Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization in Atlantic Canadian Popular Music*

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Abstract: During the 1990s, Atlantic Canada witnessed a brief period of attention from the Canadian popular music industry. In conjunction with an international resurgence of "Celtic" culture, the Celticoriented traditional music of the Atlantic region was viewed as a vehicle for potentially increased record sales in a struggling industry. This article examines the marketing and identity constructs that were used to popularize this traditional and folk-based music. Using Keith Negus' notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the article examines the careers and music of The Rankin Family and Great Big Sea, and examines the ways in which their music, videos, image and personae utilized both of these strategies to achieve a national audience.

Résumé: Au cours des années 1990, la côte atlantique du Canada a fait brièvement l'objet de l'attention de l'industrie de la musique populaire canadienne. En conjonction avec une résurgence internationale de la culture « celtique », la musique traditionnelle d'orientation celtique des régions atlantiques fut perçue comme un moyen d'accroître potentiellement les ventes de disques dans un secteur en difficulté. Cet article examine les construits publicitaires et identitaires qui ont été employés pour populariser cette musique traditionnelle folk. À partir des notions de Keith Negus sur la déterritorialisation et la reterritorialisation, cet article examine la carrière et la musique de groupes tels que The Rankin Family et Great Big Sea, et examine de quelle façon leur musique, leurs vidéos, leur image et leur persona ont eu recours en même temps à ces deux stratégies pour toucher un public d'envergure nationale.

The Atlantic region of Canada, comprising the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, has produced a number of national and international popular music success stories. Hank Snow and Wilf Carter were each born in Nova Scotia, and achieved international recognition as country music singers. Snow was also renowned as a songwriter, having penned the country music standards "I'm Movin' On," and "I've Been Everywhere," and was a regular feature performer at The Grand Ole Opry for decades. Carol Baker, Stompin'

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Tom Connors, Joan Kennedy, Ron Hynes and Gene MacClellan were also successful Canadian country artists. Rita MacNeil achieved national stardom as a singer and songwriter who combined elements of easy listening, country, folk and pop music, as did Anne Murray who became an international star in the 1970s, with many international hit songs and gold records. In addition to country music, blues artists such as Matt Minglewood and Dutch Mason, from Nova Scotia, were widely respected, while the Nova Scotia band April Wine produced a number of hit rock singles in Canada in the 1970s, as did the PEI band Haywire during the 1980s. Halifax native Sarah MacLachlan became an international pop superstar during the 1990s.

Though all of these artists originated from Atlantic Canada, their music contained few sonic references to Eastern Canada. Their sound conformed to that of mainstream pop and country music and was mass-marketed as "international repertoire." Keith Negus, in his in-depth study *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, refers to this international musical marketing strategy as *deterritorialization*, involving the identification of certain artists as being suitable for the international market based on their generic appeal across a wide spectrum.

In re-imaging the world for "global marketing," international staff have drawn upon an often taken-for-granted reservoir of knowledge and a particular set of experiences, and use these to understand and make assessments about the world of music. This includes aesthetic judgments about the instruments, tempos, rhythms, voices and melodies that are able to "travel well." It incorporates semiotic judgments about the type of images that are more suitable for an "international audience." (Negus 1999: 156)

These artists were not branded as having any specific cultural or national affiliation. Instead, they were marketed as global musical acts with universal cultural and musical appeal.

Prior to the 1990s, there was very little in the way of music industry infrastructure in Atlantic Canada. Nearly all of the above-mentioned acts had to leave the east coast to pursue recording contracts in Central Canada, Western Canada, or the United States. There were no major record labels with satellite offices in Eastern Canada, and few of the independent labels had any distribution or development arrangements with any of the majors. "Celtic" music was very popular locally, and was a useful vehicle for the tourism industry, but most of the Celtic artists prior to the 1990s were not

widely known throughout North America, though many were able to tour throughout parts of Europe. I will return to a discussion of the term "Celtic" shortly.

