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## The Affective Turn in Ethnomusicology

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### Abstract

The affective turn, which has already questioned dominant paradigms in many disciplinary fields including cultural studies, philosophy, political theory, anthropology, psychology and neuroscience, has started to attract more attention in the field of ethnomusicology, becoming a particularly vibrant stream of thought. Drawing on the voices that call for the historicisation of and critical deliberation on the field of affect studies, the article strives to show how theories of affect might expand dominant paradigms in ethnomusicology and also points to their limitations.

### Key words

Affective turn, ethnomusicology, sonic affect, musical emotions, affect-emotion relationship

“Everything that occurs without praiseworthy affects [in music] can be considered nothing, does nothing and means nothing” (Der vollkommene Capellmeister, Johann Mattheson, 1739).

Music has often been taken as an example of the power of affect. Its ubiquitously distributive affective potential has become pivotal in the works of scholars advocating the affective turn.<sup>2</sup> Spurred by the poststructuralist orientation towards language, representation, deconstruction and psychoanalysis, a perspective in which body, emotions and embodiment have been neglected (see Clough and Halley 2007), the affective turn shifted the focus to pre-, extra-, and paralinguistic aspects and introduced a non-discursive, non-representational approach (see Thrift 2007). Developed mainly in the 2000s and partly inspired by research on the emotions and the body conducted in feminist and queer studies, affect theory is currently attracting growing interest in a variety of disciplinary fields. There is no single, uniform affect theory; affect has multiple and sometimes even conflicting definitions. The affective turn also cannot be seen as

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separated from other “turns”: the sensory turn and the material turn that have also emerged in scholarly discourses of the last fifteen years and that have played prominent roles in a new emphasis on embodiment, material substance and the senses. Drawing on the works of Spinoza, Bergson, James and particularly Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi, Chouse, Thrift and Connolly, the main conceptualisation of affect is that it is a state of relation as well as the passage of vital forces or intensities beyond emotions (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1). Affect is seen as a potential, a bodily capacity to affect and be affected. It is embodied in the automatic reaction manifested in the skin, on the surface of the body and in the heartbeat, but it is still something that goes beyond the body, a passage from one experiential state of the body to another (see Massumi’s definition in Deleuze and Guattari 1987: xvi). However, that body is not exclusively human, but can also be animal or plant, crowd or social body, singing body or the body of a musical instrument.<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis on affect as a theoretical and methodological concept in recent scholarly accounts proves that it is becoming a particularly vibrant stream of thought in the field of music studies. Yet has it already become a nuanced analytical category? Or, to quote Grossberg (2010: 316), has affect become “everything that is non-representational or non-semantics”, since we have not yet done “the actual work of parsing out everything that is getting collapsed into the general notion of affect”? Has affect become a conceptual outlet for any kind of “sensorial, emotional, visceral” approach to music that merely reopens/re-actualises old-fashioned binaries between mind and body, cognitive and somatic?<sup>4</sup> What is the risk in using the conceptual tools of affect theories, given the current broader social, cultural and intellectual climate? Is the usage of affect really an epistemological shift that offers a new path for theorizing music and sound? Is the emphasis on the affectivity of music an ideological and political statement?

This article explores the potentialities and limitations of the affective turn in ethnomusicology. Following the view that call for the historicisation of and critical deliberation on the field of affect studies, it aims to trace the genealogy of the concept in ethnomusicological scholarly works. For that purpose, in the first part of the article I offer a highly condensed view (giving a brief sketch rather than deep analysis) of the dominant approaches to affect in ethnomusicological accounts. Unlike the authors who recently theorized the affective turn

<sup>3</sup> For theory on the material agency of the nonhuman or the not-quite-human, see Benett 2010. For this issue within ethnomusicology see Roda 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Such a critical appraisal of the affect theories has already been made in other fields of the humanities, particularly by feminist, queer and postcolonial scholars; see Hemmings 2005.

in music scholarship in the volume *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*<sup>5</sup> and reported on the limited amount of studies in contemporary music scholarship dedicated to sound and music with a focus on affect (Thompson and Biddle 2013: 18), which presupposes affect theory as a naturalisation of the epistemological equipment from “another” field, I would like to claim that the conceptualisation of affect has long been a ubiquitous part of ethnomusicological research. As summarised by Charles Seeger, who stressed that “music is communication of world view as the feeling of reality” (1977), the special connection between music, on the one hand, and affect, emotions and feelings, on the other, has remained a hot topic for generations of scholars. Going beyond affect alone, the affect/emotion relationship that today appears as one of the most sensitive questions within the affective turn proves to be the most persistent paradigm when theorizing music and sound experience. I believe that this relation should be given particular attention, as it provides access to some pivotal questions of the affect theory itself. Discussing recent scholarly accounts on affect in light of the long tradition of thought about affect and meaning in music is not meant as a revitalisation of a psychological approach, which appeared to be dominant yet limited explanatory framework. The goal is to rethink the affective turn as a radical paradigm shift and to point to important continuities that can help us to detect the conceptual points where the affective turn has something new to say in music studies.

