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Sibelius, Gallen-Kallela, and the Symposium: Painting Music in Fin-de-Siècle Finland

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Abstract:

The painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela and composer Jean Sibelius enjoyed a complex friendship across media in the final decade of the nineteenth century as members of a group of young artist-intellectuals that called itself "The Symposium." This paper studies Gallen-Kallela's images of Sibelius and of his work, centering on the idea of "natural music," with which the composer was especially closely associated.

Sibelius, Gallen-Kallela, and the Symposium: Painting Music in Fin-de-Siècle Finland

by William L. Coleman

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela and composer Jean Sibelius enjoyed a complex creative friendship that led each to respond to the other's work in their medium of choice. Both men were born to the Swedish-speaking ruling classes of the day and participated in larger currents of the period by adopting the Finnish language and making a deliberate turn to the landscape for source material that they perceived to be free from the taint of centuries of foreign rule.^[1] In a relationship with many turns, the short window from 1891, when Sibelius first came into the orbit of the cultural-nationalist group *Nuori Suomi*, or Young Finland, of which Gallen-Kallela was a founder-member, until Gallen-Kallela left for Berlin in December of 1894, saw especially regular and productive dialogue between the two men.^[2] As core participants in a smaller group of young artist-intellectuals that grandiosely called itself "the Symposium," Gallen-Kallela and Sibelius exchanged ideas about art, music, and nature that shaped both of their work. This period gave rise to many of their best-known creations, including Sibelius's choral symphony *Kullervo* and his *Lemminkäinen Suite* as well as Akseli Gallen-Kallela's iconic *The Great Black Woodpecker (Wilderness)* and his triptych *The Aino Myth*, among others.

What accounts there have been of this intriguing episode in the history of musical-artistic exchange traditionally claim that the Symposium years saw Gallen-Kallela's decisive shift from Realism to Symbolism in the service of nationalist ideology and a parallel move from program music to less overtly "representational" work by Sibelius.^[3] While there is an element of truth to this narrative, it does not account adequately for some of the most important values that linked their processes in the early 1890s, including a new veneration of folk culture and their kindred turn to natural imagery. This paper will complicate our understanding of the Symposium period by arguing that Sibelius was, in Gallen-Kallela's art, the supreme exemplar of a particular kind of landscape consumption and utilization in which the painter also participated. The composer's own ethnomusicological labors caused Gallen-Kallela to depict him in a small group of paintings from the period as an advocate for of a kind of enlightened rural tourism that was grounded in the notion that inspiration from what we might call "natural music" could still be found in the wilder parts of Finland by those who were willing to listen. This concept of natural music encompasses both the literal sounds of nature, rich in suggestions of underlying formulae and ordering principles to an ear attuned to the mystical yearning that was central to Symbolism, and also the folk music, especially of the Karelia region, that was implicated in processes of nation formation in the period. W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of landscape as a "transdisciplinary medium" that is not the province of any one art-form will be salutary in seeking to understand the ways Sibelius's "representation" of landscape, and all the mystical and political values with which it can be charged, by means of music impacted Gallen-Kallela's art during his time in the Symposium.^[4]

While Sibelius is now firmly established in the Anglo-American orchestral canon for his evocative Fifth Symphony, the iconic showpiece for virtuosi offered by his Violin Concerto, and the tuneful tone poem *Finlandia*, Gallen-Kallela has suffered a marked decline in international reputation since his lifetime, when he was exhibited widely in Western Europe

alongside the likes of Edvard Munch.^[5] This decline is, in part, the result of the avidity of Finnish collecting of his work; *Lake Keitele*, in the National Gallery in London since 1999, is a rare exception to the rule that the vast majority of his work remains within the borders of Finland, known, studied, and canonized primarily by a Finnish audience. However, Sibelius's own writings make abundantly clear the depth of his respect for, and debt to, Gallen-Kallela and urge further study of this major artist by non-Finnish scholars with greater distance from the narratives that have grown up around his work. The composer called Gallen-Kallela "Finland's greatest painter" in a letter to the English critic Felix Aprahamian and composed a trance-like dirge for organ, *Surusoitto*, for the artist's 1931 funeral.^[6] Sibelius's own ambitions in the visual arts and his synaesthesia caused him to respond to Gallen-Kallela's paintings in his music in more subtle ways that have recently begun to receive scholarly attention.^[7] While there is much more work to be done on the ways the composer made use of the visual arts in general and of Gallen-Kallela's images of mythical subjects in particular, this paper will instead focus on the reverse: the ways the painter responded to the composer, to his music, and to his vision of natural music.

The evidence of Sibelius's investment in the work of his contemporary has caused critics from the period to the present day to look to Gallen-Kallela's paintings for points of contact with the music of Sibelius, although such accounts have often raised more questions than they've answered. In promotional materials for a never-completed Sibelius vocal work based on Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven*, the impresario Emil Gutmann claimed that it displayed "the same bold symbolism and enchantment as does Finnish folk poetry or Axel Gallén's painting."^[8] In 1952, four years before the composer's death but decades after he ceased composing, Veikko Helasvuo claimed that "Sibelius performed in music the service that Eliel Saarinen did in creating a native school of architecture and Akseli Gallen-Kallela in animating with paint and brush the characters and episodes of the [national epic] *Kalevala*."^[9] More recently, Peter Franklin was struck by a similarity between the "heroic main theme" of the first movement of Sibelius's *Kullervo* and "the energetic muscularity of a painted figure by Gallén-Kallela."^[10] Likewise, Eero Tarasti has drawn connections between the work of Gallen-Kallela and Sibelius, comparing the "Karelian-Finnish colors in the paintings of Gallen-Kallela's Karelianistic period" and the "*trepak* rhythms and folk musical melodies along with dark sensual timbres of orchestration (as a counterpoint of Gallen-Kallela's paintings) in Sibelius's *Kullervo Symphony*."^[11] Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, one of the most insightful of contemporary Gallen-Kallela scholars, paired the artist and composer as "the leading interpreters of the *Kalevala* world."^[12]

While writings by the two themselves and by scholars since show Sibelius and Gallen-Kallela to have enjoyed a close relationship for much of their lives, they were jealously protective of their independence and quick to perceive slights and to deliver them where rivals, even in other media, were concerned. The circumstances surrounding Gallen-Kallela's fiftieth birthday on April 26, 1915 illustrate the tensions that lurked just beneath the surface throughout their relationship. Sibelius was frustrated by references to Gallen-Kallela in the newspapers as "the inspirer, almost progenitor of Finnish music" and paeans from which Sibelius was conspicuously absent, like that of the poet Eino Leino, who wrote that "Our arts, paintings, temples, statues, music, song, all pay their tribute" and that it was Gallen-Kallela who had inspired "our Finnish music, and [conductor and composer Robert] Kajanus who has given it an international reputation."^[13] The composer was prompted to complain in his diary: "Newspapers full of Gallén. Full of pompous sentimentalities."^[14] Irked by the effacement of

his role in the growth of Finnish music and the suggestion that he was indebted to anyone, Sibelius declined to attend the celebratory dinner for Gallen-Kallela on the 26th.^[15] In an undated diary entry of a few days later, Sibelius wrestled with his guilt at missing the event and expressed his frustration at how the decision to stay home would be understood: “That my absence will be interpreted as ‘envy’ or God knows what by the ill-disposed and by a stupid, really stupid, public is certain.”^[16] Gallen-Kallela sent a reply to Sibelius’s birthday letter, in which the composer had not bothered to excuse or explain his absence, that included an elegant bit of backhanded praise: “You, Sibelius, were an equal and close comrade-in-arms at that time when we embarked on our respective paths, and since then you have been for me an admired paradigm.”^[17] Sibelius wrote in his diary: “From Gallén a strange letter. He speaks of me as his ‘equal’ when we set out at the beginning of our career. But later?”^[18]

