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Research Article

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Music at the Black Baltic Sea

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Abstract: Music is intimately implicated in racialising discourses. This is particularly pronounced in the case of so-called black music, i.e. the types of music that are commonly associated with African-American identity, most notably jazz and various forms of popular music. Genres of popular music are furthermore constructed continuously on the basis of a notion of their "black roots." The idea of the "black roots" of jazz and popular music is an essential ingredient of Paul Gilroy's (1993) analysis of a specific authenticity of blackness. To stress the history and consequences of the pre-twentieth century slave trade and institutionalised racism, Gilroy has coined the concept "Black Atlantic" that builds on the idea of a distinct double consciousness inherent in blackness as simultaneously a fundamental constituent and the ultimate other of the West. In the article, I aim at rethinking the notion of the Black Atlantic in relation to North-Eastern Europe. By way of marine analogy I ask, and building on the notions of the Black Pacific and the Black Mediterranean, how to formulate an analytical design "the Black Baltic Sea." In addition to addressing the impact of global racialising tendencies in music, this entails considering the cultural dynamics at issue in relation to the dynamics of postsocialism in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and Northern European indigeneity. On the basis of such a consideration, I argue that the styles of "black music" have been appropriated and adopted throughout the BSR, albeit in clearly different national manifestations which for their part imply variegated intersections between postcolonial and postsocialist processes. These intersections become manifest in the discourses over "new Europeanness" in music and the construction of national musical traditions, particularly when juxtaposed with the prevailing Islamophobia as regards treatments of Muslim music in mainstream media.

Keywords: postcolonialism, postsocialism, racism, authenticity, Northern Europe

In early 2014, in a magazine article focussing on "the voice of the Afro-Finnish generation," rapper Kani Kullervo (a.k.a. Abdikani Hussein) was interviewed and introduced as the first rapper in Finland of Somali background and the only Finnish Muslim rapper so far. In the article, the emergence of also other "Afro-Finnish" rappers is mentioned and discussed especially in relation to the choice of language. While the others rap all but exclusively in English, Kani Kullervo performs in Finnish. "Who's going to listen to me in English?" he asks and continues: "Finnish is my mother tongue that I speak every day and all the time. I can communicate much better in Finnish. … If I rapped in English, people would come and say to me that why do you try to be so black…" (qtd. Kolu 13).

The example serves to point towards different axes of meaning that surround the notion of blackness in the north-eastern corner of Europe. One axis is constituted by language, while other dimensions in this grid involve ethnicity, nationality, "race," religion and generations of migration. One can also bring in gender dynamics, as all the rappers mentioned in the article are male. Moreover, if "voice" is considered as something else than oscillation of eardrums, caused by conducting air from the lungs through the vocal cords, political dimensions are evident. And of course, when one is talking about meaning-making and communication, the notion of culture is exploited.

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In more precise terms, my aim is to interrogate the idea of blackness as a category of cultural identity through considering its variable dimensions as they manifest themselves in Finland and in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) in more general. This aim is furthermore linked to an objective to broaden the scope of postcolonial theorisation and studies by paying attention to the particularities of the BSR, most notably with respect to the Baltic Sea as a geopolitical boundary area between the (old) East and West. As racialisation is a crucial topic of postcolonial studies, the above goals are summed up in the term "Black Baltic Sea." More recent debates over global migration and the so-called refugee crisis of 2016 have in turn fuelled discussion about the role of the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden—in the global processes of postcoloniality. These issues have become topical not only because of the increased numbers of migrants from outside the region and the European Union but also due to the ascendancy of openly anti-immigrant right-wing populism in party politics during the 2010s, particularly in Finland and Sweden but manifested most violently in the anti-multiculturalist mass murder on Utøya, Norway, in 2011.

Such questions are profound cultural and societal ones, and music provides a propitious prospect to examine them in detail due to its multiple facets and modes of communication. In a single musical utterance, one has verbal, timbral, aesthetic and bodily expressions with their technological, gendered, sexual, cultural, political, social and religious implications. In this sense, it is wise to posit that music is "soundly organised humanity" (Blacking). An additional impetus here is the fact that while there has been ample attention paid to the dynamics surrounding the notion of blackness in the Nordic countries, very little has been written about its musical dimensions (see however Brown et al.; Rastas & Seye). Regarding blackness, one should also note the pervasiveness of the notion of "black music" that encapsulates blues, jazz, rhythm 'n' blues, soul, funk, reggae and rap, and is deeply associated with African-American identity. In the BSR, such cultural politics of classification become further complicated when juxtaposed with dynamics of postsocialism, indigeneity and the continuosly shifting phases of racism.

Countercultures of Modernity

The moniker "Black Baltic Sea" is based on a redevelopment of cultural scholar Paul Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic, by which he refers to a particular counterculture of modernity that hinges on a peculiar double consciousness inherent in blackness as a form of cultural categorisation that is simultaneously irrevocably modern and antithetical to the idea of the West. On the opening pages of *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy maintains that "all blacks in the West ... stand between (at least) two great cultural assemblages," namely those of nationality and ethnicity (1). These, in turn, are inextricably tied to ideas about authenticity and cultural integrity, to an extent it is possible to talk about cultural nationalism based on "the overintegrated conceptions of culture which present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of 'black' and 'white' people" (2).

