

Ēriks Ešenvalds as a (Post)Feminist? Communicating Body in *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*

Abstract. There are constellations of practices and their representations, examined by feminist and post-feminist scholarship, that signify a woman's body as a space of negotiation of their historical, ideological, and cultural underpinnings. This paper investigates the narrative of a woman's body as expressed by or communicated through *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* (2005) by Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977). In this discussion, I follow "A reciprocal feedback of musical communication" model outlined by Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miel (2005), according to which "the representations of music by the composer and the listener—the former's expressive intentions and the listener's affective response ...—may be quite different from one another ..." (18). I also emphasize that, as an embodiment of written music, each performance of *Legend of a Walled-In Woman* offers a unique interpretation of the work's structure and semantics. The recording of this piece by the Portland State Chamber Choir, chosen for this project, conceptualizes this composition as an intensifying continuum of stylistically contrasting sections that overlap to varying degrees: from an authentic folk lament to allusions to sacred music in the form of plainchant and chorale, to the soaring, expressive melodic gestures originating harmonic intensity, and eventually, to the calm, introspective lyricism of the final section. The semantics of Ešenvalds's work, highlighted by the Portland Chamber Choir's interpretation, invites a negotiation of the feminism-informed discourse, which, however, may be challenged by the context of the last section of the score, pointing to a different, postfeminist-framed narrative. I argue that by creating a musical work inspired by the story of patriarchal oppression and a woman's self-sacrifice, the composer has inadvertently entered a conversation central to feminist and postfeminist thought, thus inviting a multitude of culturally and politically conditioned perspectives.

Keywords: Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, musical communication, interpretation, feminism, postfeminism, performance, listener.

About who decides what has been said in music (I)

The vagueness of the concept of musical communication presents an opportunity for researchers to apply creative approaches to this subject matter. In the influential collection of articles comprising the 2005 book *Musical Communication*, Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miel emphasize that, to explore this complex topic one needs to consider all the aspects of the questions of "how," "why," "who," and "where" (2). In one of the essays in the book, summarizing pre-existing research on the comparison of music and language in terms of their communicative properties, Cross (2005) remarks, "Music, however, seems to embody an essential ambiguity, and in this respect it can be suggested that language and music are on the opposite poles of a communicative continuum, almost meeting in the middle somewhere near poetry" (35). One may infer that the density of the topic intensifies further when a musical work actually incorporates poetry or other kinds of texts.

To frame my exploration of the communicative properties of Ešenvalds's *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, I utilize Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miel's "Reciprocal Feedback Model of Musical Communication," comprising two counterparts. The first one, a "Reciprocal Feedback Model of Musical Response" recognizes that "the representations of music by the composer and the listener—the former's expressive intentions and the listener's affective response ...—may be quite different from one another" (18). According to this aspect of the model, considerations of the listener's preparedness to connect to the music they hear, as well as the specifics of their social, emotional, and logistical context, all play an important role in their experience with a musical work.

The second counterpart of the model, a "Reciprocal Feedback Model of Musical Performance," signifies that music becomes an audible phenomenon via a complex web of multi-leveled interactions, resulting in a specific interpretation of the score by the performers. The authors argue that only by combining the consideration of the variables going into music as a performance and those defined by an individual listener's response can scholars come closer to an understanding of the process by which the "spark" between music and the listener occurs, stimulating the listener's active engagement with a musical work.

This theoretical framework is helpful for my discussion, since, as a musicologist, I function as both a listener and interpreter of the Ešenvalds work in question. I recognize that other listeners/interpreters may not hear what I hear in the music; they may not see what I see in the score; and they may not think what I think about this piece's communicative properties. After all, as Matula (2000) points out, "the actual musical text before the listener varies depending on a host of connotations and mediations attached to the text and brought to the text by the listener" (222). But, in my view, it is precisely the phenomenological nature of music as human experience that makes it a timeless and border-defying phenomenon.

About the legend (I): The story

Legend of the Walled-In Woman is inspired by the Albanian legend of the Rozafa (Shkodër) Castle; it is, however, just one of a multitude of existing versions of the legend, spread all over the Balkan region, with its exact geographic origin being the subject of debate among folklorists. Dundes (1996) notes that there are dozens of pieces of scholarship, spanning from the 18th up to the late 20th centuries, all dedicated to this legend, making it the most researched one in the world (186). Common to all renditions (whether as a poem, a ballad, a folksong, or an epic) is the basic plot involving a group of young men building a castle, or a bridge, or a monastery, and “Through supernatural means, whatever is constructed during the day is undone at night. A dream revelation or some other extraordinary means of communication informs the would-be-builders that the only way to break the negative magic spell is to sacrifice the first woman (wife or sister) who comes to the building site the next day” (187).