As this episode demonstrates, the friendship of Sibelius and Gallen-Kallela included periods of silence and distance. However, Gallen-Kallela’s “strange letter” also underlines the important fact that in the period from 1891 through 1894 they had a profound artistic bond that is still not fully understood. Clearly, many have recognized more than superficial comparisons between the artistic projects of Sibelius and Gallen-Kallela in those years, but the precise mechanics of their creative relationship have been less well understood. A painting to which I will return later, *Sibelius as the Composer of ‘En Saga’* of 1894 (fig. 1), preserved in the collection of the museum at Sibelius’s country house, Ainola, testifies to the range of challenges these images present. First of all, it is an iconic object in a Finnish collection that is difficult to see afresh because it has been freighted with national readings by scholars for whom the political implications of a diptych showing a national hero of the arts and a piece of his music with a mythological subject are inescapable. Gallen-Kallela has not only included a sensitive portrait of Sibelius as a heavy-lidded romantic figure, tousle-haired and occupied with weighty thoughts, but also attempted to render in a fanciful wintry landscape the sound and mood of one of his compositions: *En Saga*, an 1892 tone poem that proved widely influential in his time and after. Within one frame, these two panels describe the twin poles of Gallen-Kallela’s response to Sibelius. Not only did the artist depict Sibelius repeatedly in these years, he also joined the composer as a participant in a wider cultural nationalist discourse that invested ideas of natural music with new political import.

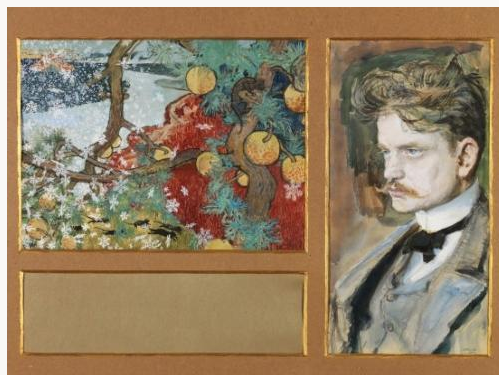


Fig. 1, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Sibelius as the Composer of ‘En Saga’*, 1894. Watercolor on paper. Ainola Foundation, Jarvenpää. Photo: http://www.ateneum.fi/sites/ateneum.fi/files/styles/0landscape_full/public/images/page/gallery/gallen_kallela_akseli_satu_2.jpg [\[larger image\]](#)

Natural Music in Myth and Politics

As the scholarship of Veikko Helasvuo and Peter Franklin has shown, Sibelius and Gallen-Kallela are strongly identified with the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, and with good reason. Their many works with *Kalevala* subjects have encouraged a critical reception that seeks to explain the two as contributors to the Finnish independence movement or as participants in international Symbolism. While there is an element of truth to both, and there will be more to say of Symbolism later, there is another more subtle way in which the *Kalevala* shaped both of their work that has been largely overlooked. The national epic was, at its heart, a work of ethnomusicological labor, founded upon the notion that there was a natural music latent in the Finnish landscape for those who were willing to go to the source and listen. Elias Lönnrot's labors to "compile" a cohesive poem from laboriously transcribed folk songs, mainly from the eastern regions of Karelia and Archangel Karelia, led to the publication of the *Kalevala*, first in 1835 and in its final form in 1849.^[19] It is difficult to overstate its national importance. One intellectual of the period famously declared of the *Kalevala*, "Finland can [now] say for itself: 'I, too, have a history!'"^[20] Later scholars have claimed that "there is good cause to believe that Finland could not have achieved independence" without the *Kalevala* and that "The Finnish nation was conceived in and born of folklore."^[21] For readers of the period, the source of the epic in music cemented that art-form's supreme role in defining Finnish identity, and music would remain central to the reception of the *Kalevala*.

Both Gallen-Kallela and Sibelius found inspiration in the *Kalevala* and drew encouragement from it to turn to patriotic art. It is significant that both were conscious of the musicality of the *Kalevala* and gravitated to episodes within it in which music was not only source but subject. In a letter of December 1890, Sibelius wrote, "The *Kalevala* strikes me as extraordinarily modern and to my ears is pure music, themes and variations; its story is far less important than the moods and atmosphere conveyed: the gods are human beings, Väinämöinen is a musician, and so on."^[22] Gallen-Kallela said, "The poems of the *Kalevala* are truly so sacred for me that, for instance, when singing them it feels as if you were resting your weary head upon some strong steadfast support."^[23] The artist went a step further in his engagement with the *Kalevala* at this stage by returning to Finland from Paris in the summer of 1890 to travel extensively in Karelia with the notion that, according to Ville Lukkarinen, "ancient Finnishness could still be found, frozen in time—and in a state that could be revived" there. On a more practical level, Karelia seemed an ideal source of the "primitive" values of folk culture that the modern art world had come to prize.^[24] Gallen-Kallela's pilgrimage gave rise to the movement known as Karelianism, for which a return to the source of the *Kalevala* held the promise not of artistic but political inspiration.^[25] *Nuori Suomi* picked up where Gallen-Kallela left off, celebrating Karelia as the font from which original Finnishness still flowed, offering all that was needed to forge a Finnish state.^[26]

Sibelius, inspired by Gallen-Kallela and the other members of *Nuori Suomi* who traveled in Karelia, spent his honeymoon there in the summer of 1892, transcribing folk songs with funding from the Finnish Literature Society, the same organization that had supported Elias Lönnrot's original efforts half a century earlier in compiling the *Kalevala*.^[27] In contrast to Gallen-Kallela's enthusiastic adoption of Karelian design motifs and Karelian people as models, Sibelius drew on his study of Karelia in a manner that is more difficult to describe, except in cases where he has helpfully labelled a work as the product of this travel, as in his jaunty *Karelia Suite*.^[28] It is certainly true that Sibelius composed a great many works that

were explicitly labelled as pertaining to the *Kalevala* over the course of his career, perhaps most famously the widely performed *Lemminkäinen Suite*. A spirit of mysticism and nostalgia for a more innocent past certainly pervades many of his tone poems of the period, with subjects like *The Wood Nymph*, *Spring Song*, and *The Bard*, while the striking choral third and fifth movements of *Kullervo* show that Sibelius understood the characteristic repetitive structures of Finnish folk song.^[29] Most importantly, a lecture Sibelius gave in 1896 shows that he was intimately acquainted with the pentatonic and modal construction of Karelian folk song and made wide use of these elements in his work during the Symposium period and after.^[30]

