

Musical representation of war, genocide, and torture

Treating cultural trauma with music

Susanna Välimäki
University of Turku
School for History, Culture and Arts Studies

Abstract: In this article, I explore musical representations of trauma that are related to war, genocide, and torture. The aim is to discuss, via detailed musical examples, the significance of music as a vehicle for dealing with collective trauma, and hence as a sociocultural site for the social healing process. I approach music as a cultural practice that is especially capable of processing collective traumas and burdens transmitted from generation to generation.

Methodologically I combine trauma theory and cultural music analysis. Most importantly, I draw on the cultural study of trauma, which examines representations of collective traumas in cultural practices, art, and popular culture from the point of view of collective memory, remembrance, and mourning (e.g., Felman & Laub 1992; Caruth 1995 & 1996; Bal et al. 1999; Eyerman 2002; Alexander et al. 2004; Modlinger & Sontag 2011; Siltala 2012 & 2014). This interdisciplinary field of humanistic, sociological, psychological, and medical research is substantially influenced by psychoanalytic trauma theories but orients more towards the social, cultural, and collective, instead of or along with the individual, psychic, and private. Cultural music analysis, for its part, means that my focus is on the sonic substance and the mechanisms therein that construct meaning.

THE CULTURAL TRAUMA PROCESS AND TRANSFERRED BURDEN

The experience of psychological trauma defies reason and a sense of order, damages the ability to maintain a stable sense of reality and identity, and exceeds our understanding, tolerance, and capacity to master and respond to it and its long-lasting effects (Laplanche & Pontalis 1988: 465; Granofsky 1995; Caruth 1995: 2–4). When the trauma is collective and not only individual, it concerns a large group of people, and damages the elementary tissues of social life, collective identity, and sense of community (Alexander 2004: 4).

The cultural study of trauma emphasizes trauma as a cultural process (e.g., Alexander 2004; Eyerman 2002: 1–10). Here it is essential to understand three intermingled aspects in the conception of trauma as a cultural process. (1) First, the emergence of trauma is related not only to a traumatic event but to the social repression of that event from the shared cultural sphere of representations (*ibid.*). The repression can be total or partial. A collective trauma requires collective processing and recognition in the form of public cultural representations in order to transform, little by little, from an unnamable affect that disables the culture (and its individuals) into the symbolic sphere of collective

Ritva Hartama-Heinonen & Pirjo Kukkonen (eds.)

Pax

Acta Translatologica Helsingiensia (ATH) Vol 3, 122–136. 2015.
Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Nordica, Swedish Translation Studies.

remembrance and mourning work. This process is called the *cultural trauma process*, and art and popular culture have a significant role in it (ibid.).

(2) Second, it is important to understand that one does not have to experience oneself directly, in one's own life, war, torture, genocide, or other utmost traumatic events in order to suffer from cultural trauma. It is enough to grow up or live in an atmosphere of trauma. For collective traumas are trans-generational: they transmit unconsciously from one generation to the next (Volkan 2000 & 2014; Siirala 1983; Siltala 2012 & 2014). The less the trauma is socially addressed, the heavier the *transferred burden* (Siirala 1983: 92; see also, Siltala 2012 & 2014), the suppressed heritage of trauma is.

As Ron Eyerman (2002: 1–22) and Jeffrey C. Alexander (2004: 1–10; see also, Alexander et al. 2004) have emphasized in their elaboration of the notion of *cultural trauma*, cultural trauma always initiates “a meaning struggle”: a process of grappling with the traumatic event and signifying it painfully within a timespan of several decades or even centuries.¹ This is precisely what is meant by a cultural trauma process (ibid.).

(3) Third, a cultural trauma process is a prerequisite for social healing. Step by step, it results in acknowledging and naming the nature of the burden, the victim, and the responsible quarters (Eyerman 2002: 1–22; Alexander 2004: 1–10; cf. also Alexander et al. 2004). It is only through social mediation and collective sharing via public cultural representations that the disabling burden can be eased, by distributing it from the carrier groups to larger collectives of people, who by sharing the same social space (be it an ethnic or some other kind of social group, society, nation, or the whole of humankind), should be able to respond, co-mourn, remember, and thus carry collective responsibility. (Siirala 1983: 14–16, 60–61, 92–95.)

LISTENING TO THE OTHER

Music is an effective vehicle for contributing to the cultural trauma process. As an art form based on hearing and temporality, it has an especially direct ability to appeal to the nonverbal, bodily, and affective sphere of subjectivity (e.g., Välimäki 2005). It is precisely in this experiential realm of subjectivity, beyond the symbolic realm of signification, that the unidentified trauma lives on. As psychoanalytic music research and psychodynamic music therapy have revealed, music may be able to contact hidden dimensions of subjectivity that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to reach, and thus to work through traumas (e.g., Schwarz 1997; Välimäki 2005).