In the Albanian version of the legend, used by Ešēnvalds, it is the victim’s mother-in-law that has that prophetic dream, and proposes that a wife of one of her three sons—whichever one brings lunch the next day—is the one to be sacrificed. According to the story, the two older brothers warned their wives about their mother’s dream, but the youngest one did not. The next day his young wife, Rozafa, who just had a baby, brought the brothers lunch, and was informed that she was to be immured in the foundations of the castle. According to an online resource, describing the legend, “Rozafa accepted her fate, but under one condition: the brothers would leave a hole for her right breast so her newborn son could feed, another hole for her right hand to caress him and a third hole for her right foot to move his cradle. The castle never collapsed” (Mazotti 2018).

About the texts: The art of compilation

In his musical work, Ešēnvalds incorporates an ancient Albanian folksong, which, according to the program notes in the score, “is believed to be dating from the time when Rozafa castle was built—some 2700 years ago.”¹ When comparing recording of the Albanian folksong available on YouTube (“Albanian Men’s Group From Vlorë” 2015) with the Ešēnvalds piece, it becomes evident that the composer stays true to his strong stance of using any folk material in the most authentic way possible.² Figure 1 offers the opening measures of the score; figure 2 includes original Albanian text and its English translation by Robert Elsie.

As seen in figure 2, while the folksong contains references to the legend as described above, it excludes the last part of the narrative, having to do with the young woman’s response to the demands of her sacrifice, which, dramaturgically, would provide the composer with an opportunity to create some kind of a resolution to the story. It is not surprising then, that having always being drawn to the art of textual compilation, Ešēnvalds decided to add another text to the fabric of his work. The composer selected several lines from the poem “Vendit tem” (“My land”) by prominent Albanian poet Martin Camaj (1922–1993), English translation by Robert Elsie, thus complementing the folksong’s text by a sort of “condition” or “conceptualization” of the young woman’s sacrifice:

When I die, may I turn into grass on my mountains in spring, in autumn I will turn in seed.

When I die, may I turn into water, my misty breath will fall onto the meadows as rain.

When I die, may I turn into stone, on the confines of my land may I be a landmark. (Ešēnvalds 2005: 20–27)

Admittedly, some listeners of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* may find this last section the most lyrical and beautiful one. To me, however, it is the most curious and problematic part of the composition—one that led me to on the path of exploration, ultimately resulting in this essay. Specifically, I find there to be a semantic dissonance between the folksong-based and the Camaj text-based sections. This tension is, perhaps, not unlike one between the two contemporary ideologies focused on women’s issues, i.e., feminism and postfeminism, respectively; something that came to my mind on the first listening to *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*. Let’s consider this proposed framework for an examination of the Ešēnvalds composition in some detail, first focusing on the legend itself.

¹ Ešēnvalds, Ēriks (2005). *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*. Riga, Latvia: Musica Baltica.

² See Ešēnvalds’s interview with the author, in Lentsner [forthcoming 2023].

LÉGENDE DE LA FEMME EMMURÉE
 LEGENDA PAR IEMÛRËTO SIEVU / LEGEND OF THE WALLED-IN WOMEN

Text translations from the Albanian by Robert Elsy.

Ēriks Ešenvalds
 (*1977)

Misterioso $\text{♩} = 60$

Alto
 solo *mp*
 Lu - mē, O - - - - -

Tenor
 A - tje te u - ra në lu - mē, O - - - - -

Ensemble Tenor
mp
 O - - - - -

Bass
mp
 O - - - - -

Bass
mp
 O - - - - -

5
 Alto
 - - - - oi, *3 O,
 Tenor
 - - - - oi, *3 O, O -
 Ensemble Tenor
 - - - - oi, *3 O, O -
 Bass
 - - - - oi, *3 O - - - - -
 Bass
 - - - - oi, *3 O - - - - -

*1 - pirms sitiena / before the beat
 *2 - uz sitiena / on the beat
 *3 - divskanis / diphthong
 *4 - izlaidit līdzskapis / drop the consonants

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Figure 1. The opening of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*.
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Albanian folk song

Atje te ura në lumë,
 Ooooi, E mjera unë,
 Most a bëre të bëje punë,
 Ooooi, E mjera unë.