As a logical by-product of their embrace of the *Kalevala* and the celebration of rural life it embodied and encouraged, both Gallen-Kallela and Sibelius made a decisive shift to landscape imagery for new source material in the period of their closest contact. While Nationalism should not be allowed to serve as a tidy explanation for their projects, it is true that they participated in a zeitgeist for which, according to Torsten Gunnarsson, the rugged, ancient wilderness of Finland came to stand in for manmade monuments and a lengthy, native artistic tradition, while serving as a “readily accessible symbol of the strength and indomitable resolution of the Finnish people.”^[31] Gallen-Kallela wrote of landscape in these terms in his memoir *Boken om Gallen-Kallela*: “The man who, even in these times, in certain harmonious moments can find himself standing in powerful unity with all of nature had assuredly gotten more life than others. During such solemn times of cohabitation with nature he can know her soul and at the same time dives deep and flies high into the all.”^[32] In the words of Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, the artist’s great-grandson and one of the most incisive commentators on his art, “the art of landscape was an ideological construction, a medium by means of which [Akseli Gallen-Kallela] transformed nature into a codex of national identity.”^[33]

While the role of landscape in the music of Sibelius is not as readily apparent as it is in the art of Gallen-Kallela, finding evidence of the importance of this subject matter to the composer is by no means difficult. Sibelius famously called himself “an apparition from the forests” and said of the experience of seeing the Finnish coast looming through the mist on a return from abroad, in a phrase especially suggestive of ideas of musical principles latent in the landscape, “When we see those granite rocks we know why we are able to treat the orchestra as we do.”^[34] In an interview with a Norwegian newspaper, he rejected the persistence of nationalism in readings of his work in favor of landscape, claiming “as far as inspiration is concerned, I think that nature and landscape play a greater part than national origins.”^[35] Perhaps even more striking than Sibelius’s own comments is the near unanimity of critical discourse in using landscape to explain his music. To cite just a few of countless examples, a Russian journalist claimed in 1906 that “Sibelius is the pride of the Finns. His tones are thoroughly Finnish, the thoughts of a thousand lakes and forests, of hard granite rock.”^[36] Olin Downes, an influential American critic who was a zealous advocate of Sibelius’s music, wrote to the composer that, “I have dreamed for many [years] of Finland—ever since first hearing your music, . . . which I knew could only come from a wonderful northern country where there was room to be alone, and a grand nature about.”^[37] So prevalent were responses of this kind that a fierce backlash arose even within Sibelius’s lifetime. The most famous example of this came from Theodor Adorno, who raged against this rhetoric in a 1938 review of one hagiographic biography by one of Sibelius’s followers:

The song [of Sibelius's supporters] hinges upon the refrain "everything is Nature, everything is Nature." The great Pan, yearning for "blood and soil" quickly installs itself. The trivial passes for the elemental, the unarticulated for the noise of unconscious creation . . . in its representation of Nature, Sibelius's music reveals—contrary to French Impressionism as epitomized by Debussy—no sense of color, but only "dull, rigid, and accidental orchestral color" in which there is "no palette: everything is only in tints."[\[38\]](#)

That Adorno felt such a vehement response was required itself testifies to the prevalence of the language of landscape in the writings of Sibelius and of his admirers, both during the composer's lifetime and since. In recent years, the scholarship of Daniel Grimley has been a most welcome contribution, urging the conversation beyond simplistic understandings of the ways landscape operates in Sibelius's music to a more sophisticated perspective, rooted in structural analysis, on the ways he used silence and tonal distance to evoke a rather more abstract sense of physical distance.[\[39\]](#) When Gallen-Kallela represented Sibelius, he was depicting a range of ideas about the uses of landscape in the creation of national art with which the composer was inextricably associated for contemporary audiences. The artist's images of the Symposium group show the working out of notions of natural music and their place in an amorphous, evolving, Finnish brand of Symbolism.

The Symposium

The group that brought Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Jean Sibelius into contact for the first time, that came to be known as the Symposium, included not only musicians and painters but also writers like Eino Leino and Juhani Aho. These men, and they were all men, met regularly for nights of drinking and discussion at the fashionable Hotel Kämp in Helsinki in the early 1890s.[\[40\]](#) In contrast to the larger and more overtly political *Nuori Suomi*, with which many of the Symposium's members were affiliated, this circle was an informal gathering of like-minded artist-intellectuals of the period. While the Symposium did not have a formal manifesto, the unifying factor was an admiration of folk culture as a means to an alternate modernism, infused with Symbolism. Gallen-Kallela's representations of the Symposium, including himself among its members, are important documents of this milieu, its preoccupations, and, as has been overlooked in pious accounts of these now-canonical images of men who have become national heroes, its erudite sense of humor.

It is significant that in the canonical painting now known as *Symposium* (fig. 2), and in an earlier sketch (fig. 3), the artist chose to represent himself among only musical members of the group.[\[41\]](#) In both versions of the group portrait, Gallen-Kallela meets the viewer's gaze at left, followed to the right by the composers Oskar Merikanto and Robert Kajanus, the latter a founder of the Helsinki Philharmonic.[\[42\]](#) At the rightmost edge is Jean Sibelius. While the compositions are very similar, there are revealing differences from the sketch to the final version. Both versions depict Merikanto, Sibelius, and Kajanus deep in drink and dialogue, but in the first state (fig. 2), Sibelius looks less romantic than on the verge of being sick, Oskar Merikanto has passed out with his mouth crudely open, and Kajanus, caught in the act of pontificating on some unknown point, doesn't realize that his grandiose gestures have thrust his hand uncomfortably close to Merikanto's face. Not to be outdone, Gallen-Kallela leers crudely at the viewer around an indistinct red form. Evidence indicates that this was originally a flayed sphinx symbolizing "the mysteries of artistic creation," but this creature was judged too gruesome and cropped from the canvas.[\[43\]](#) The painting is obvious caricature, a group portrait of friends at play with a thin sheen of parodic Symbolism on top. Gallen-Kallela saw

enough formal merit in the subject to revise his little joke for public exhibition in a final state that is less obviously satirical. No more do we find toppled bottles and extremes of caricature. Sibelius is a bit glassy eyed but appears fired with inspiration rather than simply intoxicated. Kajanus's gesture is less awkward and Merikanto has politely rested his head on his arm instead of snoring openly. Gallen-Kallela's leer has gone the way of the sphinx, replaced by red wings, the owner of which is not shown to the viewer but is likely another representation of the mysteries of the artistic process, at which Kajanus and Sibelius gaze intently.^[44] Despite the more sedate portrayal, or perhaps because its self-mockery was less obvious, this painting met with a great deal of controversy when it was exhibited at the 1894 Exhibition of Finnish Artists. Gallen-Kallela was forced to get Sibelius and Kajanus to state publicly that they had agreed to sit for the picture, and Sibelius was widely criticized for his involvement. Indeed, he encountered a great deal of difficulty finalizing the purchase of land at Jarvenpää, where his country house, Ainola, would eventually be built, because of the reputation this painting earned him as an untrustworthy decadent.^[45]



Fig. 2, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Symposium*, 1894. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: <http://slash-paris.com/en/evenements/akseli-gallen-kallela-1865-1931> [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 3, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Symposium* (sketch), 1894. Oil on canvas. Serlachius Museot, Mänttä. Photo: <http://www.sibelius.fi/english/kuvituskuvat/080803/symposium.jpg> [\[larger image\]](#)

