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REFLECTIONS ON MUSIC AND IDENTITY IN *ETHNOMUSICOLOGY*

Abstract: The relationship between music and identity became a commonplace theme in ethnomusicology beginning in the early 1980s. This article surveys all 17 articles published in the journal *Ethnomusicology* in the last 25 years with the word “identity” in the title in order to understand how ethnomusicologists have treated this subject. The survey reveals that the authors of these articles neither cite the general literature on identity nor one another. As a consequence, this article takes on the task of analyzing the ethnomusicological literature around basic questions found in the general literature, including what is identity, where does identity come from, how many identities do we possess, how is identity created, and who defines and institutionalizes identity. It concludes with some reflections on what music contributes to the construction and symbolization of identity.

Keywords: identity, identification, belonging, suture, self-understanding, agency, power, semiotics, reflection, constructivist, essentialist.

The title of this article is a pun. In order to provide a systematic limit on a preliminary study of a vast and important topic, the article reflects on the treatment of the theme of music and identity in the field of ethnomusicology through the prism of one of its major journals, *Ethnomusicology*. Adding further constraints to the project in the interest of both completeness and brevity, I limit this reflection to articles in the journal with the words “identity” or “identities” in the title. As it turns out, the first such article appeared in 1982, and 17 of them have appeared in the 25-year period from 1982 to 2006.¹ This survey of the literature provides one picture of how American ethnomusicologists have dealt with theme of music and identity in the last quarter century.

I assumed at the beginning of this study that themes like music and identity/ies, together with many other comparable themes (music and politics, music and gender, the meaning of music, the teaching and learning of music, and so forth), were ways that ethnomusicologists organized their research lives (readings, conferences, edited collections of essays) because of the “gluttonous” nature of our field.² Our gluttony

¹ There is one “short contribution” ten years before Waterman’s: Gilles Potvin, “The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Canadian Folk Cultures: The Preservation of Ethnic Identity”, *Ethnomusicology* 16 (1972): 512–515.

² This characterization of our field occurs in Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

consists of defining ethnomusicology as the study (the metaphorical eating) of all music from all parts of the world, a definition which contrasts with the suggestion of some of our founders that we focus primarily on folk, tribal, and Asian art music. Organizing our thinking around a variety of theoretical perspectives (functionalism, structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, interpretive anthropology, French sociology, and so forth) and general themes is one way to bring some order, like a menu does, to our omnivorous interests. Focusing on themes forces us, in principle at least, to read broadly, regardless of our particular geographical interest, to uncover general processes at work in music around the world.

The themes around which we build our research have multiplied since Alan Merriam provided the first list of twelve in 1964.³ Most of the themes he identified have endured in our work to the present, for example, native concepts about music; music as symbolic behavior (the meaning of music); and aesthetics and the interrelationship of the arts.

Conspicuous by its absence from Merriam's list, given the topic of this essay, is the theme of the relationship between music and identity. This and many other themes that are now commonplace emerged after the publication of Merriam's seminal work: encounters with modernity; individual agency; urban and popular music; gender; migration and diaspora; nationalism; and globalization, to name a few. New themes have continued to pop up in the last decade or so and may soon become commonplace themselves, among them music in relation to war, violence, and conflict; music and medical crises such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and the music of affinity groups (as opposed to national or ethnic groups).

The theme of identity and its relationship to musical practice developed relatively recently in American ethnomusicology. Not only was it absent from Merriam's discipline-defining book in 1964, it was also absent from more recent important summations of the field such as Bruno Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology: 29 Issues and Concepts* published in 1993 and the edited handbook *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, published in 1992.⁴ By 2005, however, I found, in surveying the program of the 50th anniversary meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, that music and identity was by far the best represented theme at the conference, forming the basis for some 83 of about 500 papers.⁵ Somewhere

³ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

⁴ Nettl 1983 and Helen Myers, ed., *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

⁵ Timothy Rice, "SEM Soundbyte: What Are We Thinking?" *SEM Newsletter* 39, # 4 (2005), 1.

along the way the relationship between identity and music became a major theme in our field. So what happened? When and why did this theme emerge, and what has been its intellectual payoff? Answering these questions is the topic of this essay.

1. Overview of the literature

A search of the three major English-language journals devoted to general ethnomusicology (*Ethnomusicology*, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*) for article titles that employ the term “identity” suggests that the theme emerges and begins to be deployed consistently in the early 1980s. The first article was Christopher Waterman’s “‘I’m a Leader, Not a Boss’: Social Identity and Popular Music in Ibadan, Nigeria” published in *Ethnomusicology* in 1982.⁶ After that, the use of the term “identity” in an article title occurs an average of once a year in those journals up to the present. A search of the titles of the one hundred or so book-length musical ethnographies published in English in the last thirty years reveals that the first book with the word “identity” in the title was not published until 1991.⁷ Looking inside the books, it is possible to discern the theme of identity and music emerging earlier, in the 1980s; one of the earliest is Manuel Peña’s 1985 study of class identity among Mexican-Americans in Texas.⁸ After that, the theme of identity and music forms an important element of most musical ethnographies published in English up to the present.

There are probably three reasons why the theme of the relation between music and identity emerges in the 1980s. First, identity as a psychosocial category of analysis gains strength in the literature of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and philosophy beginning sometime in the 1960s; in other words, identity has a relatively short history in those fields that are foundational for ethnomusicology. Second, American identity politics based on race, ethnicity, and gender gained ground in American universities and cultural life beginning in the 1970s. Third, there has been, beginning in the 1990s, an increasing sense in ethnomusicology, often from direct fieldwork experience, that people inhabit a world that is “fragmented” and “deterritorialized”; that they possess unprecedented opportunities for geographical, economic, cultural, and so-

⁶ Christopher A. Waterman, “‘I’m a Leader, Not a Boss’: Social Identity and Popular Music in Ibadan, Nigeria”, *Ethnomusicology* 26 (1982): 59–71.

