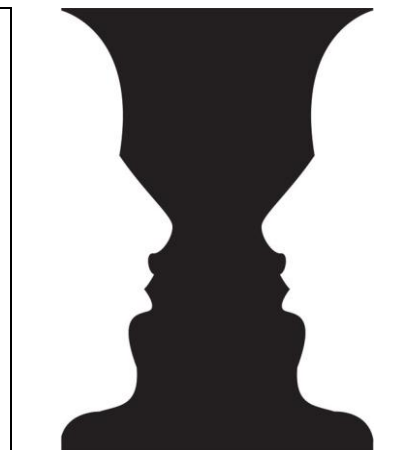


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## JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

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Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2011  
ISSN 2068 – 0317  
<http://compaso.ro>



### A rough guide to musical anthropology

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper has set out to be an introductory approach to socio-anthropological studies of music and all human behavior and narratives (as lore) associated to it. The path chosen for this was the somewhat convenient and broad road of a historical outline and the main paradigms that dealt with music. In spite of the so-called “easy” historical approach, philosophy, literature or other earlier sources were not taken into account, focusing only on truly systematic approaches to music, starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, altogether with general social anthropology. As the world becomes increasingly more connected to media, the consumption of music as cultural goods rises as well. It is speculative to assume that this proven increase in quantity will make music a more central part of peoples’ lives, but it will certainly attract more scientific attention to the behavior and perception transformations associated with it. The study of music as everyday “magic” will most likely intensify. Meant to be a guideline through the key-themes and authors relevant when it comes to the social studies’ perspective on music, this paper serves as a good starting point, not offering any all-too- neat answers, but explaining some of the right questions.*

#### **Keywords**

*Musical language, mental perception of music, role of musician in society, musical industry, music and religion, music and the political, music as a commodity, the so-called “world music” in exploitation and copyright issues.*

#### **The beginning of musical anthropology**

Musical anthropology is a relatively new branch of anthropology, but not as new as the name it bears today, given that it descended from ethnomusicology. Leaving aside the discourses that try – more or less constantly – to identify its beginnings in the dawn of man’s interest for philosophy or esthetics, it is certain that the systematic study of music

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debuted in the early twentieth century, as the interest for the most striking aspects of primitive alterity began to fade. In other words, at the debut of general anthropology, generated by the great anthropo-geographic discoveries, researchers have focused on the most poignant aspects of difference, of understanding the other as a reality completely different from that which the occidental man was accustomed to. After the soothing of the main curiosities towards the discovered and studied 'savages', after the fading of the typical nineteenth century speculations more related to physical anthropology than to what is anthropology today, ethnographers began to take an interest also in recording cultural aspects of exotic peoples, one which was, of course, music. The debut of musical anthropology can be successfully placed at that moment, at the beginning of an interest for preserving and studying the music of the so-called savages. Therefore, at the beginning of the twentieth century one could speak of two sciences that dealt with music: ethnomusicology, which centered the musical manifestations of exotic populations in all their cultural regards; and musicology (with an older tradition, but which cannot be called remotely anthropological) that dealt with the strictly technical aspects of western music. The first required field study and data gathering, and was only performed by ethnographers, while the second was reserved to specialists in the strict field of sound analysis, having nothing to do with cultural anthropology. Just as there is a cultural and a physical anthropology, we can speak of a physics of ethnomusicology, that focuses on the material culture of music (instruments, especially, plus arithmetic variations of sounds). This field will not, however, be making the object of this introduction.

With the beginning of the twentieth century, after the self-proclaimed superiority of the West, until then a given fact, started to be considered questionable, ethnomusicology starts to consider the anthropological study of the civilized west's study, not only of the savages' manifestations. Practically, the moment did not constitute an innovation, but the natural follow-up of the more general tendency present in all of anthropology's fields: first initiated for the study of "contemporary ancestors" (the populations newly discovered through colonization), of 'primitives and savages', this newly born science decided to turn its analytic gaze towards its own culture. From that moment, the term 'ethnomusicology' started to refer to studies concerning both types of music (western and non-western) and in a few decades the term 'musical anthropology' imposed itself, marking the departure from the old ethnomusicology. For a few decades – and in some studies even today – the two terms remained equivalent and interchangeable. In spite of this transformation of its object of study, musical anthropology maintained a dual nature (cultural and technical), which makes it, on one hand, to carry within itself « the seeds of its own destruction » (Alan P. Merriam, 1964, p 3), but which is, on the other hand, « also its greatest strength » (idem, p 7). The fusion of the two sides, although desirable, is often difficult, because it claims the reuniting of very different discursive positions, reducible by simplification to the opposition artist-scientist or humanist-social researcher (idem, p 22-23).