The audience that took *Symposium* so seriously, and scholars writing about the picture since as an unproblematic “chef-de-oeuvre symboliste,” have missed the crux of the joke Gallen-Kallela is making: he has applied the composition of Peter Paul Rubens’s utterly earnest *The Four Philosophers* (fig. 4) to a scene of a group of friends at play.^[46] The comments of the German critic Franz Servaes on Gallen-Kallela’s pictures in Berlin come the closest of any writer of whom I am aware to the recognition of the source, at least noticing a formal rigor that seems somewhat out of place in the Finn’s oeuvre. Servaes wrote that “The impression [Gallen-Kallela] makes is . . . that of a man finely attuned to the cultural elements and problems of his day, able to skilfully utilize foreign influences and to give them new form in an interesting way.”^[47] [Italics mine.] This is indeed a skillful and funny reuse of an important foreign influence. Gallen-Kallela wittily equates his drinking buddies with the learned circle with whom Rubens associated.^[48] Sibelius, appropriately, occupies the seat of Rubens’s great friend, the Antwerp intellectual and lawyer Johannes Woverius. Robert Kajanus takes the place of the Neostoic scholar Justus Lipsius, mimicking his hand gesture as he holds court. In the height of irreverence, the dozing Merikanto is in the place of Rubens’s deceased brother Philip, to whom the picture was a memorial, although perhaps Gallen-Kallela would not have known this. The wings that frame the left side of the picture replace the red curtain of Rubens’s image. Gallen-Kallela includes himself in the painting in the place of Peter Paul Rubens himself, likely a bit of mockery of his own grandiose ambitions while also arguing for his own rightful position among the great composers of Finland just as the earlier painter had laid claim to a place with the Neostoics. While the witty allusion the picture is making has been overlooked since Gallen-Kallela’s day, at least one contemporary recognized the multiple valences of it. Adolf Paul praised it “partly as a joke”: an image of the “internal productivity one develops under the drunkenness of alcohol” and the fleeting flashes of enlightenment that join with humor in that state.^[49] *Symposium* is a high-minded jest that makes abundantly clear the extent to which Gallen-Kallela envisioned himself as a participant in the musical life of Finland in the period, for which Sibelius was a visionary figure who recognized new ordering principles and structures for symphonic writing in the landscape itself and conveyed them to an eager public.



Fig. 4, Peter Paul Rubens, *The Four Philosophers*, ca. 1611–12. Oil on canvas. Galleria Palatina, Pitti Palace, Florence. Photo: http://www.wga.hu/html_m/r/rubens/4lportra/09philos.html [\[larger image\]](#)

Music and Landscape

At no point in Gallen-Kallela's life was his connection with, and interest in, music stronger than it was in the Symposium years. The depth of his friendship with Sibelius in the period prompted him to study the composer himself, as we have seen in *Symposium*, and his music in art. This period of musical painting produced two images in particular that deal with the subject of music's relationship with the visual arts, and with the organic existence of music in the landscape: *Waterfall at Mäntykoski* of 1892 (fig. 5) and *Sibelius as the Composer of 'En Saga'* (fig. 1). These "musical landscapes" enact the ethnomusicological listening of which Sibelius was, for Gallen-Kallela, the ultimate exemplar who recovered from the more remote parts of Finland sounds and structures that were held to be not only pre-Russian and pre-Swedish but even pre-rational. In this, music was especially rich in possibilities for an artist increasingly receptive to the values of Symbolism.

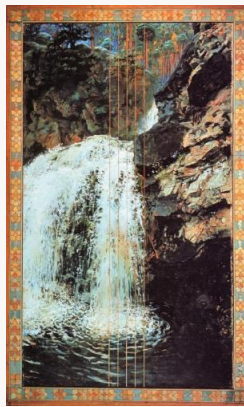


Fig. 5, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Waterfall at Mäntykoski*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: <http://paintingdb.com/view/4210/> [\[larger image\]](#)

Kirk Varnedoe has rightly argued that “developments in Scandinavian painting from 1880 to 1910 do not conform to the sequence of stylistic progress we know so well from the often-described evolution of French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.”^[50] For this reason, caution is required in applying so comfortable a category as Symbolism to Gallen-Kallela's art, as so many have, especially amid the many creative directions that the ferment of the Symposium years produced. Gallen-Kallela's stylistic trajectory is complex. Long after Impressionism had become the dominant style on the continent, Gallen-Kallela adhered to a Realism that seemed old-fashioned in Paris. He said of the Impressionist paintings he saw there, “each of them is a bloody, dastardly deed.”^[51] When he returned to Paris in the spring of 1892 to show the final version of his triptych of *The Aino Myth* (fig. 6), having improved upon a first effort that he painted in Paris by incorporating Karelian models and landscapes, he was frustrated to be received coolly by a city that now insisted upon “a more dreamy kind of poeticizing,” in Roald Naasgaard's apt phrase.^[52] Väinö Blomstedt, a fellow Finnish painter working in Paris, wrote of the mood in a letter home in 1891: “As regards painting, there is something completely new in the air here. Assyrian and Egyptian art have been raised up as an ideal, in them the lines have immense power and their decorativeness is magnificent in its power.”^[53] *Nuori Suomi* member Eino Leino's comments on the mood back in Helsinki in 1891 indicate that this was not only a Parisian phenomenon: “All old religious ideas are awakening

and a time of new mysticism, new occult doctrines, invocations of the spirits and star-gazing wafts through the intellectual life of the end of the century. . . . The human spirit once again feels the need to fall on its knees before the great unknown spirit of the world.”[54] Nina Kokkinen coined the term “occulture” to describe this yearning after hidden systems and natural laws that preceded official Christianity.[55] Music seemed to be a prime example of these natural principles at work in parts of the country that had not yet been tamed by urban and ecclesiastical bureaucracies.



Fig. 6, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *The Aino Myth* (second version), 1891. Oil on canvas. Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. Photo: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gallen_Kallela_The_Aino_Triptych.jpg

[\[larger image\]](#)

Michelle Facos has written that “a Symbolist work of art is characterized by (1) an Artist’s desire to represent ideas and (2) a manipulation of color, form, and composition that signals the artist’s relative indifference to worldly approaches.”[56] Whereas Realism was international in outlook and socialist in orientation, preoccupied as it was with documenting the condition of the rural poor, Symbolism was decidedly nationalistic and was more concerned with personal experience.[57] Gallen-Kallela at first reacted negatively to the new style, writing in a letter to his wife from Paris in 1892, “Everything here is approaching an end; the signs of life which are seen here are only death throes.”[58] However, the artist quickly came to see the merits of Symbolism and has since been called the leading Symbolist in Finland.[59] Never one to fit neatly within the purview of any single aesthetic movement, he drew on Symbolism while maintaining elements of Realism when it suited him, as in the case of *Symposium* with its fusion of Netherlandish group portraiture conventions and compositions with playful overtones of Egyptian mysticism, conscious of the contradiction and hoping a viewer will be as well. In this stylistic heterodoxy, he was very much an artist of his time and place. As Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén has argued, “In *fin-de-siècle* Finnish landscapes several nineteenth-century aesthetic trends—neoclassicism, romanticism, realism, impressionism, naturalism, symbolism, primitivism—converge into a urgently constructed image of an unborn nation.”[60] Symbolism is a factor in Gallen-Kallela’s art that is significant to understanding his use of musical imagery, but it is only one of many.

