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Hauntology and Heterogeneity: “Western” Criticism’s Distortions of Institutional Change

Hauntologija ir heterogeniškumas:

institucinių pokyčių iškraipymai vakarų kritikoje

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Abstract

The (formerly) “Western” critical gaze on contemporary Baltic art musics has often been colored by problematic perspectives. Many writers eagerly swallowed proffered narratives of a homogeneous, a-modern, spiritual and/or folkish “Baltic” aesthetic and worldview (epitomized by figures like Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis, and Jaan Kaplinski)—at times interpreting popular “spiritual minimalist” leanings as reflective of some inherent quality or character of “the region.” This tendency may not have altogether dissipated, but the dust has settled somewhat (cf. Kevin Platt’s 2007 assertion that “the post-Soviet is over”), and it is possible to view critical sensationalism through a more historical lens. A perceptible correlation exists between the notably consistent outward-facing aesthetic countenance of more northern, particularly Estonian, art music and the comparatively more unified, rapid, single-message institutional transitions, accompanied in the northern country by drastic socioeconomic reforms and the commissioning of “Brand Estonia.” This contrasts instructively with greater institutional heterogeneity and relative slowness of change in Lithuania and, correspondingly, comparatively less unified aesthetic discourses, at least on the most broadly visible level. We can view this disjuncture not in terms of what peculiar quality the art in question *has*, which seems to have been a common essentialist fallacy (or fantasy) in much English-language scholarship, but in terms of what has apparently been marginalized—the “hauntology” of modernism, dissonance, angularity, motor rhythms, urbanity, and red. This paper contrasts hauntology and heterogeneity as symptoms of differentiated rates of institutional change that have been distorted in Western discourse through an erroneous essentialist lens.

Keywords: criticism, discourse, journalism, marketing, Brand Estonia, modernism, Baltic, post-Soviet, essentialism, hauntology.

Anotacija

Anksčiau vadinamajam „vakarų“ kritikų žvilgsniui į šiuolaikinę Baltijos šalių akademinę muziką būdingi tam tikri probleminiai aspektai. Dauguma autorių uoliai pasigavo pasiūlytą naratyvą apie vienalytę, amodernią, dvasingą ir (arba) liaudišką „baltišką“ estetiką ir pasaulėžiūrą (kurią įkūnija Arvo Pärto, Veljo Tormiso ir Jaano Kaplinskio kūryba), kartkartėmis interpretuodami populiarią „dvasingo minimalizmo“ kryptį kaip tam tikrų šiame „regione“ užkoduotų ypatybių atspindį. Nors ši tendencija visiškai neišnyko, ji tam tikra prasme laikoma atgyvena (pavyzdžiui, 2007 m. paskelbė Kevinas Platto teiginys, kad „posovietinė era baigėsi“), o į kritikos sensacionalizmą dabar galima pažvelgti labiau istoriškai. Egzistuoja ryšys tarp itin vientiso, į išorę orientuoto labiau šiaurietiškos, ypač estiškos, akademinės muzikos estetinio vaizdo ir santykinai labiau unifikuotų, sparčių, nekomplikuotų institucinių pokyčių, kurie šioje šiaurės valstybėje vyksta kartu su radikaliomis socioekonominėmis reformomis ir šalies tapatybės „Brand Estonia“ kūrimu. Tai iškalbingai kontrastuoja su didesniu instituciniu nevienalytiškumu ir gana lėtai vykstančiomis permainingomis Lietuvoje ir atitinkamai – su mažiau unifikuotais estetiniais diskursais, bent jau žvelgiant iš plačiausios perspektyvos. Šią skirtį galima sieti ne su aptariamam menui *būdingu* specifiskumu, tą darė daugelis angliškai kalbančių mokslininkų, ir tai yra esencialistinio mąstymo klaida (arba fantazija), o su tuo, kas iš pažiūros buvo marginalizuota – modernizmo, disonanso, kampuotumo, motorinio ritmo, urbaniškumo ir raudonumo „hauntologija“. Šiame straipsnyje priešinami skirtingu tempu vykstančius institucinius pokyčius atspindintys hauntologijos ir heterogeniškumo reiškiniai, kurių sampratą vakarų diskurse iškreipė klaidingas esencialistinis požiūris.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kritika, diskursas, žurnalistika, rinkodara, Estijos prekės ženklas, modernizmas, Baltijos kraštai, posovietinis, fundamentalizmas, hauntologija.

Introduction

Certain popular, internationally visible Baltic art music styles—often choral genres—show some distinctive recurring trends, at least on the level of discourse. This article will discuss how these associative trends may relate to a marketing campaign regarding the outward-facing image of Estonia specifically; what they appear characteristically to encompass or exclude; and how this could be related to

wider matters of representation and political, economic, and institutional change.

As the most-performed living art-music composer in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 (Tambur 2019) most readers will be familiar with Arvo Pärt. Furthermore—as will be supported in more detail later—familiarity with Pärt’s musical work may be accompanied by a strong tacit awareness of the aesthetics, imagery, rhetoric, associations, and allusions that tend to surround this composer in popular

discourse. The whole conceptual package accompanying Pärt is quite vivid and recognizable—partly, of course, owing to his considerable commercial success. The following table (Table 1) contains examples of recurring tropes and imagery as they appear in a number of articles about and reviews of Pärt’s music from various English-language media outlets between 1989 and 2017. In addition, the second table shows examples taken from similar writings (those articles with listed dates range from 2000–2018) on the Estonian composer Veljo Tormis (1930–2017), Latvian composers Peteris Vasks (b. 1946) and Peteris Plakidis (1947–2017), and a number of CDs and concerts advertising compilations of contemporary “Baltic” classical music (mostly choral) by various artists.

Table 1. Examples of recurring tropes and imagery of Pärt’s music from English-language media outlets between 1989 and 2017

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
<i>New York Times</i> (Kozin 1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shimmeringly mystical, devotional quality • [a] mystical enigma
<i>Gramophone</i> (Cowan 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marked lack of musical “activity” • a few simple but beautiful ideas • extreme simplicity • deceptively uncomplicated • hangs suspended • subtle • sustained intensity that aids concentration • the voice of internal exile, self-communing and highly personal but wholly accessible
<i>Guardian</i> (Wigley 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • music that conjures an instant magic • plangent • repeated stark tones • sparse • severe if ineffably beautiful music • pure, spiritually inflected work • stirring resonances • yearning delicacy
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> (Swed 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mystical aura • meditative music • a man not of this world • otherworldly • haunting beauty
<i>New York Times</i> (Schweitzer 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mournful, introspective lament • mystical • slow, introspective style • solemn, shimmering haze • delicate chimes • serenity • meditative moods • glacial pace • seething tension • hauntingly beautiful

