

The Music of Modern Indigeneity: From Identity to Alliance Studies

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By the 21st century, it is obvious that indigenous music, once thought to be the most local of traditions, is widely implicated in globalization.¹ Indigenous musicians are using transnational networks and media sources for local purposes; they are defining the potential of new technologies, and articulating the social issues that constitute modernity. The work of the beautiful Sami museum, Ájtte, in which the European Seminar in Ethnomusicology met in 2006, is a fine demonstration of an indigenous institution the outreach of which is both local and international.

My paper considers two questions about this flowering of modern indigeneity: How has a globalized vision of modernity changed indigenous music? And how do contemporary indigenous musicians re-vision their post-colonial position in the world at this juncture? Is “identity,” at this point in time, the best concept to think with when we ask such questions? I suggest an alternative: we might call it “alliance studies.” My thinking about alliance studies as a framework for understanding indigenous modernity is deeply indebted to the Sami yoik as a means of communicating. In other words, I premise my comments on the belief that we should regard musical practices *as* theory not as objects to which we might apply theory.

I’ll explain what I mean by starting with someone who inspires my thinking, the internationally renowned Sami musician, Wimme Saari. Saari manages to use yoik to comment not only on the people and places of his immediate surroundings but those in the public eye. Consider, for instance, his appearance at the Riddu Riddu festival in Norway in 2002. Among the performances, there was a version of “Texas”, a modern yoik inspired by the American state.² The live performance however, had text that you don’t find on the commercial recordings. He acknowledged his audience by naming places - Kautokeino, Karasjoki - recognizing audience members from different northern

¹ Among the many publications that address this, articles in Smith and Ward (2000), and Dei (2000) particularly influenced my own thinking.

² Originally, this “modern yoik” was released on the CD, *Cuga (Puppy)* in 2000. In North America, this piece was issued on a CD titled *Texas* with a number of remixes. The very idea of a remix fits well with the yoik where the style of presentation varies with each performance, depending on a range of contextual factors. Traditional yoiks were also often addressed to specific places. Wimme Saari has simply expanded this to include cities or states world wide, among them Havana, Durban, and Kalkutta (sic).

communities in Finnmark (northern Norway) at this indigenous festival. But then he introduced world leaders: Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Yassar Arafat, subtly characterizing each of them in a way that only the yoik tradition can do. The international audience at this large indigenous festival appreciatively recognized the names. “Bill Clinton” was voiced in precise, isolated syllables. Bush became “Bushy” - an informal (but diminutive) name form perhaps alluding to the fact the leaders are more apt to be named in this way³ in the U.S. than in Europe, or perhaps alluding to a squirrel. “Arafat” was envoiced with the most lyrical melodic phrase, one that soared in an imitation of an Arabic popular melodic vocalisation and, in its expansiveness, suggested that Wimme has considerable respect for the late PLO leader. While this performance had a “political” dimension, it was simultaneously humorous, in a juxtaposition that is powerful and engaging.

Audience members danced in front of the outdoor stage in the shadow of the beautiful mountains around Kafjord. The traditional yoik is not dance music, although “Texas” certainly has a dance feel that is arguably unprecedented in the yoik tradition. The combination of American influence, modern production, and an international audience ready to have a good time changed genre associations, among other things.

Saari’s amazing vocal play and knowledge of microphones and the computer controlled electronics that back up his voice allow him to transform tradition while simultaneously maintaining it. Like older yoiks that convey the characteristics of the person being yoiked, Saari uses his voice to represent what he notices when he looks closely at his world - a world that simultaneously embraces Sapmi, America and the Middle East.

Yoiking has always expressed relationships to people one knows well, to the land. This feature suggests a basis for a theoretical model that could be useful in ethnomusicology more generally: “alliance studies.” I suggest that studying music’s capacity for defining relationships may well be as significant in the 21st century as studying music’s role in defining identities has been for the past few decades. Indeed, our alliances produce our identities.

Of course, an approach that focuses on relationality is hardly new to many contemporary ethnomusicologists who focus on process, agency, and intersectionality.

³ Cf., Jimmy or Ronny for other recent American presidents.

Nor is it new to theorists of diaspora who explore transnational flows and systems through which culture circulates in a world where both people and data move more rapidly than ever before. My approach would complement and build on the “Doers-Makers-Knowers” model of our Swedish colleagues, Lundberg, Malm and Ronström, a model that has already shown how an emphasis on the agents of music making is fruitful. Mark Slobin’s “micromusics” which emphasizes an intermeshed network of subcultures, intercultural and supercultures also points in this direction, as do the many scholars who study forms of mediation.

What exactly might alliance studies be? It might look at ways that concepts and social relationships of the past are embedded in the present. Alliance studies might track connections to places, or networks of people. Such a focus would shift our attention to such things as genre formations, technological mediations, language and dialect choices, citational practices, and issues of access and ownership. Genre formations are usually discussed as industry tools for targeting niche audiences (see, e.g., Negus 1992), but both musicians, audiences, and other “mediators” (including scholars) are implicated in systems of labeling and categorization. We each position ourselves differently if we conform to or resist industry definitions. As Wimpe Saari’s performance demonstrated, a yoik might become a dance song, given the right inspiration, production values, and performance context. Furthermore, the technological choices made during recording, arranging, or mixing processes help determine genre alliances and related associations that listeners may make in a multi-valent manner. Technology is, then, integrally part of this process of genre making. Since production is usually multi-sited, it is also a form of collaboration, a different and direct aspect of alliance. The musical collaboration, the merging of traditions and ideas, is equally significant. This dimension is not simply a matter of production since listeners have a great deal of agency in determining how such things as fusion and hybrid styles should be judged. Closely related to collaboration, and yet quite different in some ways, as a form of alliance, are citational practices. I suggest that citation and collaboration cast power relations differently within the alliance studies model.