⁷ R. Anderson Sutton, *Traditions of Gamelan Music in Java: Musical Pluralism and Regional Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁸ Manuel H. Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

cial mobility untied to ostensibly traditional ethnic, national, gender, and class identities and categories; and that life “routes” are becoming as or more important than “roots.”⁹

When I began this survey, I assumed two things about ethnomusicologists’ research on the theme of music and identity. First, I assumed that we would look at the general literature on identity to understand how it is being defined and discussed more generally in the social sciences and humanities. Second, I assumed that as we worked on this theme in relation to our particular area of interest, we would cite and build on the publications of those who had written on this theme before us. One of the results of my survey is that, sadly for me at least, neither of those assumptions turns out to be true. In the first instance, ethnomusicologists who have produced this corpus of work seem to take for granted identity as a category of social life and of social analysis. They do not, with a very few exceptions, cite more general work on identity in the social sciences and humanities, nor do they define the term. In the second instance, their particular studies are not contextualized, for the most part, in the ethnomusicological literature on music and identity. I am left to infer that these authors understand implicitly that music and identity is a theme around which ethnomusicologists organize their work, but how previous work might impact their work or how their work might build toward useful generalizations or more insightful treatments of the subject doesn’t interest them. They seem content, in other words, to leave such work to overview essays such as this one. What worries me is that their failure to think more clearly about identity as a social category and to understand their own particular ethnographic work in relationship to a growing literature on this theme in ethnomusicology is symptomatic of a general problem with the discipline of ethnomusicology, at least as practiced today in the United States. By not embedding our particular ethnographic studies in these two literatures, we are limiting the potential of our field to grow in intellectual and explanatory power.

Having begun with one form of conclusion, I continue with a closer look at the theme of music and identity as it has manifested itself in *Ethnomusicology*. I am particularly interested in how it unwittingly intersects with the treatment of identity more generally, especially in the field of cultural studies. As it turns out, the discussion of identity generally is

⁹ For two classic statements of this understanding, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), as well as Timothy Rice, “Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography”, *Ethnomusicology* 47(2003): 151–179 for its application to ethnomusicology.

riven with splits, distinctions, and contradictions that ethnomusicologists would do well to consider and respond to.

2. *What Is identity?*

Perhaps predictably, the literature on identity is rather confusing on this point. The term itself may have entered the lexicon through the work in the 1950s of psychologist Erik Erikson, who was concerned with the developmental stages of the individual and who gave us the cliché “identity crisis.”¹⁰ If the meaning of identity once implied, in philosophy for example, something identical over time, then Erikson’s idea of the stages of life seems to have replaced it with a “logic of temporality.”¹¹ In later years Erikson himself broadened his work to include “the social context of individuals’ development” and “the moral and ethical implications of different forms of social organization for humankind.”¹² While all subsequent developments in the study of identity cannot be laid at Erikson’s feet, some of the main themes find expression in his work.

Individual Self-Identity

One such theme is the idea that identity is fundamentally about individual self-identity. It is, in other words, a psychological problem for the individual. This has taken at least two forms in the literature on identity. One is a concern for self-definition or self-understanding that implies questions like who am I and what is my true nature. The other is a concern for the psychology of belonging to, identification with, and “suturing” to social groups.¹³

Although ethnomusicologists have not tended to define identity, let alone make this distinction, a few can be read to have addressed these issues in their work. For example, one way that music contributes to identity in the sense of self-definition or self-understanding is in situations where people work in unrewarding hum-drum jobs but musical competence provides them with a sense of pride and self-worth. Lawrence Witzleben, for example, documents the activities of nine amateur

¹⁰ Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

¹¹ Lawrence Grossberg, “Identity and Cultural Studies – Is That All There Is?” in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 87–107.

¹² J.E. Marcia, “Erikson, Erik Homburger (1902–94),” in: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2002), 4737.

¹³ The evocative term “suturing” is given by Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs Identity?” in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 1–17.

music clubs in Shanghai with a total membership of about 200 musicians. They specialize in playing a core repertoire of “eight great pieces” in a genre called *jiangnan sizhu* (literally, south of the [Yangtze] river silk and bamboo [string and wind music]). “Through participation in a Jiangnan sizhu music club an individual belongs both to a small community in Shanghai society (those who know and play this music) and to a more exclusive one (the club).”¹⁴ Witzleben’s lack of attention to the psychology of the players, that is, to the psychology of self-understanding and of status is striking. For example, one of the more interesting possibilities for identity that is not addressed concerns the fact that people join these clubs from all walks of life. “The environment of the club is one which minimizes demarcations based on education, status or wealth (...) Several players with menial jobs are among the Jiangnan sizhu musicians most highly regarded by both amateurs and professionals ... Factory workers are numerous, but there are also retail clerks, engineers, doctors of Chinese medicine and retired farmers” (p. 249). Witzleben suggests, but does not follow up in detail, the possibility that participation in musical clubs such as these may play an important role in self-understanding in general and in this case in providing a sense of self-worth rather more elevated than the one they get from their paying jobs alone and a source of pride absent from low-status and menial jobs.

An excellent study of self-identity as the psychology of belonging is Christopher Waterman’s essay about how Dayo, a Yoruba *jùjú* musician in Ibadan, Nigeria, sutures himself to two social groups: the upper-classes for whom his band plays music and the lower-class “band boys” whom he simultaneously cultivates and exploits.¹⁵ As a semiliterate musician he works in the low-status occupation of musician, akin to being a beggar, along with other low-status musicians whose loyalty he must cultivate. However, since people with money and wealth demonstrate their prestige through the hiring of the best possible musicians, he, as a very successful musician and band leader, has been able to elevate his status to that of a person with some of the same money, prestige, and honor of his clients. Waterman turns this concern for social position into a question of “self-identity” or perhaps better self-identification through belonging by reporting that Dayo believes that he is a leader, not a boss. “A boss commands, I don’t command.”¹⁶ This self-understanding cor-

¹⁴ J. Lawrence Witzleben, “Jiangnan Sizhu Music Clubs in Shanghai: Context, Concept and Identity”, *Ethnomusicology* 31 (1987): 240–260. Quote from page 256. Other references to page numbers are given in the main text.

