ movement). In the *5ᵗʰ Sonata* they are much more numerous ("con stravaganza", "languido", "accarezzevole", etc.). However, the markings that unequivocally reveal an implicit narrative program behind the music appear from 1910 onwards (in his last period the composer definitely switches to French, which appeared rarely before):

Poème-Nocturne op. 61: "avec une grâce capricieuse", "comme une ombre mouvante", "comme un murmure confus", "avec une volupté dormante", "comme en un rêve", etc.

6ᵗʰ Sonata op. 62 (notable for its particularly abundant markings): "mystérieux, concentré", "étrange, ailé", "avec une chaleur contenue", "souffle mystérieux", "onde caressante", "le rêve prend forme (clarté, douceur, pureté)", "l'épouvante surgit", "appel mystérieux", "épanouissement de formes mystérieuses", "comme en un rêve", "effondrement subit", "l'épouvante surgit, elle se mêle à la danse délirante", etc.

7ᵗʰ Sonata op. 64: less markings than in the 6ᵗʰ.

8ᵗʰ Sonata op. 66: almost none.

9ᵗʰ Sonata op. 68: "légendaire", "mystérieusement murmuré", "avec une langueur naissante", "pur, limpide", "perfide" (sic!) "avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnante" (sic!).

10ᵗʰ Sonata op. 70: "avec une ardeur profonde et voilée", "haletant", "avec une joyeuse exaltation", "avec ravissement et tendresse", "avec une volupté douloureuse", etc.

Vers la flamme op. 72: "avec une émotion naissante", "avec une joie voilée", "avec une joie de plus en plus tumultueuse", etc.

It is noteworthy that a number of Scriabinian markings point to emotional content that could barely be guessed from the music if it was not specified, while the standard markings typically just highlight the character that the music itself suggests. In bar 23 of *Poème-Nocturne* Scriabin indicates "avec une volupté dormante" ("with dormant voluptuousness") above a single sustained chord. In the *9th Sonata* he writes "perfide" ("perfidious", bar 95) and "avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnante" ("with an increasingly caressing and poisoning sweetness", bars 97–98). For the performer it is almost impossible to imprint such feeling to real sound substance and to convey it to the listener. He can imagine it intensely and try to express it, but even if the sounding music bears its trace, any such trace would be too vague compared to the concreteness of the verbal text. This situation can be interpreted as a gap between the composer's artistic imagery and the expressive possibilities offered by his actual musical language. In other words, the musical means of re-narrativization, which he implemented, were somehow insufficient for his musical narration. In this light one understands better Scriabin's absolute need to integrate verbal texts in his grandiose projects of the synthesis of arts—the sketched *Prefatory Action* and the unrealized *Mysterium*.

2.3. The impact of the de-narrativization of musical language on musical form

The de-narrativization of Scriabin's musical language has induced not only a compensatory process of re-narrativization by means of an augmentation of the role of extrinsic means of musical narrativity, and of programs and verbal markings, but also some further de-narrativization processes at the level of the entire musical form. These intersecting tendencies of de- and re-narrativization constitute the inner forces that act within the composer's creative work, contributing to its richness, complexity and contradictions.

In sonata form these contradictions led to a sort of artificiality of construction, with recapitulations of second theme groups transposed by a tritone that have no effect of tonal resolution, and modulations—i.e. changes of the chord root—that have a very weak impact on the energetic aspect of the musical flow. This characteristic earned Scriabin much criticism. One of the most cited among them is Aaron Copland's statement:

> One of the most extraordinary mistakes in music is the example supplied us by Scriabin (…) The quality of his thematic material was truly individual, truly inspired. But Scriabin, who wrote ten piano sonatas, had the fantastic idea of attempting to put this really new body of feeling into the strait jacket of the old classical sonata form, recapitulation and all. [14, 159]

Usually, the composer overcame or, at least, attenuated the risk of the lack of dynamism by enriching the texture in recapitulations. In some cases, however, the material is transposed almost without modification. The most blatant example of this is the *Poème-Nocturne*. However, the dreamlike character of this piece may justify the lethargy of the form.

In contrast, in smaller works Scriabin's form is in perfect coherence with his musical language and thematic material. His new system of harmony naturally favors static symmetrical structures. According to Sabaneyev, Scriabin repeatedly stated that he strove for forms that are perfect like a sphere or a crystal [12, 122, 123, 170]. In short compositions, which are rather snapshots than extended musical narrations, he achieved this aim with particular clarity and organicism.