¹ Though my present research is significantly influenced by the theorization of the notion of cultural trauma of Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka (2004), I use the concepts of cultural, collective, social, and national trauma to refer to the same phenomenon at a general level. In using the concept of cultural trauma my aim is nevertheless to emphasize the cultural meaning struggle for representations of trauma.

On the other hand, because of its temporal, bodily, and affective nature, music has a powerful ability to resonate with the basic experience of being, invoke compassion, and build an ethical space of encounter; music is a powerful vehicle of identification, since attentive listening is always based on resonance between the source of sound and the listener (Välimäki & Torvinen 2014: 10–13). Music becomes meaningful only when identifying with it in a comprehensive way, assimilating into it, taking it into one's own body. In this way music teaches us how to listen to the other – how to encounter the pain of the other.

This is the theoretical context in which I will now listen to three musical representations of cultural trauma. These are: (1) *Different Trains* (1988), a composition for string quartet and tape by minimalist composer Steve Reich; (2) Bruce Springsteen's rock classic *Born in the U.S.A.* from the album of the same name (1984); and (3) *Stress Position* (2009), which is a solo composition for amplified piano by Drew Baker.² These examples all underline the significance of sound and hearing in the psychic landscape of trauma, and expose how music may create a shape for something which otherwise would be difficult or impossible to engage with – which actually cannot even be thought of properly but which exists in the realm of body, affect, and the unconscious, behind reason, language, and the symbolic.

DIFFERENT TRAINS BY STEVE REICH

Different Trains for string quartet and tape is among the most popular pieces by American (post)minimalist composer Steve Reich (b. 1936). It is also one of the best-known compositions describing the Holocaust. Reich has explained the background impulse for the composition as being related to his own childhood experiences of travelling in a train and his later reflections on the matter. Born in New York as a United States citizen in 1936, Reich frequently travelled in his childhood, during the years 1939–1942, through the American continent, from New York to Los Angeles and vice versa. His divorced parents lived on different sides of the continent, which is why he made the journey, which at that time took four days, with his governess a couple of times a year. He says: “If I had been in Europe during this period, as a Jew I would have had to ride very different trains.” (Reich 1989b & 2002: 180–181.) While he was travelling by train from coast to coast in America, in Europe trains were taking children to concentration camps.

The composition, which lasts about half an hour, has three movements, each of which represents a different kind of train journey: I *America – Before the War*, II *Europe – During the War*, and III *After the War*. Reich collected and recorded various kinds of tape material for his work. He looked for sounds of

² I have discussed these pieces more briefly in another context in Välimäki 2014.

American and European trains of the 1930s and 1940s. He produced reminiscent speech material by interviewing his governess (Virginia), with whom he made the journeys, and a retired Pullman porter (Mr. Davis), who had worked on the New York–Los Angeles trains. Moreover, he collected fragments from recorded talks by three Holocaust survivors (Rachella, Paul, and Rachel), speaking of their childhood train journey to a concentration camp. They had been the same age as Reich, and had experienced the journey to the concentration camp with a child's eyes, body, and mind. Afterwards they had moved to the United States.³ (Reich 1989b & 2002: 180–183.)

Fragments from the speech and other sound materials are heard in the midst of the string quartet texture (which is quadrupled by recorded layers on the tape). They appear slurred and vague, like extremely sore memories approaching the consciousness behind the veil of repression. The speech fragments have been processed to make them unclear, misty, and distanced, so that it is difficult or impossible to understand the words without prior knowledge, such as the printed text in the liner notes.

The music behind the words

The piece begins with a quick, mechanical texture, based on repetitive back-and-forth-gestures by the strings. This is easy to associate both with the sound of a fast-moving steam train and the bodily experience of being in a train. Simultaneously the tape feeds into the mix sounds of railroad-crossing warning bells, rails clanging, trains hooting, and utterances, all with a definite rhythm and timbre, and some with pitch as well.

After about half a minute, the music slows down a little and the harmonic landscape changes, as if the train were changing tracks. At the same time the first speech fragments are heard: “from Chicago” and “to New York”. These two utterances, deriving from the Pullman porter's reminiscences, are the only speech fragments heard amid the avid string texture during the next minute, “from Chicago” being repeated thirteen times and “to New York” six times, inconstantly alternating. Repetition, fragmentation, and blurring are nucleus elements of the aesthetics of this piece, and these are the features that characterize the poetics of memory, unconscious, and repression, especially as related to efforts to remember something long ago in the past. Not until after one-and-a-half minutes is a new speech fragment added to the mix (“one of the fastest trains”).