Crucially, the Black Atlantic is a form of critical analysis of modernity that interrogates the centrality of racism and the whole notion of race in it by offering a theorisation of creolisation, hybridity and cultural mutation that "provides a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (16), and stems from a "desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (19). What is pivotal in such an analysis is a refusal of "the suggestion that cultural fusion involves betrayal, loss, corruption, or dilution," supported by a recognition of hybridity and intermixture as "not the fusion of two purified essences but rather a meeting of two heterogeneous multiplicities that in yielding themselves up to each other create something durable and entirely appropriate to troubled anti-colonial times" (144). As a result, in the end, the Black Atlantic becomes constituted as "a non-traditional tradition, an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable, and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the Manichean logic of binary coding" (198), signalling "the inescapability and legitimate value of mutation, hybridity, and intermixture en route to better theories of racism" (223).

In his summary of Gilroy's work in general and *The Black Atlantic* in particular, Paul Williams emphasises the inextricability of such theorisation from "a political project to end racism's influence on

human life" (3), a project that is not the property of the primary victims of racism but something in which everyone is implicated. Furthermore, instead of simplistic dogmas about being more tolerant and less prejudiced, at issue is a critical reflection into the worldwide political and social structures whose formation has been decidedly influenced by race-thinking and direct racism (3-4). Indeed, while Gilroy's work has received criticism on the basis of concentrating on the African-American experience and the associated "slave sublime" (Williams 99-100, 134-136), there is a need to consider the ways in which these historical forms of racism have informed the later forms of racial(ised) social relations. Gilroy himself suggests that "the concentrated intensity of the slave experience is something that marked out blacks as the first truly modern people, handling in the nineteenth century dilemmas and difficulties which would only become the substance of everyday life in Europe a century later" (221).

The dilemmas in question manifest themselves also within the BSR in the twenty-first century, albeit conditioned by their different national frameworks, musically and otherwise. Regardless of national—and nationalist—peculiarities in relation to migration, indigeneity and processes of postsocialism, certain master narratives prevail when it comes to blackness. In the words of Obi Phrase, a Sierra-Leonean reggae musician-activist with whom I collaborated in Finland in 2014-15 within a documentary film project, as he was reflecting upon his activities as the primus motor of an anti-Ebola campaign and the symbolic significance of having the ambassador of South Africa to Finland participate in the campaign:

We can never talk about Africa's liberation without going into the transatlantic slave trade. We can never talk about Africa's liberation without mentioning the apartheid system in South Africa, and ... thinking about exactly how they overcome or overcame that system; you know that South Africa is like, still licking wounds from brutality.

It is indeed arguable that the New World plantation slavery and the institutionalised racial segregation in South Africa constitute two master narratives associated with blackness, and that their legacy has been conspicuously resilient after their formal abolition. Gilroy does not dwell on the South African situation in detail, but he does refer to the name of Nelson Mandela as "a paternal talisman" that has the capability to alleviate intraracial differences, as "a black hero whose global significance lies beyond the limits of his partial South African citizenship and the impossible national identity which goes with it" (*The Black Atlantic* 95). What makes this assertion of particular relevance to my purposes is the explicitly musical context in which it is introduced; at issue is a new version of the 1960s hit *I'm So Proud*, made famous originally by the Chicagoan proto-reggae vocal trio the Impressions, retitled *Proud of Mandela* and topping the UK reggae charts in 1990. In Gilroy's estimation, the song "is a useful example in that it brings Africa, America, Europe, and the Caribbean seamlessly together" and offers "an analogy for comprehending the lines of affiliation and association which take the idea of the diaspora beyond its symbolic status as the fragmentary opposite of some imputed racial essence" (95).

The Roars of the Black Atlantic

Music does hold a specific place in the theorisation of the Black Atlantic, to the extent some are willing to deem it overemphasised, at the expense of visual arts and religious life especially (King 9-12). To be sure, there is a lot to be learned from the latter spheres, yet one should remember that when discussing music, it is the importance of bodily performance—as opposed to less immediately accessible literary or visual media—for the Black Atlantic cultural expression that is at issue. According to Williams, there are three distinct forms of social and cultural critique that so-called black music represents. First, there is the critique of capitalist labour, expressed most commonly through the metaphor of the slave experience; second, the critique of injustice, replete with references to "law as an unjust tool of state power"; and third, the critique of racist historiography that deprives the black Atlantic populations of any historical agency, for instance by reworking older songs and recounting major black musical innovators (90-92). What is important to note here is the non-verbal forms of expression that come into play, not only as stylistic references but also as platforms for phatic and ineffable meaning-making in more general. Gilroy himself emphasises here the significance of forms of racial terror in particular and maintains that while they were unspeakable, they

were not inexpressible. Thus one of his main aims "is to explore how residual traces of their necessarily painful expression still contribute to historical memories inscribed and incorporated into the volatile core of Afro-Atlantic cultural creation" (73).