The same Merriam, one of the most important names in musical anthropology, identifies three types of representation of musical anthropology in the second half of the twentieth century (thus not considering the evolutionary approach from the début of

this field). I shall reproduce the three below, considering them useful to an overview of the whole field:

- a) Musical anthropology must protect and promote the insufficiently appreciated music of outer-western spaces, which is considered by the West inferior or a corruption of art. This approach is also doubled by a great fear for the disappearance of traditional music. One of its chief figures is Jaap Kunst, 1959 (*idem*, p 8).
- b) The second vision regards music as a form of communication that might be used by the researcher to get to know the whole investigated world more profoundly. Its key representatives are Mantle Hood, 1961, Seeger, 1941 or Herzog, 1946 (*idem*, p 10). This approach must not be confused for the hypothesis of music as the universal language, which I shall discuss in one of the sections below.
- c) The last type of approach combines the first two, as well as visions and methods from other fields into a multidisciplinary whole. A classical figure: Nettl, 1956 (*idem*, p 14). This last type of approach is the most practiced today (obviously, with sciences getting as eclectic as they can get and with the accent of trans-disciplinarity being promoted as it is).

In Romania, for a long time, ethnomusicology has been more of a folklore-gathering and, at most, (literal) study of popular music in order to create TV shows as « Tezaur folcloric » or festivals as « Cântarea României ». This is explainable also by the communist censorship that inhibited the natural growth of social sciences.

In the pages to follow, I shall pass from the semi-chronological approach of the field to a thematic one, briefly introducing some of the main directions of research and orientations from contemporary musical anthropology.

### **Music as universal language**

The hypothesis that states music as the universal language is the most known presupposition of musical anthropology and continues to be widely speculated in non-scientific environments (media, mostly). The fact that music does not require a conceptual, word-based, language has contributed to the strengthening of this assumption. As to my opinion, I think that the universality of music can only be (to some extent) true only for a well-defined group that belongs to the same general cultural area (like, very broadly speaking, the West). Other than that, although I believe individuals can esthetically react to a musical communication outside their cultural sphere, its interpretation will most likely be very different than what was meant to be transmitted initially. One of the first who completely denied the universality of musical language was Robert Moorey, as early as 1940 (Merriam, 1964, p 12), through an experiment on exotic populations (by exotic being meant, here, populations in a state as close as possible to our concept of primitivism), successfully showing that they don't identify the same emotions in classical western music (Beethoven, Wagner etc) as the people from the western area.

A recent analysis of the issue was made by Patricia Shenan Campbell (Campbell, 1997), which re-opens the classical debate in the context in which the post-modern

discourse, through some of its authors, argues that a great musical diversity will contribute to a greater harmony and intercultural tolerance. The researcher from the University of Washington takes under analysis the typical post-modern western hypothesis that through the exposure of individuals to the music of different cultures a multicultural harmony and enhanced mutual understanding will be achieved. She shows how the typical western prescriptions for « political correctness » come to perpetuate a belief in the universality of music that is backed by almost a century of inconclusive scientific debate that the present takes as given and demonstrated. In plus, presenting music from a diversity perspective and presenting it as universal are logically and conceptually two very different types of discursiveness, which the post-modern discourse seems to ignore, placing a sign of equivalence between the two in its militating quest for “universal diversity” of cultures.