³ Reich found these recorded recollections in the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University at New Haven and in the Holocaust Collection of the American Jewish Committee's William E. Wiener Oral History Library at New York (Reich 1989b).

The very beginning of the piece is a good example of how the strings imitate the speech fragments in this work (Cumming 1997: 141–142; Schwarz 1997: 19). The strings are, in addition to the machine-like train texture, playing melodic figures of the heard speech fragments. We may say that the strings play (out) the non-verbal, i.e., the musical features of the language (cf., Cumming 1997: 141–142; Schwarz 1997: 19; Reich 1989b).

The musical imitation of speech greatly resembles the non-verbal communication of the early interaction between an infant and his carer (see, e.g., Välimäki 2005: esp. 163–204). This kind of music is heard a lot in *Different Trains*. In the second movement, *Europe – During the War*, the strings in this way mimic the utterances of individuals reminiscing about their childhood Holocaust experiences. We may say that when speech is stripped of the words (of the verbal semantics), what is left is the pure affect. This means that when the strings in *Different Trains* imitate melodies, rhythms, and timbres in the words emitted by the reminiscing individuals, they play out the affects behind the words: the encapsulated emotive experiences (emotion-memories) concealed beneath the surface of the language. The non-verbal, “musical” aspects of speech are precisely what the music is able to imitate in language. In the second movement of *Different Trains*, this imitation is a sign of trauma: no words are left, only the affect.

Bodily traces of trauma

The repetitious and mechanical music can be heard as conveying the movement of a train, as already said. But at the same time, it can be heard as a bodily image and a bodily memory of being in a train. Likewise it can be heard as the murmur of the bloodstream stirred by the pumping heart, or as a womb-like hum. An unaddressed trauma remains beyond signification, i.e., in the bodily realm of being, but even an addressed trauma that has been worked through over and over again remains to a considerable extent beyond language, in the bodily realm of being if the trauma is so terrible that no words can ever capture or respond to it satisfactorily (Laplanche & Pontalis 1988: 465–469; Moore & Fine 1990: 199; Siltala 2012). Transgenerational trauma of genocide can never be totally worked through; it demands constant remembrance. This fact resonates in the minimalist, tight and machinery-like string texture that spreads in an oceanic way throughout the listening space and that keeps on going, no matter what. It is the sound of the constrained, involuntary movement: drive, repetition compulsion, and violent forcing (Cumming 1997: 130–131).

The roar of the train constructed in *Different Trains* is like the roar of the consciousness behind which the memories open up, like vague, hazy scraps. Words take shape only here and there, fleetingly, without further connections.

Speech fragments become unclear in the second movement of the work, where the listener has to approach the darkest nucleus of the trauma, Auschwitz (-Birkenau). Reich's way of processing the speech material, to make it more fragmented, unclear, and shapeless, relates not only to the expression of the workings of trauma and memory. It also relates to the nature of the work's subject matter. Can a holocaust, the industrial mass slaughter of millions of people, be truly represented, described, and narrated? (Cf. Felman & Laub 1992; Caruth 1996; cf. also Adorno [1949] 1983: 34; [1966] 2005: 362–363.) Has anyone ever really heard, listened to, and been able to understand what genocide is, and what an individual, or a child who has experienced genocide says about it? How much and which aspects of a massive cultural trauma can be brought into the representative realm of signification and how much or which aspects of it can never enter the shared cultural discourse?

The silence

The second movement of *Different Trains* is characterized from the very beginning by an incessant blare of sirens. A child's horror is heard in the voice of a middle-aged individual relating details registered as a child on a journey to a concentration camp (Cumming 1997: 143):

“1940”
[– –]
“the Germans walked in”
[– –]
“no more school”
[– –]
“strange sounding names”
“Polish names”
“Lots of cattle wagons there”
“They were loaded with people”
“They shaved us”
“They tattooed a number on our arm”
“Flames going up to the sky – it was smoking”

At this point in the second movement of the composition, when Rachella mentions the flames and smoke coming out of Auschwitz's crematory, the pulse of the train that has so far been relentless suddenly subsides and stops. What is left is the echo of a siren, and a chord standing still, slowly disappearing into the distance. It is a confrontation with the shock and silence. Silence, emptiness, is a traditional sign of death and trauma. Here it refers to death in an extermination camp, a holocaust, the landscape of utmost trauma, horror beyond description. Moreover, it conveys the silence and powerlessness experienced by the listener when the train stops and Rachella enters Birkenau. When the train

music that has driven relentlessly and overwhelmingly onwards, and with a strong identifying power, stops, it forces the listener to stop as well. Halting, silence, and emptiness make way for confronting the horror, to remember.