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
<i>New York Times</i> (Lubow 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a whiff of church incense • resonate profoundly • harmonic stillness • unbelievable calm and brilliance • seeming simplicity • total meditative state • like raindrops on a windshield • the silence that is being broken is as palpable as the music being played • a web of sustained notes that shimmer and glisten
<i>Gramophone</i> (Cowan 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • austere meditative • weeping cadences • seemingly timeless • haunting bass drone • infinitely strange • gentle • deep spiritual engagement
<i>Telegraph</i> (Hewett 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sublime • otherworldly • radiantly euphonious • quiet and meditative • primal simplicities • strange new light • patience, naivety and indifference to public scorn • “one is capable of doing anything, if one only listens attentively enough.” (Pärt quote) • put his faith in the simple truths his ear was telling him • radiant, harmonious intervals • sturdy simplicities • ancient musical devices • mystery • new sort of truth
<i>Limelight</i> (May 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vertiginous excitement • spiraling serenity • haunting • inexorably building sostenuto lines • the Estonian wizard • towering and slightly ursine [conductor Tõnu Kaljuste] • simplicity is...captivating • elegiac • overenthusiastic and distracting application of artificial snow
<i>NPR Classical</i> (Huizenga 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow, pure, simple, yet powerfully focused • musical combination of awe and silence • austere

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
<i>365Bristol.com</i> (Caddick and Anderson 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • radical, reductive, introspective, impassioned and intensely personal • haunting dissonance • anguished intensity • flickering with dreamy oscillations • eventually, quietly, hauntingly fad[ing] away into silence • totally hypnotic, tranquil, dreamily endless aural will o' the wisp • gently repeated • sublime, heart-meltingly lilting lullaby • delicate, tender intimacy and quiet yearning • intense, magnetic, hypnotic, introspective, prayerful, profound, compelling, luminous, meditative: these are all words that could easily be used to describe Arvo Pärt's wholly unique musical soundscape
<i>Classic FM</i> (Brunning 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique, atmospheric and compelling • ancient sounds • the world of monasteries • strikingly minimalist • hauntingly simple • gentle • slow-moving • magic • stillness • almost divine • state of infinity • beautifully transcendent • still and lyrical • full of emotion • slow, exquisite musical meditation • perfectly peaceful
<i>Financial Times</i> (Nepil 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flaccid • simplistic • soothing sonorities struggle to cast a spell • musical spiritualism
<i>Telegraph</i> (Brown 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • profound, spiritual music • indefinable power
<i>Guardian</i> (Smith 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mystical minimalism • immense stillness • mesmeric, free-floating
<i>Guardian</i> (Molleson 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • light-filled music • most popular choice [of music for people who are dying]

Table 2. Examples from the writings on Veljo Tormis, Peteris Vasks and Peteris Plakidis

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
<i>ClassicalNet</i> (Tuttle 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ancient power • paradoxically contemporary • shamanistic rain-dance • natural, non-operatic quality • fresh and challenging like a stiff Baltic breeze • strikingly beautiful
<i>Gramophone</i> (Fanning 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sung drones propel us back through the centuries to a time when folk and sacred music could be imagined growing from the same stem • attractive • a rich tradition, euphonious and for the most part proudly rooted in national folk idioms
<i>Guardian</i> (Service 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bland invention • dispiriting poverty of musical imagination
<i>Gramophone</i> (Fanning 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft but evocative choral breezes from the East • authentic performances • it's not all slush • the gift of spinning long threads of musical thought from apparently unpromising material • coming rather too close to Pärt's patent tintinnabuli idiom for comfort • doubts are niggling as to whether the first five movements[...] [are] ever going to do anything original • superb gift for sustaining a long floating line • much of this work is very soft-centred
<i>Classics Today</i> (Vernier 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad umbrella of "tonalism" • repetitive elements • nothing particularly innovative here • voices spend lots of time whispering, panting, groaning and swooping • minimalist mannerisms • impressive for its beautiful unison and close interval singing, and for its powerful ending (that should have come about two minutes sooner) • listeners interested in exploring beyond the choral music world in which most of us mortals reside and perform will be at least enlightened if not compelled to hear more
<i>Gramophone</i> (Rickards 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considerable aural imagination (albeit with a debt to Bartók) • postmodern tonal idiom

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
ECM Reviews (Tormis 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ EPC's restraint is in full flower ♦ reverence ♦ uncanny ability to soak us in a feeling ♦ shamanic drum and tense use of silence ♦ peers into the heart of elemental forces and further into the human condition ♦ proves the power of song to be a guiding light through adversity ♦ ethereal ♦ gentle enough to break apart from a sigh ♦ appeal to nature as a source of art ♦ whistling winds ♦ monastic solemnity
<i>Hyperion</i> (Gough 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ strong affinity with the meditative power of nature ♦ distinct character of Latvian folk music
<i>Telegraph</i> (Allison 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ too much easy listening ♦ theme of northern light ♦ Baltic connection ♦ single, meditative arc ♦ haunting lines ♦ repeated incantations ♦ mood of increasing fervour
<i>Guardian</i> (Reinvere 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ free in narrative fantasy ♦ incorporating [...] sounds of village life or birdsong ♦ sparse in development ♦ "I don't use folk melody – it is folk melody that uses me" (quoting Tormis) ♦ drew on [the] power [of singing] to express [...] forest pantheism
<i>Planet Hugill</i> (Hugill 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ elegiac, folk-like ♦ beautifully shaped with a sense of a still, quiet centre ♦ focused, serious and intent ♦ folk-ish melodic lines ♦ meditative ♦ Spare, short and intense ♦ hanging in mid-air ♦ completely magical ♦ The four songs didn't so much tell a story as each evoked a particular mood ♦ flowing, long-breathed ♦ melancholy ♦ straightforward, though beautifully constructed
<i>Tocatta Classics</i> (nd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ rooted in the melodic character of Latvian folk music ♦ remarkable strength and beauty ♦ remarkable and moving ♦ shares some points of contact with the 'Holy Mystics' among other Baltic composers, such as Arvo Pärt and Peteris Vasks

Publication, date	Relevant quotes
<i>Tocatta Classics</i> (nd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ unique ♦ quasi-minimalist rhythmic vigour of Estonian runic singing ♦ tingling with excitement, energy, and power
<i>MusicWebInternational</i> (Arloff nd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ music that is "off the beaten path" ♦ [performer] writes that all four composers on his disc "share a fundamental conviction that music has the power to transcend suffering and heal the human spirit" ♦ attractive ♦ a wonderful and ethereally beautiful work that expresses feelings of nostalgia and loss in the most unmistakable way ♦ incredibly powerful ♦ a luminosity that shines within the music ♦ made my hair stand on end with its hugely effective evocation of those feelings he seeks to describe ♦ quietness ♦ echoes of folk music which further enhance the feeling of timelessness ♦ the most satisfyingly relaxing work I have heard in a long time

In many positive and important ways, it is possible to map some of these and other related ideas onto some significant visible currents of twentieth-century literary and philosophical discourses of Estonian cultural identity. Drawing on the work and ideas of Jaan Kaplinski (Salumets 2015/2006; Daitz 2004), Maire Jaanus (2006), Veljo Tormis (2007; Daitz 2004), Mikko Sarv (n.d.), Marek Tamm, and Kalevi Kull (2016), a broad set of relevant themes can be extrapolated. Those familiar with common treatments of musical time in so-called "spiritual minimalist" music may recognize intersections between this list and the interpretive discourses that often tend to accompany works of this sort. In short, and to simplify a diverse and nuanced body of literature, it is possible to see recurring references to:

- ritual (whether "folk or religious")
- a sense of ancientness or "timelessness" (whether in a "folk" or Orthodox religious interpretation)
- a sense of diminished authorship and intuition or "mediation"; a recognition of the primacy of nature (or of God—just not of humans).
- the idea that *space* takes priority over *time*; postmodern paradigms of time and history as circular, repetitive or goalless.