The encounter with Symbolism quickly had a significant impact on Gallen-Kallela’s thinking about art and led him to depart from efforts toward immersive realism, instead embracing flatness, decorative patterning in the manner of Puvis de Chavannes, and, indeed, musical subject matter for its value as a less literal and more universal language that could suggest great depths of meaning accessible to those who are sensitive to nature’s rhythms.[61] The artist’s

credo that he wrote in his journal in 1893 testifies to the exhilaration he felt at this new freedom:

In the world, in life, and in nature, there is nothing but beautiful tales, and when the door opens, enter and accept it with all your soul. Art is an immense, eternal forest, where the trees stand as sparsely or as densely as you wish. The moon, sun and all kinds of glittering stars move about at your will, and when you come to the shore of a lake in the wilderness it is fathomless if you so want, and lush waterlilies and wonderful red-speckled waterbirds swim on the black water. And if you want, the day will dawn on the other side of the lake behind the craggy mountain, and the yellow sun's rays shine through the delicate spiderwebs which hang between the eternal firs. The birds can begin their concert and beyond the mountain the spirit of the mountain accompanies them on the organ.[62]

The final sentence of this passage is particularly striking in its embodiment of Gallen-Kallela's concept of music as a unifying principle in the landscape and an organic outgrowth of it. Moreover, he positions natural music as the culmination of this list of goals towards which an artist, liberated by Symbolism perhaps, can strive.

Sibelius's writings of the period also manifest a search for natural music. Although they arrived at similar artistic values in the 1890s, Sibelius's path was toward a more representational quality, not to drift from realism into the murkier waters of musical Symbolism.[63] As early as the autumn of 1890, Sibelius described in a letter to Aino from Berlin his vision of finding and utilizing the materials of nature as a means to realism. He wrote, "I am going to use a large orchestra and am trying to aim for a greater realism than I have ever done before. In the world around us there is also music: it must be hewn from its source and put to use." [64] Whereas Gallen-Kallela was drawn to musical imagery for its capacity to suggest obscure systems of meaning and belief, Sibelius was turning from the generally abstract nature of his medium to embrace program music with literary and historic subjects. A statement of his youthful aesthetic philosophy makes this clear:

I believe that music alone, that is to say absolute music, is in itself not enough. It arouses feelings and induces certain states of mind but it always leaves some part of one unsatisfied. . . . Music attains its fullest power only when it is motivated by poetic impulse. In other words when words and music blend. Then the vague atmosphere that music engenders becomes more defined and things can be said that not even the most powerful language can formulate.[65]

Nationalism certainly contributed to this representational impulse; just as Gallen-Kallela would see in music a tool for the quasi-Symbolist expression of Finnish identity, so did Sibelius comment "I believe in the future of a national music, however much the knowalls may turn up their noses." [66] The strong parallelism between Gallen-Kallela's use of the language of music to describe landscape and Sibelius's quest for a music that is simultaneously natural and national shows the extent to which their thought was aligned in these years.

Waterfall at Mäntykoski (fig. 5) was Gallen-Kallela's most direct response to the shock of the new style on his return from Paris in the summer of 1892, marking, according to one scholar, his "definitive transition to Symbolism." [67] It is also his first musical landscape and a vivid

depiction of the idea of music's latency in nature that was so bound up with Sibelius and his work. Measuring almost nine feet by five, it is the largest single canvas the artist ever painted. The twin foundations of the image are Realist study of a famous sight in northwest Finland and a tale from the *Kalevala* of a waterfall. Within a patterned frame Gallen-Kallela designed to house the picture that recalls Puvis de Chavannes, the twin spouts of the waterfall descend through craggy rocks into a placid pool. Above, a hallucinatory, fantasy forest reaches to the sky. Directly following the course of the right fall, five golden bars bisect the canvas. As Michelle Facos has rightly said of the picture, "Gallen-Kallela combined Naturalism and abstraction to convey the sound and texture of nature."[\[68\]](#) However, we can go a step farther. Gallen-Kallela departs from these beginnings to render a Symbolist vision not just of sound but of natural music. This becomes clear from studying the relevant passage from the *Kalevala* and the way Gallen-Kallela's composition took shape.

Rune 40 of the *Kalevala* tells of the river journey of the wise old man Väinämöinen, the master smith Ilmarinen, and the foolhardy youth Lemminkäinen to the land of Pohjola to the north to steal the magic mill known as the Sampo that guarantees its owners limitless prosperity.[\[69\]](#) At one point, they find the waters on which they are travelling going faster and faster until they realize that a waterfall is near. Lemminkäinen uses his magical powers to charm the waterfall and guarantee them safe passage. Although Lemminkäinen's efforts succeed in seeing them safely through the rocks, the travelers soon become stuck in mid-river on what turns out to be the back of a colossal pike. After a number of tries, Väinämöinen succeeds in killing the fish and makes of its bones the first kantele, a stringed instrument akin to the zither, that only he is able to play. The music he produces is legible and transfixing to all of nature:

As old Väinämöinen played
there was none in the forest
running on four legs
or hopping on foot
that did not come to listen
marvel at the merriment:
the squirrels reached from leafy
twig to leafy twig
and the stoats turned up
sat down on fences;
the elk skipped upon the heaths
and the lynxes made merry.[\[70\]](#)

Väinämöinen's music is an organic one, produced by nature's own materials and appreciable equally by animals and nature spirits as by humans.

Conservation science and Gallen-Kallela's sketches have made it possible to reconstruct the original composition of *Waterfall at Mäntykoski*, in which it was even more explicit that the natural music described by the *Kalevala* is the subject of the picture. In the first state of the picture, this was done by including a water nymph plucking the strings of the waterfall, her natural instrument, while a mortal man plays a pike-bone kantele on the rocks nearby.[\[71\]](#) As Michelle Facos has shown, this original conception makes clear the artist's debt to Ernst Josephson's influential *The Water Sprite*, another image of music's latency in nature.[\[72\]](#) In the end, Gallen-Kallela chose to embrace Symbolism by making this evocation of organically

produced music more abstract: he left only the five golden harp-strings that trace the path of the waterfall, suggesting that the sound of the water is organic music without any need for the intervention of man or spirits. While five-stringed kanteles are not uncommon, it is no coincidence that the five strings also mimic the empty lines of the staff of notated music. We are to understand that the inspiration composers require is ready and waiting in nature for those who, like Sibelius, go to the source as participants in the ethnomusicological effort that was at the heart of Karelianism. Moreover, the blank staff lines call out for inscription by the hypothetical attentive listener so the music found in the wilderness can be conveyed to the public and put to use by means of writing. This painting shows the extent to which Gallen-Kallela had, through his conversations with the members of the Symposium and with Sibelius in particular, come to conceive of music as key to the future of Finnish identity. Accordingly, seeking out a natural, national music became an artist-intellectual's most noble endeavor. As Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén has argued, "Through acoustic bridges Gallén established closer relationships with the world of rural Finns than any painter before him. . . . For Gallén language and songs were the glue that anchored the people to their land and history."^[73] In this archaizing effort centered upon music as a link between urban and rural, past and present, Gallen-Kallela participated in pan-European aesthetic movements with roots reaching as far back as Baudelaire and beyond.^[74] *Waterfall at Mäntykoski* distills Gallen-Kallela's direct engagement with folk songs and natural sounds through the values of Symbolism in the service of the cultural nationalism that the Symposium advocated.

