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On ethnography, when "we are all (ethno)musicologists now"
Martin Stokes

We have been talking for a long time now of breaking down the disciplinary boundaries which have (supposedly) stopped us talking to one another about our common object, 'music'. For some, indeed, they are a thing of the past. The idea of shared 'music study', in the UK at least, has, we are told, supplanted the old conflict between historical musicologists, ethnomusicologists, music theorists and analysts, popular music scholars, and advocates of 'new music'. As Nicholas Cooke once argued, "we are all (ethno)musicologists now" (Cooke 2008; Amico 2020 refreshes the argument). This mutual accommodation may have appeared self-evident, natural and reasonable to some (like Cooke). Others may have been less sure, but were prepared to accept the strategic benefits of solidarity in a higher education environment experiencing financial and political pressure. In the reflections that follow I will try and explain this accommodation to a readership that may be unfamiliar with it. I will show some of the institutional and intellectual pressures on it. I will suggest that debates about the place of ethnography in music study reflect some of these institutional and intellectual pressures. And I will ask whether the recent arrival of sound studies changes the picture.

The relationship between ethnomusicology and popular music studies (henceforth 'PMS') is revealing in this context – both of the nature of this accommodation, and the strains upon it. Few scholars in the UK these days would recognize a meaningful boundary between the two. They might accept minor differences of emphasis, but not of epistemology or object. The friendliness of this relationship, the lack of debate about it, may be peculiar to the UK. Things do not, for example, look quite the same in France. It is tempting to search for an explanation for this state of affairs in the 'anglosphere', purportedly a North American hegemony. But this would be simplistic. Intellectual relationships between the UK and the USA are complex, many-stranded and constantly changing. In addition, talk of the 'anglosphere' rarely considers the relationship between the intellectual cultures of the UK and the very different ones of Ireland, Canada, South Asia, or Australia. Nor does it consider complex relationships that pertain, intellectually, between the component parts of the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. 'The anglosphere' explains very little in intellectual life, or, indeed much else.

One must seek to understand the relationship between ethnomusicology and PMS in the UK more historically. Three distinct historical 'moments' concern me here. One of these concerns the period between 1980 to 2000 – a disciplinary moment in which ethnomusicology went from being institutionally marginal to mainstream. A second concerns the following two decades, a period in which the differences between various musicological sub-disciplines (ethnomusicology and PMS amongst them) were subsumed under the broad rubric of 'the new musicology'. A third concerns the debates of the present moment concerning sound studies, the most significant challenge to 'the new musicology's' dominance in recent decades. This is a crude framework, and I will often need to bend it. But it does allow me to stress the changing nature of the relationship between

ethnomusicology and PMS, and its connection with broader institutional and intellectual transformations.

The differences between PMS and ethnomusicology in the UK in this first period can be evoked, impressionistically, by my own memories of the academic conferences at which they gathered, those organized annually, respectively, by IASPM(UK) and ICTM(UK).[1] Institutionally speaking, PMS in the UK in this first period was rather provincial, with its professors and lecturers concentrated in places like York, Hull, Liverpool, Birmingham, Strathclyde, and the Open University. But its intellectual outlook was internationalist and cosmopolitan, and it was refreshingly free of the stuffy influence of Oxford and Cambridge. At IASPM(UK) conferences there was excited and uninhibited discussion of new books in philosophy, sociology, social and political theory that might have implications for music study. Continental European music scholarship was a prominent part of the mix – the work of innovative scholars such as Jan Ling, Franco Fabbri, and Antoine Hennion, for instance. There was an atmosphere of – often combative – debate, too. Egos were certainly on display, and there was a palpable anxiety, bordering on hostility, to certain styles of scholarship – for instance, those that seemed too concerned with 'the music itself' (i.e. 'music analysis'), or those that seemed too 'ethnographically' descriptive, and not sufficiently 'theoretical'. Those, like me, studying non-European popular musics, were a tiny minority, in what, I recall, were quite large gatherings. But at both the national and the international conferences we were actively made welcome, listened to, and encouraged. The same could be said about the editorial board of the journal *Popular Music,* which, of course, reflected international IASPM's broader intellectual outlook.

In the 1980s, ethnomusicologists gathered at ICTM(UK)s annual conferences. These would attract about 20 or 30 people, and were, by contrast, small and quiet affairs. The location of these conferences reflected the centre of gravity of UK ethnomusicology in these years, primarily London, slowly spreading northwards and westwards.[2] The European Seminar in Ethnomusicolgy (ESEM) had an energetic (European) vision for UK ethnomusicology under John Blacking, but that faltered when he died in 1990. Very few people travelled, because of the expense, to the North American conferences, and very few North Americans turned up at ICTM(UK) events.[3] Conference presentations reflected the UK's diverse ethnomusicological practices, gathered as they were around the individual figures of Laurence Picken in Cambridge, John Blacking in Belfast, Neil Sorrell in York, Frank Denyer in Dartington and in London's more complex configurations (spread, then, primarily, between SOAS, City and Goldsmiths).[4] They also reflected the colonial map, with research concentrated in China, South Asia, the Mediterranean. There was little in the way of a shared theoretical language to draw these discussions together or debate their respective merits. There was some consciousness of a 'UK ethnomusicology' rooted in specifically British traditions of oriental studies and social anthropology, as well as folk music studies, but it was not asserted much. The 'founding fathers' of the modern discipline in North America - Merriam, Hood and Nettl – were read and referred to politely. But so too was the work of Rouget and Arom. UK ethnomusicology positioned itself between North America and France. But that was probably all that could be said about its sense of intellectual identity. The conferences could not be said to have generated energetic debates and

