

Death and rebirth: an archetypal narrative in Liszt's *B minor sonata*

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Background in music theory / analysis. During the last decades there have been a few structuralist approaches concerning the form of the *B minor sonata*, certain viewpoints dealing with the extra-musical meaning of the work (with most of them, however, moving strictly along theological lines), an *Interprétation Sémantique*, and a noteworthy study of Autograph sources and documents. Nevertheless, probably due to the remarkable length and complexity of the work, we believe that there has never been a study presenting a convincing interpretation of all musical events as successive stages in a meaningfully structured sequence.

Background in literary / psychological criticism. Plot is the thread of design that makes narrative possible because finite and comprehensible. Especially in extended and ambitious (literary or musical) works, the search for a convincing plot could be seen as the only means that enables us to explain the specific function and importance of any particular event as part of a unified whole in which each functional choice determines and is determined by all the others. Of course, a narrative plot is not necessarily a linear unfolding of successive events and human (or musical) actions. According to Jung, on whose concepts of *rebirth* and *the process of self-transformation* we drew heavily, the character(s), after facing immense difficulties and crises, may enter a dreamlike, 'timeless' dimension, during which a transforming experience occurs aiming at the maturation of personality, at *renovatio*. This process involves an inward and backward motion that leads towards the 'starting point', the journey called 'introversion'. It could be described as a descent into the depths of the psyche, a meaningful '*katabasis eis antron*', the 'temporary death' that precedes rebirth.

Aims. Most of the analytical approaches regard the sonata as an incredible mixture of heroic, lyric, (melo)dramatic, satanic, erotic, even macabre 'moments' that line up, one after the other. Our aim, on the contrary, is to explain the role of each event in accordance with what precedes and what follows it, as part of an all-embracing 'scenario'.

Main contribution. We shall focus on two extended parts of the whole structure: the 'Development II' and the 'Thematic presentation of the Recapitulation', which begins with a *fugato*. We shall argue that 'Development II' could be perceived as a dreamlike / nightmarish period of time, during which the main characters withdraw from the main 'scene of action', or as a musical depiction of a '*katabasis eis antron*', the descent into the deeper layers of the psyche, which concludes with an extended whole-tone passage that, lacking any tensions, resembles a state of temporary death. We shall also argue that the *fugato* could be perceived as a violent 'break' which brings the sonata back to a higher and solid situation of consciousness, from the cyclical, imaginary time of 'the land of dreams' to the linear time of 'the world of action'. Furthermore, we shall claim that the existence of these two passages at this particular point of the whole structure is strongly dictated both by narratological and psychological reasons.

Implications. The search for an all-embracing plot and the thorough examination of many musical and literary parameters could prove useful in the study of musical structures: plot could be seen as the ordering force that gives meaning to a seemingly arbitrary array of events. Our intention is not to see a musical structure as a limiting, static, spatial design but, rather, to suggest a process of temporal 'structuring' that may shape a musical work, as well as our hearing and understanding of it. The implications for music / poetry analysis and pedagogy seem to be noteworthy.

I

It seems that Liszt's *B minor sonata* is based upon a narratological model which is not rare, having shaped numerous poems, novels, as well as musical works. It is eloquently described by Scott Burnham, among many others: talking about the first movement of

Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, Burnham argues that, "These sorts of programs are still generated today, though much less frequently, and even at the height of formalist disdain of such interpretations, earlier this century, the old story is preserved For the trajectory of these stories is always the same, or nearly so: something

(someone) not fully formed but full of potential ventures out into complexity and ramification (adversity), reaches a *ne plus ultra* (a crisis), and then returns renewed and completed (triumphant).ⁱ As we shall see, the *B minor sonata* suggests not only one but two successive crises, one worse than the other and, after reaching total exhaustion, which leads to a final state that resembles a kind of 'temporary death', it finally manages to successfully overcome all difficulties –not without a sense of futility, pessimism, and a vague melancholy, however, which emerge at the very end, after the triumphant apotheosis heard in the first Coda.

We shall begin by presenting an overall formal plan of the sonata, we shall continue discussing the musical procedures that lead to the crises mentioned above, in order to ultimately focus on two extended parts of the whole structure: the harmonically static 'Development II' (mm. 331-452) that comes immediately after the second crisis, and the highly energetic 'Thematic presentation of the Recapitulation' (mm. 453-532), where the piece starts to act again.

