

# Music, Language, and Texts: Sound and Semiotic Ethnography

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## Abstract

This review surveys recent research on language-music: the unified expressive field comprising sounded and textual signs whose segmentation into “language” and “music” is culturally constructed. I argue that approaching language-music semiotically will promote—alongside the discipline’s emergent “auditory turn”—greater holism in anthropological practice if coupled to the joint effort of attending to textuality while decentering its primacy. I discuss recent scholarship that demonstrates, if often implicitly, the merit of this approach. I organize this work into three overlapping themes of active research: scholarship on chronotopes and soundscapes exploring processes that reconfigure time and place; work on subject creation focusing on voice, emotion, intersubjectivity, and listening; and scholarship on the social dimensions of object creation, including technological mediation, authentication, and circulation. I conclude by discussing future directions in research on language-music and the promise such work offers of furthering the call to broaden anthropology’s holism while loosening adherence to its text-centered practices.

## INTRODUCTION: ON SIGNS, BOUNDARIES, AND PROCESSES

“Our language is like music”: That sentiment is frequently expressed when people discuss Mazatec, an indigenous tonal language on which I conduct research. Spoken in southern Mexico, Mazatec is best known for its “speech surrogate”—a whistled register (Cowan 1948)—and its use in chants during medicinal ceremonies involving hallucinogenic mushrooms (Rothenberg 2003, Wasson et al. 1974). Similar to lament (Wilce 2009), whistle speech and mushroom chants hover at the boundary between music and language. Although there are numerous ways to interpret such speaker statements, the relevant point is that for people expressing them the boundaries between language and music, between speech and song, are not particularly meaningful and do not map onto standard categorical distinctions between “music” and “language.” Nor is this an isolated case: The ethnographic record provides abundant evidence of societies worldwide where the division between language and music is differentially salient and contingent on local practices. What lies behind such statements is not merely the culturally different ways of conceptualizing divisions between language and music, nor the variances among their ideologized meanings. Rather, music and language are socially determined constructs that arbitrarily divide, in fundamentally cultural ways, a communicative whole. Yet, one persistent difficulty, which I do not escape in this essay, is that we lack the language to refer easily to this expressive whole without using terms that artificially divide it, thereby reinscribing the divisions they presuppose.

Although many approaches can advance the cause of moving beyond received divisions between language and music, I take the position here that viewing music and language as variably constructed distinctions in a total semiotic field is especially fruitful. The musical and linguistic signifiers making up this field compose an integrated expressive system whose components are differing, sometimes

competing, overlapping, mutually influencing signs essential to human societies. Indeed, many scholars discussed here are employing such an approach—though not always explicitly—to take us further down the path of “viewing the precise ways that music and language are phenomenally intertwined and socially dialogic” (Feld et al. 2005, p. 340). By viewing the boundary between language and music as even more thoroughly constructed and placing the burden of analysis on signs regardless of categorical distinction, we not only move away from our own assumptions about the division between language and music, but also heighten the visibility of boundaries between different expressive categories as ethnographic facts supported by specific cultural practices, institutions, and ideologies. Furthermore, viewing music and language as part of a full semiotic field will further ongoing conversations about how to decenter texts as a core unit of analysis, while providing the tools for examining them holistically and assessing their relative importance (and unimportance) by positioning texts alongside other collections of signs, sonic and otherwise.

There is a rich history of research on language and music, a subject others have treated at length (Feld & Fox 1994, 1999; Feld et al. 2005). This history has built, recently, toward increased interest in analyzing sound, reflected by the recent founding of the AAA music and sound interest group (Black 2011). Several anthropologists of music have recently called for greater focus on neglected sonic dimensions of social experience through multisensory ethnography, thus counterbalancing the discipline’s prevailing focus on visuality and textuality (Porcello et al. 2010, Samuels et al. 2010). These authors advocate research oriented toward the “soundscape” concept, designed to “contain everything to which the ear [is] exposed in a given sonic setting... [including] the contradictory forces of the natural and the cultural, the fortuitous and the composed, the improvised and the deliberately produced... [C]onstituted by cultural histories, ideologies, and practices... soundscape

implicates listening as a cultural practice” (Samuels et al. 2010, p. 330). This “sonic turn” (Ochoa 2006) in the field is represented by scholarship in recent decades stressing an expansive treatment of the sonic as a site for ethnographic analysis and the development of social theory (Erlmann 2004, Feld & Brenneis 2004, Fox 2006, Graham 1995, Hirschkind 2009, Sterne 2003).

