On Circulation

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School of High Studies in Language and Society:
Mobility at Large

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Approaches to the study of circulation and “globalization”

- David Harvey: globalization as “flexible accumulation”
- Arjun Appadurai on global flow” and -scapes (eg., media-scapes) and the indigenization of globalization
- Critical views of globalization as the extension and deepening of local and global inequalities—mobilities and immobilities (Z. Bauman & Robertson)
- Aihwa Ong & Saskia Sassen: global assemblages
- Anna Tsing on “friction”—the global as movement shaped by difference, grooves and channels
Beyond approaches to the study of “globalization”

- “Globalization” as a central concept invites
  - Totalizing
  - Reification
  - “The fallacy of misplaced concreteness” (Alfred North Whitehead)

- Better to think in terms of more “middle range” concepts that document “aspirations to the universal” (Tsing) rather than universals

- Contingent, emergent processes
George Yudice

*The Expediency of Culture, 2004*

- Key research site: “funk” in Rio
- All cultural forms are now:
  - commodified
  - part of a global market
  - valued in monetary terms
- Social movements and socially/economically disadvantaged communities: only possible effective form of resistance is to demand a piece of the action
Steven Feld
Rorogwela Lullaby: as ethnomusicology
Communicable models in Feld’s argument

- **Ethnomusicological communicability**
  - A musical form circulates in the Solomon Islands
  - Rorogwela’s performance is recorded by ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp
  - Press into a UNESCO LP
  - Circulates as ethnomusicological documentation

- **World music communicability**
  - Digital sampling
  - Origins erased or misplace (African “pigmy” melody)
  - Circulation = appropriation
  - Logic of capital, of the market
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Subjectification: projecting particular types of subject-positions and subjectivities
  - Rorogwela as authentic musical subject
  - Ethnomusicologist
  - Commercial artists
  - Mass audiences/consumers
  - Record companies
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Spatializing practices: projecting sites of production, circulation, and reception of discourse
  - Solomon Islands: Point (D&G) of origin
  - Scholarly trajectories of fieldwork
  - UNESCO
  - Deterritorialization of digital sampling & performances, accompanied by distorted, represented reterritorialization (African “pigmy” music)
  - Circulation of “world musics” through production, marketing, consumption, recontextualization (new samplings, performances, recordings)
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Temporalization: projecting the speed and forms of contemporaneity and displacement
  - Temporalities of traditional performance (existing apart from colonialism, modernity)
  - Scholarly temporalities: producing an archive and its slow circulation (an LP!)
  - Time sliced, spliced, repositioned in digital sampling (the old cut into the new)
  - Temporalities of marketing and consumption (subsequent from CDs to downloading)
Performative dimensions of communicable models

Objectification: How are particular entities objectified as the objects of circulation?

- No objectification in the Solomon Islands
- Scholarly objectification in ethnomusicological recording, archivization, and circulation—not commodified
- Transformation into a commodity, value structured by capital
- Commodity-cultural fetishization through consumption
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Communicable affects: how do communicable models create and differentially position affects?
  - Politics of empathy with Rorogwela
    - The affective power of authenticity
    - Victim of a global rip-off
  - Commercial musicians, their corporate sponsors and legal defenders: the politics of outrage
  - The role of the scholar?
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Ethics: how do cartographies of communicability project ethical positions?
  - Rorogwela and her descendents: ethical ground zero, for calculation of other ethical stances
  - Hugo Zemp: ethical neutrality
  - Deep Forest and kin: ethical violators
  - World music audiences: ethical dupes
  - And the scholar?
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Scales: how do communicable models construct scales and modes of crossing them?
  - Rorogwela as the local
  - Hugo Zemp scholarly up-scaling
  - Deep Forest and kin: uncontrolled up-scaling
  - The scholar: the only one who can see all scales and cross them without catching on fire
Performative dimensions of communicable models

- Technologies: how do communicable models construct technologies of circulation?
  - Music in the Solomon Islands as pretechnological
  - Classical technologies of ethnomusicological documentation, archiving, and reproduction
  - Digital technologies of appropriation, dissection, and reassemblage
  - Mass technologies of capitalist circulation
Some questions we might ask....

- Who gets to map subjectivities, spaces, times, objects, affects, and ethics?
- How do particular cartographies get naturalized?
- To what extend are these dimensions constructed individually by scholars or collectively?
- What are the stakes of making these communicable cartographies?