This article attempts to show complex epistemological stances on affect in the ethnomusicological accounts, and particularly the ways the affective turn has influenced the revitalisation of the existent paradigm and/or deepened existing deadends. Analysis of the recent studies suggests that affect is a constant area of investigation in various overlapping branches of music research (musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, sound studies, cultural anthropology of music, music education etc.). Although I strive to be cautious in thinking about the disciplinary differences within the dominant conceptualisations of affect<sup>6</sup> and to take the point of view that seems to me to be relevant to ethnomusicology, my analysis inevitably includes accounts from musicology, music education and music theory, but also sound studies and human geography. This is also due to the lack of dialog among these disciplinary fields, which, I believe

<sup>5</sup> This volume can be seen as a result of the growing interest in affect in the field of music scholarship in the last several years, as visible in the number of conferences organised on this topic and in the large number of panels and individual papers dedicated to it at the international conferences and annual meetings of ethnomusicologists.

<sup>6</sup> As Gregg and Seigworth warn about confuting philosophy, psychology, critical race studies and feminist standpoint theory, among other fields, which all have their own disciplinary differences when conceptualizing affect (2010: 316).

should be fostered. Still, such an overview tends to reduce a variety of parallel voices and paradigms to the dominant stream. From the wealth of thought about affect, I selected those studies relevant for my examination. This proved to be even more challenging after 2000, when scholarly production related to emotions and affect became particularly vibrant. Influenced by the critiques from the discursive and linguistic-centred approaches, the rapid blossoming of studies addressing these topics meant that many of them quickly become outdated or neglected. As a result, my literature preview is selective and, despite my personal wish to focus precisely on these theoretical and conceptual “leftovers”, this article still focuses on the most resonant works in the field.

### *Affect, an Ancient Topic in Music Studies*<sup>7</sup>

Affect in music and musical affect are topics that have occupied intellectuals and scholars since Antiquity. In his overview of rhetoric and music, Blake Wilson provides a valuable insight into the terminological changes and conceptual transformations of “affect” from Aristotle, Plato and Cicero<sup>8</sup> to Baroque rhetoric and the terminology of music theorists in the late 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, who all acknowledged the power of music to control and direct the listener’s “affects” (in this case equated with emotions): “the association of rhetoric with the concept of the Affects can be found almost continuously in the history of music from at least the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century” (Wilson et al. 2012). Wilson further reflects on how affect was rationalized and understood in perspectives that categorize and describe types of affect as well as the affective connotations of scales, dance movements, rhythms, instruments, forms and styles.<sup>9</sup> His overview demonstrates that past theorists established no single “theory” of affect and shows that, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have faced the same stumbling blocks when approaching this concept. In that sense, it proves that thinking about affect is nothing radically new, due to the long legacy of criticizing discursive and linguistic approaches in music scholarship.

Although his work is not related to ethnomusicology, Wilson’s overview excellently illustrates the continuous interest in the “music-affect problem” that later emerged in the works of scholars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mainly within

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<sup>7</sup> Paraphrasing David J. Elliot, who opens his article with the intention of revisiting the ancient topic of musical affective experience (2000: 79).

<sup>8</sup> For considerations on this topic in Antiquity and in Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious thought, see Garofalo 2010: 727.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the understanding of affect, see Wilson 2012.

the field of musical psychology.<sup>10</sup> As early as 1951, Suzanne Langer warned her readers that language's discursive nature is less congruent with musical forms than feelings (Langer 1951). In his seminal work *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Leonard Meyer theorizes musical affect while arguing for a more nuanced theoretical and analytical approach to the general claim that musical works and performances communicate feelings and emotions. The main concerns of the theorists, he asserts, appear to be the relationship between the affective stimulus and the affective responses (Meyer 1956: 13), and he notes the difficulty of sorting out particular musical processes that evoke affective responses (ibid.). Meyer's epistemological background negotiates two rival views of the absolute meaning of music and the nature and value of the experience involved in the perception and understanding of the relationships that constitute a musical work. Therefore, he builds on behaviourism (discussing emotional and affective behaviour), arguing that, although emotion or affect is in itself undifferentiated, affective experience is differentiated because it involves awareness of a stimulus.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the stimulus itself and awareness of it are equally important in Meyer's conceptualisation of musical affect, which will become meaningful for the further discussion of sonic affect in the second part of this article. Like Meyer, Malcolm Budd too suggests a tendency to a succession of both natural and learned automatic responses to a stimulus (1985: 159).<sup>12</sup>

Several dominant tendencies marked these early thoughts about affect. Studies took a subject-centred approach to emotion and affect, which they used interchangeably. Based on the psychological theory of emotions, their main field of enquiry was the particular musical pattern or character that evokes a response and a particular psychological change in listeners. Affect is thus inseparable from perception: music's power to generate emotion lies in the listener who "understands" the music (Budd 1985: 160). Scholars discussed music in relation to self-ness, self-growing and self-transformation as a part of the behaviourist paradigm. On the other hand, Meyer acknowledges the importance of bodily aspects: "Other aspects of affective behaviour, such as skeletal and muscular adjustments, have been said to be automatic, natural concomitants of the affective response. These will be called 'emotional reaction'" (Meyer 1956: 17). In a similar way to Meyer, Budd also provided theoretical ideas about

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<sup>10</sup> For more about this early peak, see Juslin and Sloboda 2010: 934.