For a more detailed example, the conceptual imbrications between the work of composer Veljo Tormis and poet Jaan Kaplinski can provide an illustrative focus. An

intersection between constructions of "Baltic" (more specifically, Finno-Ugric) identity in a more abstract sense and parallels in a composer's theories about their own practice can be seen in the juxtaposition of Tormis's words about his music¹ with Kaplinski's expression of certain idealized ways of being (2002), as extrapolated by Thomas Salumets (2014). This "quilting point" is a helpful way to expand on the present discussion due to the vividness of Kaplinski's poetic imagery. Starting from these apparently entirely sincere and meaningful articulations of twentieth-century pro-independence Estonian identity discourse, we can trace their reverberations across other conceptually relevant areas, with varying degrees of ambivalence.

Responding to the perceived threats of "intra-European postcolonialism" and the "rush to join the West," as well as historical occupations, Soviet erasure and Russification, Estonian poet Jaan Kaplinski conceived of an idealized "Finno-Ugric mode of seeing" (2006). The group of concepts which he saw as aligned with this mode includes: artlessness; the value of minimal intervention and "unforced flourishing"; "blandness"; a lack of concern for strict differentiation or exactitude; ritualistic, monotonous repetition, as opposed to innovation and progress; and respect for the balance of nature (Salumets 2014). Kaplinski's poetry paints fond portraits of the unforced and the everyday:

The snow's melting. The water's dripping.
 The wind's blowing (gently).
 The boughs are swaying. There's a fire in the stove.
 The radiators are warm.
 Anu is doing exercises on the piano.
 Ott and Tamber are making a snowman.
 Maarja is preparing a lunch.
 The wooden horse is looking in from the window.
 I am looking out of the window.
 I am writing a poem.
 I am writing that today is Sunday.
 That the snow's melting. That the water's dripping.
 That the wind's blowing, etc., etc. (Kaplinski, accessed online, nd.)

According to Salumets, the idea of "unforced flourishing":

... conceives of two otherwise separate and contradictory processes as one: it conveys engagement and attentiveness, but our involvement is directed towards bringing to fruition what happens of its own accord. Expressing a complex matter all too simply, one might say that Kaplinski's intention is to "invent nothing" and thus "receive everything", to borrow Gerhard Richter's words about his kindred existential perspective and sense of diminished authorship. (Salumets 2014: 26)

Coined by Salumets, the term reflects Kaplinski's "challenge to firmly entrenched and reified core conceptions," most notably the assumption "that human fulfilment

depends predominantly on assertive, goal-bound initiative" (Ibid.). He goes on to explain that, "built on a distinctly different foundation, 'unforced flourishing' calls for diminished intervention in favor of an engaged responsiveness without agenda" (Ibid.). Emphasizing the poet's "sense of 'artlessness' as a desired aesthetic effect," Salumets highlights a "deep and unqualified identification with the nonhuman world" as the "very richest" manifestation of unforced flourishing in his thought (Ibid.). Kaplinski believed in the value of minimal intervention and the relative insignificance of human goals. In conjunction with the rejection of anthropocentrism and a belief in self-organizing systems redolent of a brand of Cageian anarchism, this ontology is positioned as a discursive other to rationality in the Weberian *zweckrational* sense—rationality defined as a highly or maximally efficient relationship between input and output, deliberate cause and intended effect, decisive action and desired outcome (Petrov 2015: 97; an outlook we could characterize as "modernist," when defined as being in a unity of opposition to postmodernism). Salumets's pithy paraphrase of the overarching sentiment—"don't touch that rock, Sisyphus" (Salumets 2014: 25)—unfolds more subtly in this "biophilic" extract from Kaplinski's *Through the Forest* (1996), which follows the heading:

I have no principles.
 in my depths are no thoughts.
 in the depths is clear water that flows
 in the dimness over stones, a few shells, or caddis fly,
 minnows
 and roach,
 water-moss and speedwells
 that tremble in the current
 like the strings of an instrument, only unheard.
 At the bottom of stream are no thoughts,
 only flowing, only the current's
 categorical imperative
 which bends and bows with it
 the mosses and speedwells, the fish and caddis flies,
 teaching some to cling to the stones on the bottom,
 others to the flowing water itself,
 which is called swimming. (1996; Salumets 2014: 25)

Kaplinski's worldview also colors his interpretation of the significance of ancient Estonian regilaul folk song. Salumets says that:

... to capture the essence of its unique appeal for Kaplinski [...] means to recognize and welcome the regi song's astonishing inartistic modality, a remarkable "blandness" (Salumets 2014: 158).

The poet's recognition of a positive valence of ambiguity (the inherent value of the sense that "an a" is not "an a" but is merely "an a-like thing"; Salumets 2006: 443) in the characteristic parallelisms of regilaul verse implicitly suggests

a correspondingly diminished significance for language, taxonomy, classification, symbols, and systems designed to maximize efficient action. There is more to say about regilaul in particular, and about the connections that may be drawn between the ways it is frequently described in relation to time and some of the most prominent discourses of minimalist music, both spiritual and otherwise.

Many aspects of Kaplinski's characterizations of regilaul are conceptually mirrored in other cultural and historiographical framings of the runic song. Observations by Tormis and others also suggest a discursive opposition to anthropocentric agency and rationalism. Regarding his own relationship with the folk songs, Tormis said "I am more a mediator than composer or arranger," and that "it is not I that makes use of folk music, it is folk music that makes use of me" (Daitz 2004: 56). Mikko Sarv has also identified a conviction among some regilaul singers that the songs represent "the free flow of nature through the human spirit" (Sarv n.d.). His advice for students hoping to learn to sing them is as follows:

You cannot learn regilaul tunes from a songsheet—you need to look for them among what they call willow notes. As singer Toomas Kõömel explained in 1913 to folksong researchers visiting Rannu village, Viru-Nigula parish: "These old songs didn't have no proper tune to them. They were sung just like that—to willow notes." When asked "what does that mean?," his answer was: "Well, this means that each singer has their own tunes and sings to them..." You can learn the willow notes when you go to a tree, stone, river or spring, on your own and without talking to anyone, and ask them to teach you a tune. If you know how to be very quiet, and open your heart, then a tune will start singing within you. Sing along to it and give your thanks to the place where you found the tune. (Sarv n.d.)