This is further linked to Gilroy's notion of the slave sublime, by which he refers to the unattainability of the slave experience and its "unsayable claims to truth" (37), as well as to "the centrality of terror in stimulating black creativity" (131). This means inevitably that heightened attention must be paid on the phatic and the ineffable, for instance by considering how "the formation of a community of needs and solidarity [is] made audible in the music itself" (37). Williams summarises all this by noting that "[s]inging in a musical tradition that came out of the experience of slavery ... pulls words into new aural shapes because the pain ... resists being conveyed in spoken language" (100). A crucial aspect of the slave sublime is, however, that even the most radical experiments with expressive techniques are bound to fail as the slave experience defies them. The residual traces of the ineffable terror audible in forms of black music, then, offer no redemption but rather a confirmation that the redemption is not possible (see Gilroy, Against Race 260).

Gilroy's ideas about the Black Atlantic are well-known within (popular) music studies but rather often utilised as brief and thus necessarily generalising references to "a variegated constellation" of musical styles in the African diaspora (Austerlitz 1) which nevertheless are—well-nigh paradoxically—based on "a very real common aesthetic" or "musical pan-Africanism" (Bilby 284; see also Brown 93), to the importance of kinesics and performance instead of textuality and narrative (Hutchinson 87), and to the politics of authenticity associated with forms of black music in particular (Moore 215-17). There are also those for whom Gilroy's work constitutes merely incidental footnotes in rather sweeping ruminations over the relationships between Black and White Atlantic music that in the end prove to be tantamount to a juxtaposition between (African American) orality and (European) music notation (Mosley). There are of course important exceptions to this tendency to utilise the notion of the Black Atlantic uncritically, almost as a given; J. Griffith Rollefson, for instance, engages in reworking Gilroy's ideas in the context of musical Afrofuturism, albeit all but exclusively by concentrating on the notion of "anti-anti-essentialism," developed by Gilroy in The Black Atlantic, rather than reassessing the foundations of the Black Atlantic itself (86, 90-92). In a related fashion, Nabeel Zuberi takes his impetus from what he perceives as a risk from Gilroy's part to come "close to technological determinism in his criticisms of image culture and digitization" (133). Admittedly, the point of Zuberi's disquisition is geared towards Gilroy's later, more pessimistic writing about black popular music, but he does ground his discussion on detailed scrutiny of the concept of the diaspora in particular, as it emerges from Gilroy's earlier work. Such a scrutiny, he maintains, "helps us to understand the emergence of black British diasporic aesthetics" (135) and how a number of black musicians in the UK, associated with the marketing labels trip-hop and jungle, "are in fact translating many of the older techniques into the new digital environment" and "remain in dialogue with previous and current forms of Jamaican and African-American music" (139).

Also Simon Featherstone in his examination of *Postcolonial Cultures* notes how after the initial emphasis on music as a prime site of black cultural politics, there is an element of disillusionment in Gilroy's work on the basis of the "revolutionary conservatism" of global capitalism and "visual culture of simulation" that grew in the 1990s, signalling the end of the Black Atlantic resistance and change. In Featherstone's reading, in Gilroy's writing in the closing years of the twentieth century, the critical potential of Black Atlantic music transforms into "empty rhetorics of marginality" and complacent individualism. (Featherstone 37-8.) Admittedly, for Gilroy himself, it is particularly the US rap of the 1990s, in contrast to earlier "soulful" forms of black music, that represents a dilution of authenticity in favour of commercialism (Gilroy, *Against Race*, 179-82).

Flows from the Atlantic to Other Oceans and Its Inlets

Recognising that the notion of the Black Atlantic has served as one of the most influential theories of diaspora and cultural hybridity, it is hardly a surprise to encounter its localised applications, as it were, in

the form of the Black Pacific and the Black Mediterranean. In relation to the Irish diaspora in North America, also the formulation "Green Atlantic" has been utilised (e.g., O'Neill & Lloyd). In her analysis of the links between social and aesthetic performance and environmental history by setting "a natural disaster in a dialectical relationship with cultural memory," induced by a volcanic eruption on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, Kathleen M. Gough for example refers to the "Black and Green Atlantic" as a signal of "how the island's Afro-Irish legacy was set in motion by the green (ecological) crisis" (102-3), yet with no references to Gilroy's seminal ideas.

The idea of the Black Pacific, in contrast, has been based explicitly on Gilroy's work by its proponents, even if in a somewhat isolated manner. Bernard Scott Lucious gives direct credit to Gilroy, yet noting how the Black Atlantic "is not synonymous with the African diaspora" and therefore "should be understood as a synecdoche; it represents a part, but not the whole of the black (cultures of the) world," and how the "coinage and usage of 'Black Pacific' ... represents another part" (152n2). This part, then, is effectively "an emergent site of critical inquiry and cultural space at the interstices of three diasporas" that for their part are informed by the experiences of African-American military men in the Asia-Pacific, Asian "military brides" and the Afro-Amerasian children (122-3). What this means is a recognition of the interwovenness of blackness and "yellowness" (Asianness) as general frames of cultural identification in the north-western shores of the Pacific Ocean, but crucially also taking notice of the existence of the "black" indigenous populations in the area. In Lucious's estimation, it is the experiences and testimonies of Vietnamese Afro-Amerasians which are of particularly revealing nature in relation to the cultural and social dynamics in question (123-4).