As Harris Berger and his colleagues (2003) have demonstrated, language choice is a complex and critical choice for contemporary musicians. The choice of a local language and dialect can solidify one’s community position or, if the choice is to imitate a different

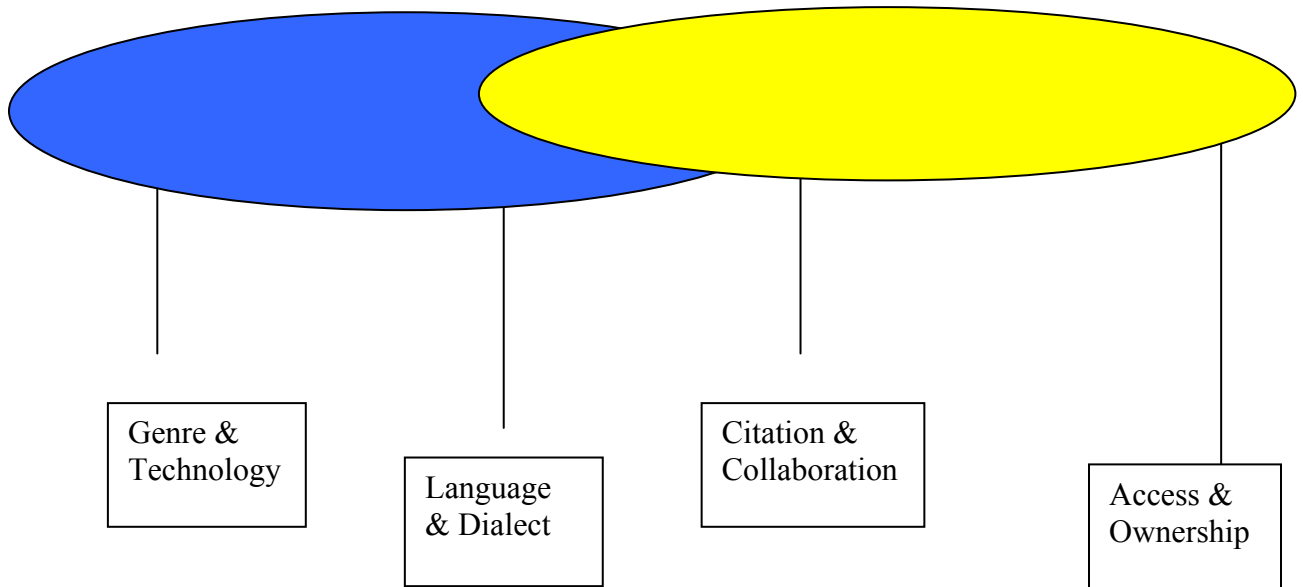
dialect or use a language other than one's own, it can signal a desire to ally one's self with others. Wimme managed to do both, by incorporating names into his Sami text, names that non-Sami speakers could nevertheless understand.

Finally, alliance studies must explore negotiations of access to music, intellectual property issues - not just in legal terms, but also in terms of community custom and value, and in terms of actual decision-making in the context of transnational commodity markets and globalization. Each of these foci in my alliance studies model is crosscut by, what I might call, "distinctiveness" (the yellow oval on the chart below) and "mainstreamness"⁴ (the blue oval) in the music. In other words, the choices indigenous musicians make may well differ if they do music that is thought to be distinctive, to be audibly indigenous, for instance, and to what extent or in what way. Those choices, in turn, are part of a cultural politics that implicates (though hardly determines) the impact their music may have.

⁴ I have previously argued (1992), together with Native American art historian Gerald McMaster, that the concept of the "mainstream" is, in itself a problematic assumption about the reception of cultural products that merits critical attention. An attitude of "mainstreamness" - the belief that one is addressing a large, polyglot, and undifferentiated audience, on the other hand - exists and shapes alliance-related decisions.

AN ALLIANCE STUDIES MODEL

Mainstreamness-----Distinctiveness



My suggestion, that we consider an alliance study model reflects a growing concern that I have about identity studies - including my own. I suggest that “identity” has become a concept that is often regulated by what Penny van Toorn (1990) calls “patron discourse” defined as “a set of normative expectations and ways of listening in non-Aboriginal society, within which minority voices must struggle for audience” (quoted in Dunbar Hall & Gibson 2004:25). In relation to Aboriginal writers in Australia, she explores how strong the control can be:

The speech, writing and other cultural practices of minority groups are only liberated into the public domain to the extent that patron discourses succeed in trapping them in the categories which the dominant audience has available to contain them. (1990: 103)

I consider whether or how an alliance studies approach would help explain patron discourse and uncover alternatives. I'll try to demonstrate this in relation to the work of a number of contemporary indigenous artists - mostly Native American but with some comparisons to Sami music.

Genre Alliances and Technology

The “patron discourse” of indigenous music emphasizes “unusual” timbres, spiritual beliefs, or distinctive social practices.⁵ Indeed, it is the musics that have these “exotic” features that have become globalized: didgeridoo, or the many unique vocal techniques of Tuvan overtone singers, Inuit throat singers, or Sami yoikers come to mind. Audiences have come to expect indigenous voices and instrumental sounds, in general, to be unique and radically different. Not surprisingly, then, neither the traditional social dances of many Native Americans, nor the rock bands nor the rappers have been globalized, or “liberated” to use van Toorn’s word. The same is true for Sami artists whose heritage-related funding for CD production often depends on their yoik performance. Sami radio, on the other hand, plays artists who do a much greater range of musical genres, some of which exhibit a larger measure of mainstreamness. Only indigenous music that exhibits the expected linkage between radical sound production and indigeneity is widely known internationally, however.

Expectations feed practice: indigenous musicians, themselves, now often try to combine exoticisms. Several collaborations between Inuit throat singers and Tuvan overtone singers, for instance, have taken place in North America, Europe and Asia.⁶ “Distinctiveness” has been emphasized in these musics much more than “mainstreamness.” However, the technological production and post-production of such musics often constructs mainstream genre alliances, nonetheless, sometimes consciously and sometimes unwittingly.