¹⁵ Waterman, 1982.

¹⁶ These and other quotes in this paragraph are from Waterman 1982, pp. 67 and 68.

responds to the Yoruba value of “in-group egalitarianism” and the redistribution of wealth, which he expresses in conversations with his “band boys” with the phrase, “we’re all musicians”. However, he is vastly wealthier than his band boys, whom he pays a pittance for each engagement. They remain poor and in some cases homeless, while he drives five cars, wears fine clothes, and owns an impressive sound system, placing him closer to belonging to the upper-class group of his wealthy patrons. Dayo seems to construct a self-identity that at once places him close to the social group of wealthy clients he plays for and at the same time keeps him not so socially distant from his band boys that they give up and leave his group to seek their fortunes elsewhere. As it turns out, both groups reject his constructions of identity, but for his personal self-identity that may not matter.

It seems to me that these two processes, creating a sense of self-understanding or self-worth and creating a sense of belonging to preexisting social groups, might be called authoring the self through music, especially through reflection and discourse on one’s own musical practice.¹⁷

Group Identity

Much more common these days than studies of individual self-identity are studies of group identity. This line of argument probably flows more from identity politics in various countries than from Erikson’s work per se. Identity in most of these cases seems to be about collective self-understanding as represented by various characteristics, activities, and customs, including music. A good example from this corpus is Gordon Thompson’s study of the self-understanding or identity of an Indian caste called Carans.¹⁸ This caste is a heterogeneous group with a variety of professions. Historically some of them were hereditary singers or reciters of epic praise poetry for the Hindu rulers (*rajputs*) of western India. Carans were apparently confidants of the rulers and considered themselves on a higher social plane than hereditary musicians, especially Muslim musicians, who never developed this level of intimacy with the rulers. Today, the *rajputs* of India are no longer able to support such a function, and members of the caste are turning to other professions. The current controversy concerns identity in the sense of self-understanding.

¹⁷ Thomas Solomon, “Dueling Landscapes: Singing Places and Identities in Highland Bolivia”, *Ethnomusicology* 44 (2000), 257–280, provides another good example of people singing into existence their personal sense of belonging to a group, in this case particular small settlements of Indians in the highlands of Bolivia.

¹⁸ Gordon R. Thompson, “The Carans of Gujarat: Caste Identity, Music, and Cultural Change”, *Ethnomusicology* 35(1991): 381–391.

Does the caste include singers and musicians or not? Those who seek to keep themselves differentiated from and elevated over castes that continue to produce professional musicians deny that there are or ever were professional singers among the Carans. They argue that they did not sing, but rather recited their poetry. They are particularly troubled by Carans who today emphasize the musical aspects of their art by singing melodiously and using instrumental accompaniment. This seems to be a case where the very act of making music is at issue for self-understanding of the group. There is no doubt that the group exists and who is in the group. There is rather controversy among group members over what characterizes the group, what its essential nature is, and how members of the group should be behaving professionally: “they (...) dispute the status of singing as a characteristic of the caste and (...) disagree, in part because the caste is increasingly heterogeneous” in its modern manifestation (p. 389).

3. Where does social identity come from?

There have been two answers to this question, captured in the words “essentialist” and “constructivist.” The home of the essentialist position is the identity politics of nationalism, on one hand, and of opposition to the powerful from subaltern positions defined by ethnicity, race, class, and gender on the other. The essentialist position understands identity in terms of durable qualities and characteristics of the group that are thought to exist from time immemorial. Music’s relationship to these stable identities is usually understood in terms of processes of reflection, symbolization, homology, and expression. The constructivist position, on the other hand, holds that identities are always constructed from the cultural resources available at any given moment. Rather than durable and stable, identities are contingent, fragile, unstable, and changeable. The issue in this view of identity becomes whether, to what extent, and how music making and music listening participates in the construction of various forms of emerging and changing social identities. While the latter position has gained the upper hand in recent work in cultural studies and in ethnomusicology, it has had to contend with the on-the-ground continuing practice of the essentialist position in such arenas as American identity politics and nationalist discourses in post-socialist Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Most of the articles in this corpus deal with situations where new identities are in fact emerging for various political and social reasons, rather than with situations, still rather common in the world, where someone or some social group or some government is positing a durable, essential identity.

The authors of works in this corpus, almost to a person, repeat the mantra that music helps to construct social identities. In this context, then, it is surprising to see how often they fall back into a discussion in which the social identity already exists, and music's role is primarily to symbolize, or reflect, or give performative life to a pre-existing identity. For example, whether reflection or construction is at stake is confused in Lara Allen's study of a new hybrid genre called "vocal jive," which developed in the Black townships of South Africa in the 1950s.¹⁹ As for reflection, we learn that as a popular recorded music, it "expressed a locally-rooted identity reflective of their everyday lives" (p. 237) by employing "local melodies, current township argot, and topical subject matter" (p. 234). But it did it in an international jazz-pop-blues-based style that expressed a hybrid identity also evolving at the time. Later she says that the music helped to "form" an identity: "The musical eclecticism of vocal jive was politically significant in that its merger of Western and African elements to form a non-tribal, internationally-oriented, urban African cultural identity was at odds with policies of racial segregation promulgated by British colonials and Afrikaner settlers, and consolidated under apartheid (...) Even in particularly repressive political contexts, commercial popular music can arguably function in a seditious manner" (p. 238). She argues that "hybrid styles such as vocal jive embodied the urban, non-tribal, partially Westernized experience and identity of township dwellers, whose existence the government wished to deny (...) By nurturing the development of hybrid musical styles that expressed an identity rejected by the government, and by allowing dissident lyrics, the recording industry provided the mass of ordinary township people with a powerful means to voice cultural resistance, whether overtly, or more often, in a covert, ambiguous, contingent, fluctuating manner" (p. 243). In this case, the social identity seems to have come first, and music reflected the hybrid nature of that identity (part African, part urban, part Westernized) through the music's own iconically hybrid form. Of course, a new hybrid identity in urban Africa does not qualify as a durable national or ethnic identity dating back for centuries or even millennia as most essentialist arguments have it. Still this case illustrates how hard it is for constructivist arguments not to fall back on essentialist ones.