### **The birth of music: a neo-Darwinist perspective**

In the speculations placed at the border between anthropology and biology regarding the universality of musical language can also be found some debates and hypothesis on the context in which mankind gained access to it. Neodarwinism approaches music from an utilitarian perspective, of its cvasibiological function; in other words questions how did we come to music, why did we come up with this and not with something else, is it predestined to the human beings (inevitably inscribed in their genes) or was it a mere accident, a happy discovery? This interpretation enounced four main functions of music (in an evolutionary perspective, or, in other words, its functions within the processes of evolution and natural selection). The first of these functions is, according to cited specialists, the sexual one (predictable given the paradigm). This sexual component is implied by musical abilities as a selection criteria in the competition for a partener, given the rather large energy consumed by a musical performance. By adding the emotional implications with which music is invested, its implication in sexuality becomes even tighter. The second function is that of a social cement: music is a creator of communities by its capability to create a connection, a *bonding* effect (this aspect will be detailed at some point below), it gives a collective purpose to a group of individuals, also being assumed that it's the substitute for mutual care (*grooming*) form the point in which communities had become too large to allow this mutual care to take place between all members (the prototype for it being the mutual lice-removing found among monkeys). This mutual care component leads to the third function, which is of communication, of pre-language. The fourth function is, say the specialists from *The Economist*, of “transformative technology” for communication, of intermediation between speech and writing. To these one may also add the emotional function (of reflection, of wanting to change the other's interior state – this function will also be discussed in more detail below). With these all these assumptions in mind, the specialists from the publication conclude not only that, as seen from what was presented so far, music has accompanied humanity from its beginnings, today being one of its defining traits, but also the fact that Shakespeare's saying that music is “the food of love” might have more than a faint truth to it.

## Music and the mental universe

One of the most important scientific interests, curiosity-stirrers, regarding music is at the same time one which is very difficult to answer: what is, at a subjective level, the experience of listening to music, and, most of all, how it historically evolved, transformed. Beyond the functionally different contexts (listening to music during a ritual, like religious service or a military parade, or as a learning modus or as entertainment), we cannot suppose that the listening experience is the same from one society to another, from a group of fans to another or, especially, from a time in history to another. It would be most useful if one could find an analysis similar to the one performed by the historian Robert Darnton on the experience of lecture before Rousseau, after Rousseau and today (2000, p 187-216), applied on the listening of music. There would be many questions: was music listened individually or only collectively, was anything else done at the same time, who and when sang, what was appropriate and not regarding music, how did the technological improvements change the experience of listening etc. But this kind of an excursion of historical anthropology would require finding archives which would contain a witnessing on the subjective experience of music, and this difficulty probably explains best the absence of such an analysis.

To stay at the significance of music and the way of listening to it in the contemporary temporal frame, Vasile Donose suggests in *Imaginarul real* (1990) (translated *The Real Imaginary*) a typology of the individual actor in the experience of musical listening. More precise, he distinguishes qualitatively between the consumer of music, the one who merely submits passively to the enchantment of music (and requires too little of it), and the listener of music, the one who truly understands it. To understand music is, according to Vasile Donose, a state of consciousness that has nothing to do with professional training, but is defined as “an active and constant operation of the spirit, or, essentially, to perceive the ratios that tie one sound to another by the laws of harmony” (1990, p 25), or, more concretely, “is about being able to tell of the reason for which a sound is followed by specific other sounds, those and not others; to feel the necessity of their succession and their inclusion in a superior sound organism” (1990, p 26). I think Vasile Donose actually speaks here of what is commonly named “being musically gifted”.

If Donose analyzed the significance of music listening as an individual experience, Max Weber has analyzed it at a social dimension scale. In *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, published after his death, in 1958, Weber analyses music, as he does in most of his works, in relation to rationality. A lot more technical than you would expect from a work written outside professional music studies, the book proves to be a quite difficult and exhaustive (very broadly extended) lecture. It approaches both technical and mathematical elements of musical structure (harmony and melodiousness as opposed ways of the musical rationalization operated by the West), as well as cultural aspects – from the impact of wood working methods in Asia on producing chord instruments to the transformation of the piano from an Nordic invention for indoor singing to a bourgeoisie-related piece of furniture.

Approaching music from a cultural studies perspective – especially the history of mentalities – will most likely be the most fructuous, at least at a quantitative level, in the

near future, considering the continuous diversification of musical experiences of the broadly understood present.

### **Music and religion**

The connection between the two had occupied a central position in musical anthropology even from before its transgression of its evolutionary stage. Considering that, initially, the role of initiation held by music was much more significant than today, when the ritual component has considerably retracted in favor of the esthetic component, it was impossible for ethno-musical studies to avoid discussing too much the topic of the role of music in the religion of studies peoples. This is one of the few themes that remained as intensely explored today as in the *début* period of the field.