There at the bridge o'er the river,
 Woe, oh woe is me,
 Do not set forth a working,
 Woe, oh woe is me.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së madhe,
 Ooooi,
 Bjeru bukën mos të valë, Ooooi,
 E mjera unë.

To her eldest son's wife speaks the mother:
 Woe, woe
 Take them food, do not fail,
 Woe, oh woe is me.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së vogël,
 Ooooi,
 Bjeru bukën mos të valë,
 Ooooi, E mjera unë.

To her youngest son's wife speaks the mother:
 Woe, woe,
 Take them food, do not fail,
 Woe, oh, woe is me.

Në themelët e Kalasë,
 Ooooi,
 Është pendu se ja dhanë një vashë,
 Ooooi, E mjera unë.

To the foundations of that fortress,
 Woe, woe,
 They regret that they once gave a girl,
 Woe, oh woe is me.

Figure 2. The text of the Albanian folksong used by Ešenvalds in *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*.
 2005@Musica Baltica. Used by permission.

About the legend (II): The legend vis-à-vis the feminist perspective

Feminist scholarship offers an unapologetically strong stand in its interpretation of women's history. Muellner (2018) points out the inherent brutality of the walled-in woman legend in its many renditions, reminding us that "Jacob Grimm, who called the ballad 'one of the most outstanding songs of all peoples of all times,' translated the Serbian version (called "The Building of Skadar") in 1824 and shared it with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who apparently found it too barbaric" (247, citing Dundes 2007, 110). However brutal the legend of the immured woman may seem to Goethe (or any sane person, for that matter), its core has a direct connection to the long and dark history of patriarchal oppression of women, and reduction of women's place and space in culture and society to their biological state and functioning, beyond an "obvious message of women's entrapment (in marriage or in any other type of 'built' space that the folktale imparts" (Muellner 2018, 248).

Gatens (1999) addresses the historical perspective: "Recent feminist research suggests that the history of western thought shows a deep hatred and fear of the body" (228). Spelman (1999) elaborates, "What philosophers had to say about women typically has been nasty, brutish, and short. A page or two of quotations from those considered among the great philosophers (Aristotle, Hume, and Nietzsche, for example) constitutes a veritable litany of contempt" (33). Friedman (1991) reminds us, "As Friedrich Nietzsche's Zarathustra pronounces: 'Everything concerning woman is a puzzle, and everything concerning woman has one solution: it is named pregnancy.' But even after women's active part in conception became understood, cultural representations of woman based in the mind-body split continued to separate the creation of man's mind from the procreation of woman's body" (374). Wesely (2003) emphasizes that, "Historically, female identity has been associated with the body, especially in terms of sexual and reproductive spheres" (486). Researchers discuss how women have been categorized and defined according to their two specific anatomical/biological conditions: as either virgins (maidens)³ or mothers, with the former being a preparation for the latter, and both assuming a marginalized societal function as a kind of "biological" support and service to men, who comprised the socio-political structure of Western society.

Bal (1986) brings up another point: "It is a common insight ... that a female body scares man by its otherness, its 'lack' and its obscurity" (33). According to this perspective, since a woman is one who biologically produces a man, then, in a way, she possesses a power of creativity a man cannot ever have. This may explain why sacrificing a young mother would ensure the stability of the structure; furthermore, the fact that in the Albanian legend the role of a "villain" of sorts (one who proclaims the necessity of sacrificing a young woman/wife/mother to appease the gods) is assigned to the victim's mother-in-law, may also be considered a manifestation of sexism. This proposition is supported by Friedman's discussion that incorporates Julia Kristeva's (1974) earlier argument of the "phallogocentric hegemony [making] woman 'a specialist in unconscious, a witch, a bacchanalian...'" (quoted in Friedman 1991, 374).⁴