discussions (as at IASPM(UK)). But their quietly collaborative and constructive spirit was important in the nurturing of a new generation of UK ethnomusicologists.[5]

Energies were gathering, however, and UK ethnomusicology was to undergo a significant change in the early 1990s. This became evident in the renaming of the institution (which became the *British Forum for Ethnomusicology*), and the launching of a refereed, peer reviewed journal (The *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*). This coincided with the rapid growth of ethnomusicology across the country, particularly in the provincial ('red brick') universities. A (neoliberal) ideology of interdisciplinarity and globalization had taken root amongst the new managers of the UK's universities, which were emerging from the crisis of funding and confidence left by Margaret Thatcher's government a decade earlier. Ethnomusicologists were beneficiaries: they *were* 'interdisciplinarity' and 'globalization', and were so by definition. University Music Departments that wanted to look contemporary and energetic were replacing their retiring scholars of renaissance, baroque and western classical music with scholars of Asia, Africa and the Latin America. The same largesse was not extended to PMS, however. Disciplinary doubts about the ethnic 'other' proved superable, one might say, but not the popular 'other'. PMS scholars were anyway tending to pursue their careers in departments of sociology, political science, geography, media and communication studies, and not – with a few distinguished exceptions - music departments.[6] One consequence of this moment, then, was the *concentration* of ethnomusicologists in departments of music, and in faculties and schools of *arts and humanities*, and its steady move away from anthropology departments. Another was the *dispersal* of popular music scholars across a largely *social scientific* institutional and intellectual spaces.

This surge of energy became highly evident to me on my return to the UK in 2007. In 2010 I co-organized the 2010 BFE meeting in Oxford, with Steven Feld as keynote speaker. This was (I believe) the first conference to exceed 100 paper-givers. Europe, and cheap air travel, played a role. Ethnomusicology had grown across Europe, East and West, for roughly similar reasons and at roughly the same time. The United Kingdom was easy to reach by air. BFE conferences were an opportunity to network and practice academic English. They had also become distinctly international in ethos. Many of those (like myself) who had completed their PhDs in the 1980s were by now established academics; we had travel budgets (and salaries) that made possible regular attendance at SEM and ICTM meetings. The vast scale of the North American meetings (at which attendance could be counted in the thousands, not hundreds) impressed us. The BFE started to cultivate its own 'special relationship' with SEM.[7] Publication in the journal *Ethnomusicology* and in the prestige university press monograph series (Chicago, Wesleyan, Duke) was becoming more and more desirable, perhaps even necessary, for UK based academics. The flagship journal (BJE) also wanted a steady flow of good English-language publications from across the Atlantic, to enhance its visibility and prestige. This was simply a matter of political realism, in other words. Unlike their UK-based PMS colleagues, UK ethnomusicologists were simultaneously 'Europeanizing' and 'Americanizing' during these years – stretching themselves, energetically, in both directions, finding themselves at a kind of international crossroads.

So far I have been mainly discussing the relationship between ethnomusicology and PMS in institutional terms, focusing on the key academic associations, conferences, and transformations of the broader university environment. What of the intellectual stakes, though? This is more difficult to define. In the middle of this first period (1980-2000), it was possible to talk about an ethnomusicology concerned, variously, with 'art music' theoretical texts (the philological and orientalist tradition), with analysis and meaning (the semiotic tradition), with community, with ethnicity and identity (the British social anthropological tradition), and with the transition from 'tradition to modernity' (the Marxian and Weberian traditions of thinking about historiography, 'the invention of tradition' and patrimonialism). And one could talk about a PMS concerned with the theorization of race; of media, of subcultures and class; of the relationship between ideology and culture. We might, in other words, talk about an ethnomusicology rooted, then, in ethnographic and philological methodologies. And we could talk about a PMS based, then, on the Gramscian critical methodologies associated with the so-called Birmingham school, the – heavily theorized and qualified 'view from below' associated with 'subcultural theory'. This very rough characterization of the two fields might suggest – at that particular moment - a distinction between an ethnomusicology concerned with the non-west, and a PMS concerned only with the west; between an ethnomusicology concerned with small, face-to-face music making and a PMS concerned primarily with the consumption of mass-mediated music.