Leaving aside Rey Longyear's and William Newman's theories about the sonata's "double function form",ⁱⁱ we shall adopt the formal plan presented by Sharon Winklhofer,ⁱⁱⁱ according to which one may consider the piece in terms of a *sui generis* sonata form with two distinct parts in the Exposition and the Recapitulation, two successive Development sections, as well as two Codas. The plan is as follows:

Exposition:	1) Thematic presentation: mm. 1-31
	2) Tonal presentation: mm. 32-204 (2 nd theme at m. 105)
Development I:	mm. 205-330
Development II:	mm. 331-452
Recapitulation:	1) Thematic presentation: mm. 453-532
	2) Tonal presentation: mm. 533-649 (2 nd theme at m. 600)
Coda I:	mm. 650-710
Coda II:	mm. 711-760

II

Hearing the opening of the *B minor sonata*, one may experience a kind of dark, cold, icy, even threatening landscape in which the absence of any movement or life-form predominates. From this middle-of-nowhere, the piece begins to move in a clumsy, awkward, uncertain, reluctant way, revealed by the low-register *sotto voce* G in octaves, the descending phrygian G scale, the silence that surrounds almost each and every gesture and, predominantly, the negation of downbeats in mm. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. We have the impression of 'someone' or 'something' that is willing to start a process, no matter how gawky or awkward, without knowing how to continue or even end it: at first, hesitant, repeated notes, followed by a primal form of melodic movement, two somehow distorted downward G scales that are incapable to end on downbeats. After the mysterious opening, two distinct thematic ideas enter, one after the other. These two ideas (along with the ominous scales that often return, mainly as signs of frustration and awkwardness) will prove to be the main *dramatis personae* that act and suffer throughout the whole piece, following their destiny but, also, trying to transform and determine it. In this paper we shall call them the *theme* (first appearance in mm. 8-13) and the *motif* (first appearance in mm. 13-15).

In m. 8 the *theme* breaks out in a full of dynamism *Allegro energico forte*. However, this outburst is equally clumsy: at first, the *theme* has nothing else to express but the initial G, still unharmonized and in almost all registers; finally, this G becomes the 7th of an ambiguous full-diminished seventh chord on A# that could lead almost anywhere. Then, the *motif* enters in *forte marcato*; it 'resolves' the preceding A# into B and attempts to define a tonal center, outlining a B minor triad for the first time in the piece. In the midst of the modulatory passage that follows, leading towards E minor (the subdominant of B minor), the impatient *theme* decides to take over again (m. 25), in *ff* outlining, however, the least expected key of E \flat major. While it continues wandering one more time through successive full-diminished

chords, the *motif* re-enters decisively, in *rinforzando*; and with its opening repeated notes playing F# in octaves (the dominant of B minor), it saves the situation leading towards the first structural downbeat of m. 32, where the tonal presentation of the Exposition begins. We argue that some of the main characteristics of the two agents, the *theme* and the *motif*, are already revealed from the thematic presentation of the Exposition. The *theme* sounds bold, dynamic, impulsive, even exhibitionist; and yet undecided, wandering, even dallying after an opening gesture full of enthusiasm and certainty. On the contrary, we prefer to perceive the *motif* as decided, stubborn, even somehow cautious and reserved.^{iv} Hearing the *motif*, we experience someone (something) that tries to move forward in small, safe, secure steps: its persistence is revealed by the repeated notes; unlike the rather extroverted *theme*, the *motif* spans no more than a perfect 5th; and, more importantly, it manages to provide solutions, at least on a local level.^v

The beginning of the tonal presentation of the Exposition seems to be firmly grounded in the key of B minor, with the *theme* and the *motif* perfectly cooperating for the first time, a sign that the piece is, at last, on solid ground. A steady rhythm of middleground-level harmonic change (four measures of tonic harmony, followed by four measures of subdominant harmony) already sets expectations for the completion of a basic harmonic progression in B minor (I-IV-V-I) that would unquestionably confirm and establish B minor tonality. However, for all the decisive and secure opening in mm. 32-39, the piece loses its way towards a perfect authentic cadence in B. After a new modulatory passage, the *theme*, always willing to lead the way, enters in B \flat major, then in G minor, and finally in E \flat major (m. 67, in *fff*).^{vi}

More than that, in this passage (mm. 55-79) we perceive a real metamorphosis of the *theme*: it sounds secure and full of self-confidence outlining, *sempre staccato ed energico assai*, consonant triads for the first time, instead of the previous ambiguous full-diminished chords. We may now recall that

the piece attempted twice to move from the tonic (through the subdominant) to the dominant of B minor, but the *theme* has entered both times emphasizing the rather unexpected E \flat major and, thus, denying the completion of a basic harmonic progression in B on a deeper level. So, it seems that the *theme*, frequently escaping toward the 'wrong' key of E \flat major, is the agent that mainly contributes to the creation of a general sense of harmonic awkwardness within the first subject group, which brings to mind the thematic awkwardness we experienced while hearing the opening of the sonata. As listeners may expect, the piece will manage to overcome this problem in the Recapitulation –in fact, any problem at any level– assimilating the 'wrong key' of E \flat major within a basic harmonic progression in the parallel major of the home key, B major. Significantly, the *theme* will be absent from the rather short E \flat passage of the Recapitulation.