Furthermore, the area of scholarship categorized as "sacrificial studies" suggests a curious framework (with some conflicting opinions notwithstanding) for the understanding of the undercurrent of the act of sacrifice taking place in the legend of Rozafa. René Girard (1977) maintains, "[Sacrifice] is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves. The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its own violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself" (8). Conversely, the "theory of rational human sacrifice" authored by Leeson (2014) offers a different perspective, arguing that "the ritual slaughter of innocent persons to appease divinities ... is a technology for protecting property rights. It improves property protection by destroying part of sacrificing communities' wealth, which depresses the expected payoff of plundering them" (137). Using Girard's proposition, one can conceptualize the sacrifice of the young woman in the legend as the community's expression of fear and despair; according to Leeson's theory, however, Rozafa's sacrifice may be seen as a manifestation of the community's manipula-

³ Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* is an iconic musical work depicting sacrifice of a virgin, an "innocent" young woman to "the son god Yarilo to secure a good harvest" (Penicka-Smith 2010, 17). Unlike Ešenvalds, whose music captures the tragedy taking place in the legend, Stravinsky, in his quest for musical objectivity, paints an impartial picture of the "pre-civilized, biological archaic" practices of pagan Russia (Vishnevetsky 2003, 510).

⁴ Outside of the feminist-informed framework, Zimmerman (1996) considers this Balkan legend a "celebration" of motherhood, and in her analysis of the Serbian version proposes that, "A woman, especially a mother, represents the future.... By being the 'foundation' of society herself, the woman is one of the highest sacrifices mankind can offer" (152). Even within this mainstream view of the story, the scholar recognizes "the emotional confusion and the moral perplexity" manifested in the legend (153).

tive and well-calculated political-economical move, victimizing one of the marginalized members of that community—a woman. And thus, the semantics of the dark, sorrowful, and claustrophobic, as if restrained, Albanian polyphonic folksong that Ešenvalds absorbs into his score, is a fair game, open to polarly different, but equally disturbing interpretations.

About performance as interpretation

Most commonly, a musical performance is an embodiment of written music, facilitating a listener's first encounter with a musical work. This is why I find the "Reciprocal Model of Musical Performance" by Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miel (2005), briefly discussed above, a useful tool, for it recognizes the critical role of the professional musician's intellectual, emotional, physical, and contextual engagement with the score that takes place before the score becomes a performance, a music to be heard.

There are several commercially available recordings of this work; to my ear, the top two are by Latvian Radio Choir and by Portland State Chamber Choir. These two performances differ greatly in their interpretation of the score, leading me to two different interpretations of the work's semantics. The Latvian version is striking and captivating in its focus on the lamenting element of the Albanian folksong, adapted by Ešenvalds, attention to the structural features of the piece, and an emphasis on the intensity of the interworking of the inner voices. I hear this interpretation as one communicating a distressful, as if suffocating, containment of an emotion, or a body, or a soul. The American version of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* is quite different, for it highlights the transformational feature of music in terms of its texture, harmonic density, melodiousness, and stylistic juxtapositions. The differences between the two recordings are striking, deeply affecting my connections to this Ešenvalds work. Another recording of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, by Britten Sinfonia vocal ensemble and Polyphony choir conducted by Stephen Layton, is rather surprising, if not problematic. The execution of the folk lament by Britten Sinfonia personifies each voice and their interaction in a dramatized, almost operatic manner, thus losing the connection to the folksong's authenticity. As a whole, this performance neither absorbs nor reflects the most important structural feature of the piece, engendering its innate dramaticism and continuity—the sectional overlap. And, as the result, this interpretation of the score, at least in my opinion, lacks integrity.

For the purpose of this essay, between the Latvian and the American versions, I picked the latter, the Portland State Chamber Choir recording, for no reason other than it happened to be the first performative embodiment of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* that I encountered and connected with.

About the structure and semantics

Figure 3a) represents the structure of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* as an "ascension," in order to capture the dynamics of transformation that the Portland State Chamber Choir's performance emphasizes. Ešenvalds conceptualizes the work as an intensifying continuum of stylistically contrasting sections that overlap to varying degrees (signified by the angle of the arrows on the graph): from an authentic folk lament to allusions to the sacred music in the form of plainchant and chorale, to the soaring, expressive melodic gestures originating harmonic intensity, and eventually, to the calm, introspective lyricism of the final section. Figure 3b) serves as a simplified reference to each section's content, not reflecting the complexity of Ešenvalds's intricate polyphonic overlapping technique.