In the 2007 lecture "Some Problems With That Regilaul," Tormis laid out fourteen points for consideration. Here are two of the most salient ones for the discussion in hand:

- 9) The regilaul is a ritual song and not a means of communication.
- 10) The regilaul is supra-individual culture, the cultural atmosphere that stretches out above us like the sky. One should not aim for setting a model based on the regilaul as performed by a particular singer, and linking it with the so-called "great" singers. (Tormis 2007)

Salumets relates Estonian folklorist Jakob Hurt's 1902 characterization of regilaul as like the "ancient tendrils" of a "primeval forest, which refuse to be transformed into artful gardens of modern culture" (Salumets 2014: 157). The idea of Estonia viewed as Other/underdeveloped/primitive in comparison to (formerly) "Western Europe"—a

phenomenon Kaplinski emphatically feels is symptomatic of a form of self-colonization—is reflected in Salumets's explication:

In the course of their 700-year colonizing process, as Kaplinski sees it unfold, Estonians find their culture wanting, particularly during the period of national awakening in the 1860s and 1870s. Estonia was perceived to be lacking in what Europe's centers took for granted: stone buildings, churches, palaces, poetry with end rhymes, manor houses, cities, abstract words, a Protestant ethic, a national epic, song festivals, fraternities, operas, the devil, a standard literary language, a single God, and other manifestations of the mentality associated with the colonizers. (Salumets 2006: 435)

Maire Jaanus's essay "Estonia's Time and Monumental Time," in which she asserts that the time of Estonia is repetitive, cyclical, feminine, Other, ecological, eternal, static, goalless, hysterical, and linked to a history of oppression, serves to link an image of Baltic postcolonialism (or postcolonial "Balticness") strongly to the collection of tropes that have historically functioned as "Western" imperial rationalism's discursive others.² This in turn serves to reinforce a discursive link with popularly cited characteristics of minimalism, cf. static time, circularity, repetition, endlessness, goallessness, and more related tropes of otherness to academic modernism and/or putatively Western teleology.

Many of the above examples can be seen as positive identity constructions relating to a hugely important pro-independence moment, linked with internal movements of empowerment and self-identification. The valence of this type of imagery is necessarily altered when it is wielded by different speakers in a different context and can have a notably altered function in English-language discourse about Baltic art music, particularly when the commercial dimension is taken into account. Having identified this cluster of distinctive qualities, it is possible to map related concepts onto the rhetorical "superstructure" of cultural discourse and to argue that aesthetic and conceptual connections can be drawn between key threads of cultural discourse and the marketing and reception of the most successful 'Baltic music' exports to date. However, a side effect of the popularity and coherence of this particular postmodern palette may be seen in its potential to obscure a greater diversity of styles, ideas, and movements generated by artists from the three "Baltic" countries.

Heterogeneity

One of the aspects of "heterogeneity" that is relevant here concerns the idea that other Baltic art musics—notably, some of the most significant Lithuanian contemporary art music and its mainstream discourses—may share many of these

fingerprints (such as a prominent tendency towards post-minimalist styles) but also have a *comparatively more visible* legacy of twentieth-century atonal modernism—with significant figures like Jeronimas Kačinskas, Vytautas Bacevičius, and Osvaldas Balakauskas—which is *less* prominent in mainstream English language discourses of Estonian art music.

The Baltic states are often erroneously homogenized. Obviously, it is not surprising that discourses of art and music across such a region should be very diverse—but beyond that, the underlying implication that Estonia might have just bypassed musical modernism in the twentieth century seems problematic.

According to Boris Groys, one of the tactics ostensibly deployed with the aim of (re)building an identity free from any associations with the USSR was the idea of “going back” (2015) to pre-occupation-era art and culture to find something “authentic,” erasing the Soviet experience from cultural memory as both alien and entirely irrelevant. In a lecture on the difference between Western postmodernism and Eastern post-socialism, Groys claimed:

Western postmodernism was a reaction against the modernist canon [...] The emergence of this type of postmodernism was impossible in Eastern Europe because the conditions under which art was practiced there were completely different. The modernist canon was never established and institutionalized in Eastern Europe, so the revolt against it had no sense. (Groys 2015)

He also suggested that:

... for the Eastern European and Russian artists, to move on means, in fact, to go back [...] to the national cultural identity before it was repressed and distorted by communism. Here the question emerges, of course, how far they have to go back to be able to rediscover and reappropriate the cultural capital. Obviously Russians have to go at least until 1916, maybe to 1913. That means that on the way to post-communist normalisation, globalisation, they have to abandon and subtract from the, let's say, cultural bank account [...] almost the whole twentieth century. The situation of other post-socialist countries is not so dramatic. They have to go back merely to the period before World War II. But they still lose several decades, and in terms of cultural capital, under the conditions of international competition, this is not so negligible an amount of time. (Groys 2015)

In the case of the Baltic States, two complications arise. One is the common idea that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania experienced *comparatively* greater cultural freedom and less strict control on the production of art and culture during Soviet occupation than some other republics. The other is that, for Estonia at least, the interwar period in fact constituted the only two decades of full national independence

in 700 years (Salumets 2006: 435)—hardly less “dramatic” than a ground zero of 1913. During this period of independence and “national awakening,” various strands and siblings of “modernism” in the arts may have flourished and withered for any number of reasons.

However, although it is vital that modernism is not framed as some kind of necessary evolutionary stage—or indeed as a normative good—it is also not hugely obscure knowledge that even Arvo Pärt, who is generally portrayed as epitomizing the most prominent kind of “euphonic” palette, also wrote experimental avant-garde or modernist works before his “tinnabuli” phase. There still exist popular tropes which hold that the central powers of the Soviet Union succeeded in erasing and rooting out all modernist, experimental, or progressive tendencies in music and art altogether in the twentieth century—and this is not a completely accurate picture (Sverdiolas 2006).³ But “modernist” leanings do seem to be comparably *more* marginalized in the internationally visible image of Estonian art music. This is at least the case in accessible, published English-language sources. I am not trying to argue either way that there *is* or *isn't* a comparable Estonian modernist canon—in which case, figures like Mart Saar and Heino Eller might be cited—but intend instead to examine some potential significances and sources of the discursive emphasis placed on, and the apparent privileging of, what I think can reasonably be described as a postmodern aesthetic in terms of reception, interpretation, and promotion.

So, in addition to some (already-cited) important cultural roots of the aesthetic discourses in question, the prevalence—and the distortion—of these images is a matter of reception (though in the context of this article, I am only examining English-language, and mainly Anglo-American, examples). One quite striking case, to be discussed imminently, is a 1995 article from the British newspaper the *Sunday Telegraph*, which was actually about the Latvian composer Peteris Vasks but could almost be a kind of instruction manual for writing reductive and fantastical clichés about post-socialist countries. But recurring in the ways that English-language writers have depicted Arvo Pärt himself, we also, of course, see particular trends. A notable phenomenon is the recurrence of pairs of concepts which, on the one hand, emphasize his supposed intuitive, abnormal genius and, on the other, paint pictures of a kind of impish, childlike, animal-like, emoting-rather-than-intellectual figure. One user's comment on a YouTube video of a Pärt piece claims:

I have a much higher IQ than Arvo Pärt, but there is no way I could have even begun to conceive the indescribably beautiful sounds in his compositions. Where do you think that kind of genius comes from?