In the mean time, the *theme* expresses itself with unforeseen ease –one may refer to a kind of extravagant enthusiasm, or even a kind of arrogant and vain attitude– but it finally finds itself trapped in a spiral motion in E \flat major which leads steadily towards the highest register of the piano. In mm. 80-81, marked *rinforzando*, it expresses its frustration as it plunges, through a full-diminished chord, from a higher register into a low-register unharmonized and rather portentous A, persistently repeated in octaves; and then *pesante* scales enter, recalling the uncanny atmosphere of the opening of the piece. One could argue that the *theme* has made wrong choices that have led to a dead end; and as a consequence, the piece suggests a first serious crisis. However, it manages to overcome it, making the ambiguous A sound all the more decisively as the dominant of a forthcoming D major, in which the first theme of the second subject group, the *Grandioso theme*, enters (m. 105).

The arrival of the magnificent *Grandioso theme* creates a (temporary) sense of safety, stability and relief. Among several musical features that contribute to that feeling are the –most expected by classical conventions–

key of D major; the fact that the upper voice plays a song-like, stepwise melody; the D pedal-point (mm. 105-108); and the steady pulse of the accompaniment. Nevertheless, the period of stability does not last for a long time: the 'magic' diffused by the impressive opening of the *Grandioso* theme begins dissolving around mm. 113-14 (among other things, the repeated-note accompaniment stops and rests are introduced). We are not sure whether the piece cannot, or does not want to remain and relax in the secure area of the *Grandioso*; what is certain is that it will soon return to its previous ways of expression, to the *theme* and the *motif*. However, the experience it acquired during the brief, relaxed period of the *Grandioso* theme will influence and change the nature and the behaviour of its main 'characters': both, the *theme* and the *motif* will appear again transformed, sweetened, and much more expressive and lyrical.

This new phase of the Exposition begins in a somehow embarrassing way (m. 120). It is again the *theme* that acts first and fully accepts the *Grandioso* influence, entering, though, more hesitantly than ever before, as a *piano* solo line. The sheer change in the texture indicates how the *theme* may feel at this moment: embarrassed, frustrated, even lonesome and fragile. A brief 'echo' of the previous *Grandioso* provides the necessary push to the still hesitant *theme* that expresses itself *dolce con gracia*, first in F major and then in D minor. Yet, after a while it sounds uncertain once more, in *poco rallentando* and *molto ritenuto*, and it is again the *motif* that enters, *a tempo*, "to provide closure", as Winklhofer rightly argues.^{vii} Tentative but, still, decided, it prepares the listener for what is going to follow.

And this is nothing but a *cantando espressivo* version of the *motif* itself that appears in augmentation (m. 153 *ff*), extremely tender and expressive. It is the third theme of the second subject group and, significantly, it is this transformed version of the *motif* that fully accepts the secondary key area of D major. From m. 179 the piece becomes all the more nervous; and in m. 188 a *crescendo* begins and leads to a modulatory passage where *agitato* versions of the transformed

motif are heard, now expressing full-diminished seventh chords in several 'keys'.^{viii} Finally, trills and *rallentando* and *accelerando* solo passages prepare the listener for the first Development section which begins in m. 205.

III

Development I opens with an *ff* outburst of the *theme*, first in C Major, then in B major.^{ix} It seems that the calming effect the *Grandioso* theme initially had upon the two main thematic ideas has gone, and it is the bolder *theme*, in rush, almost in anger, that initiates again this new dynamic 'chapter' of the story. After a while, the beginning of the *theme* sounds in the left hand, combined with impetuous scales, while continuous *rinforzandi* heighten the tension. After a *stringendo* passage, Development I leads towards F# major, the (expected) dominant of B minor and, indeed, the transformed version of the *motif* (the *cantando espressivo* version heard in m. 153) enters (m. 255) in this key.

One may expect that the *motif* will provide, once more, a way out of the previous uneasiness expressed by the *theme*. However, the *motif* sounds *incalzando* and becomes all the more nervous and agitated in a modulatory passage where it starts faltering –it even loses its essential characteristic, the repeated notes that usually revealed its decisive or stubborn character. It tries again (m. 263, *sempre ff*) but sounds as if it cannot go further; in fact, this time it is the *motif* itself that leads to a crisis, literally a *stringendo* explosion in mm. 270–277.^x *Marcatissimo* scales enter –scales beginning with the pitch G as in the opening of the Exposition; the piece sounds more frustrated than ever before. The *theme* enters angrily, almost in despair (m. 286), and soon it gets stuck in the lower register, playing with evident rage a full-diminished seventh chord.