The strikingly dark opening of the piece, quoting the Albanian folksong, suggests Ešenvalds's reading of the legend as a trauma-inducing act of violence, even if motivated by the thrive for a common good. The allusion to the sacred music of the Middle Ages that I hear in the opening line of the tenor solo is specific to this performance, expressed in a manner where the singer articulates the melodic line; in the score, it is just a solo opening of the folk lament, picked up by the rest of the vocal ensemble. Ešenvalds's rendition of the folksong, shown in figure 1, centers around the G natural minor scale (without the Eb), with each voice contained within the "walls" of a perfect fourth, and the polyphonic totality "trapped" within a range of an octave (G^3-G^4). The lament features grace notes and pitch bends, "muddying the waters" of the implied tonality and darkening its color. Then, in m. 27, while the listener gets engrossed in the throbbing sound of the lament, Ešenvalds creates the first structural overlap by means of the evaded cadence with an almost translucent-sounding chorale (see figure 4).

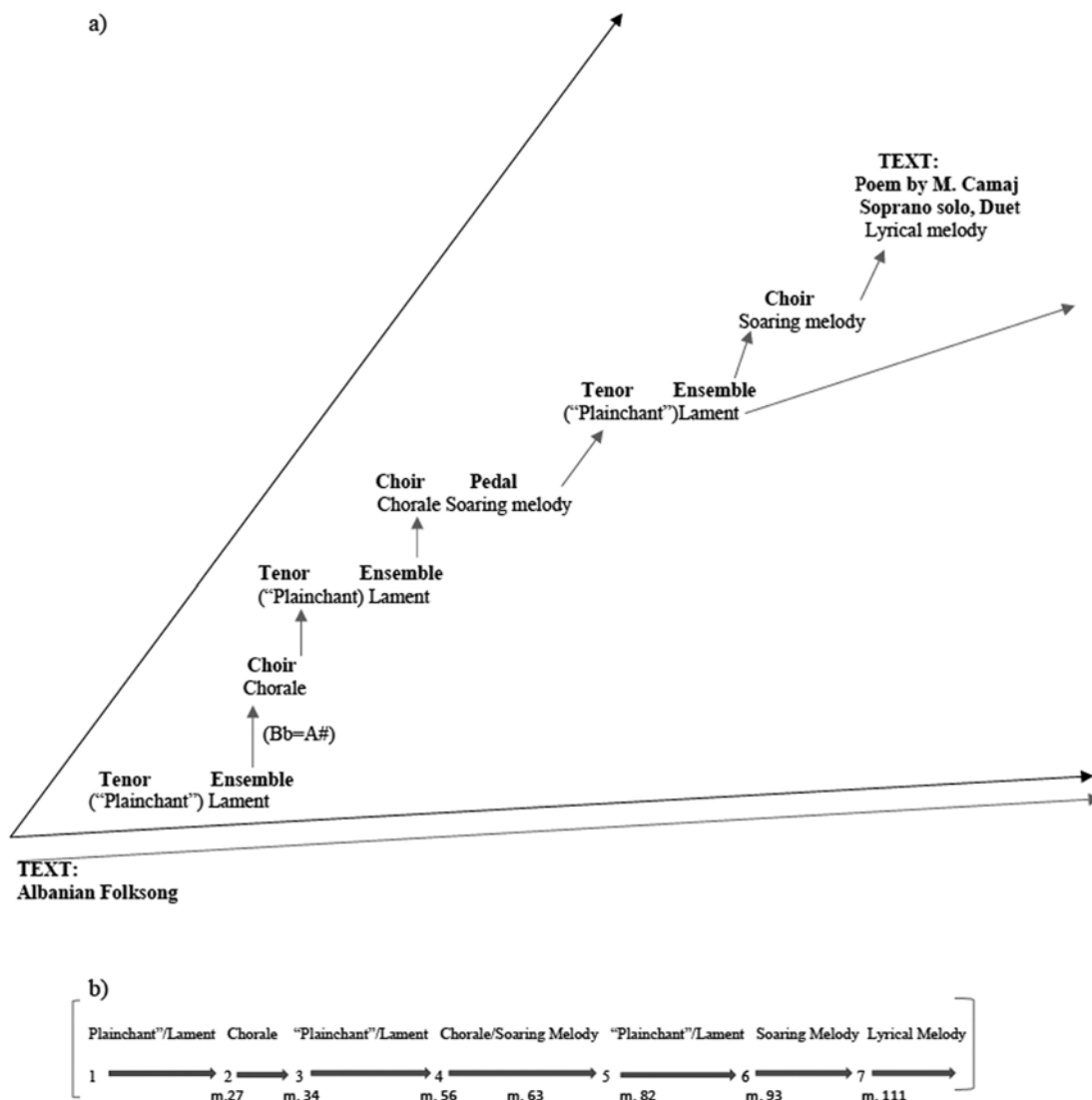


Figure 3. Two versions of the graphic representation of the composition's structure.