This is a vital movement in the field, one promising to further the holism of anthropological research while drawing attention to work under way on sonic aspects of sociality, including research on sound and the music-language continuum. This shift will have even greater power if it can be harnessed to methods exploring sound’s importance without losing sight of how texts help configure soundscapes. In particular ethnographic contexts, “musicking” (Small 1998) and “linguaging” are culturally intertwined in ways that often rely crucially on texts, whether written language, musical notation, or other graphical productions of meaning.<sup>1</sup> Although music and language are jointly implicated in various expressive practices—such as whistle speech and chanting—singing is a particularly salient nexus of musical-linguistic signification, in turn tied in culturally variable ways to written texts. The sounded dimensions of human experience are intimately tied to graphical ones (see Gitelman 2000) not least as a reaction to the supposed ephemerality of sound, a feature sometimes proposed as a reason for disciplinary inattention (Feld & Brenneis 2004, Samuels et al. 2010). This calls for an exploration of the specific social relations among speaking, writing, and “sounding.” Furthermore, as many have commented (and lamented; see Porcello et al. 2010), texts are thoroughly embedded in disciplinary practice.

<sup>1</sup> Here I define texts narrowly, as tied to writing, though many discuss oral and performed texts as distinguishable from “text artifacts” (e.g., Silverstein 2005, Silverstein & Urban 1996). See Titon (1995) for the long history in anthropology and related disciplines of privileging texts analytically, a history involving many definitions for “text” and cycles of anxiety over texts’ analytic limitations.

Thus finding ways to integrate texts with sound into a unified analytical framework alongside the ongoing effort to decenter their primacy has implications for reflexive scholarship, forcing attention to our own expressive practices as bound up in the same processes enveloping the entities we study. Finally, paying holistic attention to texts involves examining not only their internal qualities and their embeddedness in social practice, but also their materiality as physical objects circulating in social worlds and phenomenally accessible to the senses (see Myers 2002, Urban 2001; on language materiality, see Shankar & Cavanaugh 2012).

A semiotic approach offers valuable tools for advancing holistic research of this sort, offering a unified framework for analyzing the variety of expressive forms—spoken, sung, written, etc.—at play in particular social contexts. Many of these concepts are already in use, if implicitly, in the ethnographies I discuss. To date, semiotic approaches have gained greatest traction among linguistic anthropologists: Mertz’s (2007) recent *Annual Review of Anthropology* article, “Semiotic Anthropology,” of necessity focused heavily on linguistic anthropological research. Nevertheless, the Peircean theoretical foundations on which it is based can be applied to any social signs, not merely linguistic ones—including, for example, those analyzed by archaeologists (Preucel 2006), physical anthropologists (Deacon 1997), and ethnomusicologists (Turino 1999, 2010).<sup>2</sup> Discussions of Peircean semiotics—augmented by concepts introduced by others, including Sapir, Whorf, Jakobson, Goffman, and Bakhtin/Voloshinov—have been treated exhaustively elsewhere (e.g., Agha 2007). I emphasize the central elements of this semiotic

<sup>2</sup> As noted elsewhere (Feld & Fox 1994, Feld et al. 2005, Turino 2010), music has a long though divergent tradition of applying semiotic models (recent examples include Martinez 1997, Rice 2001, Tomlinson 2011, Turino 2008, Van Leeuwen 1999). My thinking derives from engagement with Turino’s work (especially Turino 2010) and from teaching students, few of whom have been linguistic anthropologists and thus use semiotic theory to analyze musical and other nonlinguistic signs.

“cocktail” that make it useful for examining a wide range of social signs, particularly linguistic-musical ones.

Similar to other semioticians, Peirce (1992) offers an isolable unit of analysis—the sign—that is nevertheless meaningful only within its pragmatic framework, and hence is only interpretable as the product and producer of relations. However, Peirce’s approach claims not one type of sign but several, constructed around distinct linkages to the objects (material and conceptual) they represent. Perhaps his best-known set—icon, index, symbol—distills this idea: Each “sign-vehicle” is linked in different ways (likeness, copresence, and convention, respectively) to its object. For research on language-music, this offers conceptual distinctions for examining “system-internal” differences (e.g., how signs are differentially linked to particular musical styles or linguistic registers) as well as differences and similarities across whole musical-linguistic complexes that are linked to intricate layerings of context. Furthermore, Peircian signs not only mediate between material and ideational modes, but also fuse them in the three-part structure of the sign, comprised of the sign-vehicle (commonly called simply a “sign”), the object represented, and the interpretant [“whatever a sign creates insofar as it stands for an object” (Kockelman 2005, p. 234), whether the interpretant is a mental state, a reaction, a feeling, an action, a habit, etc.]. This formulation helps transcend entrenched Western dualisms and offers tools for examining complex mechanisms by which signs and the objects they identify are linked not only to contexts but also to perceiving selves—an approach allowing harmonious collaboration with phenomenological approaches, which have had enduring currency in both linguistic anthropology and ethnomusicology. Finally, signs in this model are subject to continuous and recursive chaining, as the interpretant of one sign can become the object for a new sign—cycled always through the experience of particular perceivers. This dynamic approach to social life foregrounds process and its interactions with specific

social contexts and subjects while calling upon empirical investigation to elucidate those linkages, thereby privileging ethnographic method.