Like it is easy to deduct, the initial studies in ethnomusicology (except the knowledge initiatives preceding the formation on the field, performed by widely innovative and broadly preoccupied humanists, like Dimitrie Cantemir or Leonardo da Vinci) that approached the connection between music and religion were based on observing the ritual of so-called primitive populations, and therefore most of the initial studies focused on shamanistic music etc. The interest range has then extended to religious alterity (Islam, Buddhism), to finally come, as the general focus of western anthropology shifted towards itself, to the first attempts to study the connection between the music and the religion of the West. From the explicitly religious music (used in services) and towards its fusion with the commercial (like in the gospel movement) and back again to the masked religious music of modernity's rituals (like the hymn *Gaudeamus Igitur*), the West is no shorter in research subjects than the more traditional targets of ethnomusicology. The idea of a masked ritual (exemplified by *Gaudeamus Igitur*, or songs completely secular connected to a certain *cvasi*-ritual moment, like Happy New Year) was used here in the acceptance proposed by Mircea Eliade, which in his studies has shown the masked ritual value of camouflaged traditions that accompany modern man's rites of passage (New Year's Eve, finishing a certain life stage and entering another – like college, marriage, the “new home” party etc).

A good example of a recent study concerning the connection between the Western music and religion is the one written by Robert Wuthnow (Wuthnow, 2006), about the way in which the different branches of Christianity (including orthodoxy, which is less common in the West) are revitalized through popularizing the music associated with their rituals (gospel commercializing, including creativity encouragement in the emotional support offered by the religious leader etc). The work is quite impressive especially through the richness of the data comprised in it and through the rigorous methods used to gather it (both quantitative and qualitative) in the four years of study which preceded the book.

Returning to music in the laic (de-sacralized) context, this is the area where most interesting connections have been made between the ways in which post-modernity ritualizes the listening of music and the concrete musical content. One of the largest (both in the number of participants and in the media visibility) such modern musical rituals is the thematic festival. A secular musical tradition born in the second half of the twentieth century (the most known among the first being Woodstock), the thematic

musical festival (oriented to a certain genre) is becoming more and more popular in the urban spaces of the last decades. This western tendency is largely valid for Romania also, the festivals in our country being organized regularly, in the same space frame, with new and returning attendants. A few examples would be the jazz festival from Gărâna, the jazz festival from Sibiu, the “Artmania” symphonic rock festival from Sibiu, Stufstock from Vama Veche (following the model of Woodstock – which again makes me think of Eliade’s thesis concerning the sacred exemplary manifestation, which are worthy of periodic reiteration), the rock festival from Târgu Mureș, the medieval music (and art) festival in Sighișoara, the similar one in Suceava etc. Besides the local ones, also the thematic festivals outside the borders are becoming a constant destination for the Romanian public (especially the one in Sighet and, shyly for now, the one in London). About the ritaulic component of secular music festivals were written quite a generous amount of papers, by T J Todd, K Liddle, J Nelson, J Attali, TJ Cooley etc.

### **Music and the political**

If one of the approaches identified by Merriam was the one regarding music as a form of communication, as to the music’s relation to the political sphere the connection can be regarded as more than a mere communication but a form of elaborate discourse. The examples of political movements that debuted as musical ones and extended their stake to the altering of the socio-political reality are not few. Perhaps the most known such example is the hippie<sup>2</sup> movement which, although it didn’t generate a political party or another concrete political manifestation, has surely generated an important change in the vision of the western modernity, expressing out loud some of the concept that orient our political sphere today: diversity, tolerance, political correctness, multiculturalism etc. Actually, not only the result of this movement is politically infused, but also its origin, given that it appeared amongst the young Americans as a reaction of protest against the Vietnam War. Another example of a musical genre with an explicit political-ethnic load (but also religious) is the reggae, born in the late sixties in Jamaica. The debates around whether the musical movement generates the political one or the other way around seem quite pointless and similar to the “which was first – the hen or the egg”. The history the political and musical dimensions of such movements are so intertwined that that it appears to be more productive to study the movement and its impact than to encourage speculation similar to that expressed above.

The study of the political dimension of musical culture can be, for theoretical purposes, split into a few major issues. One of these is the relation between music and the phenomena of political resistance. This is where one can fit the study of nationalist music, of music associated with rising political factions or movements or with revitalizing preexisting ones that used to be popular, the study of music of actual resistance against a totalitarian regime (like the ethnographic material gathered by Zahu Pană or Marian

<sup>2</sup> The movement known as “hippie” started as a semi-spontaneous youth movement in the United States of the early sixties. The emotional basis of it was the revolt against the Vietnam War, but in several decades the movement oriented more towards sexual revolution, drug legalizing militating, abandoning some of its initial purposes. Today the hippie influence is still felt weakly in fashion and strongly in music. One of the standard musical “faces” of the movement is the Beatles band and its emblem festival is the Woodstock.