In *Sibelius as the Composer of 'En Saga'* (fig. 1), Gallen-Kallela built upon his previous efforts to depict natural music in general by attempting to represent the sound or mood of a specific piece of music.^[75] Originally planned as a triptych "in which the linking theme is the interdependence of the arts," an inescapable link to Baudelaire's "Correspondences" from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, it was never completed, and what survives is a diptych consisting of a freely-handled portrait of the young Sibelius and a Symbolist landscape that we are to understand as a representation of Sibelius's *En Saga*.^[76] That tone poem, which Sibelius claimed was a response to the Icelandic epics, the *Eddas*, with all their tales of giants and great battles, was one of Sibelius's first great successes and one that would play an important role in the popular image of the composer, both at home and abroad.^[77] Olin Downes went so far as to say of *En Saga* in a radio address: "When I hear this music I avow a carnal desire to discard the soft fat ways of life; to set out in oilskins . . . to discover at least a desperate polar bear bent on conflict! . . . In these pages Sibelius is the last of the heroes."^[78] Perhaps the portrait of the composer, with its distant stare and air of determination, has an air of heroism about it. The pose was clearly taken from the same sitting that produced the image of Sibelius in *Symposium* and conveys a similar sense of being fixed on something out of the realm of ordinary experience. However, it is significant that Gallen-Kallela chose to represent the music not as a heroic or mythological vision—as another painting with a musical subject, *Kullervo Departs for Battle* (fig. 7), shows he was fully capable of doing—but rather as a visionary landscape. While this panel has been called "the most obvious reference to *japonisme* in his work," there is quite another possible precedent in Samuel Palmer's Shoreham landscapes, with their air of magic and whimsy (fig. 8).^[79] Snowflakes blanket a fanciful scene with indistinct animals running about and climbing a tree, heavy with outsize fruits. When considered in conjunction with *Waterfall at Mäntykoski*, this complex object reads as a claim that *En Saga* is natural music whose source and subject are the landscape. Nina Kokkinen has claimed that this painting depicts Sibelius in the role of "master-seer."^[80] I would argue that this is only partially correct. Instead, Gallen-Kallela depicts him in the role of master listener: as the supreme enlightened

ethnomusicological traveler who retrieved and translated the music latent in the landscape for an eager public. The painted landscape can be understood as an attempt to show the foundation of Sibelius's composition in the imaginative study of the physical landscape. The success of Gallen-Kallela's effort to represent the sound and mood of *En Saga* is debatable, but the work remains important evidence of Gallen-Kallela's fascination with Sibelius's music and the artist's belief that it derived from the landscape itself.



Fig. 7, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Kullervo Departs for Battle*, 1901. Tempera on canvas. Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. Photo: https://sparkystreet.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tumblr_mavslbnzlx1r0gzehol_1280.jpg
[\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 8, Samuel Palmer, *In a Shoreham Garden*, 1829. Oil on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Photo: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17825/in-a-shoreham-garden-watercolour-palmer-samuel/>
[\[larger image\]](#)

Richard Leppert has written, “Reference to music occurs in visual art not because musical sound exists but because it has meaning.”^[81] Akseli Gallen-Kallela's responses to the person of Sibelius and to his ideas about natural music from 1891 to 1894 follow this formulation, not merely illustrating the profession of his intellectual comrades in the Symposium circle but delving deeply into the ways music is a natural and universal language capable of being recovered by an enlightened audience. Although the composer and the painter did drift apart later in their careers, their combined efforts to construct a national aesthetic of landscape by means of music in the Symposium years brought them in contact with wider currents of the

period. Their revealing exchange across media is especially rich, but it is not unique, calling for further study of other instances of musical-artistic contact in fin-de-siècle Europe.

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Notes

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[1] George C. Schoolfield has given a good account of the vicissitudes of Finland’s political fortunes in the period. George C. Schoolfield, *Helsinki of the Czars: Finland’s Capital 1808–1918* (London: Camden House, 1996).

[2] On *Nuori Suomi*, see Riitta Kontinen, *Sammon Takojat: Nuoren Suomen taiteilijat ja suomalaisuuden kuvot* [Forgers of the Sampo: Artists of the Young Finns and pictures of Finnishness] (Helsinki: Otava, 2001).

[3] For a recent Symbolist reading of Gallen-Kallela, see Nina Kokkinen, “The Artist as Initiated Master: Themes of Fin-de Siècle Occulture in the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela,” in *Fill Your Soul!: Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, ed. Tuija Wahlroos (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011), 46–59. For a teleological account of Sibelius’s move from musical realism to abstraction in these years, see Veikko Helasvuo, *Sibelius and the Music of Finland*, trans. Paul Sjöblom (Helsinki: Otava, 1952).

[4] W. J. T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

[5] The recent Gallen-Kallela exhibition that included stops in Paris and Düsseldorf was an important step in addressing this posthumous decline in international reputation, and an essay in the accompanying catalogue is the best recent study of his international profile during his lifetime. See Magdalena M. Moeller, “Gallen-Kallela, affinités allemandes,” in *Akseli Gallen-Kallela: Une passion finlandaise*, ed. Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén and others, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 162–71. In contrast to the relative obscurity of Gallen-Kallela today, the fact that the British designers of what is now the most popular music notation software in the world chose Sibelius’s name for their product shows how canonical he has become in the English-speaking world.

[6] Letter (no date given) quoted in editor’s note: *Architectural Association Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (July/September, 1975): 2.

[7] *Surusoitto* (Funeral Music), Op. 111b, 1932. See Daniel Grimley, “The Tone Poems: Genre, Landscape and Structural Perspective,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius*, ed. Daniel Grimley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 95–116. Grimley’s writings on Nielsen have also been novel in drawing comparisons between specific paintings and the structure of specific pieces of music. See *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011). I

have written elsewhere of Sibelius's synaesthesia and the mechanics of his musical response to specific paintings by Gallen-Kallela. See William L. Coleman, "The 'Representation' of Paintings in Music," in *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. Tim Shephard and Anne Leonard (London: Routledge, 2013), 137–44.

[8] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius*, trans. Robert Layton, vol. 2, 1904–1914 (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 163. The artist was born Axel Gallén and adopted the current Fennicized and pseudo-aristocratic double-barreled surname in 1907. Sibelius and other correspondents use a variety of spellings that I have maintained in quotations.

[9] Helasvuo, *Sibelius and the Music of Finland*, 18.

[10] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's Problem—Kullervo's Story," in *Sibelius Studies*, ed. Timothy Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 68.

[11] Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, Especially That of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1979), 229, 237.

[12] Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, "Inspiration from the Kalevala: Style and Complete Work of Art," in *The Kalevala in Images: 160 Years of Finnish Art Inspired by the Kalevala*, ed. Riitta Ojanperä and Satu Itkonen, exh. cat. (Helsinki: Ateneum Art Museum, 2009), 71.

[13] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius*, vol. 3, 1914–1957 (1997), 54.

[14] Sibelius in his diary, April 24, 1915. *Ibid.*, 53.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*, 54.

[17] No date given. *Ibid.* Sibelius's birthday message to Gallen-Kallela is transcribed on page 53 of the same source.

[18] No date given. *Ibid.*, 55.

[19] While period audiences received the *Kalevala* as a rediscovered epic, it is important to keep in mind that it verges in its construction on the "fakelore" of Ossian. In his "compilation," Lönnrot wrote lengthy sections of his own to bind together found folksongs as a cohesive narrative. See Alan Dundes, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore: A Reconsideration of Ossian, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the *Kalevala*, and Paul Bunyan," *Journal of Folklore Research* 22, no. 1 (April 1985): 5–18.