<sup>11</sup> Two instances of emotion are the same kind if and only if they involve an awareness of the same kind of stimulus situation.

<sup>12</sup> However, he criticized the argument that focuses on the tension that music creates in the listener.

the body, drawing on Pratt, who discussed the movements both of and within the body. Budd argues that our body can move about, being itself a locus of movements, and that some of these movements are felt by kinaesthesia and organic sensation (1984: 38–39). However, these claims remained the “leftovers” within the dominant focus on cognitive and psychological aspects. Scholars generally favour the brain and consciousness, maintaining the dichotomy between body and mind. Most work on the subject seeks to identify positive emotions and draws on the thesis that the emotional consequences of experiencing music are that people feel joy in being themselves and in being in tune with others. Such views also do not reflect on the fact that what is defined and seen as ‘positive feelings’ might actually be ambivalent, unsettled and unpredictable emotional state, or in Ngai’s words, “a meta-feeling in which one feels confused about *what* one is feeling” (Ngai 2005: 14). Also, dominant research trajectories maintain the dichotomies between the aesthetic and technical characteristic of music and social and historical circumstances, stimulus/biology-based and sociological/culturally constructed perspectives and a generally essentialist approach to emotion and affect. The dominant hypotheses and proposals presented also resonate in the debates and disagreements in recent scholarship, as will be examined more closely in the following section.

### *Theories of Musical Emotion*

In the early 1990s, scholarly works were galvanised by an increasing interest in the field of music and emotion, reviving the “old” studies of Meyer, Berlyne and Clynes (see Sloboda 1991 and Le Doux 1996). As Juslin and Sloboda (2010: 935) assert in their overview of the field, this topic has become an accepted area of research with a broad range of topics, theories and methods. Although heterogeneous in their approaches, the majority of works on musical emotion are situated in music physiology as the central epistemological framework. The main question that scholars have raised is how music produces its emotional effects. They pursue the questions of the very existence/essence of musical emotions; mechanisms through which music arouses emotion; social processes related to these emotions and the issue of applied scholarship (particularly in therapy and healing). In the interpretation of Juslin and Sloboda, the term “musical emotions” is shorthand for “emotions that were somehow induced by music’, without any further implications about the precise nature of these emotions” (2010: 10). Many of the studies were based on experimental work conducted by ethnomusicologists and music psychologists. Bernard Lortat-Jacob and some other scholars were interested in the potential existence of musical universals related to

the expressive meaning of music (Fernando et al. 2014; Lortat-Jacob 1998). Musical meaning, as something that is communicated between performers and listeners through musical affect, has been the subject of a continuous line of thought in theorizing the aesthetic experience of music and sound (see e.g. Shepherd and Wicke 1998; De Nora 2000). In his introduction to the special issue of *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Martin Clayton says that the ethnomusicological theory of musical meaning is “something I consider to have been a pressing but unfulfilled need for many years” (2001: 2).

Simultaneously, another shift towards biology and neurobiology is being made, with the idea of combining neurobiology, perception studies and the psychology of music. The influence of this “affective neuroscience” appears to be particularly strong: experimental methods have included various ways of measuring musical responses – self-report measures, psychological measures, measuring neurological changes and hormonal activities, as well as behavioural measures of affect (see Västfjäll 2010). Another stream of research observes music and emotions with a focus on technological and new media-based processes (Becker 2004: 5). In general, the dominant approaches welcome empirical research and focus on applicability in various fields, such as music education, music therapy, health, film music and marketing.

While addressing the cognitive and physiological dimensions of musical emotion phenomena, scholars have shown awareness of the limitations of this approach: some have argued for the importance of analysing the musical discourse and behaviours that occur in a given socio-historical context and the need to combine the cultural anthropological approach with the cognitive psychological one. As Judith Becker asserts, some also claim the importance of embodiment for the cognitive model and propose “embodied cognition” or “distributed cognition” (2004: 5). Approaches based on biology, neurology and psychology, in particular, have started theorizing the body as a structure within which cognition and emotion occur. Yet many of the works remain ambivalent about the role of music experience beyond the mind and perception. In line with the subject-centred approach, scholars give priority to listeners: “the most common motive for listening to music is to influence emotions”, often with an accompanying affective reaction of some sort (Juslin and Sloboda 2010: 3). A focus on listeners also attempts to offer a more nuanced interpretation of psychoanalytical aspects of music’s visceral experience, as is suggested by David Schwarz, drawing on Lacan and Žižek (1997: 2). Many scholars focus on rhythmical entrainment as an “aesthetic emotion”, drawing on the concept of entrainment from social psychology.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Due to the limited scope of this article, I am not able to further discuss works that