Not only does the user assume, without providing any evidence, that their own intellect is demonstrably far superior to Arvo Pärt's, but they also highlight their impression that the composer's "genius" is somehow strange, unexpected, incomprehensible, or difficult to define. Moreover, the discursive binary of being simultaneously more-than and less-than an imaginary "normal" standard of intellect is strongly reminiscent of David Graeber's assertion that the subject who has (or is supposed to have) less power in a relationship is often framed as being simple, backward, irrational, or stupid—but, at the same time, also "somehow mystically wise" (Graeber 2015: 69–70), preternaturally intuitive or instinctual, "in touch" with nature, or "streetwise"; we can see this in countless representations of women, people of color, poor people, and people with other marginalized identities. It also reflects Stuart Hall's identification that the Other is often required to represent something inciting attraction and something provoking repulsion at one and the same time (Hall 2013 [1997]: 228, 257).

In a 2002 *New Yorker* article, Alex Ross cited the "unsentimental evidence of record sales" as an indicator of the significance of Pärt's work. Pondering the significance of this mass appeal and explicitly describing the composer as having an "uncanny voice," the article theorized:

He has put his finger on something that is almost impossible to put into words—something to do with the power of music to obliterate the rigidities of space and time. One after the other, his chords silence the noise of the self, binding the mind to an eternal present. For this reason, anecdotes of listeners' experiences, whether extreme or mundane, may give a better account of the music than any analysis of its inner workings. (Ross 2002)

Here the author frames the composer as being in touch with "something" powerful yet non-verbal and/or inarticulate (and therefore non-rational?). Silencing the "noise of the self" surely also means silencing language, discourse, and the symbolic order, as these are what constitute the subject. Positioning Pärt as both inspired and irrational—intuitive and emotive, not analytical—is to situate him on the "more organic" side of a kind of nature-culture dichotomy (or spectrum). In a classical othering strategy, the composer is repeatedly represented as being both "more" and simultaneously "less" than an unspoken standard of normality or some anonymous but more "rational" cultural counterparts. Even the ways that writers describe the composer as an individual tend to make him seem somehow unusual, different (from "us," i.e., normative standards of reason and rationality governing hegemonic discourse). The article acknowledges these trends at the same time as reproducing them:

Pärt is a gaunt man with a pale, gentle face and mournfully powerful eyes. His bald pate is balanced by a tightly curled beard of a few inches' length. He has been described as "monkish" so often that a German musicologist has undertaken a deconstruction of the term, but the word still springs to mind unbidden: he could pose for an icon of St. John Chrysostom, or another of the literary saints. Yet, when his large eyes fix on you, he becomes more worldly and formidable; his stare seems to ask, "Are you serious?" At times, he is unexpectedly impish, even antic. He needs few words to make himself understood, using a repertory of quasi-operatic gestures and clownish faces. (Ross, 2002, online)

Highlighting his alleged penchant for non-linguistic forms of expression, the description here seems to link Pärt to irrationality, the unconscious, the body, childhood (actually, the language[s] in which the interview was conducted—English and German, presumably encompassing the reviewer's first language and the composer's third or fourth—may be more relevant). The excerpt effects the uncanny evocation of images of someone very ancient/wise (St. John Chrysostom) and someone very young (impish, clownish), mirroring the common interpretations of Pärt's postmodern compositional juxtapositions of very old and new musical ideas. If this characterization of his person is accurate, then that is certainly a convenient coincidence; more important, either way, is that it serves to make the composer himself seem almost strange. The article's poetic closing lines also zero in on the significance of the non-linguistic and emotive, claiming that, while trying to make himself understood during their conversation the composer had "stopped, frustrated at the inability of either English or German to bring his image to life", produced a pen "as if that would explain everything", and exclaimed that "Schubert's pen [...] was fifty per cent ink, fifty per cent tears" (Ross 2002). The general idea that what composers "want to say" can only adequately be expressed in music, not verbally, is a popular one, but in other cases it may be less common to highlight an actual perceived failure or breakdown in everyday interpersonal verbal communication to illustrate this. The intensification and personification of existing ideas about intangibility, inarticulability, and the uselessness of words when talking about emotion and meaning in music is used here, however inadvertently, to characterize Arvo Pärt as an individual in a way that overlaps with both positive internal and othering external constructions of Estonian cultural identity. So, these recurring images of "mysticism," simplicity and naturalness may in some instances constitute *demeaning* representations, as in the aforementioned *Sunday Telegraph* article about Peteris Vasks, which made incredible, sweeping claims about Latvians in the 1990s ("these people know nothing yet of guile") and accused the composer—whose music the article's author clearly enjoyed—of producing work that "lacked the qualities of a mind in dialogue with itself" (Jackson 1995).

Brand Estonia

But in addition to orientalism, exoticism, or cultural paternalism on the part of external commentators, there is also the matter of how foreign policy, economic agendas, and outward-facing reforms also had great potential to influence the ways in which powerful groups *internal* to Estonia might have favored a particular perception of their country for more pragmatic reasons. As many readers may be aware, in 2002 the Estonian government commissioned Interbrand, a British branding company, to produce a document—a style guide—called Brand Estonia. Although many other nations subsequently commissioned new national brands around a similar time, Estonia's was one of the earliest and most visible "exemplary" cases (Jansen 2008: 124). The resulting guide was essentially an introduction to how to represent the country abroad in line with their new image. Proposed keywords were *digital*, *ecological*, *fresh*, and *Nordic*—one of the key messages was "Nordic with a twist."⁴ At this time, Estonia, along with but ever-so-slightly more rapidly at first than the other Baltic states, was of course undergoing radical shifts—obviously the change in administration from Soviet to independent was the biggest meta-level transition, but even in a wider context of drastic change, Estonia seemed to lead the way in terms of the speed and depth of reforms that were implemented in the earliest days. One politician said it wasn't enough to change institutions—that they had to also actively undo Soviet brainwashing in the minds of the people.

Themes and images highlighted for focus by the updated "Brand Estonia toolkit" —which is available online, as is the 2002 Brand Estonia handbook—include sparsity, nature, water, plants, weather, boulders, bogs, clouds, blue, green, purple, fog, snow and ice. "Diversity" is pinpointed as a significant message; the guide advises that this concept "displays the contrasts of our four voluptuous seasons and also our rich history. It conveys the layers of our culture—Estonia as a place in-between (east and west; nordic and rustic, etc)."⁵ The guide recommends that users "show contrasts: nature/technology, snow/soil, water/land, eastern europe/nordic, traditional/modern, digital/natural, typical/weird, boulders/fog." One sample photo of a foggy, rainy, grassy scene featuring a retreating, umbrella-wielding figure is accompanied by instructive copy that explains:

Sparsity means openness. It displays our pure nature and low population density, but also that there is lots of room to discover. (Brand Estonia, nd.)