In the last movement, *After the War*, life continues – the life of those who did not die in the world conflagration. But the trauma remains and lives on, too, and train journeys can no longer be the same as before the war. In the midst of the string texture we hear the porter Davis reminiscing about the luxury trains that used to cross the US continent. He notes: “But today, they’re all gone”. In these words the listener remembers all those millions of people who died between the years 1933 and 1945. They are all gone.

The above observations about Reich’s *Different Trains* reveal many features in the work that suggest non-verbal and bodily reception. This disposition of the work both points to the trauma of the Holocaust and offers the listener a bearable means of dealing with a topic bordering on the thinkable. This is music that does cultural trauma work. It is musical remembrance contributing to the collective sharing of transgenerational burdens and engages in the cultural work of social responsibility and ethical confrontation. Moreover, it also serves as a reminder of the undercurrent violent forces in contemporary society.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN’S *BORN IN THE U.S.A.*

My second example of music dealing with cultural trauma derives from socially-critical rock music. The heavy rock song *Born in the U.S.A.* from the album of the same name (1984) is Bruce Springsteen’s best-known song and an anti-war classic in the American political song-writing tradition. The song has been widely discussed in academia, yet its sonic substance has not been analyzed from the point of view of trauma representation. This is the focus of my analysis concentrating on the musical mechanisms by which songs construct a discourse of trauma and remembrance.⁴

Born in the U.S.A. is a furious depiction of a deadlock of a Vietnam veteran and his desperate struggle for a reasonable life in a society that gives him nothing but hits below the belt again and again (Springsteen 1984a):

Born down in a dead man’s town
The first kick I took was when I hit the ground
You end up like a dog that’s been beat too much
Until you spend half your life just covering up
Born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A.

⁴ About Springsteen’s music from the point of view of trauma, see, e.g., Weine 2007; and Yates 2010. The literature on Springsteen’s music is extensive. On the song *Born in the U.S.A.*, see, e.g., Cowie & Boehm 2012; Masciotra 2010: 65–71; and Sturr 2012.

I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A

Got in a little hometown jam
So they put a rifle in my hand
Sent me off to a foreign land
To go and kill the yellow man

Born in the U.S.A...

Come back home to the refinery
Hiring man says "Son if it was up to me"
Went down to see my V.A. man
He said "Son, don't you understand now"

I had a brother at Khe Sahn
Fighting off the Viet Cong
They're still there, he's all gone

He had a woman he loved in Saigon
I got a picture of him in her arms now

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
Out by the gas fires of the refinery
I'm ten years burning down the road
Nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go

Born in the U.S.A...
I'm a long gone daddy in the U.S.A.

Born in the U.S.A...
I'm a cool rocking daddy in the U.S.A.

Oh no no...

The song conveys the flip side of the American dream, the structural violence of a society that crushes the underprivileged citizen time and again. To be born ("Born in the...") turns out to be a psychological death sentence (Sawyers 2006: 93), since there are no real life prospects. The "I" in the song is buried alive to the mortifying options of refinery, jail, and (Vietnam) War. Life has been lost before it ever began, the first blow being received right at birth: "Born down in a dead man's town / The first kick I took was when I hit the ground" (cf. Cowie & Boehm 2012).

The "I" in the song survives Vietnam, unlike his friend. He returns home, but has nothing to return to. He has neither a job nor other chances of building a life, and the union of Veterans does not help either. He is an outcast who has been exploited by society and has nowhere to go: "Nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go." Thus he just continues, year after year, his lonely and frantic struggle in the emptiness.

The poetics of melancholy

Trauma, depression, pain, and anger are effectively represented in music in *Born in the U.S.A.* Its linchpins are the poetics of melancholy (see, e.g., Kristeva 1989; Välimäki 2005: 257–266; Siltala 2012) and the application of signs of Americanism and nationalism to portray structural violence.