Approaching affect from the perspective of practice, David J. Elliott proposes the concept of multidimensional affect, which is built on the individual's cognitive-musical processing abilities and implies that there are many layers of personal and social meaning "to 'locate', apprehend, construct, and feel emotions *about* in musical work" (Elliott 2000: 85). Drawing on Bowman's ideas of human audition, he warns of auditory ambiguity, the fact that it is phenomenally fluid, affecting the listener's aesthetic experience – for example, through individual attachments to memories of particular sound patterns, or appreciations of personal response to the musical expression of emotions they cognize (ibid.: 86).

In line with the previous works, these studies consider the same conceptual questions when thinking about the affective in music, an emotion that is *sui generis* or specifically musical (Budd 1985: 30). As I will show later, constructing a viable theory that can be built either upon the idea of an emotion that is specific to music, or upon the idea of emotion per se, is still one of the main points of disagreement in recent thinking about affect.

### *The Emotion-Affect Relationship Unveiled*

In the majority of the presented studies, emotion and affect appear as parallel and interchangeable concepts. This conceptual division/relationship has been one of the main stumbling blocks in recent scholarship, which thus displays many points of contradiction. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, Grossberg asserts the continuing difficulty of theorizing affect and emotion, due in part to the way the historical trajectory of these terms has been used to dismiss and trivialise (Grossberg 2010: 316). Music scholars already noted this complex discursive relationship between emotion, feeling and affect in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Meyer defines this relationship as blurred, but sees affect as a concept used to mark undifferentiated feelings: "Much confusion has resulted from the failure to distinguish between emotion felt (or affect) and mood" (Meyer 1956: 7). For him, as interpreted by Budd, the character of affect involved in the different kinds of emotion is always the same and, in itself, affect is neither pleasant nor unpleasant (1985: 156). Juslin and Sloboda reflect on the "terminological confusion" in the field of music and emotion due to the different ways scholars use the words "affect", "emotion", "feeling" and "mood". They distinguish between these terms: emotions refer to a quite brief but intense affective reaction;

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focus on entrainment. For more about this, see Tia de Nora's pivotal study *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) and Clayton's, Sager's and Will's discussion of the concept of entrainment in ethnomusicology (2005).



mood is used to denote affective states that are lower in intensity than emotions, while feeling refers to the subjective experience of emotions and moods (2010: 10). Juslin and Sloboda define affect (in music) as the overarching concept that “comprises anything from music preference, mood, and emotion to aesthetic and even spiritual experiences” (ibid.: 9). They also express hesitation to use the term “affect”, since the main journals in the field increasingly use “emotion” rather than “affect” (ibid.: 10). However, this stance is difficult to justify, as the scholarly work on affect in other fields of the humanities provides a detailed analysis of this conceptual duality based on the core debates among theorists.

Although “affect” and “emotion” are often used as synonyms (Rice 2008), affect theorists such as Massumi claim that these terms follow different logics and different orders: feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, while affect is pre-personal (2002: 28, 40). Grossberg claims that emotions should not simply be described as affect, even when they are considered configurations of affect: “I have always held that emotion is the articulation of affect and ideology. Emotion is the ideological attempt to make sense of some affective productions” (2010: 316). Such views draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between affection as a relational state of a particular body manifested in feeling, emotion or perception on the one hand, and affect as an intense force on the other (see 1987: 281). Emotion thus resides on the side of subjective affirmation, as a subjective capture of affect (Schrimshaw 2013: 31). For many scholars in the humanities, affect is seen as a “raw material” for emotion, while emotion enables the social, political and cultural articulation of affect.

Nevertheless, some scholars claim that Grossberg’s and Massumi’s conceptual distinction between affect and emotion cannot be sustained (Leys 2011: 434). In Leys’ opinion, such approaches actually reaffirm the false dichotomy between conscious and signifying (emotional and intellectual), on the one hand, and unconscious and affective (a process of intensity not tied to signification) on the other. For Leys, certain strands of theory, especially in the work of scholars inspired by Deleuze (and Guattari), reinforce the same dualism (the mind and the body or matter) of the subject that it seeks to criticise and duplicate an old paradigm (ibid.: 450). Sianne Ngai also argues that this split actually has methodological roots and originated in psychoanalysis’ methodology for distinguishing third-person feelings from those of the first person, where affect serves an observer perspective, while emotions belong to the analysed ego (2005: 25). Similarly, for Sara Ahmed, the distinction between sensation and emotion can only be analytic (2004: 6). As I strive to show in

the following sections, I believe that precisely the fields of music and sound can be used to show the importance of this conceptual distinction as an analytical tool, but also its unproductivity when it comes to theorizing our (music) realities.