Munteanu from detention folklore during Romanian communism), the music of jailhouses (an important study of the Romanian musicologist Marin Marian Bălașa from 2002 is focused on this theme) etc. Political anthropology teaches that when a society does not have the direct power to punish those who hurt it, it uses an indirect form of punishment, through folklore, that will work retroactively in the future, when the ‘bad guys’ will be remembered by the following generations in a certain way. At this level of analysis, of the anthropology of punishment, the whole phenomena of resistance music is based upon this collective psychology mechanism. Resistance through music is meant to exist so that it can be possible for the people from after the evil times to learn the truth about what happened (to counteract the “history is written by the winners” tendency) and so history itself to avenge the folklore creators that were persecuted by the oppressing regime. Another important function of resistance music, besides the one of informing future generations, is the emotional one of generating a measure of comfort for the auditory. Music is, for its most part, and especially in its political side, a group cultural phenomenon. Sharing the music employed by their common purpose bonds the group and brings a note of psychological relief. This is why the communist jailhouses severely forbade songs or poetry, even though the prisoners sometimes managed to find a way to surpass these interdictions. The psychological comforting effect of music can also be documented, of course, but with a not so political implication, in the literature about musical psychotherapy and relaxation, one of contemporary psychology’s common places. Also, its subjective truth was also suggested to me by a certain comment made by an interviewed subject during a field research which I performed in November 2008 in Măgura, Brașov County (Romania). The interview was focused (as the whole research) on something completely different than music or folklore), but the subject digressed and started telling us about a woman very famous in the area for her singing talent, that used to say that she “resists through music”, meaning that she soothes the pain caused by her son’s death through singing. The detail came to my attention especially through the coincidence of the terms, the concept of “resistance through music” being the exact expression used in political anthropology. On a larger note the idea isn’t exactly new or spectacular in the Romanian space, given that one of the most known folksongs spread the following lyrics: « *La inimă este-un leac / Cetera și omul drag* » (*The heart knows only one cure: the fiddle and the loved one*).

To return to other sub-themes of the broad research of music-political relations, an important part is the connection between music and the national and ethnic emotions. The music with an explicitly national(istic) content is at the same time both the expression of this type of self-identification and one of the more or less official instruments of revitalizing it. For now, studies of musical anthropology focused on this topic haven’t been made in (or about) Romania. A few more general relevant examples could be the studies of E.A. Henderson (1996) on Afro-American ethnicity and rap music, P. Manuel (1987) on popular music and communist propaganda in revolutionary Cuba etc. As to works focused on the European space, the main reference is Philip Vilas Bohlman’s book from 2004. The author argues that here (in Europe, more than in the rest of the world), music is infused with a national subtext, which leads to one of the most debated and contested thematic from both the social sciences and the public space: « I do not



believe that I have encountered anyone who is simply ambivalent toward nationalist music. Some love it, many more hate it. Some welcome it for its potentially positive attributes; others vilify it for its destructiveness. [...] It is shockingly easy to dismiss music that possesses and expresses any elements of the nation and nationalism. Nationalist music embarrasses and infuriates us. We laugh at it and we become angry at it. Almost perversely, we love to hate nationalist music. » (Bohlman, 2004, p 16-17). Here the author used the concept of nationalist music referring, probably, to propaganda music, the one which is explicitly nationalistic, because virtually almost every melody is, broadly speaking, the carrier of elements of the cultural spaces from which it originated, so that would also include national values. The distinction between national and nationalistic subtext is important to be able to discern between music representative for a certain space and music which is explicitly politically oriented (often the two types coincide – what better tune to choose for mobilizing a people than a tune that they feel defines them?).

This attention focused on ethnic music is, curiously, more manifest at the level of the elites than the masses and more in the West European space than in the American, East European or Asian spaces. One of the few certainties is that national and nationalistic music does not belong to museums just yet. A simple content analysis on music hosting sites (like Youtube) indicates the fact that there's a lot of fiery debate on such issues and the theme is not yet superseded, as some who listen to complaints coming from the nostalgic point of view might believe. What is even more peculiar is that (at least for the Romanian space), nationalistic music is not even an old one, but includes new songs, by new young bands and which become popular precisely through the political-national stake which they incorporate in their art – like Proiectul Gyr, Huliganii, Nimeni Altu' etc for the Romanian space. If most of these troupes can be included, as a musical genre, in rap, Proiectul Gyr is the exception, using a hard rock sound for the lyrics of The poet Radu Gyr (after which they are named). This choice is even more interesting and atypical if one also thinks of the conservative support (including financial) which the band is based upon.