Perhaps the one exception to this was John Allan Cameron from Cape Breton Island, the so-called Canadian "godfather of Celtic Music" (McDonald, 2012: 1-6). While Cameron never received any wide airplay on mainstream radio, he was popular throughout Canada from the 1970s until his death in 2007, and is seen by many as a trailblazer, bringing east coast Celtic music to national (and to some degree international) attention. John Allan Cameron's music, image and persona relied on a marketing strategy that Negus, referring to world music, defines as *reterritorialization*, emphasizing an artist's cultural and ethnic ties. In John Allan Cameron's case, his repertoire, stage banter, costumes (he often performed in a kilt), accent and overall persona reinforced his Cape Breton origins.

Negus describes how "world music" recordings are packaged as tokens representing exotic cultures:

If the successful marketing of international repertoire requires the development of an accent and sound that cannot be placed, then world music requires accents, languages, and sounds that can definitely be "placed." By this I do not mean that such sounds and accents materially exist in or are intrinsically connected to particular places, but that the sounds of specific instruments, musical tones, rhythmic patterns, and voices signify a sense of geographical place via various musical semiotic codes and connotations that have developed historically and which are usually recognized by listeners as "verbal visual associations." (Negus 1999: 165)

A successful "world music" artist must offer a romanticized connection to a distant land while at the same time performing in a musical idiom that is accessible to a wider world market. The complete "world music" package therefore offers an exotic (but not too strange) sound, as well as access to a foreign lifestyle.

While Negus' work describes marketing strategies that major record labels use to establish an international market, I believe these strategies of deterritorialization and reterritorialization were also used on a smaller scale to market Canadian east coast Celtic-pop music to a national audience, resulting in its brief explosion of popularity in the early 1990s. Moreover, my analyses of songs and videos by Cape Breton Island's The Rankin Family, and

the Newfoundland band Great Big Sea, will show that deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes were used simultaneously to achieve an effective balance between a traditional, Celtic-influenced, regional sound and image, and a more contemporary and commercial pop aesthetic.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

The concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization have been applied widely in the literature on cultural globalization.² Keith Negus draws on Nestor Garcia Canclini's work describing the effects of modernity on Latin American art and culture. Canclini uses the term deterritorialization to describe the loss of connection between Latin American culture and specific territorial associations of geography and society. He describes how this is accompanied by a subsequent process of reterritorialization, involving the "relocalization of old and new symbolic productions" (Garcia Canclini 1990: 288). In Canclini's work, these processes are interconnected. This differs somewhat from Negus, who describes each process as a deliberate but separate marketing strategy that the record labels employ depending on the particular market: deterritorialization for international repertoire, and reterritorialization for the "world music" market. As I will demonstrate, these processes do become connected and mutually reinforcing in the case of Atlantic Canadian popular music.

Arjun Appadurai uses the term deterritorialization to describe the migration of labouring populations away from their home territories and into the "lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies" (Appadurai 1990: 301). The resulting sense of disconnectedness from the territory of origin creates new markets for the culture and travel industries, which thrive on the need of the displaced workers to re-establish a sense of connection with their home territories (Appadurai 1990: 302). After a period of time, the homeland often becomes mythologized by these industries with the resultant film, music, art, literature and travel tourism exaggerating a narrow cultural bandwidth for mass-market appeal.

Appadurai is generally referring to population groups from developing countries that were forced to relocate to nations within the developed world. Within the Canadian context, it is interesting to compare this to the outmigration of Atlantic Canadians to other parts of the country during the 1990s and beyond. The Labour Market Bulletin, published by Employment and Social Development Canada, for April 2013 shows how the population of Nova Scotians between the ages of 15-24 declined by 13% between 1990 and 2012, with the steadiest decline happening throughout the 1990s. The report

attributes this to an aging population, low birth rates and the net out-migration of youth (ESDC Labour Market Bulletin 2013: 6). Much of this out-migration was directed towards other parts of Canada, particularly the West where there was opportunity for work in the developing Alberta oil sands and other sectors of the growing economy. It is reasonable to speculate that the increased attention paid to east coast Celtic music resulted, at least in some measure, from this out-migration. Certainly a market for east coast cultural products developed from this deterritorialization of workers. One tangible manifestation of this was the brief proliferation of Atlantic Canadian themed bars throughout the West.³