The *Poème* op. 71 No.2 (1914) is one of such "crystal-like" miniatures (example 4). This work is in binary form, quite typical of Scriabin. It consists of two exactly equal sections of 18 bars, followed by a two-bar complement, which re-affirms the main tone D (with its tritone counterpart G#).

The first half of the composition moves from the tone of D–G# to that of F–B at the distance of a minor third, thus completing the framework of the diminished chord D–F–G#–

B. The only moment that shifts out of this framework is located in bar 17 (D♭), where the most vivid emotional swell occurs. The corresponding moment in the second half of the work is in bar 35 (E).

Example 4. Scriabin *Poème* op. 71 No.2.

Example 4. Continuation.

The second half is an exact recapitulation of the first, transposed a minor third higher. As a result, the musical material using a D–G# harmony turns into F–B, and that with F–B into D–G#. In this way, the second half automatically moves from F–B to the initial D–G#, remaining in the framework of the D–F–G#–B diminished chord. Thus, the overall trajectory is: D–G# → F–B | F–B → D–G#. This structure is perfectly in line with the metaphor of a sphere or a regular crystal.

It is important to note a constant ambiguity and oscillation between the chords inside the tritone-couples, which is Scriabin's typical technique, creating a very subtle play of sonorities that contribute to the sensation of weightlessness and tonal non-linearity. However, at the same time, other features of this work fall perfectly into the notion of musical narrativity. These are phrase structure and thematic development, as well as melodic and dynamic curves. One can clearly perceive the narrative progression outlined in table 1.

Measures	Narrative function
1–5	Expositional phrase.
6–11	First wave of development, based on the material of the two initial bars and evolving in an ascending direction with a densification of musical time (2+2+1+1°b.).
12–15	"Fulfillment": apex phrase and its echo (2+2°b.).
16–18	Second wave of development: ascending sequential repetition of the last bar of the previous section, and interrupted momentum at the end.

Table 1. Narrative progression in the *Poème* op. 71 No.2.

2.4. Overall table

Table 2 shows the overall perspective of the main factors of de-narrativization and (re-)narrativization in Scriabin's evolution. The lightening of an area indicates a decrease in narrativity, and the darkening an increase.

3. Historical and philosophical discussion

As previously stated, since the beginning of the 20th century the de-narrativization of musical language resulting from the dissolution of tonal syntax became a common characteristic of music that considered itself the most advanced. Moreover, the more the music was non-linear and non-narrative, the more it was perceived as avant-gardist. This tacit criterion gained even greater prominence in the second half of the 20th century.

Another correlate of the dissolution of narrativity was the "esotericization" of music—its distancing from large audiences and common practice, reducing the circle of appreciators to narrow groups of insiders and connoisseurs. Here again, the more the music was de-narrativized, the more esoteric it became[*]. It is noteworthy that in turn-of-the-century Europe the general fascination with esotericism and the occult was also at its peak.

Progressive composers were directly faced with the need to define themselves in relation to "musical" esotericism, i.e. to develop their compositional techniques and aesthetics accentuating or attenuating the unconventionality of their work. Schoenberg and his disciples, for example, progressively accentuated it. Ravel and Prokofiev, in contrast, attenuated it by means of rhythmical predictability, more traditional and linear phrase structuring, means of extrinsic linearity, and the use of clear genre patterns.

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[*] This correlation was partially broken only in the late 1960s by repetitive music.

		Early period: late romantic tonality	Middle period: weakening of tonality, transition to a new language	Last period: personal non-tonal musical language
Musical language & other primary expressive means	Intrinsic narrativity	• Functional harmony, linear syntax. • Extensive use of subdominant region and of minor keys. • Linearity-weakening factors: harmonic ambiguities, chromaticisms, important role of harmonic color. • Rhythmic regular movement and *rubato*	• Weakening of functionalism. • Progressive disappearance of subdominant region and of minor in favor of altered dominants and major; disappearance of tonic. • Linearity-weakening factors: harmonic ambiguities, chromaticisms, avoidance of tonic, more subtle differentiation of harmonic colors. • Less rhythmic clearness and predictability.	• No functionalism; all the harmony based on "mystic chord"; permanent harmonic ambiguity; root progressions by tritons, minor thirds, and major seconds; extremely subtle differentiation of harmonic colors. • Very weak rhythmic predictability.
	Extrinsic narrativity		Dynamic waves and contrasts. Upward/downward passages Agogics (accel./rall.). Textural evolution. Dialogical effects.	
		Gestural vividness (association of music with imaginary pantomimic and dance movements).		
		Clearness of basic narrative functions of material (beginning, development, ending).		
		Linear dramaturgy in small forms.		
		Effectiveness of classical sonata scheme in the organization of narrative dramaturgy.		
		Role of implicit narrative scenarios in large-scale compositions.		
		Explicit verbal programs, titles, verbal expressive markings.		