Taking the focus on process as a hallmark of recent research, I examine work on music-language in specific cultural contexts published since this journal’s most recent article on the theme (Feld & Fox 1994).<sup>3</sup> I focus on work illustrating the value of holistic approaches to language-music complexes: research emphasizing the importance of sound, while considering the social work of texts, including their use to augment the sonic.<sup>4</sup> I have loosely organized this work into three overlapping areas reflecting active research themes, though I stress the leakiness of their boundaries: Most work could be slotted within multiple categories, and I locate given studies on the basis of dominant focus rather than exclusive attention. Across these areas I intermittently trace three cross-cutting themes: performance, genre and style, and political aspects. I conclude by considering future directions in research on music-language, particularly relative to disciplinary boundaries and practice.

### **CHRONOTOPIC PROCESSES: RECONFIGURING TIME AND PLACE THROUGH LANGUAGE-MUSIC**

A common analytical strategy in recent work on music-language has involved linking musical-linguistic practices and forms to places and the social identities harnessed to them. These then dialectically create, through complex orderings of musical-linguistic signs (both sonic and textual), the lived meanings of those places, i.e., the social content that identity labels presuppose. Indeed, the linkage to place, with the

<sup>3</sup>I do not discuss classic texts on language and music [e.g., by Feld, A. Seeger, and C. Seeger cited in Feld & Fox (1994)], though they influence ongoing work by the authors’ students (and students’ students).

<sup>4</sup>I focus on ethnographic works, though I include anthropologically informed historical studies. I treat only work in English despite exciting studies in other languages (Duranti 2009a, Matos et al. 2008, Tiezzi 2010).

implication of attached social identities, is so pervasive that the majority of ethnographies discussed here have place names in their titles. This includes those emphasizing forms of “deterritorialization” (Luvaas 2009) with terms such as “global” or “virtual” that index the primacy of place while stressing its lack of fit for the case in question. The reverse is just as prevalent: Almost all ethnographies focusing on particular places stress the global dimensions of the local, the dynamics by which local identities are marked, through linguistic-musical practices, against a transnational backdrop and often through attention to new forms introduced locally by global circulatory processes.

A prevalent concern running through recent linguistic-musical research (if not anthropological work generally) has involved examining processes by which “global flows” advance alongside the creation of difference. Several theorists have argued that the two trends are mutually dependent, with the totalizing tendencies of globalization proceeding through the systematic production of distinction (e.g., Appadurai 2006, Comaroff & Comaroff 2009); among theorists of music, a version has been advocated most forcefully by Erlmann (1996). For many scholars, world music has been a particularly productive locus for considering how the political dimensions of globalization are linked to music (Brusila 2003; Feld 1994, 2000; Frith 2000; Shannon 2003; Taylor 1997; Théberge 2003). Although some works are general critiques of world music as the site of “some of the most pernicious neoliberal myth-making,” many are “critiques of neoliberal globalization discourse” and hence focus specifically on the social work accomplished by the language of world music (Stokes 2004, p. 51). Furthermore, much of the discourse surrounding world music is textual. Studies critiquing such discourses thus attend to the circulation of linguistic signs alongside musical ones (if not always explicitly and rarely with deep attention to textuality *per se*), highlighting the contested nature of key terms/signs in world-music discourses, such as “authentic,” “local,” and “indigenous,” among others.

In other work emphasizing the global dimensions of contemporary music, continuities and innovations in genre and style—in which language and texts often play crucial roles—provide a cohesive focus that elsewhere is filled by attention to particular places. The substitution is explicit, for example, in Alim’s (2006) work on the global language of the “Hip Hop Nation,” which emphasizes the wide range of signs used to form youth identities across national borders while consolidating them among group members [see also Mendoza-Denton (2008) on linguistic and cultural practices, including musical ones, that semiotically differentiate among Latina youth gang members and Keeler (2009) on Burmese rap’s role in producing gendered, generational distinctions]. Though identification with hip hop musical forms constitutes an important point of departure, and other visual signifiers are also stressed (e.g., clothing style and physical stance), the weight of the analysis falls on the indexical social work accomplished through culturally charged linguistic signs ultimately linked to “Black language” and hence, more indirectly, to particular sites of the genre’s origins. This analytic strategy governs other recent work on hip hop and rap, even when authors also stress the role that linguistic variation—bilingualism, codeswitching, and sometimes musical hybridity as well—plays in the “processes of localization” that inscribe local distinction while marking fidelity to globally recognizable musical forms (Alim et al. 2008, Mitchell 2002, Sarkar & Allen 2007). Condry (2006) discusses Japanese hip hop artists’ use of visual and musical signs to express alignment with American rappers. Alongside their innovative deployment of the Japanese language’s unique resources and their tailored adherence to the genre’s discursive norms by turning social critique toward contemporary concerns in Japan, Japanese artists make their style of hip hop distinctively and “authentically” Japanese. Other scholars have taken a related but somewhat reciprocal approach, stressing how musical, rather than linguistic, appropriations and innovations both index and construct