But this would be simplistic. It would ignore the pathways between the two institutional and disciplinary spaces – enabled by the relatively low-stakes of the competition between them, and by the friendly and collegial relations that pertained between a relatively small group of people, *all of whom* had reason to feel marginalized by 'historical' (i.e. western art music) musicology's rather powerful hegemony. And it would ignore the tendency to intellectual convergence between these spaces. Within PMS, an emphasis on Blackness and African American culture was, for example, being extended to other fields of difference (notably, for example, South Asian music culture in the UK). Within ethnomusicology, an interest in 'the reinvention of tradition' extended – from an early emphasis on pedagogical institutions – naturally to media, urbanization and globalization. Those interested in 'musical analysis' in *both* ethnomusicology and PMS were trying to find ways of applying western derived analytical systems (Schenker, Reimann, Ruwet) to non-western and popular music practice. In all of these areas, shared reading – often Foucault, Bourdieu, and Lacan for those who dared – meant that sideways glances were possible between and across these all of these fields. We had something to talk about in the conference coffee breaks and pub sessions, if not immediately in the panel question and answer sessions. Ethnomusicology and PMS may have looked and felt rather different in the middle of this (first) period. But, as a consequence of entirely independent and autochthonous developments within these disciplinary fields, there were already significant convergences and conversations.

<u>2000-2020: Ethnomusicology, PMS and 'The New Musicology'.</u>

If the intellectual convergences between ethnomusicology and PMS in the UK between 1980-2000 relied on personal connections, between 2000-2020 they were the result of a fundamental transformation of the intellectual and institutional space. Entirely new, or newly energized theoretical fields (including postcolonial theory, cultural geography, various

media and communications sociologies, material culture studies, and an emergent sound studies) eroded distinctions between 'traditional' and 'modern', small-scale and large-scale, face-to-face and mediatized culture, and set the terms for a new kind of interdisciplinarity in the study of music. The Western Art Music canon was under pressure. The left-leaning demotic populism at the end of the previous century (embodied by Jack Lang in France, Tony Blair in Britain) were celebrating national popular culture and multiculturalism. Those studying the Western Art Music canon began to assume a defensive attitude; the traditional study of Western Art Music needed to rebrand. This was the moment of 'the New Musicology' – a self-consciously transatlantic moment, 'democratic' in its rejection of the canon and its even-handed embrace of a world of music, 'new' in critical methods that would engage with music in a multitude of social, cultural and political contexts. A handful of edited volumes both anticipated and shaped the moment (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Solie 1995; McClary and Leppert 1989). They were assertive in their critiques of the Western Art Music canon. They were defined by critical questions emanating from Foucault, Bourdieu, Williams, psychoanalysis, second wave feminism, new historicism and postcolonial theory rather than on particular kinds of musical repertoire, or kinds of musicology. Ethnomusicologists and PMS scholars, it should be noted, were quite well represented in them.[8]

University Music Departments in the UK began to resemble those in the USA and Canada in their structure, which included roughly equal numbers of composers, performance teachers, 'musicologists' (meaning those studying the Western Art Music tradition), music 'theorists' or 'analysts', and ethnomusicologists. PMS' place in this new institutional dispensation was unclear. Many, as mentioned earlier, had long been working in media, communication and sociology departments, and had no real investment in the interdisciplinary energies that were accumulating in music departments at the time. A small number, late in their careers, moved to senior positions in prestigious 'old' music departments (for instance Richard Middleton at Newcastle, Simon Frith at Edinburgh). 'Musicologists', music theorists and analysts, ethnomusicologists now included western popular music in their thinking, writing and teaching as an extension of the work on the canon they had thus far built their careers on. In both North America and in the UK, ethnomusicologists had a clear sense of their intellectual and institutional home being 'a music department', and many, myself included, felt thoroughly engaged by the intellectual and institutional project of 'the new musicology'.

From an ethnomusicological point of view, the new consensus offered security, but it came at a cost. Firstly, there was a growing acceptance of North American intellectual hegemony, of key (North American) individuals (Gary Tomlinson, Laurence Kramer, Carolyn Abbate, Richard Taruskin) setting the tone of the big debates and discussions. Their work simply had to be cited (to signal intellectual seriousness and conversation with 'the big ideas'), and their titanic conflicts thrilled and entertained us. The big ideas, one could not help but notice as an ethnomusicologist, tended to keep the West and its prestige repertoires, practices and intellectual methodologies central. And the 'non-West' may have been acknowledged but it was kept distinctly on the margins. We may "all be (ethno)musicologists now", as Nicholas Cook put it (Cook 2008), all equal. But, to

paraphrase George Orwell, some (ethno)musicologists appeared, even then, to be significantly more 'equal' than others.