The poetics of trauma and melancholy is excessive in the song, which is extremely repetitive and simple. The sounds, riffs, and figures are harsh and furious, and the music merely repeats one and the same thing over and over again, resulting in an acoustic image of a jam or a psychic prison (cf. Cowie & Boehm 2012: 30) in which the singer screams his head off. There is one melodic motif (f#–e–f#–g#–e–f#) that is heard in the melody of the synthesizer riff as well as that of the refrain, and even the melody in the verse is a variant of the same basic motif. The song complies with a Verse–Refrain structure, but the verse and the refrain are musically very similar, and the structure also disintegrates during the end part. There is only one chord in the song (B major, the bass of which undulates between the first and fourth grades⁵). Altogether, it is an extremely monotonous song. Nothing changes really, except the anger, which grows to the point of collapse.

The beat is straightforward, persistent, and aggressive. The snare drum, which associates with a traditional military drum, hits hard and mercilessly on every second and fourth beat of the measure. From the point of view of trauma expression, the drums musically paint the victim's societal experience of structural violence: what society offers him is blows, time and again. The colossal reverb and gate effect in the snare drum seems to vibrate the unhealed wounds. The bass drum makes its first strike right after the line “first kick I took was when I hit the ground” [ba-bam], which is also effective word painting.

Springsteen's mode of singing is aggressive: he shouts, rages, and cries. His voice shatters towards the end of the song, where it is really broken. Likewise the structure of the song disintegrates towards the end (cf. Cowie & Boehm 2012: 37). In the middle, after the third verse, no refrain is heard. Instead, four verses are played one after the other, and the phrase structure in the lyrics breaks down from the fourth verse onward. The verses become incomplete: instead of four lines there are only three or two (ibid.). Thus, instead of words, there are more and more rests, silences, which means that the speech ceases, like the speech of a depressed person or someone describing painful memories (e.g., Kristeva 1989; Siltala 2012; cf. also, Cowie & Boehm 2012: 37). All this creates a sense of the presence of trauma. It is too difficult to talk. The singer has a lump in his throat, and instead of talking, he just bursts into tears, and eventually, in the last instrumental refrains, he no longer sings but moans,

⁵ Whether the song uses one chord or two is a matter of opinion. Most of the time the chords are played as power chords emphasizing open fifths and creating a sense of constant drones.

shouts, and screams, and (military) drums play chaotic fills. In the official music video of the song (Springsteen 1984b), this long-standing cry begins right at the point when the image shows soldiers' gravestones at the Arlington National Cemetery; the moment constructs a powerful point of synchronization (Chion [1990] 1994: 83) of the soundtrack and image track, which seem to converge in an exceptionally noticeable way.

The lyrics are socially critical but also direct and concrete. Short words and the disregard for rhyme create a feeling of puff and blow, which adds to the sense of a documentary, authentic, hard real-life story (cf. Thompson 2007: 138).

National violence

Alongside the imagery of melancholy, rancor, and depression, central to the song is the imagery of Americanism and American nationalism, such as the synthesizer's bright and anthemic, fanfare-like riff and the heavily echoed drumming. These elements refer to the exalted American style developed and established most importantly by Aaron Copland in his Americana works during and after the Second World War, and which every American recognizes as "American" (e.g., Crist 2005; Taruskin 2009: 610–674). We may talk about the topic of Americanism, created by open intervals of fourths and fifths, slowly shifting harmonies, and the solemn timbres and gestures of brass instruments, trumpets especially, and military drums. The American sound evokes the vast American landscape, brave settlers, and pioneer spirit, and the American ideals of democracy and freedom. The topic is well-known from, for example, Copland's orchestral suites *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), and his Third Symphony (1946).

It is with this topic of archetypal American sound that Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* opens, and the beginning of the song does indeed greatly resemble Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. However, in Springsteen's song the glorious, shiny, and noble signs of Americanism are converted into a constrained and gloomy emptiness. They are repeated over and over again, extremely loudly, aggressively, and mechanically – in an inhuman way. The shouting, the drum blows, and the excessive repetition of the simple fanfare riff expose the violence and the trauma beneath the surface of the national discourse. The production of American signs is forced. The signs of Americanism carry violence.

Drawing intensively on American imagery and history is a central characteristic of Springsteen's music and one that covers not only American musical repertoire (folk music, protest songs, blues, country, soul, rock, the singer-songwriter tradition, etc.), but literature, film, and folklore as well (see, e.g., Dinerstein 2007; Stonerook 2012). In *Born in the U.S.A.* the lyrics paint a

picture of America with a dense weave of historical and intertextual references. For example, the title echoes Ron Kovic's book *Born on the Fourth of July* (1976), the autobiography of a paralyzed Vietnam War veteran, which was later adapted as a film (1989).⁶

Also notable is the fact that Springsteen's "lamentation for the common man" is not only a dirge; it is also big-time power music. The song transforms the trauma into a fierce and loud revolt song that rivets the listener. It is an example of music that is able to integrate, enliven, and empower its listener by bringing a cultural trauma into the symbolic sphere of shared experience, and creating out of it a fabulously sounding representation.⁷ Moreover, since popular music is listened to by a far larger audience than, say, classical avant-garde music, Springsteen's critical, ambitious music dealing with cultural trauma contributes to cultural trauma work in exceptionally broad terms.