The "how-to" notes direct the reader to "prefer spatial compositions with a clear fore- and background which is emphasized by the objects and actions in the frame or by the depth of field," adding "Nature shots should display fog and/or clouds if possible" (Brand Estonia, nd.).

There are, of course, restrictive terms of use on the Brand Estonia imagery, which is still live and has since been updated. The terms state that the permitted and appropriate use of the images and design materials is "to introduce the Republic of Estonia, the Estonian society or different fields of the Estonian economy,"⁶ and, as such, they will not be reproduced here. However, by navigating directly to the website, it is possible to view various samples of the style specifications; various pages, such as "imagery," or "colours," can be found at <https://brand.estonia.ee/design/>. This is clearly a very pragmatic and carefully considered design. For similar reasons of copyright, it is not possible here to reproduce album covers of the many CDs of popular "Baltic art music" that have circulated through classical markets since Arvo Pärt's 1984 *Tabula Rasa* release with ECM. However, a brief search reveals that the iconic, muted white, and pale blue cover has clearly played a part in influencing subsequent releases. Among covers that can easily be found on Google Images, common themes include water (droplets, lakes, or the ocean); grey, white, and blue palettes; symmetrically framed wooden posts (tree stumps or the remains of a boat dock) in empty landscapes; vast, empty spaces with no humans or animals, or the distant silhouette of birds against a mountain or a tiny rowboat; fog, clouds, aurora borealis; light and shadow in monochrome images; rocks, boulders, pebbles, shells, feathers, leaves, branches, and natural shapes. Many of the images described here come from covers for recordings of music by Arvo Pärt, but they also include releases by Veljo Tormis and a number of compilations (such as "Baltic voices 1–3" or "Baltic and Beyond"), to reinforce that there is a quite strong aesthetic correlation with, for example, the photography prototypes that can be viewed on Brand Estonia's "imagery" page.

The stereotypical picture of Soviet imagery or iconography is so vivid from its many "ironic" recyclings in popular culture today (particularly on the internet), as well as in memory, that it doesn't seem necessary to provide examples. But we can have in our minds' eyes the starkness of the contrast between the, again *stereotypical*, archetypal Soviet modernist aesthetic, at least as it might appear in simplistic, almost caricatured, pop-culture revisions (if required, a simple Google Images search for generic terms like "Soviet art" or "communist art" can offer a helpfully condensed snapshot), and the Brand Estonia/"Baltic Voices"-type palettes explored above. One, typically, has sharp lines, regular shapes, and jagged edges; the other has soft lines, irregular shapes, and smooth, blurry, foggy textures. One is, stereotypically, bright red, while the other is both more muted and lower contrast, and favors cooler, more "natural" colors. Various contrasts between the visual/stylistic, conceptual, and more implicit or extrapolated associations of these loose aesthetic clusters are suggested below:

Digital	Industrial
“Nature” / landscapes / weather	Humans
Wild / rural	Urban / industrial-agricultural
“Nordic” / Western	“Slavic” / Eastern
Blue	Red
Cold / grey tones	Warm / bold / saturated tones
Round / “natural” shapes	Angular / abstract shapes
Soft / blurred / translucent textures	Solid / sharp / block textures
Postmodern	Modernist
Sparse	Busy
Neoliberal	Authoritarian communist

In the course of confronting the kind of aesthetic trends that seemed common to both Brand Estonia and this music marketing palette, it seemed pertinent to ask, not necessarily what this “meant” but maybe something about what its various producers might have been trying to achieve. Considering this, and simultaneously also being confronted by some quite suspect assertions of a sort of “special quality” of “Baltic music” from around the early 2000s—the question arose of what appeared to have been *excluded* from this palette. Now, of course, it is almost blindingly superfluous to point out that the aesthetic trends of one period may be seen as a reaction to and rejection of what came before, especially if there is any sense that what came before was somehow an imposition. But I am particularly interested in this case because of the apparent extent and degree of the coherence of the visual messaging, compared with other examples (and because so many writers externally apparently accepted it as a kind of reality).

This idea of systematic exclusion as a fundamental cornerstone of identity- or image formation was strongly evocative of Marina Frolova-Walker’s “deconstruction” of some forms of Russian romantic nationalist composition, in which she highlights the tactic of a *via negativa* or negative strategy (Frolova-Walker 1998: 349–50). She explained that some of these composers and theorists explicitly acknowledged that the way to write “Russian music” was not to attempt to identify what that might actually sound like—probably an impossible task—but instead, to consciously erase compositional features and patterns that seemed stereotypically Western. The following quote, from Rimsky-Korsakov, is cited by Frolova-Walker as emblematic of this pragmatic attitude:

Russian traits—and national traits in general—are acquired not by writing according to specific rules, but rather by removing from the common language of music those devices which are inappropriate to a Russian style. The method is of a negative character, a technique of avoiding certain devices. Thus, for example, I would not use [*stereotypical melodic phrase example*—C. M.] if I were writing in a Russian style, as it would be inappropriate, but in other contexts I might

use it freely. Otherwise, it would not be a creative process, but only some kind of mechanical process of writing in accordance with various rules. To achieve a Russian style I would avoid some devices, for a Spanish style I would avoid others, and for a German style, still others. (Frolova-Walker 1998: 344)

I’ve appropriated the term “hauntology” (which might be understood in a number of ways) to characterize my impression of this phenomenon. The concept of hauntology, for Mark Fisher:

... can be thought of as fundamentally about forces which act at a distance—that which [...] insists (has causal effects) without (physically) existing. (Fisher 2012: 20)

For Colin Davis, hauntology:

... supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. (Davis 2005: 373)

For Jacques Derrida, for whom exclusion is a necessary and fundamental ingredient of all meaning:

... to haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. (Derrida 1993: 202)

Some of these definitions are perhaps more “literary,” but in this context it seems feasible that the concept could be used in quite a straightforward definition as pertaining to something which signifies in or through its marked absence: a “ghost” of something that has been meaningfully marginalized and makes meaning through not being there. This is a complex phenomenon, far more multifaceted than a simple, essential characteristic to be observed, appropriated, and uncritically consumed.