Constructed identities become an issue in situations of change or where the weak and the powerful are fighting over issues of identity. Some authors make convincing claims for music participating in the

¹⁹ Lara Allen, "Commerce, Politics, and Musical Hybridity: Vocalizing Black South African Identity during the 1950s", *Ethnomusicology* 47 (2003): 228–249.

construction of new or imagined identities.²⁰ Peter Manuel, for example, makes the point that flamenco is associated with three downtrodden social groupings in Spanish society: those living in the region of Andalusia; gypsies; and people of the lower classes.²¹ He argues that music is “not merely a passive reflection of broader sociocultural phenomena that shape” it but can play an “important role (...) in expressing and, to a considerable extent, helping to shape modern Andalusian identity” (p. 48). Performers of flamenco seem to be constructing a new sense of group self-understanding through their creation of new genres of music that have begun a process of “dignification” and professionalization of the tradition. These changes “enhance the image of Andalusia and its gypsies” and thus form a “particularly important symbol of their [more dignified] identity” (p. 57). This seems to be a constructivist project aimed at expressing a new self-understanding and a new image for others to latch onto. In addition to the dignification of traditional flamenco, two new genres are participating in the formation or construction of identity. One is *flamenco arabe*, the setting of Arab songs to flamenco *cantes* (melodic forms). “*Flamenco arabe* represents a reaffirmation of Andalusia’s distinct cultural heritage in the form of a celebration of its Moorish ties. At the same time it may be seen as a willful renunciation of the economic and political domination imposed over the centuries by Madrid” (p. 59). Another genre, *flamenco pop*, responds to the urbanization and migration of proletarian workers to Barcelona and Madrid and is made up of a mixture of various influences including rock and Cuban popular music. The texts “celebrate gypsy values of freedom and hostility to authority” (61) and participate “in the formation of a new urban identity.” The genre has “become an important symbol of the new urban Andalusian consciousness (...) Its fusions (...) serve to influence and articulate aspects of modern urban social identity” (p. 62) Here it seems clear that new social groups with new social identities are not being formed. Rather what is at stake are new self-understandings, the need for which is created by long-standing social grievances and new economic and social conditions that make life even worse than before. The point is made that the construction of identity as a form of self-understanding through music is accomplished when identities need to be or are being changed. Music helps that process by changing itself, or better by being changed

²⁰ My favorite example of this line of thinking comes not from this corpus of articles in *Ethnomusicology* but from a musical ethnography by Jane C. Sugarman, *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity and Prespa Albanian Weddings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²¹ Peter Manuel, “Andalusian, Gypsy, and Class Identity in the Contemporary Flamenco Complex”, *Ethnomusicology* 33(1989): 47–65.

by the musicians who want to participate in the construction of new identities (self-understandings) and the symbolic presentation or representation of that self-understanding to others so that others' understandings of the group can change as well.

4. How many identities do we possess?

One claim about identity associated with the constructivist approach is that identity, rather than being unitary, is multiple and fragmented. Instead of a single self with enduring, deep, and abiding qualities, we possess multiple selves (gendered, racialized, ethnicized, nationalized, and so forth) whose expression is contingent on particular contexts and specific performances of the self in those contexts. Music as a performance and as a context would seem to provide a particularly fruitful arena for the expression of multiple identities in context. Similarly, music as a complex semiotic form with multiple features (melody, rhythm and meter, timbre, texture, and form) inherent in its very being would seem to provide an ideal sign for symbolizing multiple aspects of identity simultaneously and temporally.²²

A good example of music's role in the articulation of multiple senses of identity as both belonging and self-understanding is Thomas Turino's study of three forms of social identity in highland Peru, and of music's role in their production.²³ The three identities are indigenous or Indian; *criollo* or Hispanic; and *mestizo* or mixed between the two identities. By altering their performance of music on a small guitar-like instrument called *charango*, the residents of these highland communities can express their sense of belonging to one or another of these identities. When, for example, musicians strum block chords on a flat-backed, metal-stringed version of the instrument, they express their sense of belonging and identification with the indigenous population. When, on the other hand, they pluck melodies in parallel thirds on a rounded-back, nylon-stringed version of the instrument, they proclaim their allegiance to upper-class *criollo* values and a hoped-for suturing to that class identity. Finally, their *mestizo* identity is performed iconically when they structure performances, as they sometimes do, to include references to all three identities. Turino gives one example in which the performer began with a typical Indian agricultural song, segued into a set of

²² For a more detailed explication and example of this position, see Timothy Rice, "Reflections on Music and Meaning: Metaphor, Signification, and Control in the Bulgarian Case", *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 10 (2001): 19–38.

²³ Thomas Turino, "The Urban-Mestizo Charango Tradition in Southern Peru: A Statement of Shifting Identity", *Ethnomusicology* 28(1984): 253–270.

waynos, the most important *mestizo* genre, and ended with a *criollo* waltz. Thus separate or single performances make public declarations of a sense of belonging to one, or two, or all three of the multiple identities available to residents of this highland region of Peru.²⁴

5. *How is identity created?*

The notion that identity is constructed leads naturally to questions about who is doing the constructing. To answer this question, some sort of agency is usually posited for individuals, that is, individuals become agents in the construction of their own identities (their sense of belonging to groups, their self-understanding) in the conditions of modernity.²⁵ In another line of reasoning indebted to Michel Foucault, the self that could or would create an identity is a product of various “regimes” and “discourses” and thus is not a free agent in the creation of identities. As Nikolas Rose puts it, following Foucault, our relation to ourselves is less the result of active agency than “the object of a whole variety of more or less rationalized schemes, which have sought to shape our ways of understanding and enacting our existence as human beings in the name of certain objectives – manliness, femininity, honour, modesty, propriety, civility, discipline, distinction, efficiency, harmony, fulfillment, virtue, pleasure.”²⁶ He acknowledges, in fact, that although these regimes exist, “human beings often find themselves resisting the forms of personhood that they are enjoined to adopt” (p. 140). Though he claims that no theory of agency is required to explain this resistance, most writers, myself included, would employ it precisely at this moment. Music can be understood in both ways: as a regime of self-creation (subjectification) and as a tool of resistance to those regimes. In the latter instance, the ideology