STRESS POSITION BY DREW BAKER

My last example of the musical representation of cultural trauma relates to the great wave of contemporary art that has arisen as a response to the aggressive politics of the United States and the so-called war against terrorism in the 21st century. *Stress position* (2009) by an American composer, Drew Baker (b. 1978), is a solo work for an amplified solo piano, i.e., a piano with an electronic sound amplifier and a delay (echo effect). Baker composed his work in collaboration with pianist Marilyn Nonken, who gave its first public performance at the Musica nova Helsinki festival in Finland in 2009. The piece has important live performance dimensions that cannot be expressed in a recorded audio form, which is why I base my discussion on a live performance I heard at the Musica nova festival (Baker 2009) rather than on a CD release of the work (Baker 2011).

The title of the composition refers to the interrogation technique used by the United States and other countries that practice torture, in which the weight of the body is directed to one muscle group. In the piece, which lasts about nine minutes, the pianist hits the piano keys in an unchangeable, monotonous rhythmic pattern and in one and the same extreme position, with the right hand at the highest and the left hand at the lowest keys. The volume increases step by

⁶ The ironic title of Kovic's memoirs is, for its part, a reference to the famous line in the patriotic Broadway song *Yankee Doodle Boy* (1904): "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy / A Yankee Doodle, do or die / A real live nephew of my Uncle Sam / Born on the Fourth of July." At the end of Springsteen's song is a reference to Hank Williams's cowboy song "I'm a long gone daddy", as well as to Martha and the Vandellas' Motown hit "Nowhere to Run" (cf. Cowie & Boehm 2012: 40–41).

⁷ It is an object of dispute among scholars and music journalists how clear the political message of the song *Born in the U.S.A.* is. Indeed, the song is based on a conflictual setting of the desperate narrative (verses) vs. the anthem (refrain), and vernacular commemoration (verses) vs. official national discourse (refrain) (Cowie & Boehm 2012: 27, 31–32).

step, while separate pitches are little by little substituted by clusters. This stressful conception of the work, its anxiety-evoking form, and the use of the pedal and amplifier create strange acoustic phenomena. The high pitches start to sound like wailing sirens, and the low pitches like an airplane engine or other extremely slashing noise.

The pianist's hands, in an extreme playing position, represent the torture position. But so does the steadily growing mass of sound; this is annoying, stressful, and repulsive in its supreme monotony, extreme registers, and unformed noise. This growing mass of sound represents torture, or the experience of torture. Yet simultaneously, it seems to represent the helplessness felt by the listener in a world in which we are aware of what is happening but are at the same time often unable to do anything about it.

Towards the end of the work, as the tense, frightening music rushes along in an increasingly evil mode, the concert hall lights are turned off, including the stage, and without any warning. The sonic hell continues in complete darkness. In a split second, the psychoacoustic anxiety increases multifold, even though it has already been at an extremely high level. When the lights are turned off, the listener can no longer see the "torture" (the pianist or the source of the dreadful sound), just as ordinary people do not normally see the daily atrocities being carried out by humankind. Indeed, turning off the lights refers to the subject matter of the work and asks: can the experience of torture be represented? Has anyone ever heard, listened to or been able to understand what a tortured human being has experienced? Do we listen to the other's pain?

CONCLUSION

The musical works I have discussed are examples of music that carry an ethical responsibility in outlining, identifying, making visible (audible), naming, and dealing with cultural traumas in a shared, collective form available, in principle, for anyone to listen to and reflect on. As a collective, we can act for a better today and tomorrow only if we are able and allowed to deal freely with our collective past, the traumas and transferred burdens therein in cultural representations. The cultural trauma experiences of different carrier groups need to be shared collectively and distributed widely in society in order to create for the society and its people more inner freedom and space for life, instead of the sociopathological and destructive structures of repetition defined by trans-generational traumas and transferred burdens (Siirala 1983; Siltala 2012; Volkan 2000 & 2014).