⁵ The last of these is what David Samuels (2005) identifies as the problem of indexicality in which cultures are defined by sets of iconic features rather than from layerings of tradition and modernity.

⁶ A Canadian instance, available on the CD, *The Best of Folk on the Rocks. Volume One* (Yellowknife: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006) was a performance at Yellowknife’s 2005 Folk on the Rocks Festival, involving the Quebec Inuit band (Taima), the Danish traditional band (Instinkt), Tuvan overtone singers (Chirgirli), and a throat singing duo from Taloyoak (Taloyoak Throat Singers).

To look more deeply at how genre associations are produced, I consider a case study: the Inuit throat singing tradition. There was no question that, when I first studied this Inuit music 30 years ago, my imagination, and that of fellow scholars and musicians alike, was drawn to the fact that it was radically different from any type of popular or classical Western vocal production that we knew. We bought and became part of the exoticizing patron discourse.

Called *katajjaq* in some regions, throat singing is a form of vocal play, performed by pairs of women. It is often said to be a way of teaching imagination and creativity to children. The games are sometimes competitive but always fun, often ending when the partners break down in laughter. Two women lock arms and rock back and forth creating unusual sounds that imitate their environment - wind, the river, a hymn tune, the sound of a sewing machine and so on. The themes of throat singing, then, like the themes of yoiking, trace a history of relationship to place, even a history of changes in that soundscape. Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1983) accurately described throat games as a “host structure” that accommodates many sounds.

The interests of those who made recordings of throat singing, on the other hand, differed depending on their jobs, institutional affiliations, and personal aesthetics and these factors, in turn produced different systems of alliance. Since the earliest commercial recording,⁷ about 160 throat games have been released on audio recordings with different systems of circulation. In the 1970s, on one hand, researchers (of whom I was one) produced LPs that circulated internationally but were not widely distributed in northern Canada: Quebec academics usually sought out European labels such as Ocora in Paris or the Berlin Museum series. On the other hand, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s first recordings were EP (extended play) 7” discs mostly from Nunavik (northern Quebec), and they circulated only in the north. These, along with locally recorded cassettes, were sources from which many contemporary performers learned. Small indies (independent recording companies), several Inuit run, emerged in Arctic communities after 1990. They had more mixed (national and international) markets, but were still largely reliant on sales in the north. This gave the Inuit some bargaining power. One recording studio owner, whose contracts are thought to be incomprehensible and who has generated little income for the performers, has seen a large proportion of his northern

⁷ *The Eskimos of Hudson Bay and Alaska*. Washington, D.C. : Smithsonian Folkways, 1954

sales disappear. He blames MP3 downloading, but the women of his community quietly assert that they put the word out and caused the decline.

Technology has changed the relationship of performers and listeners. The modification of voices with an acoustic device such as a bread pan or bucket was a playful part of the throat singing tradition. It presumed one thing about the audience. There was none. The singers performed not in front, but behind the pan, where only the two participating women could properly hear. If a large bucket or bread pan were not available as a resonator, the parka-clad performers would put their hoods over their head to direct the sound toward each other. Microphone placement was an interesting challenge in either case. Some recordings have been made with a stereo microphone suspended over the performers' heads, others with a microphone placed a few feet away on the audience side. Some artists now wear cordless headsets, but, in recent years, many performers hold microphones, pop star like, preventing them from holding one another. What used to be an intimacy of experience has now become an intimacy of sound. A different sort of alliance emerged between the performers, themselves, and between the performers and the audience!

The attraction of the exotic influenced the popularity of certain throat songs and the processes of recording them. Here patron discourse was again at play. Consider the game that has become the most widely known and has spread across all Arctic regions from its place of origin in northern Quebec (probably from Puvirnituq): "Qimmiruluapik," (The Puppy). One story about this game explains that it reproduces the sounds of a little puppy that hid in the entrance of the igloo because it feared being eaten by the adult dogs. The sounds challenged conventional notions of what a woman's voice, and perhaps even what a human voice could sound like. As the director of the Avataq Cultural Institute told me:

It's the weirdest one that people (non-Inuit) can hear. The best way to describe it, it sounds like you're making the sound of a motorboat. And you can't believe that women, especially women with high voices can make that sound. It's the most mind-baffling. (Tagaliq Partridge, interview with BD, May 2004)

The unusual timbres unquestionably relate to its popularity.

“Qimmiruluapik” was exoticised still further in studio production of the 1970s and ‘80s.⁸ One version, produced as the lead track for an award-winning UNESCO recording⁹, has a megaphone-like quality and considerable distortion. Furthermore, singers agree that the game is faster than it could have been in live performance. Furthermore, it sounds as if the high frequencies were filtered out, perhaps to cut machine noise. Whether the original tape recorder was malfunctioning or whether the studio producers sped it up is not the issue. This became a widely used reference point. This is the most extreme case, but there are other examples showing that the production aesthetic of the 1970s and ‘80s emphasized the harsh and the strange.

By contrast, the producer of another widely heralded CD¹⁰ of two of the veteran throat singers of northern Quebec, Alicie Tullaugaq and Lucy Amarualik, made in the 1990s, told me his aesthetic goal was to create balance and evenness in the sound. This makes some of the recent recordings more acceptable as “samples” looped in the background of pop arrangements, or layered into film scores. Different post-production objectives, then, moved throat singing from a harsh, strange performance art to one that is useful as “background.”¹¹

A third version of “Qimmiruluapik” is by the current Inuit superstar Tanya Tagaq.¹² In its emphasis on breathiness, she arguably sounds more “feminine” aligning with what mainstream expectations of a female voice should be - another instance of patron discourse. She extends this in her collaboration with the Icelandic pop singer Björk,¹³ particularly in the song “Ancestors” where breath rhythms are used in experimental ways, sometimes falling into a throat singing rhythm, but sometimes having

⁸ By emphasizing both the techniques and repertoire choices of singers as well as the studio production of their voices, I want to resist the impression that studio manipulation is so powerful as to make the singer a pawn in a system. There are multiple agencies here. However, for women in particular who do not perform with qualities of “femininity” that one might associate with mainstreamness, the manner in which they are produced may be a particularly dynamic site of negotiation.