It is the second time that the *B minor sonata* is facing a critical situation, but now things are, and sound, much worse. At this point, it seems to us that the piece 'remembers' that the agent that led it out of the first crisis was the *Grandioso* theme and, in an awkward manner, truth is, tries to 'recall' it one more

time. But in vain. The *Grandioso* appears, indeed, but completely distorted. What we initially experienced as an agent of relief and stability, becomes now dark, portentous, even nightmarish. The piece expresses its frustration with two desperate *recitativo* sobs. After a while, both the *theme* and the *motif* re-enter more frustrated than ever before; the *theme* is heard in G minor (mm. 307–310); the *motif* sounds as outlining C# minor and F minor; the opening of the *theme* wanders in several 'keys' (mm. 315–318). In the midst of this modulatory chaos the *motif* returns and clings in desperation to the only steady point of reference, to the root of the home key, B; and the *theme* leans on it and expands in relief. They both sound exhausted; they fade out, the piece gradually stops or even 'falls asleep' (mm. 319–330).

In the next part of this paper we shall see how the piece will enter a dreamlike, imaginary period of time and, finally, how it will manage to regain its composure and overcome the crisis. At this point it is enough to say that, after this *peripeteia*, all the tensions of the Exposition will be eventually resolved in the Recapitulation, in which the piece will find the way to successfully handle and smoothly assimilate most of its thematic ideas and unexpected key areas within the home key of B minor / major. It is noteworthy that the sophisticated narratological strategy revealed in the first Coda (which begins in m. 650 with a *Stretta quasi Presto* version of the *motif*, similar to the *incalzando* version heard in m. 255, as in Development I), leads again to an explosion in mm. 665–672. Instead of trying to relieve tensions, to smooth away difficulties and conflicts, it is Coda I that now seems responsible for the new crisis.

However, it seems to us that the piece does not experience a real crisis but, rather, that it presents a vivid *impression* of crisis, of a dead end, so as to have the opportunity to proceed to an unprecedented *virtuoso* demonstration that proves its high level of readiness in successfully handling difficult situations. The *B minor sonata* will come through the simulated difficulty quite decisively. Unlike Development I, in which portentous scales were heard after the crisis,

the piece will play *presto*, joyful and confident scales (mm. 673–681) that sound anything but awkward (observe the *virtuoso* changes of the time values: quarter notes, eighths, triplets). A triumphant version of the *theme* will be heard in *fuocoso assai*, upon a kind of 'dance accompaniment'^{xii} (m. 682 ff), and finally the piece will incorporate total chromaticism with unforeseen ease.

The following, and final, appearance of the *Grandioso theme*, in *fff*, "is the major point of arrival for the recapitulation" (m. 700).^{xii} It will be the first time that the *Grandioso* does not dissolve or stop abruptly, but leads to a triumphant, *tremolando* dominant of B followed by Coda II. There, the *Andante theme* will appear in the major tonic but the following *Allegro moderato*, consisting of the three initial thematic ideas presented in reverse order, will leave us with a kind of a bitter-sweet feeling. Concerning the last part of the piece, mm. 729–760, Leonard Ratner argues that, "As the cadences become dispersed, so does the rhythm. First, a displacement of one-half measure (m. 749) throws the listener off with respect to strong-beat perception. Then, in mm. 750–54, downbeats are suppressed. From this point to the end, every gesture begins on a weak beat, creating a sense of measure shift, and an impression of faltering". Finally, "Long after the music has ceased, the listener can sense the sustained echo of the six-four harmony and the memory of the low B, which, by its isolation, leaves us with a question as much as with an answer".^{xiii}

IV

Returning to the middle of the *B minor sonata*, we argue that Development II could be perceived as a huge prolongation of F# major, the dominant of the home key B minor, as an extended *retransition* that will eventually lead to the Recapitulation. Its longest part (mm. 331–415) is framed by two appearances of a new theme, the choral-like *Andante theme*. It seems to us that, completely exhausted at the end of Development I, the main 'protagonists' are incapable of the slightest response to the pressure they have experienced and withdraw, or even faint, or fall into a kind of

'deep slumber'. We are under the impression that time freezes, that the succession of events is interrupted even though the music does not stop. Whatever happens during this extended passage sounds 'otherworldly', like a period of inner, spiritual activity, of reflection on past experience or meditation, of dream or nightmare, rather than like a portrayal of physical in-time action.^{xiv}