difference not only through highlighting local identities but also through reference to the enduring, if reconfigured, hierarchical opposition between the West and “its others” (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, Taylor 2007; see also Perlman 2004 on the generativity of responses by Javanese musicians to Western ethnomusicological theory). Recent work on virtuality has partaken of similar analytic dynamics, where the “schizophonia” born of separation between sound and place has called for a shift toward emergent performance styles as the site of analytical focus, as in Miller’s (2009) work on “virtual virtuosity” and amateur musicianship in rock video games. Fellez’s (2011) recent book takes up similar themes, and the conversations about authenticity and commercialization wrapped up with them, through his analysis of the hybrid genre of fusion.

The global circulation of “displaced” musical forms in local settings “has become central to ethnomusicology” (Samuels et al. 2010, p. 337); many recent studies focus especially on voice, an issue I consider below. Of the numerous ethnographies exploring local dimensions of global musical forms, relatively few focus on language per se, though particular linguistic contexts are the background against which global-local musical interactions reconfigure place and place-based identities (Averill 1997, Diehl 2002, Largey 2006, Navarrete Pellicer 2005, Tucker 2011, Wallach 2008). Some studies focus on local language use as part of what Stokes (2004, p. 53) calls “the fetishization of the local flavor”; recording studios are considered a special site where cultural work surrounding music production occurs (Meintjes 2003; Porcello 1998, 2002). Of the work focusing directly on language, notable examples include Haugh’s (2005) research on the role of singing and song composition in the construction of Namibian nationhood, Ninoshvili’s (2010) work on the re-valencing of vocables when marketed as “world music,” an edited volume by Berger & Carroll (2003) documenting the politically fraught choices surrounding language use in popular music in diverse ethnographic contexts, Bergeron’s

(2010) work on the role of national education and linguistic theory in shaping the rise and fall in France of the musical art form *mélodie*, and Gilmer’s (2007) work on political discourses surrounding vernacular language use in South African hip hop.

Although processes reconfiguring place have been an area of active research, the temporal dimensions of these processes have been explored less fully. As Samuels et al. (2010, p. 338) note, one limitation of the soundscape concept—which many of the aforementioned studies draw on, if often implicitly—is its tendency to foreground theorization in geographic terms, leaving temporality aside. As they also note, temporality has often meant historical time; indeed, many recent ethnographies of language and music have invoked a direct orientation toward historical shifts, particularly political ones. Examples include the rise of corporate sponsorship in Texas borderland *pachangas*, political barbecues featuring live music (Dorsey 2006); changes in AIDS policies in South Africa and the way they have fed into new musical and verbal art performance styles among HIV-positive performers (Black 2010); Haitians’ use of particular music forms to navigate political repression at key historical moments (Averill 1997, Largey 2006); or Trinidadians’ use of different musical genres to interpret recent political events (Birth 2008).

Authors have generally lacked a more varied engagement with temporality, however, and here Bakhtin’s (1982) concept of the chronotope is useful. Using it runs the risk of downplaying sound while privileging text—the concept was, after all, developed in the context of literary theory, despite its recent development by linguistic anthropologists. Nevertheless, similar to soundscape, chronotope is expansive and holistic, invoking a complex field of signs in which voices—with the implication not only of individual subjectivities but of contextually specific attitudes and interests—are intimately involved in constructing time and space. Swinehart (2008) is one of the few recent authors working on language-music (see also Dent 2009, Fox 2004, Samuels 2004) to focus

on this concept explicitly, invoking it to analyze how a Norwegian group's music and the fictitious community it posits, using contrasting phonolexical registers linked to regional and class identities, helped create a "cultural chronotope of dissidence" within Norway's politically divisive climate of the 1970s. Others use the concept less directly, particularly in exploring processes by which speakers, music makers, listeners, and readers orient themselves toward the past and to affective engagement with it, through nostalgia, veneration, and other emotion-laden ties (Diehl 2002, Faudree 2013, Ferguson 2010, Fox 2004). Specific examples include Samuels' (2004) work on how San Carlos Apache people create expressive, ethnically marked ties to popular country songs through their linkages to Apache history as well as Dent's (2009) discussion of Brazilians' relationship to rural country music as a medium through which they make sense of the meaning—and costs—of modernization.