For Lucious and other proponents of the Black Pacific, it does remain such, at least in terms of decibel levels. This is to say that while in the reworkings of Gilroy's ideas a lot of attention has been paid to the different "interdiasporic sites of critical inquiry" (Lucious 125), not much has been said about the significance of music—whether in communicating the residues of the ineffable terror associated with the slave sublime or not—in the Black Pacific, or the Black Mediterranean, or any other Black mass of salty water for that matter. The reasons for this are beyond my scope, yet I cannot resist insinuating such an oversight—Gilroy never ceases to stress the importance of musical details—results mainly if not exclusively from disciplinary boundaries. Gilroy is a sociologist, is he not, and thus his remarks should be redeveloped within social sciences, and the musical details are arguably best left to musicologists.

The same goes by and large for the "Black Mediterranean," which has been introduced as a unit of analysis for investigating the role of the African diaspora in the Francophone and Italian worlds especially. In relation to this, as well as to attempts to identify a "black Indian Ocean," Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley note how such scholarship suggests "that large bodies of water are not barriers but avenues for transnational, transoceanic trade, cultural exchange, and transformation" (29). Admittedly, their remarks date back to the time before the so-called immigration crisis in Europe in the mid-2010s, and more recently, the notion of the black Mediterranean has accrued more currency in analyses about borders, hospitality, historical subjectivity and "colonial amnesia" in the relations between Africa and Europe (Proglio; Danewid). These analyses tend to concentrate on ethical issues in pro-refugee activism for instance, and musical activities remain outside their focus.

A case in point is provided by Gabriele Proglio's reading of the Mediterranean as "an excess space of signification." By this she suggests moving beyond the conventional dichotomies that have been utilised in conceptualising Africa and Europe, and conceiving the Mediterranean as "a fluid space of connection between different cultures, nations, continents and subjectivities," a space which "can be used as an empty and meaningless space not only by non-European people in order to rethink their subjectivities and their connections with Africa and Europe" (411). Intriguingly, Proglio relies on Gilroy's writings and refers to the centrality of black music in representing the said excess, yet does not discuss the reasons for excluding musical phenomena from her investigation in the assemblages of memories of migrants from the Horn of Africa, despite the recognition of the centrality of "identity-making cultural practices (music, dance, food, etc.)" in attempts to "subvert the official Eurocentric creation of knowledge (history, literature, geography, etc.)" (419).

The Subregions of the Baltic Sea Region

Disciplinary cautiousness towards music notwithstanding, the ideas about the Black Pacific and the Black Mediterranean provide useful points of departure for theorising the Black Baltic Sea as an interdiasporic site and an excess space of signification that is implicated in its own dynamics of postcolonial racialisation, prejudices against blackness and histories of migration. Not only does the Black Baltic Sea provide people with possibilities for rethinking their subjectivities and connections with African-ness in particular, but to interrelate these with more nuanced dynamics of North-South relations, as well as of those between the East and the West. This is to state the obvious fact that the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is not uniform societally, politically or culturally, and in its contemporary constellation, comprises six primary geopolitical subregions which all have their particular historical trajectories.

First, as the name of the region suggests, there are the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the eastern shores. After being Soviet republics for five decades, they regained their independence in 1991 during the turmoil that eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union; since 2004, they have been members of NATO, which can be taken as an indication of post-Cold-War, or postsocialist, processes at play (see, e.g. Riim). Much of the same can be said and written about Poland on the southern side of BSR, though it never was a Soviet state but merely a member of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (TFCMA) known as the Warsaw Pact, and joined NATO in 1999.

Second, further in the east, there is the "unstable" cause of postsocialist relations, tensions and possible security threats, namely Russia (Riim, 34). To a substantial degree, contemporary Russia represents the surrogate of the Soviet Union in global politics, or what has been labelled by some political commentators as "Cold War II," referring to the heightened unease in the international relations between the West and Russia (and China) specifically since 2014 (Lind).

Third, moving north counter-clockwise, a particular strand in postsocialist processes is constituted by Finland. While the country has remained neutral in terms of military alliances since World War II, it had its own bilateral TFCMA with the Soviet Union, and because of the friendly, cooperative and assisting relations—or submissive stagnation, depending on one's stance—the term Finlandisation, or *Finnlandisierung*, was coined in German-speaking Central Europe. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, at issue is a "process or result of becoming obliged for economic reasons to favour (or refrain from opposing) the interests of [a powerful neighbouring state] despite not being formally allied to it politically."

The fourth geopolitical subregion at issue is constituted by Sápmi (in the North Sámi orthography), the land of the indigenous Saami populations. As the different spellings imply, at issue are several languages and cultural traits within a larger group of indigenous people, and as a consequence, debates abound over the proper criteria for asserting one's Saami identity. In addition, in recent decades many Saami have moved from the very north to the "southern" cities and generations have already grown up there, constituting a demographic category known as the City-Saami. With respect to the ethnic dynamics in northernmost Europe the Saami hold a pivotal place, not least due to forcible attempts at assimilation in the past and to disputes over cultural appropriation in the present day. It is arguable that especially in Finland the Saami became the targets of fierce racist politics in the 1930s in the attempts of the country's political and cultural elite to prove the racial position of Finns as one of the Nordic races, or at least not as the much-despised Mongols (see, e.g. Kemiläinen).