### *Theories of Sonic Materialism*

Affect theory's most important impact is in proposing affect as prior to intentions, meanings, reasons and beliefs – as non-cognitive, corporeal or automatic responses. For the theorists who argue for its autonomy, affect is an inhuman/trans-human, pre-subjective, non-signifying, unconscious intensity, disconnected from the subjective (see Massumi 2002). In other words, humans apprehend the world on two separate but unequal tracks: intention and affect, meaning and sense impressions, perception and experience; thus they co-exist but do not merge or commingle (Clough and Halley 2007: 200, see also 232). According to Clough and Halley, affects are defined in terms of their “autonomy from conscious perception and language” (ibid.: 209). So, despite persistent warnings that “affect and cognition are never fully separable” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 2–3), body and sign nonetheless function and can be analysed on ontologically separate planes, as a matter of “parallel processing” (Clough and Halley 2007: 198). The *difference in kind* between affect and meaning, experience and representation, sense and significance, is a categorical assumption of affect theory. According to Lawrence Grossberg, affective states are neither structured narratively nor organized in response to our interpretations of situations (1992: 81). Theorists also argue that affect is independent of, and prior to, ideology, “the third state between activity and passivity, occupying the gap between content and effect” (Massumi in Thompson and Biddle 2013: 6). However, it is precisely this “autonomy of affect” that is the main source of debate and criticism among scholars. Feminist and queer scholars, in particular, argue that affect cannot be pre-political but is continuously mediated by social and cultural locations and identities. Others propose that affect's relative autonomy is its most important critical and political value, as asserted by Bryan J. McCann: “It is simultaneously subject to capture while retaining the potential for complete or partial escape – if only to be captured once again” (2013: 409).

It is this dual nature (autonomous and entrenched) that also seems to be a crucial stumbling block when discussing affect in relation to sound and music. In most of the recent theoretical studies of the affective potential of sound and music (the works of Kassabian 2001, 2013; Gilbert 2004; Bull and Back 2003; Cusick 2006, 2008; Goodman 2010; Garcia 2011; Voegelin 2014 and Hofman 2015),

the analyses focus on sound as affective vibrational force. These approaches generally call for “sonic materiality” and focus on sonic affect as the “nonrepresentational ontology of vibrational force” (Goodman 2010: xv). These calls follow the ideas of scholars who have extensively theorized the ontology of sound and the nature of auditory experience, particularly in the field of sound studies (Nudds and O’Callaghan 2009: 6). Recent scholarship, moreover, proposes that sound is vibrational affect that exists above and beyond the ear, resonating in our bodies (see e.g. Goodman 2010 and Price 2011). Several scholars have anticipated this shift from the ear alone to the visceral/somatic experience of sound and have asserted the automatic bodily responses as the important part of music’s aesthetic experience.

From a different angle, Will Schrimshaw proposes sound not only as an intentional object of auditory experience, but as a physical process whose ontological status is neither reducible to, nor dependent upon its being heard (2013: 40). This means that vibrational regimes also exist beyond our conscious perception and that affective aspects in sound not only resonate with parts of the body other than the ear, but also go unheard (*ibid.*: 43).<sup>14</sup> A good example is brain-wave music, which has lots of frequencies that our ear cannot actually detect as “sound”; another is the difference between human and animal auditory perception.<sup>15</sup> Schrimshaw thus challenges the distinction between quality, experience and affirmation, on the one hand, and intensity, quantity and autonomy, on the other (2013: 39). In his opinion, what complicates our experience of sound is that it exists separately from audition: “non-sound” is filled with inaudible but affective signals that resonate in bodies. He argues that affects therefore do not need anthropic, subjective relational extension; their perceptions are seen as independent of the state of those who experience them (*ibid.*: 31). In his conceptualisation of sonic affect, he draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that art’s affect persists beyond the experiential; it is a block of sensations independent of the affected and the affecting, as it is independent of both the creator and the perceiver (2003: 164).

In attempting to think of the affectivity of music and sound as facilitating acoustic entry into the affective fields, Schrimshaw goes even further, claiming that sound itself can be a synonym for affective autonomy (2013: 40). In the introduction to his approach to sonic materialism, itself built upon the paradigm of the “autonomy of

<sup>14</sup> Sonic intensity that is not manifested in experience yet is nonetheless real vibration or frequency beyond the range of audition (*ibid.*: 36).