I think this is a good starting point for sliding the discussion into the topic of the relation between music and identity options in postmodern culture (given that for the postmodern man identity is a matter of option, just like with musical genres), leaving aside the issue of national and ethnic. In the typically western mainstream culture, especially among young people but not only, the preference towards a certain musical genre has become in the last decades (post the fifties) also an identity option. Although not as strict as the traditional idea of identity, it assumes the same rules: liking an exterior musical genre which is not at least a little similar to the main one that has been declared as adopted is regarded suspiciously. Even more, the preference for musical genre comes with a package of role models, a set of life rules and values, attitude models, ways to dress and to act etc so that the bearer of this option to express the subculture which he adopted in a complex way. “I listen to rasta, punk, goth etc<sup>3</sup>” and “I

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<sup>3</sup> Musical currents form the second half of the twentieth century, with a strong identity component. The people embracing such a genre not only have musical taste in common but also share political ideal,

am rasta, punk, goth » have become two interchangeable idioms. The phenomenon was closely related to the ascension of individuality and the quest for originality and representativity. There are numerous authors which explored these issues: Lawrence Grossberg, Simon Frith, J Gottlieb, G Wald, A Bennet etc (conform Walser, 1993). Also at the level of identity option as a musical genre alone, apart from the national or ethnic subtext, the musical phenomena generates an adhesion oriented towards competition, with the same type of confrontations: the listeners of a genre develop stereotypes about the listeners of another, say a certain style of jokes about them, and even get into fights during festivals that host a larger range of musical genres etc.

Therefore, whether it be about nation, ethnicity or just a group of people with similar tastes, music is inevitably connected to belonging and community: « Some of us are better than others at explaining why we care about this song and not about that one, but for most people, music is intimately involved with crucial feelings of identity and notions of community. This is where sociological approaches to the study of popular music have so often failed. » (Robert Walser, 1993, p xii). In other words, ignoring this aspect of belonging and identity is the main reason a social research on music fails.

### **Music from a micro-sociological perspective**

In the broader frame of music anthropology one can identify a direction which has a lot in common with psycho-sociology (or socio-psychology, depending on each paper), linguistics or economy than with classical anthropology, but which is enrolled in it mostly because of the object of study which they share. This micro-sociological approach is focused on the role of music in the structure of social interaction (one of the most visited field locations visited being the disco, the club etc), the role of the musician in society (is he being regarded as blessed and chosen by the divine, or as a paria, or as a criminal, what is he being paid etc) or the concrete mechanics of the commercial music industry, of the festivals (previously discussed) in mainly economical terms etc.

Also from this psycho-sociological perspective, there is a category of studies that don't focus on the role of music or of the musician in society, but on the musical frame that creates specific interactions (the concert, the festival, the club, the album release, the street performance etc), and also on the fixation of emotional experiences through music. This last concept refers to the association of certain melodies with events and experiences relevant for the subject (something similar to what Eliade calls personal mythology – apparently the personal mythology of postmodern media man tends to also have a soundtrack) and the way these associations get created.

In this direction one can also find the gender studies, both the feminist oriented ones (which claim that music is an instrument of coercion, of perpetuating the myth of the male superiority and of maintaining the socio-sexual status quo, like Ellen Koskoff's book, *Women and music in a cross-cultural perspective*, 1989) and the ones that analyze the role of gender in the rising of a new dominant musical genre (like the paper of Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil : power, gender and madness in heavy metal music*, 1993).

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religious and clothing options. Of course, the degree in which the music option influences the other sectors of a person's life is variable, but that influence exists and is often quite strong.

The influences of economy in the study of musical anthropology can be portrayed by the recent research on the musical industry, on the pro and con music commercialization debates, on the phenomenon of piracy and copyright infringement (like the study of Simon Firth and Lee Marshall, *Music and Copyright*, Edinburgh University Press, 2004) etc. Another group of musical anthropologists was influenced by linguistic studies, focusing more on the text analysis of lyrics and on the issues of translation of music (very known are the studies of Steven Feld on music and language).