[20] Juhana G. Linsén, Chairman of the Finnish Literature Society, quoted in William A. Wilson, *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 41. The Finnish Literature Society funded Lönnrot's research, and he published under their auspices, so Linsén's comments are far from impartial.

[21] Wilson, *Folklore and Nationalism*, ix; and W. Edson Richmond, "The Study of Folklore in Finland," *The Journal of American Folklore* 74, no. 294 (October-December, 1961): 325.

[22] Sibelius to Aino, December 26, 1890. Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius*, vol. 1, 1865–1905 (1976), 76.

[23] Gallen-Kallela in his sketchbook, 1899. Onni Okkonen, *Akseli Gallen-Kallela Kalevalataidetta* (Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1935), 5. Translated in Adriaan van der Hoeven, "Form and Identity: The *Kalevala* Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela," in *Akseli Gallen-Kallela: The Spirit of Finland*, ed. David Jackson and Patty Wageman, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Groninger Museum, 2006), 45.

[24] Glenda Dawn Goss, *Jean Sibelius and Olin Downes: Music, Friendship, Criticism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 10.

[25] Ville Lukkarinen "Art and National Identity: Finland at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Northern Stars and Southern Lights: The Golden Age of Finnish Art, 1870–1920*, ed. Adriaan Waiboer, exh. cat. (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2008), 13. For an account of the experience of that first summer in Karelia by Eva Sparre, wife of the Swedish painter Louis Sparre who visited Gallen-Kallela there, see Roald Nasgaard, *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 46.

[26] Members of the movement published in the *Nuori Suomi* newspaper *Päivälehti* a sort of manifesto for Karelianism shortly after Gallen-Kallela's influential summer in Karelia. See Glenda Dawn Goss "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius: The Intellectual Genesis of the 'Kullervo' Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 27, no. 1 (Summer 2003): 58.

[27] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:121. As a result of this trip, Sibelius came to be thought of as an expert in folk song and was sent songs collected by other folklorists to correct their musical notation for some time afterward. See *ibid.*, 1:164.

- [28] Tina Ramnarine's discussion of this difficulty is especially perceptive. Tina Ramnarine, *Ilmatar's Inspirations: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Changing Soundscapes of Finnish Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.
- [29] For the claim that *Kullervo* reflects the traditional meter of *Kalevala* performance, see Leo Normet "The *Kalevala* as Reflected in the Symphonies of Sibelius," in *Sibelius Forum: Proceedings from the Second International Jean Sibelius Conference*, ed. Veijo Murtomäki (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 1998).
- [30] See Jouko Tolonen, "Jean Sibeliusken koeluento ja molli-pentakordin soinnutus" in *Juhlakirja Erik Tawaststjernalle*, ed. Erkki Salmenhaara (Keuruu: Otava, 1976), 79–92.
- [31] Torsten Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 267–68. This use of landscape as history calls to mind an example from another young country: Albert Bierstadt's repeated representations of giant sequoia trees in California in the mid-nineteenth century. He ruminated that they had been alive at the time of Jesus and thus offered a precious link to the Christian past. See Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825–1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- [32] Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Boken om Gallen-Kallela* (Helsinki: H. Schildt, 1947), 125. Translated in Nasgaard, *Mystic North*, 57.
- [33] The translation is mine. Janne Gallen-Kallela Sirén, "Akseli Gallen-Kallela et l'invention de la tradition," in *Lumière du Monde, Lumière du Ciel*, ed. Sophie Gréle (Paris: Paris-Musées, 1998), 33.
- [34] Bengt de Törne, *Sibelius: A Close Up* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1937), 97.
- [35] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius*, 2:145.
- [36] Ivan Lipaev, account of a 1906 meeting with Sibelius at Ainola published in *Muzyka*. Translated in Eero Tarasti, "Sibelius and Europe," in *Sibelius Forum: Proceedings from the Second International Jean Sibelius Conference*, ed. Veijo Murtomäki (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 1998), 44.
- [37] Downes to Sibelius from Salzburg, August 17, 1927. Quoted in Goss, *Jean Sibelius and Olin Downes*, 183–84.
- [38] Theodor Adorno, "Törne, B. de: *Sibelius: A Close Up*," *Sietschrift für Sozialforschung* 7 (1938), 460–63. Reprinted with title "Glosse über Sibelius" in Theodor Adorno, *Impromptus: Zweite Folge neu gedruckter musikalischer Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968), 88–92. Selections translated in editors' preface to *Sibelius Studies*, ed. Timothy Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xii-xiii.
- [39] See Daniel Grimley, "Landscape and Structural Perspective in *Nightride and Sunrise*" in *Sibelius Forum II: Proceedings from the Third International Jean Sibelius Conference*, ed. Matti Huttunen, Kari Kilpeläinen and Veijo Murtomäki (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 2003), 248–58.
- [40] Moeller, "Gallen-Kallela, affinités allemandes," 164.
- [41] These paintings have been known by a variety of titles, including *Probleemi* and *Kajustafan*. *Symposion* is the most widely accepted for both and is useful in that it positions the controversial first version as a stage in the process that ended with the second, rather than a standalone work.
- [42] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:137–39. Järnefelt was also Sibelius's brother-in-law. Kajanus's *Aino* symphony was one of the key motivating factors behind Sibelius's embrace of *Kalevala* subjects but is little known today.
- [43] Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880–1910*, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1982), 118.
- [44] The best discussion of this recurrent figure in Gallen-Kallela's work is Minna Turtiainen, "We could amuse ourselves by teaching the Symbolists Symbolism': The Phases of a Sphinx in the Correspondence of Axel Gallén and the Author Adolf Paul," in *Fill Your Soul!: Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, ed. Tuija Wahlroos (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011), 71–92.
- [45] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:162; and John Boulton Smith, *The Golden Age of Finnish Art: Art Nouveau and the National Spirit* (Helsinki: Otava, 1976), 106. In addition to the difficulty with the house, there is evidence that *Symposion* played a negative role in the reception of Sibelius's music. The Swedish composer and critic Wilhelm Peterson-Berger wrote that Sibelius's first symphony caused one to yearn for "a fresh wholesome and powerful personality with the bloom of health on his cheeks and a liveliness about the eyes instead of all this romantic nocturnal pallor, the blazed eyes of the dreamer-mystic and the bogus philosophical poses," clearly a reference to the portrayal of Sibelius in Gallen-Kallela's painting. Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius*, 1:291–92.