<sup>15</sup> Steven Feld’s study *Sound and Sentiment* from 1982 not only argues for including both human and non-human (natural) sounds and musical sounds through an acousticological approach, but also takes into consideration cultural and social levels, sentiments and emotions – all as the assemblage that should be addressed in the analytical process.

affect”, he stresses that the focus is on the “surplus” of sonic matter beyond its symbolic and subjective affirmation (ibid.: 30). And it is precisely this issue of the inaudible territory of sound that seems to have existed alongside the main inquiry in music scholarship, using a different conceptual vocabulary: although scholars from the field of cognitive ethnomusicology and those focused on musical emotions have situated their approaches within an opposite paradigm of music, as necessarily embedded in subjective affirmation, they recognize the limited access to the internal processing of sound experience. They are aware that it is not possible to catch the totality of aesthetic experience, claiming that “emotion” and “feeling” do not capture everything relevant to our experience of music. In addition to the emotions experienced, “flow”, “spirituality”, “altered states” and “vitality affects”<sup>16</sup> constitute a part of the more complex “aesthetic experience” (Juslin and Sloboda 2010: 940). Some studies go beyond the subject-centred “perceptual” paradigm, introducing the concept of “unconscious affect” and “pre-attentive affective behaviour” (Winkielman and Berridge 2004), which can exist without conscious experience. They report that it is not possible to capture “all aspects of affect” and that the subjective experience of affect is only one component of the “affect chain” (Västfjäll on Carver 2001).

From a different theoretical perspective, Martin Clayton uses the *rasa* theory originating in Indian “dramaturgy” to examine the role of affect in musical meaning. The word *rasa*, meaning literally ‘juice’ or ‘essence’, suggests something flowing and dynamic (2000: 2) – a fluidity that Becker calls “aesthetic essence” or “aesthetic emotion” (2004: 11). In discussing the application of the *rasa* theory to music (which “remained underdeveloped”), Clayton asserts the importance of thinking within “the irreducible domain of sound – something from which Western musicology could certainly learn” (2000: 13). Despite his main focus on the “perceiving subject” and musical meaning, he contends that music experience can occur well before we have a chance to come to any definite conclusions, even subconsciously, about the music’s tonality, motivic or formal structure or metrical regularity (ibid.: 8).

The main challenge related to the experiential aspects of music and sound has to do with the long-lasting paradigm that affect (and emotion) engenders in the listener through a direct experience (performance or listening). For the theory of sonic materialism, in contrast, the main obstacle appears when the sound is reduced to the subjective and *the real* is identified as intentional, as an object of experience. One of its main aims is to blur the line between the

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<sup>16</sup> For more about vitality affects, see the Handbook of Music and Emotion (Gabrielsson and Lindström 2010: 367–400).

experience of sound as intentional, on the one hand, and inescapable everyday activity, on the other, an aim deriving from the belief that literally everything vibrates – whether object or ecology, idea, event, feeling or process.<sup>17</sup>

*“Experiential Messiness”*<sup>18</sup>

The dialectical *subject/object* relationship and the dichotomy between *intentional/unintentional* appears to be the main focus of recent scholarly works fostered by the affective turn. Views of sonic materialism argue for the autonomy of affect as a pre-subjective, pre-political force and have raised the most important issues regarding the experience of sound and music. Such stances presuppose objective/subjective sounds, manifested also in the dichotomy between inaudible and audible. Maria Thompson and Ian Biddle point out that, in terms of sound and music, affect theory can be seen as contradictory, in that it strives to focus on the listening/performing bodies, but at the same time on what is beyond the audible and the bodily experience: “on the one hand, it looks for the orders or regimes of feelings (it is something connected, that is, to the bodily) and yet, on the other, seeks to allow for nodes of connectivity that sometimes (often) omit or bypass our bodies” (2013: 13). Such views are based on the assumption that we are either fully intentional or fully unintentional beings, which is one of the main points of the critique of the affective turn (see Leys 2011).

Employing the concept of affect need not reduce either the source or the given abilities of the subject to experience the sound. Sound is not a result of the interaction between subject and object, as Voegelin asserts; the very nature of sound exceeds the subject-object dichotomy: “a formless form that is neither object nor subject but the action of their materiality formlessly forming as liquid stickiness that grasps me too but leaves no trace” (Voegelin 2014: 2). The materiality of sound as mobile and fleeting cannot be captured as a noun, but only as a verb – as a process of contingent materiality (ibid.) – or, as proposed by Born, contingent on multiple materialities (2011: 377). Ethnomusicologically speaking, people experiencing music and sound invest their own affective dispositions, moods and emotions, and although they are open to the affective environment, they are not just empty vessels for impersonal affect (Garcia 2011: 186).<sup>19</sup> The body’s activities to process sound only partly determine

<sup>17</sup> For more about the concept of resonance and sounds as affective vibrations that resonate, see Gershon 2013.

<sup>18</sup> I use Sara Ahmed’s expression (2010: 30).