I find it significant that Ešenvalds creates the first sectional overlap through the common tone, an enharmonically respelled Bb, functioning as the third of the sounding G minor harmony, but transformed into the A#, the fifth of the D# minor triad with an added 6th (the B) that marks the entrance of the chorale section. The result is a beautiful chromatic mediant juxtaposition between the two harmonies and the two overlapping sections. I suggest that a symbolic reconfiguration of the Bb, belonging to the contained cries of the Albanian folksong, into the A# of the quiet, harmonically transparent chorale, invites a consideration of “a trapped body” vs. “a clarity of the mind” dichotomy. And while short melodic cells of the lament seem to not be able to overcome their own boundaries, in the chorale, there is not even an attempt to escape the almost motionless harmonic frame. Still, somehow, the chromaticism that gently arises in the alto voice of the chorale, invites the semantics of an alternate reality, one that exists beyond the gravity of the world that the lament is originating from.

This reading of the first two episodes of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* is especially fruitful considering that the composer continues to overlap them over and over. The effect is that both the lament and the chorale take turns resurfacing and then going silent, but never really disappearing. It is not until m. 63 (section 4 in figure 3), when the chorale transfigures itself into “soaring,” expressive melodic gestures that seem to be boundless, pervading all the voices of the choral texture, and, notably, also incorporating elements of the folk lament (see figure 5).

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Alto
O - - - oi.

Tenor
E mje - ra u - nē.

Ensemble Tenor
E (mj)e - (r)ja u - (n)ē.

Bass
E (mj)e - (r)ja u - (n)ē.

Bass
O, u - (n)ē.

S II
E mje - - ra u - - - -

AI
E mje - - ra u - - - -

T II
E mje - - ra u - - - -

B II
E mje - - ra u - - - -

*1 - uz sitena / on the beat

Figure 4. Structural overlap of the folk lament (section 1) with the chorale (section 2) in *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*. 2005@Musica Baltica. Used by permission.

How would one decode the message carried by all this musical information vis-à-vis the legend of Rozafa (the process that is important for the composer, since he includes the legend in the program notes of his score)? Does the darkness of the folksong capture a grief for a young woman, a human being, treated as mere construction material, or as a grief for a community, guided by fear and superstition? Does the solo opening of the lament that I likened to a plainchant in the Portland State Chamber Choir's performance together with the chorale sections suggest a reference to the Christian views of chastity and motherhood as two "embodied" states of a woman's existence? Does the composer give his walled-in heroine a voice through the "soaring" melodies, so as to capture Rozafa's inner resistance to the violence, emphasize her creative powers, and thus transcend her essence beyond the constraints of her body and the walls of the oppressive society?

In my own reading of Ešenvalds's *Legend of a Walled-In Woman*, the answer to all these questions is a resounding "yes." Most likely unintentionally, but in this composition Ešenvalds created a context that invites a negotiation of the feminism-informed discourse explored above. There is, however, one problem with my interpretation of the semantics of *Legend of a Walled-In Woman*: the last section of this piece. Its role in the fabric of *Legend of a Walled-In Woman* makes my proposed theoretical framework collapse like a house of cards.

Finale: The last section of *Legend of the Walled-In-Woman* vis-à-vis the postfeminist perspective

As I already propositioned above, selected lines from Camaj's poem "Vendit tem" ("My land") offered the composer an opportunity to create a conclusion to the story. In both the Albanian legend that inspired the composition and the Ešenvalds piece, a young woman that was just told that she was going to be immured in the wall of a castle as a sacrifice succumbs to her fate, even though, conditionally so. In the legend, Rozafa negotiates to leave some parts of her body exposed from the wall, so she can still function as a mother, which only reinforces a consideration of the patriarchal ideology expressed by the legend, misrepresenting women's

The image shows a musical score for a choir section, numbered 63. It features eight vocal parts: Soprano I (SI), Soprano II (SII), Soprano III (SIII), Alto I (AI), Choir A II, Tenor I (TI), Tenor II (TII), Bass I (BI), and Bass II (BII). The lyrics are in Lithuanian. The score includes dynamics such as *pp*, *cresc. poco*, and *mp*. The lyrics for the parts are: SI: O, E mje - ra; SII: E mje - ra u - - - nē; SIII: O, O; AI: E mje - ra; Choir A II: O, E mje - ra u - - - nē, E; TI: O, E mje - - - -; TII: E mje - ra u - - - nē; BI: O; BII: E mje - ra u - nē.