²⁴ Multiple identities are elucidated in three other studies in this corpus but not summarized in the main body of the text: Jeffrey A. Summit, “‘I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy’: Identity and Melody at an American Simha at Torah Celebration”, *Ethnomusicology* 37 (1993), 41–62, about the clash of Jewish and American identities; Daniel B. Reed, “‘The *Ge* is in the Church’ and ‘Our parents are Playing Muslim’: Performance, Identity, and Resistance among the Dan in Postcolonial Côte d’Ivoire”, *Ethnomusicology* 49(2005): 347–357, on the clash of ethnic and religious identities; and Julian Gerstin, “Reputation in a Musical Scene: The Everyday Context of Connections between Music, Identity, and Politics”, *Ethnomusicology* 42 (1998): 385–414, on the intersection of national, urban-rural, and individual identities.

²⁵ For an example of this view, see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); for an application of this position to ethnomusicology, see Timothy Rice, 2003.

²⁶ Nikolas Rose, “Identity, Genealogy, History”, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 128–150. Quote from page 130.

of creativity often associated with music gives the sense that composers and performers of music have the power, the agency if you will, to model new and alternative forms of behavior not given by the “rationalized schemes” of everyday familial and governmental discourse and discipline.²⁷ On the other hand, music very often is precisely one of the modalities, to use an intentional pun, or “technologies” that conveys to a society its fundamental values in such domains as manliness, femininity, modesty, distinction, and pleasure. These technologies, according to Rose, work on two axes. One he calls “intellectual techniques” like reading, writing, and numeracy, which can transform “mentalities.” The second axis consists of “corporealities or body techniques.” One thinks of manners and etiquette, for example, which “inculcate the habits and rituals of self-denial, prudence and foresight.” Musical practice would seem to be both an intellectual and corporeal technology. At the intellectual level, its use or non-use of notation and its valorization (or not) of orality and improvisation may create particular kinds of selves and self-understandings that function well within specific social and cultural circumstances. At the corporeal level, many traditions with strong teacher-student relations inculcate specific performative forms of obedience and respect that create not just good music but good people as well.

One article that can be read as mediating these two perspectives is David Harnish’s study of shifting identities and their effect on musical practice at a temple festival at Lingsar on the island of Lombok in Indonesia.²⁸ Two religious groups have historically claimed the festival as their own: the Balinese Hindus and the Muslims, called Sasaks. Although “ethnic tensions and contestations” were a feature of the festival, both groups managed to coexist. They explained to Harnish, who has been studying the festival on and off for twenty years since 1983, that each element of the festival was necessary and could not be changed. So he was surprised that, when he attended the festival in 2001, much about the musical practice had in fact changed. Some genres of music had disappeared and some new ones had been added. Still the participants claimed that nothing much had changed. What was going on? “Some forces both within and outside the government” were at work to differentiate religious identities more clearly than they had been in the past. One Sasak group that had predominated on the island and that was only nominally Muslim (“maintain[ing] indigenous, pre-Islamic customs and shar[ing] a few beliefs with Hinduism and Buddhism”) had been superseded in importance by another group that had adopted a much

²⁷ For one of the most detailed elucidations of this point, see Jane C. Sugarman, 1997.

²⁸ David Harnish, “New Lines, Shifting Identities: Interpreting Change at the Lingsar Festival in Lombok, Indonesia”, *Ethnomusicology* 49 (2005): 1–24.

stricter form of Islam coming from Saudi Arabia (p. 5). In response the Hindu Balinese were more anxious to demonstrate their ties, their sense of belonging, to Balinese culture. These new political and religious beliefs were impacting the performance of music at the festival. So in this case we have a clear case of changes in musical practice reflecting larger social, political, and religious “shifts” in the self-understanding of Hindu and Muslim groups. Harnish complicates the issue, however, by arguing that these outside forces are not enough to explain the musical changes, that individual agency at the local level must also be described: “though the government and other external forces promoted new actions, individuals negotiated and reinterpreted these actions” (p. 19). With that point in mind, he examines the actions of three “subjects” to illustrate how each interprets and acts out his understanding of processes enveloping the society. They, “through the force of their actions and personal negotiations with ritual history and modernist powers, have helped shape the contemporary reality of the festival” (p. 20). Harnish’s study provides a good example of the disarticulation of agency and construction. In this case, agency helps the music to reflect the larger social and cultural conditions, discourses, and “regimes” that seem to be creating new senses of identity in the first place.

6. Who defines and institutionalizes identities?

While some authors seem content to claim agency for all individuals, others raise questions about the link between identity, agency, and power. If identities are constructed, then who are “the agents that do the identifying?”²⁹ Can everyone be an agent or only some people? Are agents the creators of the discourses or do individuals make choices among the discourses available to them? Are agents an individual self, a clique of politically motivated identity makers, or organs of the state? Does one identify oneself or is one identified by others? Identity politics is centered in the ground between these extremes of identification. Who has the power to define identities and do all individuals have the same range of identity choices and the same mobility in making identity choices? “Each society sets limits to the life strategies that can be imagined, and certainly to those which can be practised.”³⁰ As Lawrence Grossberg observes, “some individuals may have the possibility of occu-

²⁹ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47. Quote from page 14. I would like to acknowledge here the salutary impact this article has had, in a general way, on my thinking about identity.

³⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity”, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18–36.

pying more than one such [subject] position (...) some positions may offer specific perspectives on reality that are different from others, [and] some positions come to be more valued than others (...) The question of identity is one of social power and its articulation to, its anchorage in, the body of the population itself.”³¹ In terms of agency, the question becomes: “who gets to make history?” As Grossberg puts it, “agency – the ability to make history, as it were – is not intrinsic to subjects and to selves. Agency is the product of diagrams of mobility and placement which define or map the possibilities of where and how specific vectors of influence can stop and be places (...) Such places are temporary points of belonging and identification” (p. 102).

Conceived in the West as an archetypal instance of self-expression, musical choices, whether in the making or the listening, allow individuals acting as agents to identify with groups of their choosing and to escape the bonds of tradition provided by parents, schools, and other governmental apparatuses. In some instances, music can literally give voice to the powerless to label themselves and to express their existence as a group and their “nature” in contexts where the powerful either do not acknowledge their existence or label and identify them in ways they find objectionable. In societies where the powerful control education and propaganda through literacy and the literate media, the orality and performativity of most musical traditions provide the powerless or those seeking power with an important and potentially very public and effective mode of expression. On the other hand, music patronized and controlled by the state through such institutions as cultural ministries and by such commercial institutions as the music industry, advertising, and media play a powerful role in creating and defining groups, in identifying and classifying them, and in specifying who may associate or identify with them and who may not. In these sorts of cases, ethnomusicologists tend to speak about “contestation” and “negotiation” of identities and about different “subject positions” from which contested identities are proposed.

In this corpus, two articles stand out for their documentation of different ways powerful entities establish identities through music.³²

One is Peter Manuel’s study of salsa as a symbol of Puerto Rican national identity despite the fact that *salsa*’s roots are in Cuban dance

³¹ Lawrence Grossberg, 1996.

³² For an interesting study in this corpus of a state apparatus determining a musical expression of identity in the face of widespread opposition, see J. Martin Daughtry, “Russia’s New Anthem and the Negotiation of National Identity”, *Ethnomusicology* 47 (2003): 42–67.

forms of the 1940s and 1950s.³³ In fact, Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans (Puerto Ricans living in New York City) regard *salsa* “as local in character.” He believes this is because *salsa* has been “appropriated and re-signified (...) as symbols of their own cultural identity,” which is cosmopolitan, urban, not European or North American, and linked to Latin American culture (p. 250). The musical structures, which combine Afro-Latin music with modern, flashy popular music and with a few elements native to Puerto Rico, seem to provide an excellent iconic expression (though he doesn’t say so) of that hybrid identity. On the other hand, not everyone agrees. Some argue that the fact of *salsa*’s roots in Cuban music is a fatal flaw in its claim to being a symbol of national identity. They argue instead that other genres native to Puerto Rico should be its symbol of national identity, including (1) *jibaro* music, a guitar-based music of rural peasants (*jibaros*); (2) *bomba*, a drum-based vocal music originating among lower-class blacks; and (3) *plena*, a lower-class and lower-middle-class recreational music from the town of Ponce that uses the tambourine (*pandareta*) prominently plus scraper (*guiro*) and guitar or accordion. According to Manuel, none of these claims by their advocates have been successful because each genre is limited by its origins in lower-class social groups in a context where most Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans understand themselves as moving up in a cosmopolitan world. These genres are too associated with backwardness rather than with modernization. This is certainly an interesting reversal of the claims of European folklorists that precisely such rural, “backward” genres should be the symbols of an essentialist national identity. In effect, Manuel is arguing that in the absence of government-imposed nationalist cultural policies, mass mediation and popularity are crucial to a particular kind of music working as a symbol of national identity. The key to his argument that *salsa* is the most potent symbol national identity for Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans is “its appeal across a broad spectrum of Latino nationalities, age groups, and social classes” (p. 271). *Salsa* “has become identified with a new sense of Latino identity which is at once international, and yet rooted in local community culture.” *Salsa*’s symbolic value has emerged in a particular social situation of racial discrimination, a sense of otherness in the U.S., and the fact of living in “tight Puerto Rican enclaves” within New York City. It has participated in processes of “helping them to outgrow the cultural inferiority complex of the 1930s–1950s and discover a new pride in their language and Latino musical heritage.” It is “not just reiteration and borrowing, but creative

³³ Peter Manuel, “Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Souces from Danza to Salsa”, *Ethnomusicology* 38(1994): 249–280.

appropriation and reformation” or in other words “the resignification of the borrowed idiom to serve as a symbol of a new social identity” (pp. 272–274). He concludes by writing that “there is little agreement as to what form cultural nationalism should take, just as Puerto Ricans themselves may hold varied forms of social identity” (p. 276–277). In that context, the popularity of the music in the mass media seems to be the agent that makes *salsa* the music best able to express the identity of contemporary, urbanized Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans.

The other example of music’s role in the contestation of power over the labeling and assignment of identity is Chris Goertzen’s study of the small Occaneechi band of Indians in the state of North Carolina.³⁴ In this case the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, a commission made up of members of Indian tribes in the area, has the power to decide who is an Indian and who is not. They have so far denied the Occaneechi’s application for Indian status and identity based on their gut feeling that they are not “really” Indians. On the other hand, the Occaneechi understand themselves to be Indians due to their kinship relationships with recognized tribes, their documented history in the area, a lifestyle that values hunting and fishing in addition to whatever menial jobs they hold, and other Indian values such as sharing and giving away their wealth. As far as music is concerned, the Indians of North Carolina have, for all practical purposes, lost their original musical traditions and have taken up the musical traditions associated with powwows of Indians from the central Plains region of the United State. These powwows were originally cultivated in the 1960s by the larger Indian groups in the region as a way to assert difference during a period when Indian schools were closing and integration with the larger society was being forced on them. Unfortunately the smaller groups, such as the Occaneechi, didn’t take up powwow music during this period and so “remained ‘hidden in plain sight,’ as many North Carolina Indians phrase it” (p. 68). Even though they have started recently to host powwows and musical performances, they can’t convince the larger tribes that they are Indians; these larger groups do not seem to accept the powwow as an unambiguous symbol of Indian identity. For the Occaneechi themselves, on the other hand, powwows work in multiple ways. First, they are a way to express enduring local values of community and sharing and to create a sense of belonging to and identifying with a community of Indians. Second, “powwows provide adults with a focus for self-esteem and intellectual engagement that may be lacking in the work week,” characterized