Secondly, there were the constraints involved in the kind of work that now fell on ethnomusicologists' shoulders, primarily a sense of obligation taking shape around a new discourse of 'diversity'. Too often this felt like supplying 'balance', rather than a radical critique of the curriculum, which remained, of course, full of west-centric biases. And too often this simply felt colonial. The large majority of ethnomusicologists in 2000 were (like myself) white and middle class. The gatekeeping role that we found ourselves playing in representing 'the non-western Other' in discussions about curriculum, in hiring new staff, and in our responsibilities for the adjunct (non-tenured, part-time, and often non-white) faculty who maintained our non-western performance ensembles, began to feel distinctly uncomfortable. Institutional and career security meant for many of us, then, subtle and no-so-subtle constraints on action, thought and energy. Doubt about the nature of the institutional bargain we had struck began to creep in.

The new hegemony, I would suggest, manifested itself most clearly in methodology – in core ideas about music and music study as a field of knowledge – concerning what could be asked of music, and how. My own growing doubts about the 'new musicology' were triggered by the pronouncements made from within this hegemony about 'ethnography'. It is worth reflecting on this in a bit of detail because the question is a revealing one. Ethnomusicology is of course methodologically diverse. But ethnography is, arguably, central to it. It is in ethnography that ethnomusicologists signal their distinct debt to, and kinship with, anthropology. It is in ethnography that ethnomusicologists claim to bring something distinct to music study. The pronouncements in question were both implicit and explicit. Implicitly, they would emerge in discussions about the university music curriculum. Despite the appeals to plurality and diversity, a distinct methodological hierarchy had taken shape, often expressed as follows: students were expected to learn technical approaches first ("the notes themselves"), then historical frameworks ("so they have a core narrative to make sense of things") and only then ethnography, alongside other analytical methodologies like set theory, music psychology and so forth. The values of this hierarchy were usually implicit or justified with appeals to 'common sense' or expediency. Voices of protest – noting that such implicit biases were exactly why nothing ever (really) changed – were ignored. But the tacit methodological marginalization of ethnography in 'the new musicology' was soon to be supported by much more explicit attacks.

It is worth stressing, as a preliminary comment, that from the point of view of anthropology (and the ethnomusicology associated with it), 'ethnography' is a sacred object. It is associated with the methodological revolutions of Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Boas, Mauss, Levi-Strass and a few others. It defines the field. It is less a methodology and more a kind of ethic, a scholarly way of being in the world. It is a highly reflexive culture of inscription (writing, filming, recording), constantly critiquing and revising itself; it is form of creativity – messy and self-questioning - as much as it is science; it is a zone of constantly evolving practices and critiques, of turbulence and revolutions, and of rich interdisciplinary conversation. Intense reflection on the epistemological, literary and political challenges of

(and to) ethnography followed Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture* volume of 1986. Epistemological doubt, passionate statements of 'positionality', fierce polemics between the 'old' and the 'new', and writerly experimentation became the norm. Like all sacred objects, it is a projection, a community's effort to square the demands of identity with the demands of multiplicity in a field of exchange (Durkheim's point about totems). It is, in other words, simultaneously a fundamental intellectual stance, and many different things.

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Outside the field of anthropology and ethnomusicology, to make the distinction a little crudely, it is simply one form of empirical data-collection amongst others. This, unfortunately, is the understanding of ethnography that has been most energetically adopted by those working in popular music studies and elsewhere in music study. And it has been the focus of some, to my mind, strident critiques. Let me identify four recent episodes in which these critiques have taken rather decisive turns and outline a preliminary response to them. The episodes in question are both moments of time, and locations on the disciplinary map. I will label these episodes, somewhat crudely, 'PMS', 'postcolonial critique', 'empirical musicology', and 'global histories'.

Firstly, PMS. For the popular music scholars of the 1990s, the 'problem of ethnography' was its association with the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. This was highly influential in the way it framed musical 'subcultures' (Mods, Rockers, Punks, Skins; see Hall and Jefferson 1976). But it did so using Gramscian language, and in a way that pulled music in the direction of a general sociology of culture. Within PMS a distinct line of critique emerged, which can be seen, independently, in two field-defining volumes: John Shepherd and Peter Wicke's *Music and Cultural Theory* (1997), and Richard Middleton's magisterial *Studying Popular Music* (1990). In their view, subcultural studies tended towards reproducing the dominant patterns of the dominant discourse of such subcultural groups. Typically, these were white and male. Subcultural theory consequently tended to prioritize the explanation of difference-making, of Gramsci's 'war of positions', and often did so in a rather circular way (music explained in terms of 'ways of life', 'ways of life' explained in terms of music). This failed to account, according to Shepherd, Wicke and Middleton, for music's *specificity*, its capacity to move people in particular ways. Spoken discourse, whose function is as often one of concealing what is going on as it is one of revealing, is invariably a poor guide. Subcultural theory also failed to account for the way music moved *across* and connected such subcultural spaces over time. Neither book distinguished between Birmingham school subcultural theory and the anthropological theoretical traditions. The purpose of the exercise was, after all, to simultaneously to distance PMS from Birmingham School Cultural Studies (an oedipal operation with regard to the parent body) and ethnomusicology (its rival sibling, coming up in the world).