We can see the “absences” in Brand Estonia not framed in terms of a *lack* or of something found wanting, but actually of something decidedly strategic. Frolova-Walker’s assessment of the Russian nationalist technique is that it was “very prosaic”—and this is something that seems important to emphasize in light of the tendency to frame some of the most widely visible Baltic art music as magical, unbelievable, otherworldly, and so on, in fundamentally Othering ways. As Frolova-Walker continues,

Here the composer is not, after all, the conduit for the ineffable groanings of the Russian soul, but merely a practical musician who has learned the trick of avoiding certain turns of phrase in order to create a distinctive stylistic ambience. (Frolova-Walker 1998: 344)

Veljo Tormis, an Estonian composer whose treatment and re-presentation of the runic song genre *regilaul* has been received as an oeuvre of incredible cultural importance, once

noted that the folk song could "not be harmonized" (Tormis 2007)—at least, not according to Western common-practice ideas about harmony. There may be echoes in this statement of the kinds of tactical avoidance prescribed above. However, I am not so interested in ascertaining whether or not Tormis, Pärt, or any other successful and popular Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian art music composers used a *via negativa* approach as consciously and explicitly as Rimsky-Korsakov. The more important point, I would argue, is the reluctance or inability of some writers, evident in some previously explored examples of criticism, to *accept* that Tormis, Pärt, and other successful and popular Baltic art music composers were primarily "practical musicians who learned tricks [...] in order to create a distinctive stylistic ambience" (Frolova-Walker 1998: 344). This, of course, does not necessarily preclude such artists from having incredibly strong and profound national and/or spiritual feelings, inspirations and/or significance. However, it should be recognized that when the suggestion that an artist displays a special kind of strange, dim-witted, intuitive genius is prioritized over the assumption that, first and foremost, they have studied, they are skilled, and they have worked hard to produce effective and distinctive pieces of music, an insidious Othering strategy may be at work. Furthermore, as suggested by Graeber's ideas above, the assertion that a subject is both more (magically intuitive) and less (practically rational) than the alleged norm has precedents in the kinds of oppressive and power-loaded circumstances which it seems highly undesirable to reproduce. Some commentators framed Brand Estonia as quite cynical—be that as it may, it's certainly not evidence of a lack of the so-called "qualities of minds in dialogue with themselves." In a similar vein, an excessive focus in reception on a composer's intuition and/or identity can equal a failure to acknowledge the skill, commitment, opportunities, training, experience, labor, and simple trial-and-error experimentation that go into producing successful and meaningful music.

Conclusions

What seems to emerge overall from earlier comparisons is a relatively more unified, streamlined and coherent aesthetic "message" in many more visible cultural exports of the northernmost Baltic country, seemingly correlating with Estonia's rather faster and more radical (in the earliest days) post-socialist reforms. We can also see some links between Brand Estonia's aesthetics and the Estonian poet Jaan Kaplinski, whose ethos of "unforced flourishing" supports non-intervention and a kind of "attentive inaction," and "deep ecology," a *laissez-faire* environmental philosophy of "checks and balances." The social ecologist Murray Bookchin sees deep ecology as an implicitly neoliberal ideology because it

may be founded on the baseline assumption that inequalities are a part of nature (Bookchin 1987)—a necessary part, in fact, of a "self-organizing" system, which is another favorite concept of Kaplinski's (Salumets 2014: 24)—and that "natural" imbalances shouldn't be interfered with. This is relevant here because, at the time of Brand Estonia's conception and release, figures within the Estonian government were implementing comparatively drastic right-wing economic policies—what then-Prime Minister Mart Laar described as "shock therapy" (Jansen 2008: 127)—in the name of economic recovery. Laar, who was nicknamed "Margaret Thatcher's grandson," headed a government which saw in a series of radical changes; at this time, as Sue Jansen explains:

Estonia created and ratified a new constitution and legal system, which reduced the role of the state in the economy; the government streamlined privatization, introducing a stable national currency that was soon made an equivalent of the Deutschmark, eliminating price controls, selling off state properties, underwriting business loans in lieu of unemployment benefits, offering retraining programs especially in the information technology sector, introducing a flat tax with no corporate tax, and eliminating tariffs. (Jansen 2008: 127–128).

The new socioeconomic order in post-independence Estonia generally seemed to favor startups and entrepreneurs and encouraged cheap labor and foreign investment. Even within a context where all three "Baltic Tiger" economies were undergoing radical and hugely important changes, Estonia appears to have stood out by comparison, as some key steps tended to happen slightly earlier there, and with marginally less internal political resistance than, for example, in Lithuania. The latter state had more successfully built up a national ruling elite of native Lithuanians during Soviet occupation due to the lower rates of emigration (Bohle and Greskovits 2012: 99) and tolerated comparatively stronger residues of left-wing politics after independence than the Estonian government under Laar, who "was adamant in his rejection of any socialist legacy" (Ibid.: 124).

So, without entertaining the essentialist idea that this nation had some *quality* that would explain the quicker rate and more focused direction of change, we can trace more pragmatic, "material" reasons why powerful groups in Estonia may have been more inclined or able to make these choices in an attempt to influence cultural policy.

Without wanting to understate the seriousness of the experiences of any one group or region and without intending to simplify to the point of insensibility, it seems relevant that, during Soviet occupation, a comparatively higher number of ethnic Russian communists emigrated to Estonia

and Latvia than to Lithuania. The culturally destructive programs of linguistic and institutional Russification might therefore be seen to have had a comparatively more *widespread* or extensive reach there. It may be suggested that the impact of these numbers of ethnic Russian émigrés would make the immediate and radical transformation and replacement of Soviet-era *institutions* and structures seem *relatively* more urgent for cultural and linguistic reassertion in Estonia, whereas Lithuanian institutions changed slightly more slowly—and it must be emphasized here that this is only meant in terms of a comparison with Estonia—seeing a greater degree of heterogeneity and resistance. Bohle and Greskovits write that, in contrast to the case in Lithuania:

Estonian and Latvian power holders have [...] pursued a nationalizing project to reverse the effects of the massive influx of Russian speakers in Soviet times. (Ibid.: 97)

Obviously, it is critical to recognize that all three Baltic countries had fundamentally similar experiences in the sense that they all endured a violent, traumatic, oppressive, and unlawful occupation and subsequently strove to rebuild their nations after regaining independence. But it may be, for example, that certain geographical differences, such as Estonia's quite large shared border with mainland Russia, while Lithuania has no border with the mainland—and a number of other factors relating to geography and proximity which contributed to Estonia being viewed as a desirable location for FDI—(Kaarma 2017: 25) were involved in the formation of subtle, slight political, cultural, and economic contrasts, even between countries that were all engaged in a very similar process of moving forward that was, of course, of equally critical importance everywhere—and that these differences are perhaps at the root of the gap between Estonia's highly concentrated re-branding program and economic reforms and the comparatively more heterogeneous processes apparent in Lithuania.

But it is, of course, not appropriate to make such sweeping claims here. My argument, in fact, is only that the emphasis apparently placed on a stylistic palette that seems almost to represent the *inverse* of modernism in visible discourses of Estonian or more “Northern” Baltic art music *may* be more helpfully understood in terms of marketing agendas' relationships to foreign, social and economic policy than the essentialist notions of identity that seem to have underpinned a lot of the rhetoric deployed by some English-language music writers who tended to pay less attention to more subtle differences in the histories of these European neighbors, at least in the late '90s and early 2000s.