### **SUBJECT-MAKING PROCESSES: VOICE, EMOTION, INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND LISTENING**

As chronotope foregrounds, given its dependence on Bakhtinian concepts of voice and dialogicality, time- and place-making processes are indexically linked to subject creation. Not all authors engage with Bakhtin's semiotic understanding of the term; even within linguistic anthropology, "voice" is not uniformly used. Nonetheless, research on voice has been an area of particular ferment, uniting attention to sound and text, speech and song, the musical and the linguistic. Its generative potential for research on language and music has long been noted (Feld & Fox 1994, 1999). So, too, has the term's variability of use (Faudree 2009, Feld & Fox 1999, Feld et al. 2005, Weidman 2011). Voice has been invoked by some to focus on the acoustic dimensions and the sonic materiality of human voices. Others have used the term to denote its capacity to mediate between language and music on the one hand and between

sound and human bodies on the other. The metaphorical extensions of the term have also been used to imply certain kinds of subjectivities or political agency. Although this semantic multiplicity poses analytical challenges, it has also made the concept a rich site for theorization, a locus "where linguistic and musical anthropology most strikingly conjoin a practice and politics of culture" (Feld et al. 2005, p. 342).

Much recent research on voice focuses on interconnections among the tripartite complex that Silverstein (1985, p. 220) dubbed the "total linguistic fact"—the dynamic interaction of language structure, linguistic practice, and language ideology—but expands the semiotic field to include both musical and linguistic signs through their intersection in vocalicity. Fox (2004) discusses the processes through which country music is harnessed to rural, working-class, Southern subjectivities through dialectic interaction with a range of vocal practices—specific singing styles and ways of speaking—and ideologized discourses about vocalicity. Harkness (2011) explores how modern Christian Korean subjectivities are tied to the ability to produce a "clean" singing voice through specific phonic and bodily practices (on bodily practice in jazz instruction, also see Wilf 2010). These practices are harnessed in turn to an ideological revalorization of the voice contrasting the new prestige form with others that are metonyms for the national past. Kunreuther (2006, 2010) shows how urban Nepali subjectivity is constituted through the mutual constitution of two constructions of voice that unite in radio-listening practices (on related issues raised in the context of indigenous Australian radio, see Fisher 2009). Kunreuther discusses the ways national and international institutions promote voice as the central sign of modern, democratic, neoliberal subjectivity, whereas local ideologies about vocal "directness" position the voice as the locus of emotional authenticity; both are made manifest through radio broadcasts of intimate telephone conversations among members of the Nepali diaspora. Porcello (1998, 2002) likewise links specific vocalic qualities with

particular vocal ideologies and practices. Working in sound studios as a particularly rich place where musico-linguistic forms, practices, and ideologies converge (also see Meintjes 2003), Porcello focuses on timbre (also see Eidsheim 2008), a dimension of sound often characterized—like music in general—as “ineffable.” He shows that the discursive techniques by which musicians and sound engineers manage “talk about timbre” are both frequently deployed and highly structured, strategies including the use of sound symbolism as patterns of linguistic practice linking iconicity of sound to reference (also see Nuckolls 1996).

These studies and others share an emphasis on form, practice, and ideology as well as an attention, though often implicit, to textuality as a crucial tool for analyzing the sonic dimensions of voice in addition to its political and social aspects. Within linguistic anthropology, work focusing on voice has generally been more explicit in its engagement with textuality. Recent examples include Webster’s (2009) work on Navajo poetry, Inoue’s (2006) research on the modern construction of “women’s language” and gendered voices in Japan, and work by Bauman & Briggs (2003) on linguistic difference and modernist legitimization of domination. In music-centered research, textuality has also been important though less central. In discussing Apaches’ voicing when singing standard country songs, Samuels (2004) shows that Apaches’ refusal to “diphthongize”—and hence reproduce the “twanging” vocalic qualities of original recordings—is a political choice to distance themselves from the white Southern identities such vocalizations index; the agency of this position is underscored by his discussion of their textual practices (e.g., transcribing lyrics), which stress authentic reproduction. Weidman’s (2006) work on Karnatic music in India demonstrates that its construction as “classical” is recent and stems from a nationalistic, postcolonial, oppositional ideology requiring that the genre be modeled on Western classical musical forms and institutions while bearing distinctly Indian hallmarks. A particular “politics of voice” played a crucial

role in this process, relying on gendered vocal styles, performance conventions, and technologically mediated practices of vocal materiality, as well as shifts in musical notation. Finally, Tomlinson’s (2007) work on the place of singing in New World societies before and after European contact provides a particularly thorough conversation about connections among singing, writing, speaking—and even, in Tupinamba cannibalism, eating. Like most works discussed here—and of necessity, given the historical era addressed—he relies methodologically on written texts, including indigenous language documents. However, a crucial added dimension of his analysis concerns the relations among different expressive modes as manifested through practice and performance in indigenous societies and as undergirding differential apprehension by European observers, who engaged New World singing through their own conceptions of communicative economies.