Secondly, postcolonial critique. Kofi Agawu's critique of ethnographic understandings of African rhythm, meanwhile, leant heavily on postcolonial theory (Agawu 2003). It developed in the context of his work on Anlo-Ewe music in Ghana. But it became the topic of a book devoted to dismantling the ethnomusicological legacy in the study of African music. The main body of Agawu's work, as many readers will know, primarily concerns 'topic theory', which is central to the semiotic analysis of the western art music repertoire of the 18th

century. His critique of ethnography sprang from related analytical instincts. Agawu noted the tendency of early ethnomusicologists to seek the most complex ways of representing polyrhythm in their transcriptions and analyses, rather than the most simple (often an underlying binary pulse, consistent with dance). Why, he wondered? The answer, he argued, lay in the persistent desire to exoticize, to show the 'complexity' of the 'savage mind'. This may seem an act of generosity, on the part of western observers. After all, much had been made, in previous times, of the 'barbarity' of non-western music, and of African music in particular. Referring to the work of British ethnomusicologist A.M. Jones in particular, Agawu showed that such commitments to 'complexity' created a mystique around 'the African mind' that was complicit with colonialism. It also located that complexity in local specificities and functions, comprehensible only through the mediation of ethnographers. Even more egregiously for Agawu, ethnography therefore denied 'music' to Africans, music understood, to cite another of his book titles, as a 'playing with signs' (Agawu 2016), open to all.

Thirdly, 'empirical musicology'. Somewhat later, a more complex stance regarding ethnography was voiced in the call for a new 'empiricism' in music studies (Cooke and Clarke 2004). This emerged from an impasse in music theory and analysis (the traditions of Schenker, Riemann, Ruwet) which, in the wake of critiques of the WAM canon, no longer had a clear object. Psychological and data-oriented approaches had begun to encroach on this field, ranging (see, for instance, Clarke 2005) further and further away from the WAM canon to embrace popular music, even if it was, still, hesitant about the 'non-west'. An 'empirical' musicology would be one that engaged, in theory, with 'all' music, and that would accommodate a variety of empirical, observational and data-driven methodologies. This was intended put music study on a more objective footing, to break the tight hermeneutic circles and ontologies associated with the musical canon, whereby musicology simply told us what we already knew – that 'this music' was 'great'.

The traditions of empiricism associated with comparative musicology and ethnomusicology, tried and tested over the course of century, had to be ignored, of course. Ethnography – the patient work of studying in context, speaking with and learning from expert local musicians, dancers, singers, recording, filming, engaging in dialogue, debating and discussing conclusions with them – tended to be understood as a culture-bound exercise in local meanings, inclined to circularity and hermeneutic insularity. The critique could not be described as a particularly robust one, certainly compared to those mentioned above. No oppositional stance vis-à-vis ethnomusicology seems to have been intended on the part of its authors, no dialogue or debate sought. But a critique it was. It positioned ethnography as, at best, one empirical methodology amongst others, and at worst, a suspect one.

Similar questions have arisen in relation to the drive towards 'global histories' (episode four). Reinhard Strohm's recent Balzan project, 'Towards a Global Music History', is by now well known in this regard (see, in particular, Strohm 2018). It was premised, amongst other things, on a certain sensibility concerning the limitations of ethnography as a means of *historical* understanding. Ethnography was understood, in the context of the Balzan project, to have dealt with the world on a small scale, as an accumulation of synchronic isolates, and

not diachronically connected *topoi*. Ethnomusicologists therefore had, by and large, failed to engage with the question of global histor*ies* (the plural always emphasized). This sensibility towards ethnography was understandable. German-speaking scholars have reason to be continually wary about the legacies of *vergleichende musikwissenschaft* (as well as modern ethnomusicology's reaction to it). But it meant that a strategic silence concerning anthropology's long and rich dialogue with history hovered over the project from the outset. If a route was to be plotted 'towards' global histories, those ethnographers who had tried such a thing in the past needed to be quietly ignored. The project was built on an argument with ethnographers, then, even as it actively and generously invited ethnomusicological engagement, as well as representation on its board. My own critiques of the project's tacit assumptions about ethnography were, for example, published as the opening chapter of the project's first volume.

Four different critiques of ethnography developed during this period, then, during these 'episodes'. They shared a tendency to imagine 'ethnography' as 'a methodology' (amongst others) rather than a rich and complex intellectual culture. They considered ethnography as a settled transdisciplinary orthodoxy, ignoring the distinctions between anthropologists and sociologists, ignoring the significant debates within the field of anthropology itself, and ignoring the rather particular ways ethnomusicologist chose to engage with them (viz. Barz and Cooley 2008). They assumed that 'ethnography' is at root a colonial exercise in the governance of subject populations, and is thus marked, irrevocably, by certain kinds of denial, famously Fabian's 'denial of coevalness' (Fabian 2014). I have taken a bit of time here to confront these arguments, mainly to show that these are incomplete understandings of ethnography, that they wilfully ignore debate within anthropology, and that 'ethnography' is no more, or less, likely to inhibit critical thinking than, say, 'history' or 'analysis'. It simply depends on how, and with what degree of intelligence and epistemological rigour, and with what sense of dialogue with historians and analysts, one conducts one's research.