⁹ *Inuit Games and Songs*. 1978..

¹⁰ *Katutjatut. Throat Singing*. 1998.

¹¹ To my knowledge, the earliest use of an Inuit throat game as a background for a pop song was the Inuit duo Tudjaat performing with Robbie Robertson in “Rattlebone” on the CD, *Contact from the Underworld of Redboy*, Capitol/EMI, 1998.

¹² Genre challenges in the world of Sami yoik have been a bit different. I think of Mari Boine in relation to Tanya Tagaq. Both learned the tradition as adults, not in the oral tradition, both cracked the transnational networks and both have been judged inauthentic by some. Boine turned her real life to advantage - arguing she is a victim of the repression of Sami language and culture. Tagaq has not attempted such a move - yet.

¹³ *Medulla*, 2004.

little or no pulse. In this song, they play with the many connotations of breath: frightened, sexy, vulnerable, and strong. But there are occasional deeper throat sounds and they are sometimes foregrounded, unlike the throat singing in the previous example. Genre is hard to label here, as it is for much of the music created by the maverick, Björk, who advocated during the recording of *Medulla*, that her collaborators listen to Stockhausen and Justin Timberlake in alteration.

“Ancestors” with Björk appears again on Tagaq’s debut solo album, *Sinaa*. Here, on some other tracks, Tagaq also incorporates non-Inuit percussion sounds, particularly the Basque drum style known as *txalaparta* in which her partner, Filipe Ugarte, specializes. These arrangements arguably position her music as “world music”—an industry genre that has not generally been accorded to Native American music unless it incorporates culturally hybrid elements. Not only as a touring partner with Björk, but with film credits and a recent collaboration with the Kronos Quartet, Tagaq has taken throat singing to new audiences and the Inuit response is predictably ambivalent. She makes a lot of money. And therein she becomes controversial. Some Inuit feel that some sort of collective copyright should be established for throat singing.

Another mixing issue - one that relates to the nuances and hence the social alliances implicit in genre - is the use of reverberation, a quality introduced ambiently by those bread pans or large kettles in earlier days. Recent experimental work on the reception of various mixing techniques (Lacasse 1993) shows that listeners are consistent in ascribing values of otherworldliness and sacredness to reverberation and to its close relative, echo. An overuse of reverb has characterized a large number of recordings by Native Americans and I think this stereotype of otherworldly has been partly at play here. More recently, this production technique has also been associated with new age music: Native American music has often been mixed and marketed in this way. On the other hand, when I have talked to producers, they often state that they use more reverb on voices they regard as thin or poor quality. So the connotation of “amateurism” is also at play. Of course you do not consciously think about these things when you listen, but if you hear enough recordings that use the same techniques, they may unconsciously cohere and align with these genre definitions and social attitudes.

But to return to the throat singing recordings, reverb has been used very little for this type of music. Inuit throat singing somehow stands outside of some of the

stereotypes that have emerged for other Native American musics. Reasons? Among Native North American musics, it is one of the few that has attracted widespread attention from the classically trained, “new music” community. It was related to the “extended vocal techniques” of composers like Berio, Maxwell Davies and many others. Not surprisingly, then, Björk’s inclusion of Stockhausen as an influence aligns with this genre world. This categorization of throat singing as an extended vocal technique may have protected it from production as “amateur music” or new age music.

Alliances between other distinctive indigenous vocal genres and the classical music world have also been important for some Sami yoikers. From Nils-Aslak Valkeapää’s collaborations with symphony orchestras, to his naming of the *Bird Symphony*, to Frode Fjellheim’s recent large-scale works (such as his mass, *Aejlies Gaaltije, The Sacred Source*), there have been a number of illustrations of this. I have encountered audience members who explicitly compare the yoik to avant-garde classical experimental music. On the other hand, Sami whose yoik performances have been positioned in the popular music world have sometimes struggled with the genre categorization of their work. Instances include Angelin Tytöt, whose initial production as a “folk” duo, subsequently shifted to “pop,” or Mari Boine’s move from “world music” in the 1980s and early ‘90s to a sound that is more difficult to label generically, are cases in point.

In this case study, my alliance studies approach has explored different ways in which Inuit throat singing has been shaped by relationships with diverse outsiders, by technological manipulations that change the terms of its intimacy and its commercial usefulness, and by associations with different genre communities. Because the distinctiveness of this music is stronger than its mainstreamness, I would argue that these genre alliances and technological manipulations have been particularly varied. In other words, when a style of music does not fit the expectations of industry dictated genre worlds, the production may be more diverse and even contentious. In cases where the genre worlds are clearer, on the other hand, other strategies of alliance, such as language or dialect choice, may be more dynamic ones.

Language and Dialect Choice

Harris Berger articulates the matter of language very clearly:

Much of our identity in everyday life is achieved through linguistic behavior, and, capitalizing on this fact, singers and songwriters use forms of talk from the social world around them to publicly think about, enact, or perform their identities. Construed broadly to include the use of multiple dialects and registers, the issue of language choice in music is central to these processes. (2003:xv).

What he describes as an identity performance, I would refer to as an alliance-making activity. The choice of language or dialect that each musician makes, positions them with a specific group of other people. Berger notes, further, that globalization presents two distinct types of challenges to the social dynamics involved in choosing the language you sing in. In the first place, he notes that language choice becomes an enactment of relationship:

When a singer uses, for example, a high-status foreign language, a despised local dialect, or a formal linguistic register in song, he or she may be exploring, performing, or enacting a social identity rather than merely describing it.” (2003:xvi)

The second issue, identified by Berger and associates is “comprehensibility.” This is particularly germane to indigenous musicians if they perform outside of their own linguistic communities, since few members of their audience will understand their lyrics at all. It is also pertinent within their communities, however, where youth have limited sophistication, in some cases, in the use of their native tongue.