Another key trend in work on music, language, and subjectivity has drawn on phenomenological orientations. Although disciplinary discourses about the utility of phenomenology are arguably more well developed in ethnomusicology (Benson 2003, Berger 2010, Friedson 1996), the approach has had ongoing currency in linguistic anthropology (e.g., Hanks 1995, Urban 1996), allowing for fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration. Emotion has been a particular focus [for example, see two recent works on the affective indexicality of the nonreferential musical-linguistic forms ululation (Jacobs 2008) and vocables (Ninoshvili 2010, 2011)]. Becker’s (2004) work develops a theory of trance, likening that extraordinary subjective state to the more quotidian experience of deep emotions. During both of these, musical forms and practices play critical roles, as does inner language, which, crucially, is suspended during trance and other states of “deep listening” (on Moroccan Gnawa musical trancing and its reconfiguration from sacred to nonsacred through global commodification, see Kapchan 2007, 2008). Taking a more discursive approach, Kapchan (2006) analyzes the speech genre “trash talk” in Texan



salsa clubs and its role in producing affective ties across ethnic and class divisions. Finally, almost all the aforementioned works—such as Dent’s work (2009) on country music as a vehicle through which Brazilians make sense of their anxieties about modernization and urbanization—likewise explore the affective dimensions of musical-linguistic practices. Turino (1999, 2008), in particular, draws on semiotic analysis, providing an answer to a frequent analytical point of departure (e.g., Berger 2010): Why does music have such emotional power? Turino’s response is grounded in distinct qualities of musical and linguistic signs that differentially link them to analytical reflection and emotion-saturated experience.

Two other important foci are intersubjectivity and cultural practices of listening—both themes running through recent work on emotions and, indeed, much recent work on music, language, and subject-creation. Duranti (2010), in particular, has taken up the utility of a phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity (also see Black 2010). He locates intersubjectivity as a mode of participation in natural and material worlds that, as a precondition for human interaction, can be an integrative analytical focal point across various domains of human experience. He turns this approach to a semiotic understanding of language socialization, listening to and performing music, and literacy (Duranti 2009a,b). Drawing on the Husserlian idea of “theoretical attitude,” an accumulation of socialized modifications to perception, Duranti shows how these diverse activities are interpretive experiences with intersubjective underpinnings. Though drawing on different theoretical traditions—including theories of performance and gender—Minks (2008) likewise takes up issues of interaction and socialization in her work on song games among multilingual Miskitu children in Nicaragua. Minks shows that the genre is at once a communicative resource and a vehicle through which the ongoing process of creating gendered subjectivities takes place (for another recent study on song, language, and gender, see Stirr 2010).

Finally, work by Duranti and others explores the subject-creating dimensions of listening: an active and socialized process—one in which “literacies of listening” are inculcated (Kapchan 2009)—that is distinct from the process of hearing (for the distinction between hearing and listening in the Islamic world, see Beeman 2011). Although some work has focused on language, most treats sound broadly, with particular attention to its technological mediation. Notable recent examples include Erlmann’s (2004) collection of essays by various theorists taking up the cultural dimensions of sound across cultural, historical, and technologically mediated settings; Hirschkind’s (2009) work on how listening to cassette-tape sermons in Egypt shapes moral personhood and makes possible an “Islamic counterpublic” where practices of Islamic piety and national citizenship are linked to new practices of deliberation about social ideals; and Novak’s (2008) work on listening practices in Japanese coffeehouses, translocal sites where imported and emergent musical genres are linked to complicated processes of recontextualization and geopolitical positioning.

### **OBJECT-MAKING PROCESSES: MEDIATION, AUTHENTICATION, AND CIRCULATION**

As these past studies foreground, technological mediation has been a prevalent concern in recent research; indeed, the majority of studies mentioned thus far contain some discussion of how technology is reconfiguring linguistic-musical social relations (as well as social relations broadly construed; see especially Larkin 2008). Anthropologists of music have turned special attention to the political dimensions of musical aesthetic production. Ethnographers have analyzed the complex and often contested discursive, musical, and technological practices that actors engage in when producing popular music (e.g., Greene & Porcello 2004; Meintjes 2003; Porcello 1998, 2002; Tucker 2011). Miller (2008) takes a different approach to technological mediation,

documenting how different musical practices that are linked to different technologies—from the earlier textual technology of shape-note tunebooks to the more recent circulation of singer-produced recordings and the growth of Internet forums—enabled the popularity and endurance of Sacred Harp singing and yet changed the nature of its transmission, thereby sharpening debates about its authenticity. The historical emergence of particular recording techniques, the ways they were implicated in particular politics of modernity, and their implications for notions of authenticity have been taken up by numerous scholars [see, for example, Bergeron (1998) on various technological developments and the modern concepts tied to them that collectively made possible the revival of Gregorian chant]. Recent examples include Ochoa's (2006) work on the role of "epistemologies of purification" and practices of sonic recontextualization in the constitution of Latin America's highly stratified form of modernity; Brennan's (2010) research on Yoruba Christian musical recordings through which people navigated morality and political subjectivity during Nigeria's oil boom of the 1970s; Novak's (2011) work on the politics of "new old" media, which redistributed regional popular music recordings that were "authenticated" through the inclusion of sonic indexes of "oldness" and analog recording techniques; Stadler's (2010) discussion of early commercial recordings re-enacting lynchings through particular vocal representations of race; and Bauman's (2010, 2011) research, also on early recorded audio, treating vocal performance of race as well as technology's role in transforming speech. Finally, Waksman (1999, 2003) shows how technological innovations—the electrification of the guitar, for example—transformed particular instruments and in the process turned them into signs representing specific musical ideologies, practices, and subjectivities.