Next, on the western side of the Baltic Sea, there is Sweden, also known as the "People's Home" (*Folkhemmet* in Swedish) due to its egalitarian social democratic politics in the post-World-War-II decades in particular. As a result of an amalgamation of war-time neutrality, experience and flexibility in refugee admission from Norway, Finland and the Baltic countries during the war, and the realisation of the importance of refugees' contribution to the labour market as well as of the benefits of granting foreigners equal rights and social security, Sweden emerged by the mid-1950s as a country of practically free immigration. Yet it should be noted that until the 1970s, non-European immigration into Sweden was minimal, and thus it may be reasonable to maintain "that Swedish immigration policy has been guided not only by welfare state ambitions, labour policy, economic and humanitarian considerations, or by concerns for the security of the state, but that it was also a product of salient perceptions of ethnicity" (Byström 620).

Afterwards, nevertheless, the country has become "internationally renowned as one of the most prominent representatives of an officially declared multicultural policy," even if there is ample evidence about the discrimination against Finnish migrants in the 1970s (Borevi 138, 143). The more recent ascension of the right-wing populist party Sweden Democrats and the re-introduction of passport control on the intra-Nordic borders after the 2016 "crisis" suggest the People's Home is creaking.

Finally, to summarise the BSR cultural dynamics in a general fashion, one may note how the south-western bottom of the Baltic Sea constitutes, loosely speaking and writing, the north-eastern corner of Western Europe. In this sense, and particularly during the Cold War (I), the Baltic Sea epitomised for its part the Iron Curtain that separated the East from the West (in the European scale). Proponents of the Cold War II thesis may very well claim that the geopolitical position of the BSR has not changed significantly, even if the East/West boundary has moved some five hundred kilometres eastbound. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Baltic Sea was a major waterway for trade and hence also for cultural exchange—not to mention frequent military conflicts. Yet in contrast to the transatlantic slave trade in the past and the ongoing plight of African refugees on the Mediterranean, the best-known crises associated with the Baltic Sea as a physical maritime environment do not deal with blackness as a socio-cultural category but rather with manoeuvres and pollution. Certainly, the importance of US military troops in Europe during and after World War II as facilitators of African European intercourses, both socially and physically, should not be downplayed. The so-called occupation babies in post-war Germany and the subsequent increase in the public discussion about African Germans attests to this (see Blackshire-Belay 270).

Roots and Routes of Racial Utopia

To continue with punning ambiguities of language, one may note that while the Belts and Sounds between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea have conditioned and directed the waters, the resulting cultural interactions have favoured certain forms of belting and types of musical sound. With respect to the core musical aspects of the Black Atlantic, to examine the issue further entails considering how discourses of authenticity and the ineffable slave sublime feature in the musics of the Black Baltic Sea. Following Gilroy's original ideas in *The Black Atlantic*, of particular interest in this respect are the dynamics between "roots and routes" (19, 133), or, the emphases laid on assumptions about immutable racialised musical traditions and, alternatively (and less frequently), on transformations and continual reinscriptions that result from musical travels with either displaced groups of people or commercial mass media. According to him, much centres on the notion of authenticity:

The problem of cultural origins and authenticity ... has taken on greater proportions as original, folk, or local expressions of black culture have been identified as authentic and positively evaluated for that reason, while subsequent hemispheric or global manifestations of the same cultural forms have been dismissed as inauthentic and therefore lacking in cultural or aesthetic value precisely because of their distance (supposed or actual) from a readily identifiable point of origin. ... Authenticity enhances the appeal of selected cultural commodities and has become an important element in the mechanism of the mode of racialisation necessary to making non-European and non-American musics acceptable items in an expanded pop market. The discourse of authenticity has been a notable presence in the mass marketing of successive black folk-cultural forms to white audiences. (*The Black Atlantic* 96, 99.)

In his elaboration on Gilroy's ideas as a basis for "a methodology for analysing postcolonial music," Featherstone builds on the possibility to adopt "the model of the Black Atlantic circuit" beyond the United States, Great Britain and the Caribbean (34, 38). In more detail, he argues for a cross-disciplinary approach that surpasses the conventional foci in folklore studies and musicology on lyrics and musical forms, respectively, by stressing "the political power of the performance" in its corporeal and audible form and through that, questions of value in the diverse contexts of the music's production and reception. This entails defining and conceptualising music "as migrant and hybrid performance rather than as an expression of stable identities, national or personal" and recognising "its political agency as enacted through a complex dialogue of history, body, voice, material contexts and reception" (36-9).

The impact of these ideas is evident in recent cultural analyses that aim at examining how the postcolonial condition manifests itself in Europe. For instance, more than half of the chapters in the collection Blackening Europe deal with music and dance, thus indicating the centrality of music in the cultural processes associated with blackness. Relating to the above six subregions of the Black Baltic Sea, in the introduction to the volume Heike Raphael-Hernandez notes the impact of several different factors in the era of postcolonial blackening of Europe, as it were, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century: during the world wars, as well as the cold one, many African American soldiers entered Europe; the socialist bloc, for its part, welcomed Africans as guests or students, either in the spirit of (anti-capitalist) solidarity or "gaining intellectual territory" by educating future leaders, or both; and in the media, blackening sounds and images have increased tremendously, for instance through jazz brought even "to faraway corners such as northern Finland" and especially through the impact of MTV on youth culture (2). Moreover, in the foreword for the collection, Gilroy himself propagates for antiracist "postcolonial culturebuilding," or counterhistory, comprising of various confrontations, one of which "would be directed toward understanding the impact of black literature, culture, art, and music on European life, and in particular seeing how during the latter half of the twentieth century an appetite for various African American cultures was part of how Europe recomposed itself in the aftermath of fascism" (xviii).