Contemporary Native American and Sami musicians who work in a wide range of genres and styles emphasize that they may choose to incorporate traditional sonic or linguistic elements or not. They do not always need to “wear” their aboriginality, i.e., to sound identifiably Native American or Sami. Some of their work defies mainstream definitions of genres while some fits the industry definitions quite well. Modern indigenous musicians are aware of many different positions within the social spaces and communities of value that different popular music genres imply.

In the context of indigenous music, at first glance, the issue of comprehensibility seems to loom larger for musicians whose practice is distinctive. The issue of enacting relationships would seem to be more important for musicians who emphasize mainstreamness. But is that actually the case? I will look at the yoiker, Wimme Saari, in relationship to the “distinctiveness” argument and at two Native American bands who made mainstream-oriented but very different choices with regard to language and dialect.

First, let’s turn to musicians who do not use the currency of distinctive sounds in their music. How does it work if you don’t sound exotic, if you don’t sound indigenous enough perhaps? How do genre nuances and language and dialect choices work to create alliances, find audiences, and control the terms of those relationships? I will compare the approaches of two bands, the first, a currently successful Mi’kmaq rock band, Forever, from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the second, the Innu trad-rock stars of the 1980s and early 1990s - a duo called Kashtin, from Quebec.

The Mi’kmaq rock band, Forever, has garnered many regional and national awards, particularly for their second CD, *Something to Dream of...*¹⁴, and has recently toured in China and the U.S. Their six-member ensemble includes the standard roster of vocals, drums, guitars, keyboards, and bass. Most of their songs use the stylistic conventions of mainstream rock and many voice angst about love or romantic relationships. One might argue, then, that their work does not choose to exhibit aboriginality at all. They sing in English but enunciate vowels very broadly, in a way that sounds more U.S. than Canadian. This pronunciation is also represented graphically in the title of the tune, “Guitar thang.” Another tune, the flamenco-styled “Sloppy taco” also increases the difficulty of locating them stylistically and geographically. They choose to look and sound “cosmopolitan.” Their alliances are not clear in the sound itself. One question to ask about their music, then, is whether it matters what the indigenous identities of the singers are?

Consider the song “My Way,” the lyrics of which reflect the individualism that marks certain stereotypes of masculinity and the alienation that many youth feel (although this band has members that range in age from 20 to 40-something). Audiences, however, may respond on several levels. Locally, where they are known as a Mi’kmaq band, the lines, “I find it strange everyone/ Looks at me and stares” may resonate with

¹⁴ Produced by drummer, Keith Dawson, and Jamie Foulds, 2004.

quite different experiences. Is this song, after all, about the marginalization of First Nation people? Is it about racism? While they implicitly deny local alliances in their arrangement and language choice, the audience that knows them hears them differently. Alliance studies, then, could help suss out the many layers of audience response.

The issue of creating texts that resonate differently in local settings, and cross-cultural ones, is important in the Sami world of yoik as well. As we saw at the beginning of this paper, Wimme Saari created a variant of “Texas” that emphasized names in order for audiences, on that occasion, to connect to these thoughts. In general, yoiks on audio recordings or in concerts attended by many non-Sami speakers, have less Sami language content than yoiks performed locally. Saari has explained a couple of reasons for this. The first is perhaps the most obvious:

[T]he strongest feeling is in me when the audience understands the language and, at that time, I also use more words. And I play with the words and it goes to another dimension, that yoiking, when the audience understands the words so well. And then of course in other places where they don't understand the words, it differs in that I don't, after all, use so many words. Actually, I only paint my own associations or pictures in my mind with the voice in the form of sounds.

[Interview with BD and Pirkko Moisala,¹⁵ 2001]

For Wimme Saari, however, there is another important dimension to the way performance (and with that, language) forms an affective link with audiences. He and other Sami artists emphasize the importance of encouraging diverse levels of interpretation.¹⁶

It is because I don't want to bind the listener to a certain association. If I would describe all that which I think about in these pieces, it would put too strict limits on the listeners' imagination. So in them there are actually only these rhythms and my yoikings and they allow the listener to fly as they want to. I don't want to

¹⁵ Translation of Finnish to English and English to Finnish by Pirkko Moisala.

¹⁶ The Sami language has a particularly rich capacity in this regard. Words and phrases can mean several things and speakers will often use this potential to convey double meanings, or even “secret” meanings as Gaski (2000) has written about.

direct or guide or lead the feelings they get. Actually it is not important what I have thought in these, because most of these [yoiks performed cross-culturally] are anyway such that there are no words in them. [*Ibid.*]

While the language strategies between the Mi'kmaq band and Wimme Saari are very different in one way, a related social value seems to underpin their language choices: namely, they want the audience to respond imaginatively, to draw meanings from their songs in relation to their own spheres of reference. This value of giving the audience a space to relate in their own way, a certain affective power, also underpins language choices made by various other Native American groups. One is the Innu duo, Kashtin.

Kashtin consists of Florent Vollent and Claude McKenzie, both from Maliotenam, Quebec, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River about 12 hours by car, northeast of Quebec City. They made history in Canada in the 1990s when their three commercial albums, all performed in their language, *Innu aimun* (a language spoken by about 10,000 people), “went platinum” - indicating sales of over 100,000 in Canada. This was a group, then, that had an impact far beyond their own communities or even their own nation since they also received air time in the U.S. and Europe, particularly France, where one of their songs became number one on the pop charts. They are still on the scene, although each of the two artists is now working as a solo act. Because there was so much media, as well as academic, attention on their work of the 1990s, many have written about their “positioning” within the popular music worlds.