<sup>19</sup> The authors working on musical emotions also assert that more work needs to be done on interpersonality, since music evokes emotions not only at the individual level but also at the intergroup and interpersonal level – a kind of “collective emotions”,

how people experience and articulate sonic affect. Schrimshaw also asserts that we have to consider sonic affect's conceptual as well as material existence, which does not require us to abandon relatedness in favour of objective essentialism: "In thinking affective autonomy as interior to and in excess of both experience and representation, the problem of the in-itself attains an exteriority capable of conceiving alterity beyond the anthropic themes of linguistic and conceptual correlationism" (2013: 42).

I believe that we should go further and rethink the gap between representation and affect, since, to cite Elliot, representations are considered to have their own affects as well (2013). Although challenging the idea of representation is the very essence of the affective turn, I argue for moving beyond a reductive binarism between the representative/discursive and the sensorial/affective realms. To quote Sara Ahmed, "I do not assume there is something called affect that stands apart or has autonomy" but rather that it is something related to the "messiness of the experiential" (2010: 30). In her deliberations on the trans-subjective, unpredictable and free-floating circulation of affect and its autonomy from subjects, objects and signifiers, she asserts that although affect flows through and between, it may also "stick" (2004: 11). For theorizing about sonic affect as impersonal intensity and force, I agree that auditory experience is much more than just hearing or the bodily experience of the sequences of sound. It is multi-layered and marked by extra-auditory experiences based in the social context of the moment of the experience. To return to Salomé Voegelin's point, it is the inaudible and imperceptible aspects of sound, sounds that remain unheard or that we cannot or do not want to access, that make us aware of social, political, cultural, ideological and other prejudices and limitations (2014: 7). For her, the sound experience is gendered, racialised, and ethnicised as a framework of everyday life, the sensorial meaning of our realities. It warns us of the invisible on the socio-political frontline and talks about the plurality of (music) realities – materialities, ideologies and subjectivities. Our aesthetic, social and political realities are embedded in our experience of sound, as experienced and created through sensory engagement/action.

In that sense, I believe that the affective turn's productive potential does not lie in abandoning the semiotic, representational and discursive paradigms, but in the production of meeting points for the semantic and affective dimensions/venues at the site of the sound experience.<sup>20</sup> Recent ethnomusicological works seem to follow this

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emotions as a part of the dynamic social system (Juslin and Sloboda 2010: 944).

<sup>20</sup> For more about the limitation that affect theory sees in the semiotic model, see Atanasovski, this issue.

course, focussing on the affective contours of various music genres such as fado (Gray 2013), rap (McCann 2013), punk (Tatro 2014), popular music in general (Gitzen 2013) and partisan songs (Hofman 2015), or focussing on the affective linkage between gender and genre (Krell 2013). These studies aim to produce new insights into the role sound plays through affective technologies in the context of current realities. They also remind us that affective economies of sound and music are necessarily contextualized and individualized. They elaborate on music's affective capacity in constituting collectivities and its emancipatory potentials in alternative modes of political and cultural production. Some of the studies also argue for the need for a critical stance towards affect as a method, recognising not only its positive or emancipatory aspects, but also its destructive ones, which have to be grasped to avoid romanticisation. As Steve Goodman (2010) and Suzanne Cusick (2008) caution in their fundamental studies, affect is also manipulated as a tool for controlling lives, by claiming that it offers a "promise" in the neoliberal corporate world. I would warn of another potentially dangerous aspect of the romanticisation of affect: the tendency to assign to it an inherent authenticity – understanding affective economies in music and sound as inherently authentic and moral, which is at the core of its promise for (any kind of) potentiality.

### *Limits of the Theorizable*

"Making my own 'affecting presence' out of a Kaluli myth takes me back to Armstrong's 'being', 'feeling full experience', and 'witnessing' in the process of discovering how form incarnates feeling," wrote Steven Feld in 1982 (2012: 236). This quote vividly describes the intensity of the emotional investment, sensory experiences and affective technologies of the fieldwork environment as a spectre of affects that is derived in a very concrete moment and particular spatio-temporal context.

Claiming that theory *is* practice, several scholarly works propose affect as methodology, as an empirical research practice (see Coleman and Ringrose 2013; Gershon 2013).<sup>21</sup> Aware of the gaps between theory and practice, they argue for affect as a tool for detecting potential options and possibilities in understanding our realities. "The affective relations are fleeting, emergent, contingent, and sensual apprehensions," write Waitt, Ryan and Farbotko (2013: 9), acknowledging that we live in a world that we can only partially understand, where many things are inherently unknowable. As

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence Grossberg warns that the modalities and mechanisms of the affective must be more carefully examined (2010: 328).

Becker states, trance cannot and need not be explained (2004: 2). Her statement emphasizes the material aspects of our research realities that cannot be represented, are missing or are impossible to theorise. This also points to the important modulations between scholarly reflections and the reality of everyday life, which, in Claire Bishop's words, "rarely provide more than fragmentary evidence, and convey nothing of the affective dynamic" (2012: 5). This becomes even more challenging if, as Nagel Thrift asserts, "consciousness shows up as short-term because of the artificiality of the situation demanded by the researcher" (2007: 7). Moreover, scholarly accounts also have their own affects. How can we deal with that experience of reality that goes beyond and works against cultural gravity, constantly escaping theory? Can affect be the analytical category that enables us to create a valuable account of the dynamic encounters made through music and sound?