As is the case with Europe in general, the Nordic region has also been subjected to similar enquiries into its relationship with and role in the postcolonial processes. Yet music has featured rather rarely in such investigations about "latent" or "complicit" colonialism (Raiskio; Keskinen et al.), which again may be an indication of disciplinary cautiousness more than anything else. An exception to this tendency is constituted in *Afro-Nordic Landscapes* by an email conversation about jazz in the Scandinavian countries, or how in Denmark, Norway and Sweden "the music went from being demonized to become a seamless part of national culture," as editor Michael McEachrane puts it in the introduction to the volume (2). In the conversation itself, it is pointed out by the participants how at issue is the interwovenness of racial, national and class discourses, as well as their relationship to the notion of art. It is mentioned for example how in Sweden in the process of distinguishing bebop and other artistic styles from dance tunes by the 1950s, the ethnic and racial difference associated with jazz was supplanted by a distinct middle- to upperclass status (Brown et al. 76-77).

As indicated by the emergence of "the famed but elusive 'Nordic sound' in jazz with influences from European chamber music and Scandinavian folk" in the 1970s (McEachrane 2) as well as by the claims about the very high artistic standards of Finnish jazz with similar emphases on "strongly audible ... African-American roots ... but interpreted perhaps with a more Nordic approach" (Kaarresalo-Kasari & Kasari 8), the significance of jazz as an example of postcolonial musical mutations is paramount also in the BSR. The so-called Nordic sound, or tone, is of course associated with the Western sphere in the region, but jazz is also of historical importance in relation to the cultural dynamics on the Eastern socialist side. As Maxim Matusevich notes in his article with the Beatles-inflected title "Black in the U.S.S.R.," on a general level a major factor behind certain affinity towards black cultural forms was initially the Marxist ideal of colourblind class solidarity, supported with politically laden disgust against US slavery, even if at the same time the Soviet central administration was segregating Central Asia racially. Thus, in the 1920s, jazz and other black cultural expression were treated more amicably as a form of class struggle than in many other white European societies, and this encouraged many African American and Afro-Caribbean "race travelers" to embark on a journey to the Soviet Union in search of a racial utopia (58-62). One of the most renowned of such travellers was actor and singer Paul Robeson, who became a household name and a cultural icon in the USSR—and, as Matusevich insinuates, "seduced by this adoration" (64).

From Postsocialist Counterculture to New Europeanness

All this changed with Stalin's "iron rule" based on cynical pragmatism and paranoid xenophobia. By the end of the 1930s and the breakout of World War II, the majority of the black seekers of racial utopia had become disillusioned and left the country, "leaving a smattering of mixed-blood descendants, many of whom would

constitute the core of a small but culturally significant diasporic community of black Russians" (Matusevich 65-66). Only after roughly three decades, the next wave of black migration into the Soviet Union emerged, consisting predominantly of male students from newly independent African nations who were yearning not so much for a racial utopia than an affordable quality education. They also engaged in direct debate with the Soviet system, and thus inadvertently subverted it by carving out "a place of *relative freedom* from the political and cultural constraints" (65-69). Consequently, maintains Matusevich:

Africans of the second wave often acted as the conduits of Westernization, giving their Soviet friends, fellow students, and girlfriends their first taste of things foreign: jazz and rock'n'roll records, blue jeans, popular magazines, books in a variety of European languages, etc. ... With its strong emphasis on improvisation and free spontaneous expression, jazz forged—as rock music did later—a special kind of camaraderie between its listeners, one that knew no borders or ideological divides. Jazz as an art form, then, was bound to run afoul of Soviet authorities ... (69-70).

In later decades, continues Matusevich, Africans in the Soviet Union provided the burgeoning counterculture with inspiration "by dint of their 'foreignness' and detachment from the Soviet mainstream" and through the escapism associated with Africa's "fantasy-land status" (71). As this implies, the facts about Africa were in many cases less essential than its representations and imagined qualities where romanticism blended into politics. In such instances, the cultural and political value of black musicians was paramount, as "the partisans of Soviet counterculture worshipped the likes of Louis Armstrong, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Marley, and others" (71).

What is yet of crucial importance with respect to the inextricability of postcolonial and post-socialist processes in the Black Baltic Sea is "a certain disconnect between the internationalist ideals trumpeted by the Soviet state and Africa's real place within the Soviet society" that has provided "sadly ironic" grounds for "an epidemic of widespread racism and racially motivated violence" since the late 1980s (Matusevich 72). Matusevich does not link these issues to musical phenomena, and such analyses are indeed hard to find; some guidelines may be nevertheless found in scrutinies about music in other postcolonial post-Soviet contexts, as it were. For instance, one might ask to what extent the developments in Ukraine and the Baltic states are (or were, before 2014 at least) comparable in terms of authenticity, exoticism and nationalism in music (see Wickström). A more direct example regarding blackness in the BSR music is provided by the changes that have taken place in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) since the fall of the Berlin wall; according to Alf Björnberg, what is new in this situation "is the increasing presence of artists of non-European origin":

As new patterns of migration change the make-up of European populations, even nations wont to think of themselves as ethnically homogenous have been increasingly represented by artists of a "foreign" ethnic background. Caribbean-born Dave Benton, who [co-]represented Estonia in 2001 [with Tanel Padar], was the first black artist ever to win the contest. Another case in point is Sweden: in 2002 the country was represented by three female black singers under the punning name Afro-Dite ... (22).