³⁴ Chris Goertzen, “Powwows and Identity on the Piedmont and Coastal Plains of North Carolina”, *Ethnomusicology* 45(2001): 58–88.

by “hum-drum jobs” due to low educational levels (p. 70). Finally, the powwows express a particular form of self-understanding: “Each local powwow, by representing traditional Indian and rural values and through celebrating the history of given communities, asserts the primacy of spiritual health and community life over material improvement” (p. 70). If the large tribes do not find the performance of powwow a convincing sign of Indian identity, most non-Indians do. “Powwows are the main tool North Carolina Indians have for defining their collective identity to outsiders (...) Indians use powwows to encourage the surrounding communities to respect both the nature and the boundaries of their communities” (p. 71). So musical practice in relation to identity works for insiders in one way (a sense of belonging and self-understanding), for some outsiders (other Indians) not at all, and for whites as a symbol of a specific, “different” Indian identity. Until the North Carolina Commission of Indians recognizes their Indian identity, the Occaneechi may partake of the psychological benefits of their own self-understanding, but not of the social and economic benefits that recognition of their identity by the Commission would confer.

7. What does music contribute to identity?

While these questions do not exhaust the theoretical issues at stake in the study of identity and how music studies might contribute to them, I turn in the interest of space to a question that is specific to the ethnomusicological literature on music, namely, what are the particular contributions of music to discussions of social identity.³⁵ There seem to be four basic positions in the literature. The first is that music gives symbolic

³⁵ One point common to discussions of identity but omitted here is the idea that identity is always constructed out of difference, that is, one’s self-understanding is constituted by the construction of an “other.” On the other hand, Kevin Robbins, in “Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe”, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 61–86, argues that it might be possible to transcend this position by focusing less on cultural identity and more on cultural exchange. This entails on our part not imagining the other as essentially different from us, but as having agency; considering the possibility of openness and change; and putting our selves in their places with some knowledge of how they operate. Music would seem to contribute to both these two propositions. On the one hand, music gives groups a strong and immediate experience of the specificity of their favored styles of making music and its difference from other groups’ styles. On the other hand, in the postmodern era, musicians delight in the opportunities music provides for specific and deeply satisfying forms of dialogue and exchange that counter the discourses of difference perpetrated in the linguistic and political domains by identity makers of various political persuasions. The authors of works in this corpus do not concern themselves much with either point of view.

shape to a pre-existing or emergent identity. That symbolic shape is inherent in the structures of music and usually constitutes an iconic representation of elements of identity. Music's temporality can be an icon of the temporal logic of identity. Moreover, music has the ability to index different aspects of multiple identities through the multiplicity of its formal properties (melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre and so forth). Second, musical performance provides the opportunity for communities sharing an identity to see themselves in action and to imagine others who might share the same style of performance. Third, music may contribute to an identity its "feel" or affective quality.

Christopher Waterman makes point in his study of music's role in the construction of pan-Yoruba identity in Nigeria.³⁶ Yoruba as a label for an ethnic group in Nigeria was invented sometime in the early 20th century from an amalgam of local groups, who were understood to contrast with more culturally distant groups, such as the Hausa and Igbo. In this context, whatever is labeled Yoruba music, and especially its emergent popular forms, is participating, along with politics, education, and language in a process of construction of a new identity rather than acting as a reflection of a well-established identity. However, although Waterman claims such a constructivist position, the main line of argument flows from a structuralist perspective: "The role of neo-traditional music in enacting and disseminating a hegemonic Yoruba identity is grounded in the iconic representation of social relationships as sonic relationships," and, one might add, performative or visual relationships (p. 372). While his argument begins with the idea of reflection, he turns it into a constructivist argument by claiming that *jùjú* performances "externalize these values and give them palpable form" (p. 376). The latter idea, palpability, seems to be one of the special claims about what music can do in the constructivist project. One gets the sense here that Yoruba identity actually has been constructed elsewhere (in dictionaries of the Yoruba language, in schooling, and in political action of various kinds), but music provides the identity with "its interactive ethos or 'feel': intensive, vibrant, buzzing, and fluid" (p. 376). Since music can't name the identity, this claim may be more persuasive than the constructivist one. Or minimally one might claim that music participates in a constructivist project by giving it not its name but its "feel" and emotional resonance.

The fourth contribution of music to identity is the claim that music gives to an identity, especially a subaltern identity, a positive valence.

³⁶ Christopher A. Waterman, "'Our Tradition Is a Very Modern Tradition': Popular Music and the Construction of Pan-Yoruba Identity", *Ethnomusicology* 34 (1990): 367–379.

This argument was made by Manuel for Puerto Rican music, by Allen for South African “vocal jive,” and by Barbara Krader for singers in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁷

This topic is clearly an area where theories about the relationship between music and identity could develop, but theories are not worked out in the ethnographic articles I have cited so far. Such a theory does appear, however, in an article by Thomas Turino specifically devoted to theory rather than ethnography.³⁸ Applying to music the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), an American pragmatist philosopher, Turino argues that it is the iconic quality of music as a sign that is the source of its emotional power. Musical iconicity consists of its structural similarity to other aspects of culture and shared behaviors, and as such contributes an emotionally satisfying sense that the identity being constructed through music is “natural.” In addition, music’s ability to index common experiences of a community and one’s shared social experience with that community contributes to the emotional power of music. “Music integrates the affective and identity-forming potentials of both icons and indices in special ways, and is thus a central resource in events and propaganda aimed at creating social unity, participation, and purpose” (p. 236). This theoretical work is, in my opinion, very necessary if the full potential of organizing our scholarly work around themes is to be realized. The existence of such work makes its absence from the ethnographic articles in this corpus all the more striking.