Various practices and modes of remembrance and commemoration are needed in cultural trauma work. Official and governmental memorials and modes of remembrance, if such exist, are usually not enough to deal with the

cultural trauma experiences of different carrier groups. Sometimes the official representations of the historical past of certain cultural traumas are even experienced as false and become a further source of traumatization for certain carrier groups. When observing a memorial of a cultural trauma, we may ask: Whose way to remember does it represent? Whose way to remember is right? Memory is a social phenomenon (e.g., Mistzal 2003; Erll et al. 2008), and in this sense the representations of collective memory are always politicized.

Representations in art and popular culture have an important task and responsibility, because they can tell stories about the experiential history of cultural traumas and transferred burdens with an exceptional freedom and from various perspectives, waving aside the “official truths” and modes of representation in the society (this potential naturally depending on the society). Furthermore, art that deals with cultural trauma typically focuses on the experiential sphere of an individual and collective, instead of the grand (and often heroic and twisted) historical narrative of a nation.

War, armed conflict, genocide, and torture always mean extreme cultural traumas, which need sociocultural processing over several generations. This is probably why, in the arts of the 20th and 21st centuries, such cultural traumas constitute a major topic. The collective experiences of World Wars I and II in fact eventually generated such genres and styles as existential literature, the theater of the absurd, and other significant art trends. War, armed conflicts, genocide, and torture are always topical issues that affect and touch us all, directly or indirectly, as people living in a world shared with others. Art that deals with such issues treats and cares for cultural trauma, and hence it may function as a societal conscience, a collective remembrance, and a source of cultural self-knowledge and identity.

REFERENCES

Research Material

- BAKER, Drew 2009. Premier performance of Drew Baker’s *Stress Position* for amplified solo piano. Marilyn NONKE, piano. Concert at *Musica nova Helsinki* (2009), 20 February 2009, Sibelius Academy Concert Hall, Helsinki, Finland. Notes by the author.
- 2011. *Drew Baker: Stress Position. Marilyn Nonken, Piano*. New Fokus Recordings FCR116.
- REICH, Steve 1989a. *Steve Reich / Different Trains – Kronos Quartet*. Audio CD. Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records 7559–79176–2.
- 1989b. *Different Trains*. CD liner notes; see REICH 1989a.
- 2002. Answers and Questions about *Different Trains* (1994). In: *Steve Reich: Writings on Music 1965–2002*. Ed. Paul HILLIER. New York, NY & Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 180–183.

- SPRINGSTEEN, Bruce 1984a. *Born in the U.S.A. / Bruce Springsteen*. LP record. Columbia Records 5112562000.
- 1984b. *Born in the U.S.A.* Official music video. Directed by John SAYLES. CBS Records. 4 minutes 43 seconds.

Works cited

- ADORNO, Theodor W. [1949] 1983. *Cultural Criticism and Society*. In: *Prisms. Essays in Cultural Criticism and Society*. Transl. Shierry WEBER NICHOLSEN & Samuel WEBER. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 17–34.
- [1966] 2005. *Negative Dialectics*. Transl. E. B. ASHTON. New York, NY: Continuum.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C. 2004. *Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma*. See ALEXANDER et al. 2004. 1–30.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., Ron EYERMAN, Bernhard GIESEN, Neil J. SMELSER & Piotr SZTOMPKA 2004. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- BAL, Mieke, Jonathan CREWE & Leo SPITZER (eds.) 1999. *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- CARUTH, Cathy 1996. *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- CARUTH, Cathy (ed.) 1995. *Trauma Exploration in Memory*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins.
- CHION, Michel [1990] 1994. *Audio-Vision. Sound on Screen*. Ed. and transl. Claudia GORBMAN. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- COWIE, Jefferson & Lauren BOEHM 2012. *Dead Man's Town: "Born in the USA," Social History, and Working-Class Identity*. In: *Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream*. Ed. Kenneth WOMACK, Jerry ZOLTEN & Mark BERNHARD. Farnham, UK: Ashgate. 25–44.
- CRIST, Elizabeth B. 2005. *Copland and the Politics of Americanism*. In: *Aaron Copland and His World*. Ed. Carol J. OJA & Judith TICK. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University. 277–306.
- CUMMING, Naomi 1997. *The Horrors of Identification: Reich's "Different Trains"*. *Perspectives of New Music* 35:1, 129–152.
- DINERSTEIN, Joel 2007. *The Soul Roots of Bruce Springsteen's American Dream*. *American Music* 25:4, 441–476.
- ERLL, Astrid, Ansgar NÜNNING & Sara B. YOUNG (eds.) 2008. *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin & New York, NY: de Gruyter.
- EYERMAN, Ron 2002. *Cultural Trauma. Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FELMAN, Shoshana & Dori LAUB 1992. *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- GRANOWFSKY, Ronald 1995. *The Trauma Novel. Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- KRISTEVA, Julia 1989. *Black Sun. Depression and Melancholia*. Transl. Leon ROUDIEZ. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- LAPLANCHE, Jean & Jean-Bertrand PONTALIS [1973] 1988. *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*. London: Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- MASCIOTRA, David 2010. *Working on a Dream. The Progressive Political Vision of Bruce Springsteen*. London & New York, NY: Continuum International.
- MISTZAL, Barbara A. 2003. *Theories of Social Remembering*. Maidenhead, UK & Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