Philip Bohlman, for his part, accredits the post-Cold-War(-I) ESC with the status of "a domain of New Europeanness." As such, he maintains, the contest betrays significant paradoxes and contradictions in the attempts of the entries to accommodate local, national, international and European traits, which immediately stand at odds with conventional aesthetics of nationalism. In his estimation, this has often been done through a deliberate choice of black performers and favouring black styles such as dancehall, gospel and soul. Benton provides a case in point, as the song he and Padar performed, titled *Everybody*, indicates to Bohlman how "ideological questions of European unity ... seem at first hearing out of place against the musical choice to employ an amalgam of dancehall and gospel styles" (215-6). Bohlman discusses this further in terms of "a palpable reconfiguration of the center" of the ESC through the emergence of "new blackness in European popular music" when entering the twenty-first century. In effect, this meant that the aesthetic essence of the contest and thus the criteria of its Europeanness shifted from conventional national styles towards juxtapositions of "the national and a different, often distinctive, black musical style." Regarding Benton's and Padar's victorious achievement in particular, Bohlman asks "whether the blackness of the song's style represented the nation of emigration (Aruba) or the nation of immigration

(Estonia)" and, as an indirect answer, suggests that through borrowing and appropriation the song and its performers expressed "an aesthetic of New Europeanness" that defies the older binary either/or logic of national belonging (234).

Rap and Postsocialist Hybridity

Arguably, another prime site of musical expressions of New Europeanness is constituted by hip hop, or rap music to be more precise. Regarding the notion of the Black Atlantic and the introduction of the Black Baltic Sea on the basis of it, there is a handful of references to it in the recent collection focusing on Hip-Hop in Europe (Nitzsche & Grünzweig). In the majority of cases, however, the notion is mentioned rather fleetingly as a shorthand for racialised transnational flows and often in a precipitate and simplifying manner. For instance, in the introductory chapter it is suggested that the Black Atlantic as developed by Gilroy refers to "a continuous movement of black people back and forth across the Atlantic" and "emphasizes the common ground of black music and cultural practices across both sides of the Atlantic Ocean which originated in Africa, moved to the American continent through slavery and the across the Atlantic again ending up being global cultural forms" (Nitzsche 15). While it is the triangular maritime routes of the slave trade that provide the basis of Gilroy's theorisation, it would be more to the point to emphasise the Black Atlantic as a "web of diaspora identities and concerns" that should not be conflated with projects of "building an ethnically particular or nationalist cultural canon" (Gilroy, The Black Atlantic 218). Instead, at issue is a theorisation of "the inescability and legitimate value of mutation, hybridity, and intermixture en route to better theories of racism and of black political culture than those so far offered by cultural absolutists of various phenotypical hues" (223). Indeed, even if Gilroy in The Black Atlantic does write about "all blacks in the West" (1), he nevertheless warns against the lures of crude forms of "pan-Africanism" in the sense that there would be "some African essence that could magically connect all blacks together" (24). In his earlier book There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack, he expressed the same idea by noting that it is not any form of shared Africanness that connects black Atlantic people, but rather "a common experience of powerlessness ... experienced in *racial* categories" (208; original emphasis).

Admittedly, in their article on "Merseybeatz," or hip hop in Liverpool, Brett D. Lashua and Yaw Owusu note in passing "the fluidity and mixity of genres and styles" associated with the idea of the Black Atlantic (196). Similarly, Terence Kumpf in his excision of the transculturating potentials of hip hop in Germany refers to Gilroy's work as a form of cultural theory that builds on assumptions about abiding forms of intercultural circulation and exchange (208), even if only very briefly. More credit is given to Gilroy by Andrzej Antoszek, who in his treatment of Polish rap lyrics stresses the importance of the Black Atlantic for addressing the "many multicultural and international influences" that form the "monumental background" of rap and hip hop in the United States, and for acknowledging "one of hip-hop's crucial traits that make it so encompassing and open namely the genre's hybridity" (259-60).

Importantly for the formulation of the Black Baltic Sea, Antoszek relates hip hop in Poland to both postcolonialism and postsocialism. To begin with, he notes how already in the 1980s and before the transition from socialism to capitalism, hip hop was "a logical continuation and consequence of Poland enchantment with American culture," even if at that time "the incorporation of the Black into Polish culture was met with many doubts and reservations, indicating that Poland ... was a peculiar mixture of openness, insularity and even racism" (257). His adaptation of postcolonialism is nevertheless somewhat purpose-oriented as he reserves it in the first instance for the discussion on historical partitions of Poland between Prussia, Russia and Habsburg Austria, arguing that these led to a transformation of "one of Europe's first multicultural states" into distinct regions with their own rules and mentality (261). Moving forth from this, he links the issue also to the post-World-War-II era as part of the Soviet Bloc by stressing that while there was a relative absence of "any external agents or *colonists*," the central management of the political system from Moscow turned Poland into "a platform of clashing interests, unstable identities and not-always-very-clear divisions into the 'good' and the 'bad' ones, resulting in a typically postcolonial schizophrenia" (262). Finally, with respect to the postsocialist years, Antoszek maintains that in its current