When I first heard Florent Vollent and Claude McKenzie, they were performing locally and a number of local beliefs informed their performance choices. They dared to feature whistling in many of their early songs, for instance. Many Native American groups have strong beliefs about whistling and the Innu are no exception. Innu elders explain that the northern lights that dance in the sky in cold weather may come down and snatch up someone who whistles. By the time Kashtin began making commercial recordings, they eliminated the whistling, but used vocables for many of the same melodic lines. Vocables are easily learned, allowing audiences to participate and to form an affective link with the music. The “meaning” however, is not pinned down. As with Wimme Saari the choice not to use lexically meaningful language can often be a

powerful way to communicate to those who don't speak the local language, but also a powerful means to enable one's audience to "fly as they want to."

Kashtin's genre negotiations took a number of different turns from those of Forever. At first Kashtin invented a new genre label for their songs, "folk Innu," but genre creation is a complex matter. The music industry prefers a relatively fixed number of genre terms around which they can organize markets.¹⁷ So attempts to label something in a new way are often precarious and the "folk Innu" label was not retained once Kashtin brought out their first recording.

Kashtin's songs are often about relationships, but in a much more inclusive way than mainstream pop: among generations, between human and four-legged creatures, in relation to place.¹⁸ Romantic love songs are rather rare in Innu song writing. One of their hits, "Tshinanu,"¹⁹ a song that is often described as a sort of anthem of the Innu nation, is a case in point. The title means "All of us" and the song lyrics emphasize Innu pride. The primary harmonies, short phrases, and form of "Tshinuau" are easy to learn. Many of their songs are heterometric, a feature Florent Volland relates to the asymmetrical rhythms of the Innu aimun language. Many have refrains with vocable texts that audiences learn easily.

Kashtin's music, however, cannot be regarded in isolation from other popular music developments in Quebec in the 1980s and 1990s, as Line Grenier and Val Morrison have demonstrated. They were popular during the period of intense Quebec nationalism that led up to a narrowly defeated referendum on independence. While Kashtin preferred not to take a public stand on the issue of Quebec sovereignty, they were often used as the face and voice of difference in Quebec in order to counter those who argued that the francophone majority was not sympathetic to cultural diversity. Grenier and Morrison write:

Kashtin's success represents the first time, not only that a local group who sing in a language other than French has enjoyed so much popularity within the Quebec

¹⁷ See Negus (1992) for a detailed explanation of the way this system of "genre worlds" works. Note in particular that the top tier of global superstars have few elements that emplace them anywhere, but the next tier is often marketed specifically with attention to the "local" elements in their music.

¹⁸ Celebrating a broad range of social and environmental relationships is noteworthy in many indigenous song traditions.

¹⁹ From their self-titled album (1989).

milieu, but moreover, that an artist or group who sing in another language has been accepted as specifically indigenous, that is, *Québécois*. (Grenier 1995:127)

They point to the fact that the Innu are one of the few First Nations in Quebec who speak French as a second language, and to the parallels between the battle to maintain aboriginal language and culture vis à vis the struggle of francophones in Canada. They also note that Kashtin's success in France has cultural currency in Canada.

The alliances of the duo's language choices, then, work in several different directions. The Innu aimun language itself, the use of vocables that listeners so strongly relate to and echo back in live performance, and the subject matter featuring community relationships, all seem to be directed locally, to their roots and to their community. Their moment in history, however, made them useful to the larger francophone community and to Canadian nationalist discourses as well.

As Berger and others have demonstrated, globalization has made the matter of language and dialect choice a crucial identity issue. Whether musicians choose English or use a local indigenous language, whether they ally with a specific region, ethnicity, or class by using a particular dialect or accent, the way one speaks and sings is loaded with signification. Aboriginal musicians must decide whether to perform in English in order to reach a wider audience, or to use their native language to reflect on political, intellectual, or social issues. They must decide whether to pronounce words in such a way that their community, region, ethnicity, class or nation is identified. Conversely, they may try to sound "cosmopolitan" or to ally themselves with some other region, ethnicity, or class, by pronouncing words in one way or another. Each decision has implications. Hence, Forever chooses not to locate themselves. They write in English but utter words in a vaguely "American" way. They create songs that could be interpreted as First Nations related, or not. Kashtin on the other hand, chose to remain close to their communities by writing in their first languages and by reflecting themes and issues that stem from their community-based experience. Both groups, on the other hand, parallel a strategy used by Sami artist Wimme Saari who changes the proportion of lexically meaningful text in his work, depending on the audience. His reasons are partly pragmatic but also partly related to indigenous values - and here is where the connection between the three examples

occurs. In all cases, some responsibility for the construction of meaning is vested in the audience. Language is used, not to pin meaning down, but to open it up.

Citation and Collaboration

At some level, all hybrid products have elements of citation or collaboration or both, but these have not been theorized much in ethnomusicology. Citation is a distanced process, one that is usually both intentional and emotionally charged. I don't have to know you to quote you, but if I quote you, I probably either admire your thoughts or want to take issue with them. It is somewhat difficult, though not impossible, for someone cited to answer back. The first author has control. Collaboration, on the other hand, involves immediate and intense negotiation. Paradoxically, it is not always intentional and emotionally charged. You may simply need to have something arranged, marketed, or recorded. Control is compromised. But potential for innovative thinking may also be maximized. What Smith and Ward observe with regard to collaborative research projects may equally be true of artistic collaborations:

Collaborative research projects not only have the potential to engender new and more productive research agendas but may also change radically conventional ways of establishing identity by questioning hitherto unchallenged assumptions, themselves contingent on colonial power relations. (2000:21)

How the two processes of citation and collaboration differ, and how they relate as forms of alliance is an understudied dimension of contemporary musical practice. Consider a few examples.