The more “exotic” kinds of representations seem to paint an undignified picture of a “mystical” collective Other with a special, magical quality of *difference*, calling to

mind Johannes Fabian's ideas about the implicit imperialist tendencies of anthropology, one of which concerns the tendency to confront Otherness as though *it does not exist in the same time as the observer* (Fabian 1978); this is a trait that can also be seen to characterize quite a lot of writing about Pärt. Furthermore, and critically, these representations seem to portray a ‘Baltic’ Other with a lack of agency. It's this agency which seems particularly important to reassert in the discussion—not just on an individual, exceptionalist level, looking at figures like Pärt, but on a wider structural level, relating that agency to a really radical (if at times socially ambivalent) project of economic and cultural “rebirth.”

Endnotes

- ¹ See Tormis, “Regilaul” (2007) and Daitz, *Ancient Song* (2004).
- ² See Jaanus, “Estonia's Time and Monumental Time.”
- ³ See also Vita Gruodytė, “Happening instead of rupture, or rupture as happening,” transl. Tomas Čiučelis. *Lithuanian Music Link* no. 18 (accessed online, <http://www.mic.lt/en/discourses/lithuanian-music-link/no-18-january-december-2015/happening/>, 01.02.2019).
- ⁴ See the 2002 Brand Estonia style guide, “Eesti stiil,” available online at <http://arhiiv.pixel.ee/eas/eesti-brand/2002-2008/2002-est-brand-welcome-to-estonia.pdf>.
- ⁵ See the “Design” section of the current Brand Estonia website: <https://brand.estonia.ee/design/imagery/>.
- ⁶ See “Brand Estonia's Terms and Conditions,” Brand Estonia website: <https://brand.estonia.ee/about/terms/>.

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Santrauka

Anksčiau vadinamajam „vakarų“ kritikų žvilgsniui į šiuolaikinę Baltijos šalių akademinę muziką būdingi tam tikri probleminiai aspektai. Dauguma autorių uoliai pasiūlyta naratyvą apie vienalytę, amodernią, dvasingą ir (arba) liaudišką „baltišką“ estetiką ir pasaulėžiūrą (kurią įkūnija Arvo Pärto, Veljo Tormiso ir Jaano Kaplinskio kūryba), kartkartėmis interpretuodami populiarią „dvasingo minimalizmo“ kryptį kaip tam tikrų šiame „regione“ užkoduotų ypatybių atspindį. Nors ši tendencija visiškai neišnyko, ji tam tikra prasme laikoma atgyvena (pavyzdžiui, 2007 m. paskelbtas Kevino Platto teiginys, kad „posovietinė era baigėsi“), o į kritikos sensacionalizmą dabar galima pažvelgti labiau istoriškai. Egzistuoja ryšys tarp itin vientiso, į išorę orientuoto labiau šiaurietiškos, ypač estiškos, akademinės muzikos estetinio vaizdo ir santykinai labiau unifikuotų, sparčių, nekomplikuotų institucinių pokyčių, kurie šioje šiaurės valstybėje vyksta kartu su radikaliomis socioekonominėmis reformomis ir šalies tapatybės „Brand Estonia“ kūrimu. Tai iškalbingai kontrastuoja su didesniu instituciniu nevienalytiškumu ir gana lėtai vykstančiomis permainomis Lietuvoje ir atitinkamai – su mažiau unifikuotais estetiniais diskursais, bent jau žvelgiant iš plačiausios perspektyvos. Šią skirtį galima sieti ne su aptariamam menui būdingu specifiskumu, tą darė daugelis angliškai kalbančių mokslininkų, ir tai yra esencialistinio mąstymo klaida (arba fantazija), o su tuo, kas iš pažiūros buvo marginalizuota – modernizmo, disonanso, kampuotumo, motorinio ritmo, urbaniškumo ir raudonumo „hauntologija“. Straipsnyje priešinami skirtingu tempu vykstančius institucinius pokyčius atspindintys hauntologijos ir heterogeniškumo reiškiniai, kurių sampratą vakarų diskurse iškreipė klaidingas esencialistinis požiūris.

Neabejotinai svarbu pripažinti, kad visų trijų Baltijos valstybių patirtis iš esmės panaši; jos visos patyrė žiaurią, traumuojančią, represyvią, neteisėtą okupaciją, todėl atgavusios nepriklausomybę siekė atkurti savo tautinę tapatybę. Tačiau gali būti, kad, tarkime, tam tikri geografiniai skirtumai (Estija turi gana ilgą bendrą sieną su žemynine Rusija, o Lietuva jos neturi) ir kiti su geografine padėtimi bei tam tikrų valstybių artumu susiję veiksniai, leidę Estijai pritraukti daugiau tiesioginių užsienio investicijų (Kaarma 2017: 25), atliko tam tikrą vaidmenį formuojantis šiokiems tokiems subtiliems politiniams, kultūriniais ir ekonominiais skirtumams netgi tarp tų valstybių, kurios išgyvena labai panašius ir, be abejonės, lygiai tiek pat kiekvienai svarbius pažangos procesus. Taip pat gali būti, kad šie skirtumai yra pagrindinė atotrūkio tarp itin sutelktos Estijos tapatybės perkūrimo programos bei vykdomų ekonominių reformų ir daug nevienalytiškesnių procesų Lietuvoje priežastis. Manytina, kad estų arba labiau „šiaurietiškos“ Baltijos akademinės muzikos diskursuose pastebimas dėmesys kone priešingą modernizmui kryptį atspindinčiai stilistinei paletei

gali būti geriau suprastas analizuojant rinkodaros programų sąsajas su užsienio, socialine ir ekonomikos politika nei pasitelkus esencialistines tapatybės sampratas, daugiausia lemiančias kai kurių angliškai rašančių muzikologų retoriką ir jų nepakankamą dėmesį subtilesniems šių kaimyninių šalių istorijos skirtumams bent jau praeito amžiaus dešimto dešimtmečio pabaigoje ir šio tūkstantmečio pradžioje. „Egzotiškesniuose“ apibūdinimuose iš aukšto pateikiamas „mistinio“ kolektyvinio *Kito* paveikslas, nuspalvintas ypatingo, magiško *kitoniškumo*, o tai pasufleruoja Johannesio Fabiano mintį apie antropologijos netiesioginį imperialistinį polinkį

susipriešinti su *Kitu*, lyg *tai neegzistuos tu pačiu metu kaip stebintysis* (Fabian 1978); šis požymis būdingas nemažai tekstų apie Pärtą. Be to, galima kritiškai pasakyti, kad šiuose apibūdinimuose „baltiškajam“ *Kitam* stinga laisvos valios. O kaip tik ją ir reikėtų sugrąžinti į diskusiją – ne vien kalbant apie išskirtinai tam tikras asmenybes, tokias kaip Arvo'as Pärtas, bet ir platesniu struktūriniu lygmeniu – bei susieti laisvą valią su tikrai radikaliu (retkarčiais gal net socialiai ambivalentišku) ekonominio ir kultūrinio „atgimimo“ projektu.

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