- [46] Moeller, "Gallen-Kallela, affinités allemandes," 164.
- [47] Quoted in Kirsi Kaisla, "Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Germany," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 63, nos. 3-4 (1994), 147-48.
- [48] For more on this complex painting, see Frances Huemer, *Rubens and the Roman Circle: Studies of the First Decade* (New York: Garland, 1996).
- [49] Translated in Turtiainen, "Phases of a Sphinx," 82.
- [50] Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, 14.
- [51] Markku Valkonen, *Finnish Art over the Centuries* (Helsinki: Otava, 1992), 69.
- [52] Nasgaard, *Mystic North*, 46. For a recent discussion of *The Aino Myth* and its reception, see Fabienne Chevallier, "Style national et quête du primitif," in Gallen-Kallela-Sirén and others, *Une passion finlandaise*, 172-81.
- [53] Raakel Kallio, "Aesthetics and Emotions," in *Surface and Depth: Early Modernism in Finland*, ed. Riitta Ojanperä and Timo Huusko, trans. Michael Garner, exh. cat. (Helsinki: Ateneum Museum, 2001), 14.
- [54] Goss, *Jean Sibelius and Olin Downes*, 11.
- [55] Kokkinen, "Artist as Initiated Master," 46, 51.
- [56] Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.
- [57] Varnedoe suggests that there is a connection between the transition from Realism to Symbolism and a rightward political turn. Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, 15.
- [58] Knut Berg, "Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century" in *Dreams of a Summer Night: Scandinavian Painting at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Leena Ahtola-Moorehouse, Carl Tomas Edam, and Birgitta Schreiber, exh. cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1986), 44.
- [59] Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape*, 262.
- [60] Janne Gallen-Kallela Sirén, "Territorializing Nature: Landscape Painting and the Rise of Nordic Nationalism," in *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting, 1840-1910*, ed. Leena Ahtola-Moorehouse, Frode Ernst Haverkamp, and Torsten Gunnarsson, exh. cat. (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 220.
- [61] On Gallen-Kallela's relationship with the art of Puvis de Chavannes, see Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, "Reflections on the Past and the Future: Finnish Art at the Turn of the 20th Century," in *Towards a Science of Art History: J. J. Tikkanen and Art Historical Scholarship in Europe*, ed. Johanna Vakkari (Sastamala: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, 2009), 45-55.
- [62] Translated in Berg, "Nordic Art," 47.
- [63] James Hepokoski, "Sibelius," in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 418.
- [64] No specific date given. Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:76.
- [65] Letter to the poet J. H. Erkkö asking for help with the libretto the composer himself had written for a proposed *Kalevala* opera called *The Building of the Boat*, early July, 1893. Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:141. This passage contrasts sharply with Sibelius's thinking about music later in his career, when he proclaimed allegiance to "pure music" and refused even to title his compositions. Like Gallen-Kallela, Sibelius was no doctrinaire follower of aesthetic fashions and is difficult to assign to any single movement. See Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 3:153-54.
- [66] Sibelius to Aino, January 7, 1891. Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:87.
- [67] Torsten Gunnarsson "A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910," in Ahtola-Moorehouse, Haverkamp, and Gunnarsson, *Mirror of Nature*, 34.
- [68] Facos, *Symbolism*, 161.
- [69] Elias Lönnrot hypothesized that Pohjola was Lapland. This linking of myth to present day political reality pervades the *Kalevala*. Jouko Hautala, *Finnish Folklore Research, 1828-1918* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1969), 37.
- [70] Elias Lönnrot, *The Kalevala*, trans. and ed. Keith Bosley (New York: Oxford World's Classics, 2009), 31.31-42, 538-39. References are to book, line, and page in this edition.
- [71] Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén's valuable photographic rendering of this original composition can be found reproduced in Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, "Axel Gallén and the Art of Language: To Paint the Unpaintable," in *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting, 1870-1910*, ed. Peter Larsen, trans. W. Glyn Jones (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2000), 219.
- [72] Michelle Facos, "A Controversy in Late Nineteenth Century Painting: Ernst Josephson's *The Water Sprite*," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 56, no. 1 (1993): 77.

- [73] Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, “Art of Language,” 216.
- [74] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis & de Broise, 1857).
- [75] On the important connections between this painting and contemporary color theory, see Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, “Colour Asceticism and Synthetist Colour: Colour Concepts in Turn-of-the-20th-Century Finnish and European Art” (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2012), 262–64.
- [76] Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape*, 265.
- [77] Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius* 1:130.
- [78] Goss, *Jean Sibelius and Olin Downes*, 105.
- [79] Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape*, 265.
- [80] Kokkinen, “Artist as Initiated Master,” 54.
- [81] Richard Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Social-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Sibelius as the Composer of 'En Saga'*, 1894. Watercolor on paper. Ainola Foundation, Jarvenpää. Photo: http://www.ateneum.fi/sites/ateneum.fi/files/styles/Olandscape_full/public/images/page/gallery/gallen_kallela_akseli_satu_2.jpg [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Symposium*, 1894. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: <http://slash-paris.com/en/evenements/akseli-gallen-kallela-1865-1931> [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Symposium* (sketch), 1894. Oil on canvas. Serlachius Museot, Mänttä. Photo: <http://www.sibelius.fi/english/kuvituskuvat/080803/symposium.jpg> [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Peter Paul Rubens, *The Four Philosophers*, ca. 1611–12. Oil on canvas. Galleria Palatina, Pitti Palace, Florence. Photo: http://www.wga.hu/html_m/r/rubens/41portra/09philos.html [\[return to text\]](#)

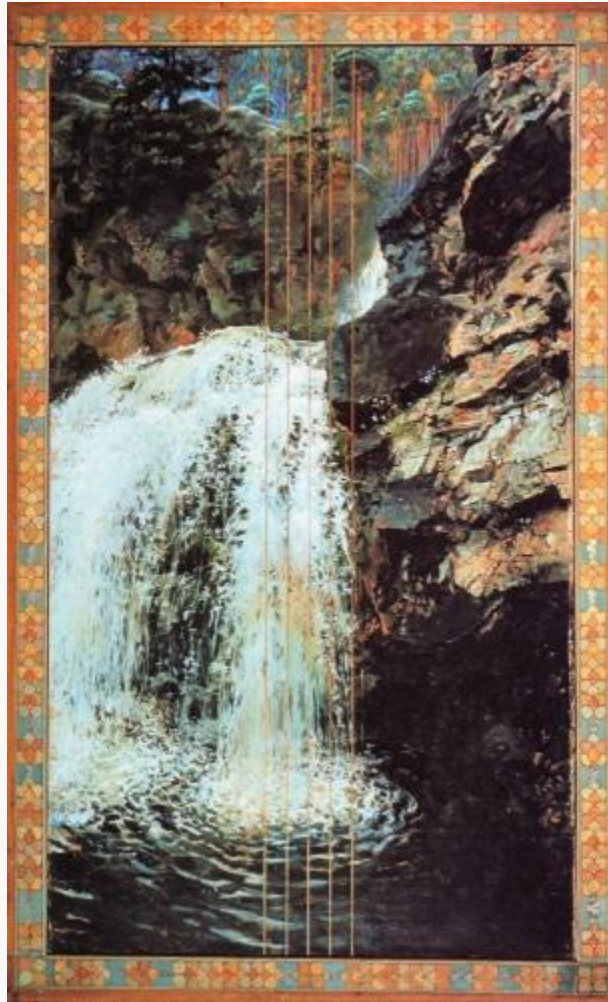


Fig. 5, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Waterfall at Mäntykoski*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. Photo: <http://paintingdb.com/view/4210/> [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *The Aino Myth* (second version), 1891. Oil on canvas. Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. Photo: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gallen_Kallela_The_Aino_Triptych.jpg
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Fig. 7, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Kullervo Departs for Battle*, 1901. Tempera on canvas. Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. Photo: https://sparkystreet.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tumblr_mavslbnzlxlr0gzehol_1280.jpg [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Samuel Palmer, *In a Shoreham Garden*, 1829. Oil on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
Photo: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17825/in-a-shoreham-garden-watercolour-palmer-samuel/>
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