Citation is increasingly a strategy of indigenous musicians and CD producers. Little attention has been paid to this as yet. Consider the Inuit vocal games discussed earlier. Lucie Idlout, a young Inuit rock and roll artist, quotes an archival recording of a radio announcer and later a throat-singing duo in one cut on her debut album, *E5-770 My Mother's Name*.²⁰ The title refers to the period when Inuit were given numbers that identified their region (E5) and unique ID (770). Lucie's anger over the dehumanization

²⁰ Produced by Heart Wreck Records, Toronto, 2002.

of Inuit through this system is contrasted in her song with a sample of her own mother's rather joyous voice as a radio announcer in the 1970s and then as a member of a throat singer duo that forms an accompaniment. When I interviewed Lucie before the album was produced she asserted her right NOT to sound Inuit in any way, describing music that wore its identity overtly as "we ya music." She told me that she intended to be the Ani DiFranco of Inuit music,²¹ The hard-hitting message, vocal play (note the line "I'm not lying" for instance), and unidentifiable accent (the words seem to be chewed and played with, not simply uttered), are all in line with that earlier goal. But, she found a way to honour Inuit tradition by citing her mother's voice. Like a number of contemporary artists, she also incorporates the past in a modern production, here, by layering an old recording into the mix.

Others who have made such audible alliances by citing older sources include Finnish yoiker, Ulla Pirttijärvi. She discovered an archival recording that so reminded her of her own vocal quality, that she tracked the genealogy of the singer, Niila Kitti from Inari, Finland. Indeed, she discovered they were distantly related. In the composition, "Calkko-Niilas" (They Said He was a Shaman), she and her producer, Frode Fjellheim, link them musically. They quote the archival tape, carefully counter-pointing the 13 beats of each phrase with a percussion pattern in 4/4 time, never letting the more complex traditional rhythm be "ruled" by the 4-square popular music metre. This polyrhythm of old and new becomes the basis, then, for the pop song that Ulla sings, matching the old recording timbrally, but adding a new lyric dimension, a gloss on the position of a Sami *noaidi* or shaman. This recording documents one of the few instances where a singer actually traced her personal history, sonically. What is more, she uses citation to establish continuity with the past. As David Samuels (2005) has argued with regard to contemporary Apache music from San Carlos,²² however, Pirttijärvi is not suggesting a simply continuity as much as a recovery of the memory of the past in the present, a layering which argues that past and present are simultaneous. Citation, then, becomes a powerful indigenous tool for challenging the linearity of mainstream histories.

Many other examples of citation in contemporary indigenous music merit consideration on a case-by-case basis, but time precludes this. Several cases merit careful

²¹ Interview with BD, 2001. See reference in Diamond 2002.

²² Samuels, David. 2005. *Putting a Song on Top of It*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

attention in the future, such as: the use of Leah Hicks-Manning's voice in Robbie Robertson's song "The Sound is Fading,"²³ the citation of environmental sound in "Wings" and "Rain" by Niko Valkeapää²⁴ (who embeds the sound of a reindeer herd on his first album), the sampling of rappers, and others. Each of these pays respect and offer points of reference for new musical creations. I wonder, however, if the aforementioned challenge to the linearity of mainstream history is consciously or unconsciously a motivating factor.

Collaboration, on the other hand, is, as argued above, a more immediate and intense encounter, for the participants, but ultimately, also for the listeners. Popular music studies look at the multi-sitedness of production - standard practice for most audio recordings by the late 20th century. Similarly, the production of most of the indigenous recordings considered so far in this paper, has involved multi-sited collaboration. In some cases, the transnational links have done little to benefit the local community, as is the case with the European recordings that I, and other ethnomusicologists, contributed to in the 1970s and 1980s. In some cases, a band, such as Forever, kept production local, but reached out to non-local audiences through language choice and arrangement. In other cases, as with the group, Kashtin, the musical references emphasize the local and the "distinctive" elements of Innu culture, but the production was placed in the hands of Montreal professionals and ultimately the transnational recording industry. In other cases, such as Ulla Pirttijärvi, she moved in the opposite direction. A non-local production team controlled her first CD with Warner, but in her second (also Warner), she insisted on a collaboration with Fjellheim, a fellow Sami who understood her vision more fully.

Even more interesting to me are the actual collaborations between musicians, especially musicians whose cultural and musical worlds differ. These collaborations are not business deals but deeply felt artistic initiatives. When collaboration is cross-cultural, it also begs the question of what "fusion" can be and what types of fusion are more satisfying, more "authentic" perhaps, than others. In my recent experience, the concept of fusion is where debates about authenticity are now taking place. People have strong opinions about good and bad ways to combine styles. Their arguments are based less in the sound itself, and more often in the depth with which artists are acquainted with the

²³ Robertson 1998.

²⁴ Valkeapää 2004.

cultures concerned, and the commitment they have to the communities whose music they reference. A number of Sami, for instance, distinguish between “world music” and Sami contemporary music, both collaborative but differently so.

A number of large-scale indigenous collaborative projects are particularly interesting initiatives. Sadie Buck, a Haudenosaunee singer and an arts and culture specialist, ran the Aboriginal Women’s Voices program at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Alberta for five years. Her concept for fusing cultures involved a period of listening and learning from each participant in the program, and then a period of creative response to one another. The best type of fusion, in her view, is a long process where the sounds of others are taken deep within, and then something new is created out of that experience.²⁵ She sees hybrid works as an opportunity for contemporary artists to author new music since, in her world, new “traditional” songs are the property of her First Nation not the individual. After her experiences in bringing women together at Banff, she wanted to create a large-scale work - an aboriginal music and dance work that she called an opera. The appropriation of a high culture label was clearly intentional. The resulting work, *Bones*, was staged in 2001 to sell-out audiences. It relied on the invention of a new language called “the language of the world,” borrowed from the Cansa of South America but using sounds from a variety of indigenous languages. Like the language choices discussed earlier, the strategy left meaning open to interpretation. The music draws on indigenous music from many cultures, Haudenosaunee, Maori, Cherokee, and others. The fusion is seamless, however, partly because the language is unidentifiable and yet familiar because of certain syllable sequences and certain vocal gestures.