Especially in tales of adventure, the use of the timeless and static element is anything but rare. Liszt seems to make use of a well known narratological *cliché*. As Paul Ricoeur argues, "Before projecting the hero forward for the sake of the quest, many tales send the hero or heroine into some dark forest where he or she goes astray or meets some devouring beast".^{xv} Often, something slightly different happens: somewhere in the middle of the story, after facing immense difficulties and crises, the hero or heroine withdraws, probably into some dark and mysterious forest where, with the help of a wise old man (a priest, a sage, an alchemist) or a kind of 'magical' supernatural power, he / she contemplates the past, organizes his / her thoughts, and makes decisions for the future. In both cases, these episodes "bring the hero or heroine *back* into a primordial space and time that is more akin to the realm of dreams than to the sphere of action ... the linear chain of time is broken and the tail assumes an oneiric dimension". Thus, "two qualities of time are intertwined: the circularity of the imaginary travel and the linearity of the quest as such. I agree that the kind of repetition involved in this travel toward the origin is rather primitive It has the character of an immersion and confinement in the midst of dark powers".^{xvi}

In this respect, Development II could be regarded not only as a period of heavy sleep, caused by exhaustion, but also as a musical depiction of an inward journey. It seems that some aspects of Liszt's *B minor sonata* may fit into an archetypal pattern of psychic and literary / artistic activities, namely into what Jungian psychologists and critics call 'the process of self-transformation' or 'the process of individuation'. By the process of individuation Jung denotes the gradual discovery of "a creative middle way between

the opposites, a living integration of consciousness and the unconscious".^{xvii} The goal of this process is the expansion of the field of consciousness, the enlargement of personality, the emergence of a wider personality –renewal, rebirth, 'psychic wholeness'. Jung speaks of an archetype of wholeness whose remembrance is preserved in the unconscious, in the 'root', so to speak, "hid under the ground".^{xviii} The rediscovery of this 'root' involves an inward –and backward– motion that leads towards the 'origin', the 'starting' or 'central' point, the inward journey called 'introversion'. Ideally, this journey should enable one to embrace values and attitudes outside consciousness; to allow the flow of new and vital elements into the personality; to descend into the 'foreign', deeper layers of the psyche and, in short, to embrace the totality of oneself, that is, both the 'natural' and 'unnatural' aspects of the psyche.

One's descent into these vast and dark regions, one's retreat from 'reality', creates a sense of desolation and appalling alienation from the 'natural' order. Long before Jung and analytical psychology, creative writers who depicted such an experience used a language suggesting archaic, primordial, horrific fantasies and images: they described "the deceits of night", "the flies of hell", "dark labyrinths", "a gloomy wood", "[a] savage wild / ... forest", "a world of shadows", "a land of sand and thorns", "black parasites", "sands and serpents".^{xix} Indeed, the descent, which is often depicted as a voyage of discovery to unknown lands, is as old or as new as Homer's *Odyssey*, the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, Dante's *Divina commedia*, Henry Vaughan's religious lyrics, S. T. Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, Gustav Mahler's "Resurrection" *Symphony*, Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny och Alexander*.

It is worth mentioning that the last part of Development II, which comes after the second appearance of the *Andante theme*, contains a whole-tone passage (continuous plagal IV-I successions in 'keys' a whole tone apart) that, lacking any tensions, gives the impression of total immobility, of complete lack of even a mood for action. It reminds us of the period of the deep slumber, without

dreams, that comes just before waking up, or even a state of 'temporary death', a stage that may precede rebirth. However, this period does not last for a long time: the piece, as if awakening from a heavy sleep, returns and stirs decisively upon an F# pedal (m. 433 ff), getting ready for action.

The thematic presentation of the Recapitulation begins in m. 453 and, after the scales a *fugato* in B \flat minor follows.^{xx} By using the strictest tonal form, Liszt creates a break, a sheer antithesis to the preceding dreamlike atmosphere. We now understand that the piece is acting again –indeed, acting in an organized, systematic way. Nevertheless, it sounds like a period of lonesome action, a period of laborious exercise and preparation for what is going to happen next. The impression we have is that the beginning of *Allegro energico* functions as a 'cold shower' that awakens mind and senses, and helps keeping both the *theme* and the *motif* sharp, 'on edge'. After a long period of inactivity, the piece submits itself to strict discipline. Through this process of persistent and strenuous exercise the *theme* and the *motif* will eventually acquire an enviable level of agility –especially the *theme* sounds ready to accomplish miracles when it manages to combine with its inversion in *forte energico* (m. 509 ff).

The whole thematic presentation of the Recapitulation can be perceived as a huge upbeat, a large-scale *crescendo* to the structural downbeat of m. 533 (tonal presentation). The sudden reduction of texture followed by a process of growth, complexity, and gradually increased density of information keeps listeners in suspense and may make them 'hold their breath'. Thus, although different from the thematic presentation of the Exposition, the corresponding part of the Recapitulation functions exactly as the former, that is, as an *anacrusis* to the tonal presentation of the Recapitulation. Beginning in m. 502, the *theme* and the *motif* cooperate, foreshadowing the texture of m. 533; the repeated notes of the *motif* are heard in octaves (mm. 506–508), thus anticipating the decisive version of the *motif* in m. 531; the material of measures 25–26 returns

(*theme* in E \flat major), repeated twice, and thus preparing listeners for the arrival of m. 533 (completely identical to m. 32) where the tonal presentation of the Recapitulation begins.