It is worth observing, at the current juncture, that these critiques of ethnography come from different disciplinary places. They have common features, but they are motivated by rather different concerns and anxieties. Perhaps most obviously, this says something about the disciplinary 'mainstreaming' of ethnomusicology over the last two decades. Undoubtedly, this has been a threat to some, on both conservative and progressive sides of today's culture wars. It also says something about the strategic accommodations that were at play in North American and the UK's 'new musicology', and the claim that "we are all (ethno)musicologists now". This claim, which met with a chorus of disagreement from ethnomusicologists at the time, now seems even more dubious.[9] It represented an aspiration towards a kind of *topical* equality: the 'new musicology' proceeded as though there was, at root, no reason to distinguish studying Wagner, or Electronic Dance Music, or Mande *griot* singing on the basis of the quality or value of 'the music itself'. But it also facilitated a kind of critical and intellectual hegemony that was far from egalitarian. That hegemony could be described in terms of an energetic melange of historicism, philosophy and hermeneutics. From an institutional perspective, it left the traditional musicological

core of the curriculum, and the functions of the music department itself, strangely untouched.

The relationship between PMS and ethnomusicology in the UK took a rather particular shape, then, in 'the new musicology'. Institutionally, as noted above, PMS flourished outside music departments, ethnomusicology within them. This conferred a certain kind of intellectual creativity and energy on PMS, even if meant less institutional power. Intellectually, however, by 2020 there was very little to distinguish the two. Scholars with a grounding in PMS worked, as they always have done, outside the West, as well as within. Scholars with a grounding in ethnomusicology continued to work on music industries and on changing media technologies across the world as well as on face-to-face music-making, on *participation*. Both approached such topics with a fundamentally similar frame of interdisciplinary reference, similar methodological and epistemological assumptions. The significant differences (for example, concerning the status of music analysis, or of big data) tended to traverse *both* fields, rather than divide them.

The complication to this picture has been the question of ethnography. Suspicion of ethnography as a methodology lingers in PMS. If advocated in PMS, it is advocated cautiously, and usually with reference to sociological, not anthropological theory. It continues, however, to be a fundamental methodological principle in ethnomusicology. The situation has been marked by a curious lack of debate or discussion. This, itself, requires explanation. One explanation lies in the institutional arrangements that have accompanied 'the new musicology': ethnomusicology predominantly within university Music Departments (albeit as junior partners), PMS outside them. There was no natural theatre for such a debate. And the institutional stakes have been low: ethnomusicologists and PMS scholars, for the most part, compete for their promotions, grants and access to prestige publications in parallel, and not against one another. Nobody, it would seem, has had a material interest in challenging the status quo.

<u>The Challenge(s) of Sound Studies.</u>
Sound Studies emerged in part as a correlate of 'Visual Studies' in Art History – an attempt to shift the work-centered ontologies of the West, to critique the canon and the disciplinary practices that sustain it, and to open up a more capacious and energetic space for interdisciplinary thinking. 'Sound' would be the embracing category here, with 'music' just one object within it, and not necessarily a privileged one at that. It also emerged in part from a strand of thinking within PMS immersed in Foucault, Latour, Deleuze and Guattari, in science and technology studies, as well as in histories and anthropologies of the senses. Digital transformations of the field of listening provided an important stimulus to reflection: technologies for sound recording, reproduction and distribution were radically changing; people were clearly listening – to music and much else - in radically different ways. Jonathan Sterne's energetic work corralled these energies and defined the field in a series of important monographs and edited collections (Sterne 2003; Sterne 2012a and b). In this sense, 'Sound Studies' was more than a correlate in the field of Musicology to 'Visual Studies' in the field of Art History; it was focused on some rather specific questions and methodologies from the outset. These were derived to a great extent from Sterne's work;

historical ("how 'new' is digital listening?"), political ("when does 'sound' become an object of control and governance/") and critical ("under such circumstances what knowledge does sound afford?").

These were not, in themselves, radically new questions for ethnomusicologists, either in the UK or in North America. The relationship of 'Sound' to 'Music' is, culturally speaking, variable. All ethnomusicologists working outside the West know what happens when we try to translate either of these terms and map them onto the practices they study. The relationship of both terms to 'knowledge' has also long been an ethnomusicological topic of conversation. Steven Feld's 'acoustemology', based on his Papua New Guinean research, has long been fundamental (Feld 1982). What does it mean, he asked a long time ago, to rely on sound to furnish knowledge of an environment, rather than sight? The relationship of 'music' to broader sonic ecologies – birds, animals, spirits – underpinned ethnomusicology's early ventures into ecomusicology, and have energized the current moment's 'ontological turn'. For quite a while, though, ethnomusicologists in the UK (as elsewhere) have not quite known how to respond.