A contrasting work is Frode Fjellheim’s *Arctic Mass*, in which traditional yoik, classical singing, and popular music are layered, each kept separately, and intact, but made meaningful through juxtaposition. In the “Agnus Dei,” for instance, you hear duets of yoikers (the top voice with more dynamic accents, the lower one more gentle). They begin with vocables, as most traditional yoiks do, a soprano soars over the top, occasionally singing the familiar text, “Agnus Dei.” A male voice improvises with the phrase “Jupmelen laampe,” again using traditional yoik techniques. Finally, the same male voice sings the full text in Sami, and in a pop style. This piece makes overt statements about alliances. After decades of protesting the cultural losses imposed by

²⁵ Based on several interviews with the author, most recently in March 2006.

Christian missionaries in Samiland (*Sapmi*), particularly the strict Laestadian Lutheranism that predominated in the northern Sami area and in Finnish Lapland, we see Fjellheim (and he is not the only one) reclaiming a Christian music, but asserting that not all Sami were Laestadian. Furthermore, he uses the southern Sami liturgy, subtly resisting the hegemony of northern Sami culture as representative of all Sami people. Fjellheim's fusing of styles, then, is closer to citation. More importantly, by creating a work that demonstrates how the Sami localized the mass liturgy, he produces a profound reflection on colonialism.

The works by Buck and Fjellheim suggest that strong indigenous musicians have a lot of agency. Decisions about genre labels, language choice, collaborative production, and the fusions involved in style and arrangement, however, often involve teams of collaborators that disperse that agency. Hence, it is not always clear who makes the choices about these matters, for instance in the case of Kashtin, whose music was positioned within a social scene charged with the idealism of Quebecois sovereignists, or even the case of Tagaq, whose success no doubt depended on a great deal of negotiation with Björk's production team. My examples, then, merely hint at the complexity of collaboration within the alliance studies model.

Access and Ownership Issues

Running through all of these case studies are questions of access and ownership. Indigenous music and dance as intellectual property is hardly a new concern. Some basic problems with ownership are:

- In Samiland, the fact that the person who is yoiked is the owner of the yoik.
- On the Northwest coast of Canada, the fact that songs may be owned by families or clans, and that the performance rights may be portable or non-portable. (that is, you cannot sing a song outside of a certain space).
- In a number of Native American contexts, the fact that songs are thought to be the "gift of the Creator" to the nation, as the Haudenosaunee express it.
- In some musical contexts (the Inuit drum dance, for instance) creators are carefully acknowledged, while in others the question of creation is irrelevant if songs are "received" knowledge (via dreams or visions). Received knowledge is not a concept that patron discourses can easily accommodate.

- In some other communities, there are informal customs of courtesy about what one should perform or not perform, or about how to acknowledge song sources.

What we don't know much about yet is how, or if, these elements of customary law really work in the context of globalization. What are the best practices? How do cross-cultural negotiations of access really unfold when indigenous music is commodified and put into transnational circulation?

My own recent experience with families and community organizations in negotiating several dozen clearances for a textbook and compilation CD, suggests that folks are grasping for solutions. Some charge researchers a lot when the research is done and then don't worry about subsequent use. Some query where the money goes. Some use traditional modes of consulting every family, clan or community member. Some have ethics committees. In many cases, there are new brokers and gatekeepers - their titles vary - tribal historians, elders, cultural administrators. We should be studying these new cultural roles, in my view, and identifying what communities believe to be best practices.

Conclusion

The small case studies I have presented focus on various aspects of music production that we need to study if we shift attention from identity studies to alliance studies. A basic issue is whether the musical practice is positioned to emphasize elements of distinctiveness or mainstreamness. In relation to that issue, I have explored four areas that are particularly central to an alliance studies approach.

- a) genre and the technological means that help construct it.
- b) language and dialect choices
- c) practices of citation and collaboration
- d) concepts about access, ownership, and intellectual property

I explored how shifts in Inuit CD production - first in the hands of academics and foreign companies or national broadcasters, then shifting to commercial labels (most small but some multinational) - partly determines what sort of music and what sort of artist reached what sort of public. We saw a shift in what I have called "patron discourse"

- first attracted to extreme and exotic production values, and later to filmic opportunities. Those very secondary rights negotiations, e.g., filmmakers licensing audio recordings, however, remain one of the biggest access and ownership questions for indigenous culture bearers. How should that work? The characteristics of the genre have simultaneously become an issue. Experimental work derived from throat singing is gaining a huge international following.

I then turned to matters of language and dialect choice. The Maritime Mi'kmaq rock band, Forever, chooses to cover the traces of their roots by using southern United States-inflected English, but write songs that speak deeply to issues of racism. Kashtin write in their own language, but was implicated nevertheless in the struggle of Quebecois sovereignists. Both groups value language that does not pin the meaning down for listeners. They share this value with Sami artist, Wimme Saari. All three encourage audiences to be affectively and intellectually engaged.

Third, I considered issues relating to citation, on one hand, and collaboration, on the other, suggesting that these two forms of alliance have implicitly different power structures. Idlout and Pirttijärvi's uses of archival samples in modern compositions were both respectful ways of recovering memories of the past in the present, in a layered fashion that provides an alternative to linear historical representations. With a view to the complex issues surrounding collaboration, this paper merely hints at two: the logic behind the choices artists make in multi-sited production and the variable concepts of musical fusion that inform different performance and recording projects.

Finally, the important issue of access and ownership is acknowledged, but largely left to explore in another paper. The complexity for indigenous people is, at least partially, the incompatibility between the concepts and norms of intellectual property in their home communities and the legal systems that govern contemporary media production and distribution.

I suggest that a research emphasis on alliances - both the ones these artists make and the ones in which they are implicated - rather than on the distinctiveness of identity can take us closer to understanding the vision of modern indigenous people and the patron discourses that need to be dismantled for that vision to be realized.

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