In musicology and performance studies (another field contributing to much work discussed here), Auslander's (1999) work is a crucial book stressing the importance of technology. Auslander shows how technological

mediation reconfigured performance practices and ideologies of authenticity across a range of expressive domains depending on "liveness," i.e., particular notions of what constitutes live, hence authentic, performance. Ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have, likewise, used performance to explore relations between music-language and technological mediation—a matter raising a host of issues attached to commodification and authentication, issues that are fraught for both analytical and social reasons (legal and moral ones, too; see Roseman 1998, Seeger 2004). These include Kapchan's (2007, 2008) work on the performance of the "festive sacred" for mass international audiences by Gnawa ritual musicians; Shannon's (2003) writing on Syrian whirling dervishes, in which the author claims that musical practices marked as local depend for their authenticity on performances for transnational audiences; Hellier-Tinoco's (2011) work on the performative and visual practices and material objects that, across the past century and utilizing a range of media, have made two ostensibly indigenous dances into key emblems of Mexican national identity; and Goodman's (2002, 2005) research on the performance of Berber identity through new song practices that emerged as a critique of Algeria's Islamist insurgency of the 1990s, a musical form that in turn became commodified as world music.

Many of these authors deal in some form with circulation and reception, a theme that has been a special focus of linguistic anthropologists working on processes by which musical, linguistic, and sounded objects are produced and imbued with emergent meaning (see Urban 2001). Such works have generally invoked a more explicit engagement with texts; indeed, one of the fruitful points of intersection with work discussed earlier is that texts, similar to sound artifacts (e.g., recordings) lending tangible materiality to sonic objects, are designed to circulate [see Keane (2003) on the semiotics of materiality as inseparable from semiotic ideologies and Gitelman (2000) on inscription technologies as material instantiations of communicative ideologies]. Work exploring

music-language with a focus on circulation has often drawn on tools and concepts developed within linguistic anthropology that are heavily linked to textuality, both through disciplinary practice and, in some cases (as with Bakhtinian concepts), their analytical origins. These include works advancing the related concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (see Silverstein 2005) that trace formal properties linking objects to each other—whether linguistic, musical, or other—but that also bear evidence of the social contexts and practices in and through which such objects circulate. Although such concepts have been used most commonly to examine verbal “objects”—such as Bauman’s (2004) discussion of intertextuality across a range of speech and performance genres—they have generative potential for other expressive realms as well and have been taken up explicitly by some authors working on music (Bickford 2007, Goodman 2002, Harkness 2011, Haviland 2012).

Other studies examining the intersection of text, performance, song, and circulation include Miller’s (2007) work in Yemen on the circulation of audiocassette poetry and song, a mediated oral form that is intimately tied to texts and that has been centrally involved in redefining Muslim authorship while fostering new forms of political engagement (on orality and literacy as differentially linked to jazz and other musical genres, see Prouty 2006). Finally, my own work on linguistic revival (Faudree 2013) takes up similar themes. I show that the popularity of new singing practices in Mazatec and the emergence of a popular market in Mazatec song recordings stem from how both innovations were simultaneously harnessed to a third “invention”—the introduction of literacy in Mazatec—and also to long-standing singing practices used to honor the dead and to contact invisible deities in mushroom rituals. Singing as a musical-linguistic performance practice with locally specific salience is at the heart of this complex of activities, yet specific forms of textuality have been central in popularizing these new forms of singing. For example, the local promotion of orthographic heterodoxy

and the distribution of song sheets in Mazatec had an enormous impact on the grassroots appeal of the new singing practices, even while being thoroughly at odds with prevailing national norms of indigenous language writing, which privilege orthographic standardization and bilingual publications featuring indigenous language texts alongside Spanish versions. This case—like others discussed here—demonstrates the importance of ethnography in examining the culturally specific underpinnings of relations among writing, speaking, and making music. Furthermore, such research foregrounds the important, though supporting, role that textuality sometimes plays in facilitating sound and in making possible the essential, nontextual forms of sociality at play in each case.