Simplifying, one could assert that almost any specialized approach from musical anthropology that focuses on micro-sociological aspects tends to borrow concepts and methods of anthropology, and any macro-sociological approach tends to slide the specific framework from anthropology to sociology

### **Music and globalization**

Given that globalization is perhaps the most common of sociology's common places (also by extension valid for anthropology), it was inevitable not to have a lot of debate regarding the role and impact of globalization on the musical phenomena. About the "globalization of music", Steven Feld (2000) identifies two types of discourse, also true for the relation between globalization and anything else: the celebratory one and the anxious one. They are antagonistic and their main dispute matter is the problem of authenticity. Their only point in which they agree is that the extraordinary technical progress of recording and transmitting sound has transformed what was traditionally understood by music with no going back and that music cannot be understood today outside the context of musical industry: "It has taken only one hundred years for sound recording technologies to amplify sonic exchange to a point that overwhelms prior and contiguous histories of travel, migration, contact, colonization, diaspora and dispersal. It is therefore the recorded form, as it circulates commercially, that defines the authenticity of music globalization" (Steven Feld, 2000, p 145-146).

The celebratory perspective identified by Feld claims that no matter the costs for the deterioration of traditions, they are no match for the gains in creativity and in avoiding the essentialist limitations (the most obvious example being the cross-genre mixes, the inter-influences etc).

The anxiety perspective, on the other hand, accuses the global musical industry of complicity in commodifying authenticity. Another issue stressed by this position is the fact that globalization means, first of all, dislocation and uprooting when it comes to music. As the author says, "In other words, displacement metaphorises globalization as a simultaneity of alienation and dispersal" (idem, p 153).

In this same paradigm there is a focus in the issue of exploitation specific to the musical industry, as a typical problem of the world system theory formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein. An author that developed this theme "instances of musical and cultural conversation validated under the sign World Music too easily mark the exploitative labor relationships of the very powerful transnational corporations with the Third World musicians, let alone with those of the Third World with only their photogenic poverty to sell" (1996, p 22 *apud* Steven Feld, 2000, p 153). In this problem, of the abuses of the world system industry on musical sources (economic and cultural exploitation),

musical anthropology and its actors can easily be engulfed in an involuntary and constricting complicity. The same Steven Feld gives insight to how easily the concepts created within the field of study can be twisted and used as tools for the corporate exploitation: „Legally, however, the term *oral tradition* can easily be manipulated, from signifying that which is vocally communal to signifying that which belongs to no one in particular. When that happens, the notion of oral tradition can mask both the existence of local canons of ownership and the existence of local consequences for taking without asking” (Steven Feld, 2000, p 161). Also the exponents of musical anthropology (the researchers) are targeted and vulnerable to such cultural abuse, when it so often happens that they are made unaware accomplices to the commercial exploitation of their sources of documentation:: „For recordists or ethnomusicologists, these power and representation themes can be productive of a different humiliation: complicity. The despair of seeing documentary projects transform from icons of musical diversity to „raw material” for industrialized neocolonialism surely marks the end of all ethnomusicological innocence. The lesson for researchers is that community trust, academic recognition and institutional prestige mean little when you are up against international entertainment law, major record companies, the media and marketing world, music collecting agencies, and highly paid, highly protected pop stars. Here they are globalization, and you are a dinosaur.” (idem, p 166).

The issue is of course, one of the chief dangers of uprooted global liberalization in which money are the driving force and censorship of any kind (even in the name of common sense) is itself censored and overpowered. Feld’s warning is a sad innuendo of what may become of academia if left open to the market domination (issues that already occur, in some degree, in the most civilized and proud of their scholars parts of the world).

The themes and matter presented above are only a small fraction of what musical anthropology, as it is today, approaches. Considering that an American teenager spends one eighth of his life listening to music in his headphones (according to *The Economist*, December 2008), it’s easy to observe that music is becoming a more and more important part of the western man’s mental space, or it could be said that it remains one of the few expression forms towards which he retains a sensibility quantitatively expressed (as time invested in it). Also it is to be observed that listening to music in one’s headphones for a large number of hours daily can be slightly toxic and that music is becoming a semi-permanent soundtrack of daily life. But in order not to slide this discussion into the debate on the legitimacy of the different forms of feeling the art, it’s sufficient to conclude that, in any case, music is already a cultural component very (if not most) present in contemporary mental space.

Therefore it is safe to assume that the sciences that deal with the role of music will gain more visibility and overall importance as the importance of their object of study in contemporary present will become increasingly obvious.

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