Figure 5. Transition from the chorale to the “soaring” melodies in section 4 of *Legend of the Walled In-Woman*. 2005@Musica Baltica. Used by permission.

resistance to the abuse as their buy-in. Similarly, through Camaj’s lines, the heroine of the Ešenvalds work conceptualizes her torturous death as her transition to becoming one with nature and her land, thus, in a way perpetuating the oppressive cultural narrative of women’s biological, or even “organic” and thus marginalized function in society. In both versions, however, the heroine willingly submits to the violence imposed onto her.

I do not doubt that the composer’s decision to close *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* with the lyrical section, and with the backdrop of the lament, reflects his keen structural and musical sensibilities. Semantically, though, the final section of the piece suggests a portrayal of Rozafa’s self-sacrifice as a celebration of her choice. A peaceful lyricism of the soprano solo, followed by the soprano duet, is slow-moving and captivating. It is as if the young woman’s choice to be victimized for the sake of her community encourages others to be

118 *pp*

Ensemble Tenor
Esh-tē pen-du se ja dha-nē njē va - shē,

S solo I

S solo II
p
when I die, may I tum, may I tum in-

Choir
S
E mje - - ra u - - - nē, E mje - - ra u -
A
E mje - - ra u - - - nē, E mje - - ra u -
T
E mje - - ra u - - - nē, E mje - - ra u -
B
E mje - - ra u - - - nē, E mje - - ra u -

122 *p*

S solo I
Wa - ter,

S solo II
to wa - ter, my mi - sty breath will fall on - to the mea - dows as

Choir
S
nē, E mje - ra u - - - nē, E mje - -
A
nē, E mje - ra u - - - nē, E mje - -
T
nē, E mje - ra u - - - nē, E mje - -
B
nē, E mje - ra u - - - nē, E mje - -

Figure 6. The beginning of the final section of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, set to the text by Martin Camaj. 2005@Musica Baltica. Used by permission.

free to make their own choices regarding their physical existence.⁵ Furthermore, Ešņvalds's inclination to use the English translation of Camaj's poem is telling, for it signals the composer's desire for the conclusion of the story to "be heard" and understood.⁶ Figure 6 includes the beginning of the final, seventh section of the piece.

⁵ Ironically, the aforementioned Polyphony/Britten Sinfonia recording of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* demonstrates a creative and effective solution to the interpretation of this section, taking a very slow tempo, with the soprano solo, and then duet, sounding completely withdrawn, as if in a deep state of trance. Potentially, this version of the ending could have contributed to a distinctive and effective performance/interpretation of the composition as a whole, perhaps questioning the sincerity of Rozafa's willingness to die.

⁶ In his choral works, Ešņvalds commonly favors clarity of the articulated text over the melodiousness of its setting (previously discussed in Lentsner [forthcoming 2023]). In this piece, however, the composer manages to create a longer-spanning melodic line from piecing together short, expressive, lyrical musical gestures.

The notion of a woman's choice, especially in regard to her body, is a key position of the postfeminist narrative, broadly represented in the current scholarship and well-synthesized in Gill (2017). The author emphasizes "the notion of femininity as a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; ... and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference" (615–616). Gill quotes Winch (2015), who examines the present-day culture, where "the body is recognized as the object of women's labour: it is her asset, her product, her brand and her gateway to freedom and empowerment" (quoted in Gill 2017, 616). Without getting into the discussion of the current cultural landscape that engenders postfeminist ideology and differs from the earlier, feminist-era sensibilities, I recognize that, based on the ending of the piece, one might reject the "young woman as a victim of the patriarchal oppression" semantics, for which I advocated above.

Who decides what has been said in music (II)?