V

Most of the studies we are aware of approach the *B minor sonata* either as a Biblical or Faustian epic, or as an incredible mixture of heroic, lyrical, (melo)dramatic, satanic, erotic, even macabre moments that line up, one after the other, as a kind of mishmash of sensitive melodic fragments, energetic arpeggios, thickly-textured powerful chordal sequences, and chromatic passages. Charles Rosen, for example, argues that, "The Sonata for piano in B Minor is perhaps the only work of Liszt to win almost unchallenged critical admiration I hesitate to disturb this near-unanimity, but the work –while an undoubted masterpiece– is neither flawless nor a truly representative achievement Because of its seriousness and originality of form", Rosen says, "the Sonata is often considered Liszt's greatest achievement; in both respects it seems to me slightly overvalued. It contains a certain amount of bombast and sentimental posturing mixed with its finest passages".^{xxi} Far from arguing that we can provide answers to each and every question about the piece, we have tried, on the contrary, to explain the role of each event in accordance with what precedes and what follows it, to understand the musical procedures as parts of an all-embracing meaningful scenario, to suggest a convincing plot in which every functional choice could determine and be determined by all the others. In this respect, for example, we have interpreted the crisis that started in m. 80 as the outcome of the *theme's* inherent shortcomings and 'unwise' behavior –its immaturity, insecurity, immoderate self-confidence, vanity, arrogance and lack of sharply-defined intentions and / or aims.

Especially with respect to the *fugato* that begins in m. 460 there are almost no convincing interpretations attempting to answer to questions such as: Why a *fugato*? Why at this particular point of the whole structure? What is the *fugato's* specific

function at this point? How does it relate to what precedes and to what follows it? Szász, consistent with his understanding of the sonata as a Biblical epic, is positive that, "Though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and Man falls again, prey to the diabolical as symbolized with the *fugato*".^{xxii} Winklhofer claims that, "Although the character of the *fugato* suggests a *scherzando*, or third-movement substitute ... it is inaccurate to assume that he [Liszt] intended the *fugato* in the Sonata as a scherzo substitute on the basis of comparison with his other works of that type"^{xxiii} without, however, saying anything more about this; and Rosen suggests: "The fugue –part scherzo, part opening of a recapitulation and finale– turns the main theme into an exercise in the macabre".^{xxiv}

We argue that, far from simply being a *scherzando* substitute in a three or four-movement cycle (as Longyear, Newman and Rosen claim), the *fugato* could be seen as the only possible form that should be used at this particular point of the whole structure. That is, that the existence of the highly energetic *fugato*, as well as of the 'fantastical' and harmonically static Development II that precedes it, is strongly dictated both by narratological and psychological reasons.

We have already mentioned some of the narratological strategies followed in adventure tales, quoting a few of Paul Ricoeur's viewpoints. Ricoeur also claims that, "the art of narrating does not merely preserve within-time-ness from being levelled off by measured, anonymous, and reified time, it also generates the movement back from objective time to ordinary temporality".^{xxv} It seems that storytellers feel almost 'obliged' to interrupt an endless and rather tiring linear succession of events at some point, in order to enter a dreamlike, "'timeless' –but not atemporal– dimension [that] duplicates, so to speak, the episodic dimension of the quest and contributes to the fairylike atmosphere of the quest itself".^{xxvi} This could be seen, we argue, as the role played by Development II within the story that the piece narrates. More than that, the completely immobile whole-tone passage towards the end of this section (mm. 422-

428) reminds us of many similar moments of total quietness and relaxation, inserted in narratives just before the moment that frenzied, tempestuous action begins –their function being to highlight and further dramatize the tension that will immediately follow. Likewise, we claim that only the strictness and severity of a *fugato* could provide the necessary violent and sudden 'rupture', the *break* that is needed at this point so as to create a total contrast to what preceded and bring the piece back to a higher and solid situation of consciousness –from the cyclical, imaginary time of 'the land of dreams' to the linear time of 'the world of action'.^{xxvii}

On a psychological level we have also seen that Development II could be regarded as a significant expression of the transforming experience ('individuation'), aiming at the maturation and enlargement of personality, at a *renovatio* that will eventually provide the piece with the opportunity to 'face its demons', overcome its shortcomings and move forward; and that this process may involve a 'temporary death', a stage in which one does not communicate with the external world. Let us stress once more that by the term 'individuation' Jung means the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'individual', an indivisible unity or whole: the result of going through the individuation process successfully is 'psychic wholeness'. Moreover, referring to this process, as well as to what follows this transforming (and painful) experience, Jung claims: "[it is] no aimless and purely destructive fall into the abyss, but a meaningful *katabasis eis antron*, a descent into the cave of initiation and secret knowledge ... With my patients ... the *katabasis* and *katalysis* are followed by a *recognition of the bipolarity of human nature* and of the *necessity of conflicting pairs of opposites*".^{xxviii}