- MODLINGER, Martin & Philipp SONNTAG (eds.) 2011. *Cultural History and Literary Imagination, Volume 18. Other People's Pain. Narrative of Trauma and the Question of Ethics*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- MOORE, Burness E. & Bernard D. FINE 1990. *Psychoanalytic Terms & Concepts*. New Haven, CT & London: The American Psychoanalytic Association & Yale University Press.
- SAWYERS, June Skinners 2006. *Tougher than the Rest. 100 Best Bruce Springsteen Songs*. London & New York, NY: Omnibus Press.
- SCHWARZ, David 1997. *Listening Subjects. Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- SIIRALA, Martti 1983. *From Transfer to Transference. Seven Essays on the Human Predicament*. Ed. Oiva KETONEN. Helsinki: Therapiea Foundation.
- SILTALA, Pirkko 2012. Sukupolvien ketjuissa kulkevat vaietut traumaattiset kokemukset – taakkasiirtymät [Suppressed traumatic experiences that pass from generation to generation – transferred burdens]. In: *Psykoanalyttisia esseitä* [Psychoanalytic essays]. Helsinki: Prometheus. 9–62.
- 2014. Kirjallisuus taakkasiirtymän vastaanottajana [Literature as recipient of transferred burden]. In: *Psykoanalyysi ja taide. Pirkko Siltalan juhlakirja* [Psychoanalysis and art. Festschrift for Pirkko Siltala]. Ed. Vuokko HÄGG & Marja LINDQVIST. Helsinki: Therapiea-säätiö. 76–104.
- STONEROOK, Jason P. 2012. Springsteen's Search for Individuality and Community in Post-1960s America. In: *Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream*. Ed. Kenneth WOMACK, Jerry ZOLTEN & Mark BERNHARD. Farnham, UK: Ashgate. 199–221.
- STURR, Heather 2012. Finding Meaning in Manhood. Gender and the Warrior Myth in Springsteen's Vietnam War Songs. In: *Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream*. Ed. Kenneth WOMACK, Jerry ZOLTEN & Mark BERNHARD. Farnham, UK: Ashgate. 111–124.
- TARUSKIN, Richard 2009. In Search of the "Real" America. In: *Music in the Early Twentieth Century. The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 599–674.
- THOMPSON, Graham 2007. *American Culture in the 1980s*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- VOLKAN, Vamik D. 2000. Traumatized Societies and Psychological Care: Expanding the Concept of Preventive Medicine. Available at: <http://vamikvolkan.com> [15 November, 2014].
- 2014. *Animal Killer. Transmission of War Trauma from one Generation to the Next*. London: Karnac.
- VÄLIMÄKI, Susanna 2005. *Subject Strategies in Music. A Psychoanalytic Approach to Musical Signification*. Acta Semiotica Fennica XXII, Approaches to Musical Semiotics 9. Helsinki & Imatra: Finnish Society for Semiotics & International Semiotics Institute.
- 2014. Trauman kuvaus musiikissa: psykoanalyttisia kuunteluja [The representation of trauma in music: psychoanalytic listenings]. In: *Taide ja psykoanalyysi. Pirkko Siltalan 80-vuotisjuhlakirja* [Art and Psychoanalysis. Festschrift for Pirkko Siltala]. Ed. Vuokko HÄGG & Marja LINDQVIST. Helsinki: Therapiea-säätiö. 62–75.
- VÄLIMÄKI, Susanna & Juha TORVINEN 2014. Ympäristö, ihminen ja eko-apokalypsi: miten nykyaikainen kuuntelee luontoa? [Environment, human beings, and eco-apocalypse: Listening to nature in contemporary art]. *Lähikuva* 27:1, 8–27.
- WEINE, Steven 2007. Blood Not Oil: Narrating Social Trauma in Springsteen's Song-Stories. *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 9:1 (*Glory Days: A Bruce Springsteen Celebration*), 37–46.
- YATES, Bradfors 2010. Healing a Nation: An Analysis of Bruce Springsteen's "The Rising". *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 22:1, 32–49.