Steingo and Sykes marshalled the first systematic response (Steingo and Sykes 2019). Sound Studies has been rooted, they suggest, in a fantasy about the role of the western enlightenment about a) separating sound from the other senses and b) building audile technologies on and around that act of separation. Sound Studies, they show, remains stuck in a 'Global North' view of things that is ultimately rather provincial. The rest of the world, the Global South and its migrants and refugees, tends to be invisible – assumed, somewhere and somehow, to be playing technological catch up with 'us', here in the purported 'centre'.[10] 'Homo mobilis' myths of connectivity, networking and flow prevail in Sound Studies, the very myths that sell the sound technologies and commodities that surround us, here, in the global North. What if, Steingo and Sykes argue, we experience sonic culture, as many in the Global South do, with poor internet connectivity, with broken and outdated machinery, in insecure environments in which consumer technology is likely to be stolen. What if we are to see longstanding habits of music technology bricolage, of making culture in makeshift and improvised as well as, sometimes, dangerous urban spaces as the norm, globally? And what if we are to regard the (musical) cultures of glitch, of entropy, of blockage that develop in such 'southern' spaces as – historically, culturally and aesthetically – not just as a time-lagged reaction to the cultural dominance of the Global North, but as somehow constitutive of the Global North's popular music cultures, tastes and fashions? Ahead of their time, rather than lagging behind it?

The argument rests on solid postcolonial foundations and it is persuasive. But it could be said to simplify and polemicize the relationship between North and South. The South is not just a 'broken' version of the North, from the point of view of digitization and the new music technologies and industries. Experiments within the Global South in the realm of digital culture industries have their own dynamic, funding streams and state support. Efforts to understand digital sound production, circulation and listening globally must move more cautiously, and empirically (Born 2021). There is a risk of romanticizing 'The South'. There is also a risk of reinscribing the very kind of disciplinary tribalism that consigns

ethnomusicology to certain parts of the world, certain kinds of music and certain kinds of critical methodology. The challenges sound studies have raised must be embraced and, of course, embraced positively.

The question here, though, is what sound studies means for the relationship between ethnomusicology and PMS. My own answer is: probably not much. Both sides seem able to absorb its central lessons and debate them comfortably. Ethnomusicology's long-standing interest in 'acoustemology', and in sonic ecologies and ontologies (Feld 1982, Bohlman 1999), and PMS' long-standing interest in the relationship between music technologies, music industries, and listening (Théberge 1999, Keightly 1996, Devine 2020) mean that Sound Studies is experienced, for the most part, as an invigoration and validation of long-standing interests, rather than a radical critique. Existing institutional spaces (academic departments, professional societies, journals and conferences) can absorb it easily, and without a sense of threat. Other threats, indeed, are on the horizon - big data, machine learning, the predations of the new technology industries upon higher education. These would seem to constitute far more serious threats to the – at root - humanistic, interpretative and critical foundations of ethnomusicology, PMS and sound studies. And they would seem to require a more collective, rather than fragmented response.

It could be that the music scholars in the UK meet this disciplinary moment more with less of a sense of threat than their colleagues in the USA. Tenured professorships in prestige institutions in the United States are more anxiously monitored by the professional organizations (SEM, AMS, SMT). These are convulsed, at the time of writing, by debates about race in the wake of Black Lives Matter. If these convulsions have spilled over into sub-disciplinary retrenchments, this is perhaps not surprising. Less is at stake, materially, in the UK, and the equivalent professional organizations (BFE, RMA) have a relatively minor role to play in shaping employment, careers and scholarly reputations. The ICTM, both internationally and in the UK, continues to be quite marginal to the institutional life of music scholarship in UK universities, even if it continues to be intellectually vibrant. This may help us understand why sound studies has, for the most part, been greeted with interest, albeit cautious interest, on the part of ethnomusicologists here, rather than a sense of threat.

If PMS, ethnomusicology and sound studies move together into closer alignments, this will be no bad thing. It is to be expected, indeed, hoped, that these new alignments will continue to pose challenges and spark debates. It would, of course, be interesting to see what happens to the concept of 'ethnography' in such circumstances, and how PMS, ethnomusicology and sound studies scholars might debate it. The grounds for a 'new empiricism' are being laid quite purposefully by scholars who have (rather effortlessly) been able to reach across this disciplinary space. Georgina Born's work, animated to a significant extent by Latourian Actor Network Theory, has been notable here (see Born and Barry 2018, Born 2021). This firmly rejects positivism (based on preordained ideas about what constitutes scientific 'data'), firmly historicizes technological transformations, firmly rejects the canon, firmly engages the Global South, firmly embraces a programme of disciplinary decolonization. It does not, entirely, dispense with the debates about the status of 'ethnography'. It is a theoretically driven programme, as yet not much open to dialogue,

conversation and artistic creativity. Nonetheless, it suggests common ground, and shows that arguing *with* one another across these emergent disciplinary spaces might prove more fruitful and productive than arguing *against* one another on the basis of the old ones.