Table 2. Factors of de-narrativization and (re-)narrativization in the evolution of Scriabin's work.

The anti-narrative line of evolution followed different paths in different cultural areas. In German music, its vehicle was expressionism with its elitist intellectualism and its interest for the unconscious, which were fueled by an aversion to hypocrisy and philistinism of bourgeois society. In French impressionism, elitist estheticism, hedonism, and anti-rationalism predominated, and narrativity was diluted by a refined mimesis of the external world, of color and light.

Earlier I put forward a hypothesis [15] [16] that the crisis of narrativity of musical language (and thus of linearity) could be, not only the result of the inner logic of music's development, but also the result of a distrust towards verbal communication, which emerged as a social and psychological reaction. In fact, by the end of the 19th century, verbal language, because of the processes taking place in mass communication, began to be perceived among intellectual and artistic elites as a medium of confusion or fraud, rather than as an instrument of mutual under-standing, knowledge, and authentic empathy. In German culture this tendency was most brightly exemplified by the figure of Karl Kraus—a very influential critic of language and of printed mass media for their tendency towards falsity and manipulation. And it is probably not fortuitous that Schoenberg and his disciples were ardent admirers of Kraus and devoted readers of his magazine *Die Fackel* [17].

Another facet of the distrust of conventional verbal communication was the suspicion towards the immediate emotionality of expressive musical gesture and of spontaneous human communion through music. Therefore, avant-garde music tended to reduce emotional immediacy and time linearity in favor of a more mediated quasi-spatial perception of expressive gesture, texture and color [16].

In French culture there was no exact counterpart of Kraus. However, since the emergence of impressionism and symbolism, and then during the *Belle Époque*, a very important part of French artistic and intellectual production was dominated by intuitivist currents turned against classical logocentrism, rationalism, and linear thinking. Symbolism sought to suggest the ineffable, to create dreamlike or mystical atmospheres. Avant-gardist writers like Alfred Jarry and Guillaume Apollinaire, followed later by the Dadaists and Surrealists, questioned the linearity of language and logical thought.

From this perspective, Russia during the first decade of the 20th century presents a special case. It is true that just as in Western countries, occultism and irrationalism were also widespread among Russian elites and the intelligentsia. But there were no symptoms of distrust of verbal communication as such. Russian culture had typically a reverent, even sacral attitude towards language. The anti-rationalist and anti-logocentrist attitude of certain thinkers such as Solovyov, Shestov, Trubetzkoy, or Berdyaev, was essentially aimed at Western rationalism. Russian society was much less individualistic than that of Western Europe. The attachment to artistic values of the 19th century, especially among composers, musicians, and the associated milieu, was very strong. Individualistic avant-garde mentality in this milieu was at an embryonic stage, if it existed at all.

In this context Scriabin's case can be interpreted as a creative junction of divergent currents. On the one hand, Scriabin was deeply immersed in occultist theories and esotericism, with a psychological and philosophical propensity to individualism and even radical solipsism. On the other hand, however, he belonged to a culture where collectivist values in the broadest sense predominated, and where universalist and messianic aspirations were historically deeply rooted and at the time very prominent.

It was on this ground that the composer's messianic utopian outlook, addressed to all mankind, was formed, although, in Scriabin's personal views, it was intertwined with a kind of materialistic progressivism [18]. A strong belief in scientific progress was another typical trait of Russian society, which left its mark on Scriabin's personality. Both traits—universalist messianism and materialistic progressivism—brought Scriabin closer to Russian cosmism [18]. Importantly for the subject at hand, both also involved an unclouded trust in linear development and narrative directionality.

I suggest that de-narrativization and (re-)narrativization tendencies in Scriabin's music are an expression of these underlying cultural factors. From this perspective, the fundamental contradiction of his work appears to be the contradiction between a de-narrativization of musical language and the persistence of a narrative rhetoric model, especially in large-scale compositions. The composer constantly challenged this contradiction, which turned out to be a source of new constructive solutions and creative ideas. However, it is in this very contradiction that the controversial aspects, as well as the aesthetic complexity of his work, are rooted.

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Included 4 musical examples, 2 tables