This is, we argue, what happens in the *B minor sonata* after Development II, that is, after the 'katabasis'. Until now we have followed the 'adventures' of the two main characters of the piece –or, one may suggest, of two sharply contrasting *sides* of *one* character. We have seen that it was only at the beginning of the tonal presentation of the

Exposition that those two different attitude types, the *theme* and the *motif*, co-ordinated in a single line of action (mm. 32-39), retaining, however, their distinct characteristics. In the *fugato* that follows Development II, these 'conflicting opposites', the *theme* and the *motif*, seem to realize the absolute necessity of concurrence and complementarity, the only means to 'return' renewed and wiser. At the beginning of the thematic presentation of the Recapitulation, these two agents do not simply co-ordinate but, for the first and only time in the piece, they become *one indivisible unit*, a unified whole reflected in the subject of the *fugato* itself, which consists of the *theme* immediately followed by the *motif*. After all, one may argue that the concept of the fugue itself brings to mind the age-old uniting symbol of psychic (and eventually artistic) unity and growth: the *mandala* (the Sanskrit name for a circular pattern).^{xxx} Jung's description of this symbol suggests that a fugue could be described in an almost identical manner: according to Jung, the appearance of the *mandala* signifies the sensing of a "center of personality, a kind of *central point* within the psyche, to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy".^{xxx} Likewise, the 'centre' of a fugue, the element 'to which everything is related', is its subject. The appearance of the subject of the *fugato* in the *B minor sonata*, consisting of complementary opposites (the *theme* and the *motif*), triggers off an outburst of energy that will drive the piece to move forward, towards the realization and completion of its goals.

VI

No doubt, the 'story' we have narrated is not about God or Satan, Faust or Mephistopheles, or even about Liszt's 'mid-life crisis', as several authors have claimed in their different approaches to the *B minor sonata*. However, although based on a detailed examination of the musical procedures, it is, still, *our story*, or the story told from our own point of view. That is, we are far from claiming that Liszt had this 'scenario' in mind while composing the sonata, or that the piece itself 'tells' the particular story. In short, we

think, it is common knowledge that our readings also reveal our preferences, as well as our involvement with pieces, and that they can be seen as the intersection of two 'worlds': the world of the piece and the world of the critic. And, yet, this may be one of the main reasons why we love musical works, that is, the fact that pieces may allow us to construct fascinating and colourful stories from them, stories we would prefer to hear, time and again.

Our major concern, however, was that each detail of the 'story' we have told should be consistent with the overall plot we have suggested. After all, as Roland Barthes argues, "Criticism is something other than making correct statements in the light of 'true' principles It is a comment on a comment, a secondary language or *meta-language* Consequently, if criticism is only a meta-language, its task is not to discover forms of 'truth' but forms of 'validity'. In itself, a language cannot be true or false; it is either valid or non-valid. It is valid when it consists of a *coherent system of signs*".^{xxxi}

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ⁱ Burnham 1995: 3.

ⁱⁱ See Longyear 1973: 198, and Newman 1983: 373.

ⁱⁱⁱ Winklhofer 1980: 130-133.

^{iv} Liszt himself has described the *motif* as "hammer-blows" (Liszt in a letter, quoted in Merrick 1987: 288, and Winklhofer 1980: 45). Winklhofer hears it as "aggressive" (Winklhofer 1980: 146). Both Szász and Merrick hear Satan himself in interpretations that move along theological lines (see Szász 1984: 50-51, and Merrick 1987: 289). Likewise, David Wilde hears 'Mephisto' in a kind of 'Faustian' interpretation (see Wilde 1997: 212), while Márta Grabócz characterizes the *motif* as 'Eroico' in her 'Interprétation Sémantique' (see Grabócz 1987: Tableau 9).

^v During the process of writing this paper we have listened to many well known performances of the piece, such as those by Vladimir Horowitz, Géza Anda, Leon Fleisher, Alfred Brendel, Alfred Cortot, Maurizio Pollini, Leslie Howard, Svjatoslav Richter, Emil Gilels, Martha Argerich, Clifford Curzon, Simon Barere, Elisabeth Leonskaja, Polina Leschenko, and Nikolai Demidenko. In a few of them (notably, Horowitz, 1932, and Barere, 1947), the repeated Ds at the beginning of the *motif* sound as in *rallentando*, hesitant and almost wavering. We would argue that these performances deprive the *motif* from what we feel to be its most essential characteristic: its insistence.