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1 The International Society for the Study of Popular Music (UK branch) and the International Council for Traditional Music (UK branch, which had a claim to being the 'parent' institution, and thus, in the view of some, did not need to signify its independent national status).
2 The conferences alternated between 'North' and 'South', the former category effectively meaning anywhere in or in the proximity of London. The 'southern' conferences would be quite well attended, mainly because of the concentration of ethnomusicologists in London. The northern ones at that point much less so.
3 When they did it was an event. Eminent folklorist Bert Feintuch turned up to the Durham ICTM(UK) conference, not as a keynote speaker, but as regular attender. This is still remembered by that ICTM(UK) generation. Regular invitations to North American, and continental European keynote speakers did not become the norm until somewhere in the middle of the 1990s, when Suzel Reily and I chaired the conference organization committee. The first may have been Tony Seeger, quickly followed by Phil Bohlman and others.
4 Dartington was a centre for new music studies and performance; ethnomusicology was a natural partner in this project and embodied in the remarkable personality of Frank Denyer. However, by the 1980s it had become detached from the broader institutional environment of Higher Education in the UK, and it was no longer possible to pursue a (funded) degree programme there as an undergraduate. The University of London in the 1980s had a powerful team in Owen Wright, Richard Widdess, David Hughes and Keith Howard at SOAS, John Baily at Goldsmiths, and Gerry Farrell at City; the functioning of London's collegiate system may be beyond most people's understanding, but somewhere within it a more cosmopolitan kind of ethnomusicology was taking shape, oriented to developments both in North America and in continental Europe.
5 I would pay a personal tribute here to Peter Cooke and Gerd Baumann in this regard, both, sadly, no longer with us.
6 The one purpose-built centre for Popular Music Studies was the Institute of Popular Music Studies at Liverpool University, established in 1988. This maintained its identity, but was eventually folded, administratively, into the Music Department there. This department remains, to this day, one of the most PMS-friendly in the country, with a number of designated music lectureships and professorships in PMS (PMS, Music Industries, Popular Music Performance, Digital Games and more). Its current ethnomusicologist, Hae-Kyung Um, is a noted authority on K-Pop.
7 Around about this time, BFE members would host the (ironically titled) 'Tea Party' at SEM meetings, to reach out to new members in North America, encourage submissions to the journal, and cultivate an institutional relationship. This proved immensely successful.
8 In Born and Hesmondhalgh, Richard Middleton, myself, Philip Bohlman, Steven Feld, and Simon Frith; in Solie, Ellen Koskoff and John Shepherd; in Leppert and McClarey, Simon Frith, John Shepherd, and John Mowitt. I often wonder how I came to be invited, since I had only recently got my PhD, and (as an anthropologist) I was poorly connected to the musicology cliques and circles represented in that volume. But, without quite knowing it at the time, I was a very plausible recruit to the 'new musicology'. I was on the critical and 'political' side of the ethnography and orientalism debates (and thus assumed to be a critic of 'old school' ethnomusicology); I was a reader of social theory and continental philosophy (in French when I possibly could); I was hungry to further my professional ambitions in North America, to make something of an intellectual cosmopolitan of myself. I considered myself unique, but I was, of course, a 'type'. If the Born and Hesmondhalgh volume, and my subsequent period of employment in Chicago, pulled me closer to the project of the 'new musicology', various other things were also pulling me back from it. One, definitely, was my colleague at Chicago, Phil Bohlman, a vocal critic of the new musicology's hegemony - and a shrewd critic of its provincialism. Another was my intellectual, ethical and above all *musical* commitment to the practice of ethnography, and my growing concern with the ways in which the new musicology both misrepresented and

marginalized it. This short article deals with intellectual history at the level of institutional politics and histories. But it is also, I realize, with the prompting of this special issue's editors, very much about myself.

[9] Perhaps the most energetically critical debate took place at City University London on Wednesday 1 June 2016, involving Laudan Nooshin, Ian Pace, Tore Lind and Michael Spitzer (see, for a report, https://blogs.city.ac.uk/music/2016/06/10/debate-on-are-we-all-ethnomusicologists-now-reports-and-responses/). Nooshin's critique resembles my own; indeed, I am indebted to it (see Nooshin 2016). The debate, as a whole, clarifies the stakes of Cook's claim well. Nooshin argues that to ignore the distinction between musicology and ethnomusicology is to erase a (still dialectically productive) history of internal disciplinary difference and struggle, struggle that brings new things into view, and continually elicits new modes of enquiry. Pace and Spitzer's arguments are superficially similar, also saying that Cook's claim erases important differences. But for them (and unlike Nooshin), these differences are far from being productive; they are, rather, highly problematic. Pace and Spitzer construe ethnography as a threat, pushing the process of 'attending to the music itself' out of the frame. Musicology, they suggest, must rescue itself from the false solution of ethnography/ethnomusicology, which, in their view, is only capable of telling us about 'contexts'; musicology must, by contrast, pursue a more capacious and critically ambitious *formalism*.

10 On the invisibility of migrants and refugees in sound studies (and, more specifically, and problematically, in music and mobility studies), see Stokes 2020.