It is this duality of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* that I detected upon my first listening—on one hand, a deep, suffocating darkness swallowing the light and creativity, and on other hand, a death-affirming, self-sacrificing lyricism of the final section—that I find semantically contradictory and a bit unsettling, but even more, intriguing. For it leads me to the following realization: perhaps it is my own, not the composer's, relationships to feminism and postfeminism that are conflicting; and possibly it is music's "self-reflective aboutness" noted by Cross (2005, 33) that engendered and heightened my sensitivities in regard to the structure and semantics of this Ešņvalds work.

Then, my experience with *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, captured in this analytical/interpretive discourse, is a case-study of sorts, one of many possible points of view on the semantics of this composition. Ultimately, a musical work is always "about" the one who is listening, the one who is initiating a creation of a unique communicative space, located somewhere between the composer's artistic intentions, the music's performative embodiment, and the listener's perceptive and interpretive mechanism, always informed by their personal and cultural biases.

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Ēriks Ešenvaldas – (post)feministas? Kaip *Legendoje apie užmūrytą moterį* komunikuojamas kūnas Santrauka

Feministinėje ir postfeministinėje mokslinėje literatūroje yra nagrinėjamos įvairios praktikos ir jų reprezentacijos, žymios moters kūną kaip derybų – istorinių, ideologinių, kultūrinių – erdvę. Straipsnyje analizuojamas moters kūno naratyvas, kurį perteikia latvių kompozitoriaus Ēriko Ešenvaldo (g. 1977) kūrinys *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* („Legenda apie užmūrytą moterį“) (2005). Vadovaujamosi Davido Hargreaveso ir kt. (2005) išdėstyta muzikinės komunikacijos modeliu *Abipusis muzikos atlikimo grįžtamasis ryšys*, pagal kurį „kompozitoriaus ir klausytojo muzikos reprezentacijos – pirmojo išraiškos intencijos ir antrojo afektinis atsakas <...> – gali būti gana skirtingos“ (18). Teigiama, kad kompozitorius, kurdamas muzikos kūrinį, įkvėptą patriarchalinės priespaudos ir moters pasiaukojimo istorijos, atsitiktinai įsitraukė į feministinei ir postfeministinei minčiai svarbų disputą, taip akumuliuodamas daugybę kultūros ir politikos nulemtų perspektyvų. Be to, pabrėžiama, kad kiekvienas kūrinio *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* atlikimas siūlo savitą, unikalią kūrinio struktūros ir semantikos interpretaciją.

Legend of the Walled-In Woman grįsta albanų balade apie jauną motiną, mūrininko žmoną, įmūrytą pilyje siekiant, kad statinys būtų tvirtas. Ešenvaldas kuria galingą pasakojimą pasitelkdamas tirštą choro tembrų ir harmonijos faktūrą, gretindamas stilistiškai skirtingas idiomias. Portlando valstybinio kamerinio choro atliekamas pradinis, iš pirmo žvilgsnio paprastas motyvas dėl faktūros tirštėjimo ir disonansinio sluoksniavimo virsta emocijų kupina liaudies daina, kuriančia storo mūro (o galbūt įkalinto kūno) įvaizdį. Vėliau klaustrofobišką raudą nustelbia aukštame registre skaidriai skambantis choralas.

Pagal semantiką šie gretimi epizodai kviečia pamąstyti apie „moters kūno *vs* sielos“ dichotomiją, kurią nesunkiai galima apibrėžti feministiniais principais, kvestionuojančiais patriarchalinę priespaudą ir moterų išnaudojimą per visą pasaulio istoriją. Vis dėlto paskutinė Ešenvaldo kompozicijos dalis, sukurta pagal albanų rašytojo Martino Camajo eilėraštį, meta iššūkį tokiai traktuotei. Soprano solo ir po jo skambančio dueto taikus lyrinis pobūdis suponuoja prieštarinę postfeministinę interpretaciją, šlovinančią žmogaus pasirinkimą, jo saviraišką su „moteriškumo, kaip kūno nuosavybės, samprata“ (Gill 2017, 606), net jei šis pasirinkimas veda į fizinį ar metaforinį kūniškumo praradimą.

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad kiekvieno *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* klausytojo patirtis kuria unikalią komunikacinę erdvę, esančią kažkur tarp kompozitoriaus meninių intencijų, performatyvaus muzikos įkūnijimo ir klausytojo suvokimo bei interpretavimo mechanizmo, pagrįsto išankstinėmis asmeninėmis ir kultūrinėmis nuostatomis.