Since thinking about affect is always writing about it, writing about affect (in music and sound) calls us to think about "invisible agency" – invisible mobility, sticky liquidity, actions and engagements, rather than artefacts, outcomes and visible relationships – and is an effort to access the invisible, "that which is barely there and yet influences all there is" (Voegelin 2014: 2). It attempts to catch the uncatchable – small bodily reactions, whispers and the energy of the moment; the liveliness of a world in flux, or in constant *becoming*, to use the Deleuzian concept. It struggles with the challenge of articulating a singular narrative about the "onflow" (Pred 2005) of everyday life, its materiality and reality, catching the moment of "right here, right now".

Affect as a methodological tool also shows us how and why this invisibility deeply influences not only our realities, but also the production of knowledge about these (music) realities. Voegelin claims that our engagement with sound as affect goes beyond what we actually perceive, showing us the possibilities rather than enabling us to recognise the perceived reality (2014: 4). I also suggest that affect leads us back to the question of ethical honesty in confronting the limits of the knowable (in a knowledge-based economy) and the obligations (or our mutual implication within global capitalism) that we share and to which we are bound. This appears particularly potent when affect is employed to gain new capacities to act politically – in the first place, in its role in the re-evaluation of reason and rationality in politics, ethics, and aesthetics. This can also be understood as an ethical act that addresses important questions of agency in the "crisis of representation for qualitative researchers", as Gershon warns us (2013: 259). He asserts that, by providing additional affective, sensory and other information in ways that text cannot, we may be



able to remove a layer of authorial translation from a text and provide the opportunity for others to be heard in their own voices (ibid.).

I have acknowledged from the start that this discussion demonstrates that it cannot fulfil the goal of being all-inclusive, even if it pretends to. Rather, it demonstrates the plurality of the origins of thought on affect and affectivity in music and sound, neither as an epistemology nor an ontology, but as many parallel and competing lines of inquiry. It points to the importance of opening more in-depth discussions about affect within current ethnomusicological scholarship and offers some of the possible directions for these discussions.

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## ЗАОКРЕТ КА ПРОУЧАВАЊУ АФЕКТА У ЕТНОМУЗИКОЛОГИЈИ

(Резиме)

Студије афекта, које су већ довеле у питање доминантне парадигме у хуманистичким дисциплинама, укључујући студије културе, филозофију, политичку теорију, психологију или антропологију, постепено добијају све већу пажњу у области етномузикологије као изузетно вибрантно подручје промишљања. Подстакнут преминацијом постструктуралистичког приступа и наглашавања дискурзивног и репрезентације кроз деконструкцију и психоанализу у којима су занемарени телесно, емоционално и сензорично (видети Clough and Halley 2007), теоријски заокрет ка афекту усмерава фокус на пре-дискурзивно, пре-лингвистичко кроз не-дискурзивни, не-репрезентативни приступ (видети Thrift 2007).

Чланак истражује потенцијале увођења теорије афекта у подручје етномузикологије. Ослањајући се на приступе који позивају на историзацију и контекстуализацију теорија афекта и њихову критичку расправу, чланак прати генеалогiju концепта афекта у постојећим научним дискурсима. У ту сврху у првом делу чланак нуди поглед на доминантне приступе у теоретизацији концепата афекта и емоције у етномузиколошким научним наративима. Према мом мишљењу, стављање нових студија о афекту у музици и звуку у шири историјски и дисциплинарни оквир посебно је важно јер 1) афект и емоције представљају две најзначајније коегзистентне парадигме када су посредни етномузикологија и сродне дисциплине 2) у теоријама афекта однос између концепата афекта и емоције појављује се као један од најосетљивијих питања и главни предмет научне дебате.

Чланак има за циљ осврт на комплексне епистемолошке мреже које обликују увођење концепта афекта у етномузикологију и посебно начине на које то утиче на ревитализацију постојећих парадигми или/и продубљивање постојећих концептуалних ћорсокака. Анализа доминантних приступа потврђује да је афект константни предмет занимања дисциплина које су фокусиране на истраживања музике и звука (музикологије, етномузикологије, теорије музике, културне антропологије музике, музичког образовања, звучних студија и сл.). Стога се у чланку афективни заокрет не третира као натурализација епистемолошког апарата из „другог” научног поља и не пропитују се начини на које постојећа истраживања одговарају на њега. Чланак заправо жели да покаже да је афект саставни део етномузиколошких епистемологија

од њених самих почетака па до данас; заокрет ка афекту није „помодни” теоријски тренд, већ теоријски и методолошки оквир који је већ дуго времена свеprisутни део етномузиколошке истраживачке праксе.

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