^{vi} Observe that the sequence B \flat – G – E \flat can be perceived as a deeper-level arpeggiation of E \flat , the key in which the *theme* arrives and stays for the next thirteen measures.

^{vii} Winklhofer 1980: 146. Recall that it is not the first time that the extroverted and impatient *theme* decisively ventures to open a new phase but loses its way

somewhere 'in the middle of the road', while the more cautious and persistent *motif*, like a *deus ex machina*, manages to provide solutions and forward the action.

^{viii} Winklhofer writes that the final section of the Exposition, "anticipates the development section by taking on developmental characteristics" (See Winklhofer 1980: 146).

^{ix} One may argue that the semitonal relationship between these two harmonies, C – B, could be perceived as related to the Phrygian scale of the beginning, alluding to the initial awkwardness and revealing a kind of nervousness and impatience that will ultimately lead to a serious crisis towards the end of this section.

^x We would argue that most of the performances we have heard render this passage in a rather 'conventional' and uninspired way, not being able to capture and convey the magnitude and the intensity of the crisis: they rather simply play these measures faster and louder but always 'in time', as if literally following a metronome that moves faster and faster. We feel impressed, however, by Leon Fleisher's performance. Fleisher manages to give the impression that the music is in a violent, raging, frenzied state: any sense of tempo vanishes, one cannot distinguish downbeats from upbeats, and barlines seem to be abolished. We had pretty much the same impression upon hearing Polina Leschenko's performance.

^{xi} Tibor Szász hears the accompaniment as "martial rhythm" and the whole passage in mm. 673-699 as symbolizing Armageddon. We prefer, on the contrary, to perceive that, at this point, the *B minor sonata* bursts into laughter in a frenzy of joy –an impression we had, especially upon hearing Maurizio Pollini's performance.

^{xii} Winklhofer 1980: 154.

^{xiii} Ratner 1992: 216.

^{xiv} *NB*. The adventurous and bold *theme*, the *motif* in its 'authentic', decided and stubborn version, even the ominous scales are almost totally absent from Development II. The thematic ideas that recur constantly during the *Andante sostenuto* are only the *espressivo* version of the *motif*, the *Grandioso theme* –either in its impressive and relaxed or in its distorted and threatening version– and, of course, the *Andante theme*. Significantly, during the appearance of the distorted *Grandioso* (in G minor, m. 376 ff), it is the only time that two small fragments of the beginning of the *theme* are heard, full of anxiety, as if memories of a nightmare were so powerful that they could make the 'protagonist' toss about in his/her sleep without, however, waking up.

^{xv} Ricoeur 1981: 181.

^{xvi} *Ibid*, 181. Later, Ricoeur argues that, finally, the time of the quest prevails over that of the imaginary travel through *an act of rupture, a break*, by which the world of action emerges from the land of dreams. Later on, our discussion of the form that Liszt has chosen so as to show that his two main characters act again –a *fugato*, whose severity contrasts sharply with what precedes it– will stress the importance of Ricoeur's suggestion.

^{xvii} See Iliopoulos 1993: 55, and Jung 1953-1978: IX 275 and VII 171.

^{xviii} See Iliopoulos 2000: 219.

^{xix} Ibid: 223.

^{xx} It is not by accident that the *fugato* is in B \flat , an enharmonically respelled A \sharp , the leading tone of B minor. We have already argued that Development II can be perceived as a huge 'dominant preparation' section that points towards B minor. The *fugato*, emphasizing the leading tone of B, could be heard as a further prolongation and extension of this function.

^{xxi} Rosen 1995: 479-480. We feel that only a few of the performances we have taken into consideration approach the piece as a unified whole, try to define and convey the function of each musical gesture within the total structure –notably, those by Pollini, Fleisher, Anda, Argerich, and Richter.

^{xxii} See Szász 1984: 55.

^{xxiii} See Winklhofer 1980: 163-164.

^{xxiv} See Rosen 1995: 489. Likewise, Grabócz argues that the *fugato* could be understood in terms of three *signifiés* (sèmes ou classèmes), those of the *macabre*, *eroico*, and *scherzo* (see Grabócz 1987: Tableau 13).

^{xxv} Ricoeur 1981: 179.

^{xxvi} Ibid: 181.

^{xxvii} See also note 16 above.

^{xxviii} Jung 1953-1978: XV, 139-140. See also Iliopoulos 1993: 88. Emphasis added.

^{xxix} The *mandala* represents the primal unity of the soul and the psychic centre or nucleus: "it has the obvious purpose of drawing a *sulcus primigenious* ... around the centre, the temple or *temenos* ... of the innermost personality". See Iliopoulos 2000: 229.

^{xxx} Quoted in Iliopoulos 2000: 230. Emphasis added.

^{xxxi} Barthes 1972: 648-649. Emphasis added.