Nonetheless, an attention to text has sometimes furthered the longstanding tendency in anthropology and other disciplines to place texts at the center of analysis. In linguistic anthropology, given the field’s orientation toward language, this has meant focusing on linguistic dimensions of song. Although routinely coupled to careful consideration of performance, including its political aspects, such work often pays little attention to the text’s musical or sounded dimensions (Ahearn 1998, Faudree 2011, Keeler 2009, Mannheim 1998, Rumsey 2007, Shoaps 2002; see Graham 1995 for an earlier exception to this trend that draws on an incipient attention to “soundscape”). Even work attempting to attend fully to both musical and linguistic elements generally separates them in analysis, making it harder to address the interactions between different expressive channels. Yet linguistic anthropologists are hardly alone. Among ethnomusicologists there is a reciprocal tendency to take musical objects as bounded units, be they particular musical genres, styles, instruments, technologies, or discourses about music. Even when careful attention is paid to how these aspects are animated in performance, the form’s linguistic dimensions (explicitly expressed ideologies surrounding its use, say, or the grammatical features of songs) go largely unexamined; in many cases, musical or sonic structure suffers the

same fate. However, the systematic nature of such shortcomings is intimately related to disciplinary practice, an issue I consider in closing.

### **CONCLUSION: TOWARD A MULTIMODAL SEMIOTICS OF LANGUAGE-MUSIC**

Feld et al. (2005, p. 340) point out the “semiotic importance of approaching [language and music] in a unified framework of sound. . . . Music and language are fundamentally interrelated domains of expressive culture and human behavior and experience.” I advocate pushing this approach even further, toward using a semiotic framework to dissolve the boundary between language and music in ethnographic and analytic practice and to promote a more holistic attention to sound and text—to speaking, writing, and music-making. Language and music are not merely separate expressive channels but part of a seamless semiotic complex, one calling for an integrated, holistic, unified analytic framework that takes as its most basic unit of analysis the socially situated, relationally understood sign, be it sung, spoken, written, performed, or embodied. One of the difficulties of adopting such an approach would be the Whorfian point that we lack the language to instantiate it in discursive practice; at least in English, there are no readily available resources encompassing the full semantic and pragmatic field taken up by the terms language and music. As a result, appeals to transcend the boundary between the categories still run the risk of indexically reinforcing it.

Recent calls for a more holistic anthropology—one turning more fully to sound and vocality as well as other senses—further push in this direction. As Porcello et al. (2010) discuss, attention to discourse need not and should not be viewed as opposed to the cause of stressing sound and the sensorium. I advocate for a related modification to these recent appeals: integrating attention to sound in all the capaciousness invoked by the soundscape concept, with attention not only to discourse but also to textuality. We must always bear in mind the deep risks and

well-established habits of attending only or primarily to texts. However, there are also dangers in decentering texts so far from our analysis that we have difficulty attending to the ways that texts may enable the production and circulation of sound or may become linked in complex ways to vocal and sonic materiality, thereby providing novel avenues for interacting with the senses and the body.

In their appeal for a sounded anthropology, Samuels et al. (2010) begin by quoting Feld’s admonition that, “[u]ntil the sound recorder is presented and taught as a technology of creative and analytic mediation, which requires craft and editing and articulation just like writing, little will happen of an interesting sort in the anthropology of sound” (Feld & Brenneis 2004, p. 471). This speaks directly to disciplinary practice as well as disciplinary boundaries, both of which must be transcended or circumvented to answer his call. Certainly in ethnomusicology, there is a longer precedent for scholarship in audio form (e.g., Feld 2001, Levin 1999; for a longer discussion, see Feld & Brenneis 2004). But even in ethnomusicology—with its far greater attention to the sound-based skills and habits of sonic attention that Feld references than is common in cultural or linguistic anthropology—text production and writing remain cornerstones of disciplinary practice. Despite recent attempts to mitigate this through, for example, offering audio recordings or multimedia Web sites to complement written texts, most scholarship remains anchored in written work.

Nonetheless, a semiotic approach may offer an analytical framework for promoting a wider, less text-based field of vision and audition, provided that the sign-in-relation at its methodological center is taken as broadly human rather than narrowly linguistic or textual. Taken to its logical conclusion, expanding the semiotic field in practice as well as theory implies attention to an ever-widening—and, potentially, impossibly unconstrained—constellation of signs. The impulse toward greater holism is always in tension with the analytical depth implied by “thick description” and the analytic rigor enabled

by specialization. But one of the strengths of a semiotic approach is that, at least in a Peircian formulation, analysis of signs remains inseparable from the practices by which they are interpreted. As Peirce would be especially eager to point out, signs are intimately linked to habits: Attending to different signs—to nonlinguistic ones alongside linguistic ones, to signs in their material and sensual, relational totality—

means promoting new habits as well. In this sense, a semiotic approach offers not only a useful analytical framework for particular studies, but also the condition of possibility for new kinds of research. Such an approach may give rise to new habits of interdisciplinary collaboration and attention that may transcend some of the conceptual and pragmatic deformations produced by entrenched scholarly practices.

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