8. Conclusion

The 17 articles published since 1982 in *Ethnomusicology* with the word “identity” in the title are clearly just the tip of an iceberg of ethnomusicological interest the theme of music’s role in creating, constructing, articulating, negotiating, and reflecting social identities. Each of the 16 ethnographic articles provides an interesting window into processes of identity formation in particular cases from virtually every region of the world: Africa (4), Latin America (4), Europe (3), North America (2), East Asia (1), South Asia (1), Southeast Asia (1); only studies from the Pacific and the Middle East are missing. All kinds of identity, including multiple identities in conflict, are examined: ethnic (5), national (4), regional (3), class (2), religious (3), community (2), tribal (2), caste (1), hybrid (1), and individual (1).

³⁷ Barbara Krader, “Slavic Folk Music: Forms of Singing and Self-Identity”, *Ethnomusicology* 31(1987): 9–17.

³⁸ Thomas Turino, “Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircian Semiotic Theory for Music”, *Ethnomusicology* 43 (1999): 221–255.

What is missing in all this variety is the desire to create a coherent, interrelated, unified body of work that connects with the larger literature on identity and works out the potentially fascinating cross-cultural theoretical implications and general tendencies at work whenever music is used to create a sense of individual or social identity? I regard this failure to achieve coherence and reference within this corpus as a structural weakness in our work on this theme. If this pattern is true for the other themes around which we ethnomusicologists organize our work, and I fear that it might be, then we have a structural weakness in our discipline that diminishes the efficacy of our research in general and limits the potential of ethnomusicology, at least in its American form, to make a powerful contribution to scholarship on music.

Тимоти Рајс

РАЗМАТРАЊА О МУЗИЦИ И ИДЕНТИТЕТУ
У ЧАСОПИСУ *ЕТНОМУЗИКОЛОГИЈА*
(Резиме)

Однос између музике и идентитета постао је уобичајена тема у етномузикологији почев од раних осамдесетих година XX века, да би на скупу поводом прославе 50. годишњице Друштва за етномузикологију 2005. године постала далеко најзаступљенија од свих разматраних тема. Разноврсност приступа америчких етномузиколога овој теми илустрована је прегледом карактеристичног узорка – чланака чији наслови садрже реч *идентитет/и* (укупно их је 17), а који су објављени током последњих 25 година у једном од најзначајнијих етномузиколошких часописа, *Ethnomusicology* (*Етномузикологија*).

Међу разлозима који су утицали на актуелизовања ове теме у етномузикологији, три су кључна. Први се доводи у везу са чињеницом да *идентитет* као психолошка категорија има релативно кратку историју проучавања на пољима која су фундаментална за етномузикологију (социологија, антропологија, студије културе и филозофија), где је присутна тек од шездесетих година. Други разлог лежи у томе што се америчка „политика“ идентитета, заснована на раси, етницитету и роду, утемељила почев од 70-их као значајно поље проучавања и анализе како на универзитетима, тако и у култури. Трећи, пак, разлог лежи у чињеници да у етномузикологији, почев од 90-тих, а често као резултат непосредног теренског искуства, расте уверење да људи данас насељавају свет који је „фрагментиран“ и „детериторијализован“; могућности за географску, економску, културну и социјалну мобилност данас су практично неограничене, и то неvezано од привидно традиционалних етничких, националних, родних и класних идентитета и категорија, те су животни „путеви“ постали значајнији него „корени“.

Разматрање поменутог избора етномузиколошких радова показује да се аутори нису у довољној мери ослањали на општу литературу о идентитетима из области друштвених и хуманистичких наука, а највећи број студија није контекстуализован ни у етномузиколошкој литератури која третира ту проблематику. У том смислу, овај рад је постављен као критичко-теоријски и конципиран као одређена врста класификације фокусираних етномузиколошких радова о идентитету(-има), а према основним појмовима и теоријским поставкама из оквира генералног поимања идентитета, посебно у оквиру студија културе. Главна обухваћена питања јесу следећа: „Шта је идентитет?“, „Које је порекло идентитета?“, „Колико идентитета имамо?“, „Како се идентитет ствара?“ и „Ко дефинише и институционализује идентитет?“.

На свако од ових питања пружен је одговор у смислу доприноса музике овом предмету. Уочено је да је већина (16) издвојених чланака етнографског типа, односе се на практично све делове света и баве различитим врстама идентитета – етничким, националним, регионалним, класним, религиозним, заједничким, племенским, кастинским, хибридниим и индивидуалним. Поједине студије показују да музика може допринети саморазумевању групе, као и осећању припадности групи код појединца. Иако постоји опште уверење да музика помаже у конструкцији идентитета, многи аутори се несвесно враћају старој идеји да музика одражава претходно постојеће идентитете. Такође, иако се често тврди да музичари (као агенти – посредници) представљају чинилац у конструкцији идентитета, многе студије показују да разне владине, квази-владине и трговачке организације често умањују и ограничавају деловање појединаца.

Чланак такође постулира четири начина на које музика доприноси конструкцији и симболизацији идентитета: 1. својом структурном иконичношћу у процесима „самоспознаја“ (self-understandings); 2. перформативношћу којом индексира социјалне вредности групе; 3. тако што социјалном идентитету даје „осећај“ сопства и 4. обезбеђује позитивну вредност негативним, „подређеним“ (subaltern) идентитетима.

С обзиром на то да посматрани корпус текстова не само да игнорише општу литературу о идентитетима већ и превиђа резултате постојећих етномузиколошких радова из ове области, у закључку се истиче да такви погледи ограничавају интелектуалне домете и потенцијал етномузикологије као дисциплине. Сугерише се, такође, неопходност заснивања теоријски утемељеног, интердисциплинарног принципа проучавања релација музике и идентитета, који би био не само применљив на сва поља којима се савремена етномузикологија бави, већ и на све врсте идентитета.

(Резиме сачинила Данка Лајић-Михајловић)

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