form the Polish postcolonial condition, as it were, is shaped "in addition to all the 'classical' postcolonial problems including resistance and representation, power struggle, capital or language ... the more than ever unpredictable turns of [global] economy deciding" (262). What is noteworthy here is that he does not connect the issue explicitly to either ethnicity in general or racism in particular, and thus risks reducing Polish postcoloniality to a (postsocialist) form of class struggle. Intriguingly, he refers to the idea of "postsocialist hybridity" that manifests itself "in a hint of nostalgia for the 'old, good days,' distrust towards the new democracy or even the assumption that the state is still secretly infiltrated and sabotaged by the Soviets" (264), and the question remains open as to how to expand the theorisation of this sort of hybridity by addressing issues of xenophobia, racism and extreme nationalism more carefully.

A Mutha(f***a) of All Traditions

Similar questions can be posed concerning the cultural position of other genres associated intimately with blackness, both historically and in the contemporary socio-political setting. For instance, there is plenty of room for cultural analyses about the shifts that have taken place in reggae in the region; in Finland, one of the first hits in the genre was *Reggae OK*, the ESC entry from 1981 and still probably the only reggae tune in the world that includes an accordion solo, while at the moment the blooming roots reggae scene in the country is dominated by white artists performing in the Finnish language (see Järvenpää 59-63). Regarding Sweden, in turn, some attention has been paid on how black genres such as rap and reggae provide the basis of musical expression for white radical nationalists (Teitelbaum). Hints of the same can be found also in Antoszek's remark about the limited number of contemporary Polish rappers who realise the global nature of current societal problems in the sense that they "should not be treated as international schemes and plots staged by other nations to put us [Poles] down, as many right-wing politicians suggest using a very nationalistic rhetoric" (283).

Historically, between jazz and rap there, of course, have been numerous other genres of so-called black music, which all have been adopted, appropriated, domesticated and indigenised to various degrees in the BSR. Scholarly investigation into the topic is yet again fairly scarce, but on a general level, it appears that while such genres as gospel, calypso, soul and funk have remained rather marginal, rock and rap have found their way into the national identity constructions, not to mention the "Nordicisation" of jazz. Be it as it may, in Finland, for example, major historians of popular music have built their work on the idea of three "parent traditions" of (1) Finno-Slavic, preferably Kalevalan, folk music of mythic historical proportions; (2) central European classical music, in its pre-atonal and pre-serial forms, combined with nineteenth-century "Chekhovian nostalgia" (Jalkanen 227) and many times in simplified or 'light' arrangements; and (3) "Afro-American" music with its unsophisticated yet oddly alluring syncopation, blue notes and—to quote music historians Pekka Jalkanen and Vesa Kurkela—"negroid vocal qualities" (459).

There is no denying that the forms of music associated with these alleged traditions have been influential in Finland. But here, one should follow caution in deeming the influence a direct consequence of a tradition. Instead, one may consider the ostensible symptom as the cause and vice versa; in other words, following historian Eric Hobsbawm, the tradition may very well be thought of as invented, wholly or at least partly in most cases, to serve the purposes of justifying and legitimising the practice that supposedly carries the influences. To fit, say, the Somali musical practices in Finland into this model of parent traditions is not straight-forward and raises questions about the possibility and politics of exclusion from what counts as national culture.

To Conclude

The idea—or invention—of three parent traditions of popular music may be a Finnish peculiarity, yet it is arguable that historically the styles of "black music" have been appropriated and adopted throughout the BSR, albeit in clearly different national manifestations. In simplistic terms, one might talk and write about a division between Western postcolonial and Eastern postsocialist dynamics and processes in this

respect; it might be more fortuitous though to approach the conundrum in intersectional terms, meaning the ways in which the global postcolonial condition has become—and continuously becomes—articulated in the context of North-Eastern European postsocialism, whether in its "proper" or Finlandised form, or in whatever materialisation the BSR cultural hybridity begets. This, in brief, is the contribution of the Black Baltic Sea on a conceptual plane.

What is clear, nevertheless, is that there are at least three major areas of enquiry for further research with respect to the cultural politics of music in the Black Baltic Sea. To begin with, when faced with the increased popularity of right-wing political populism not only in postsocialist Poland and—pardon the provocation—Finland but also in Sweden, the homeland of cultural egalitarianism, one has to wonder whether the appraisals of musical new Europeanness are worth the optimism. On another hand, one is left baffled with the potentials of rap as a tool for social and societal change, as it challenges conventions of musical production and the whole notion of musicianship, not to mention the prodigal expectations laid on online distribution. Finally, as Kani Kullervo and other Nordic musicians of Somali background have demonstrated, there are "black enough" artists in the region to contradict the mainstream Islamophobic accounts where only the extremist interpretations make the news. One can only hope that the output of such artists, as well as the critical reception of them, will be of use in examining and elaborating social policies in the future, in the BSR and elsewhere.

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