This may partially explain why the Celtic music from the east coast gained such heightened popularity instead of other existing genres. Eastern Canada, like most regions of Canada, hosts a plurality of musical styles: a thriving alternative rock scene, an urban hip-hop community, a professional orchestra, a fine chamber music program, a country music legacy and active Acadian and Mi'kmaq musical communities and scenes. However, it was the "Celtic" pop music that attracted the most attention from the Canadian music industry during the early 1990s. In Halifax, indie rock bands such as Sloan, Jale, Thrush Hermit, Hardship Post and Eric's Trip formed the core of a local "grunge rock" scene that paralleled a similar hub of underground music activity emerging out of Seattle, Washington. Sloan received a major recording contract with DGC Records (David Geffen Company) in 1992 after self-producing an independent recording titled Smeared in a friend's living room. After their success with Geffen, Sloan went on to form the independent label Murderecords as a way of developing other local rock bands. The American label SubPop eventually poached many of these bands from Murderecords. In fact, most of the industry attention directed towards these indie rock bands was from record labels in the United States. Sloan went on to receive critical acclaim and impressive record sales, but their domestic popularity was eclipsed by that of Celtic artists.

This confirms the importance of regional identity in Canadian popular music marketing. Sloan and other indie rock bands defied the regional Atlantic stereotypes: there were no songs about the sea, no songs about the past and no fiddles. Sloan played to a young, cosmopolitan and urban market that was difficult to translate into commercial tourism revenues—the kids who bought Sloan albums generally didn't vacation in Atlantic Canada and the music didn't reconnect displaced Atlantic Canadians to their homes. It was the Celtic music that was intimately tied to the regional identity of the east coast, particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland due to tourism marketing strategies employed in the region, as well as the 1990s Celtic revival in popular culture.

The Atlantic Canadian Celt

Eastern Canada is often promoted as comprising a population of pre-modern, fun-loving Celts. The province of Nova Scotia, for example, is routinely marketed through tourism promotions and popular culture advertisements as a sort of living Scottish antique. Bagpipers meet arriving tourists at border crossings and airports, greeters wear vests made from the Nova Scotia tartan (signifying that Nova Scotians are all part of one ancient clan), and signage welcomes all in Gaelic: *Ciad Mile Failte*. Tourism literature encourages visitors to attend one of the local *cèilidhs*, which are often professionally staged concerts rather than the informal gatherings the word implies. Recently, national advertising campaigns for the Halifax-based Alexander Keith's beer featured a loud, boorish drunk dressed in a kilt and admonishing patrons of a local bar in a thick, fake Scottish accent that they are not showing proper reverence to the beer and its history.

The ascribed Scottishness is curious, considering that the population of Nova Scotia comprises a diverse range of ethnicities and heritages. As Ian McKay points out in his important essay "Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954," Nova Scotia was not even the most Scottish province in Canada when it began to be branded as a true "New Scotland" (McKay 1992: 8). Notwithstanding the Scottish strongholds of Cape Breton Island and Pictou County, the provinces of Prince Edward Island and Ontario actually had higher percentages of Scottish citizens in the 1920s. McKay documents how the "Tartanism" movement in Nova Scotia began with the popular and successful provincial Premier Angus L. Macdonald. Under Macdonald's premierships, Nova Scotia gained its official tartan, Gaelic motto, the Cabot and Ceilidh Trails, Highlands National Park (featuring a replica of a *shieling*⁶ from the Scottish Isle of Skye), the Keltic (sic) Lodge Resort in Ingonish and a Gaelic College in St. Ann's, Cape Breton. Macdonald's Tartanism stemmed from a romanticized view of his own Scottish heritage, shrewd political strategy and a strong belief in the economic promise of ethno-tourism.

Macdonald's Tartanism also fit in with a post-Victorian antimodernist ideal associated with the concept of "the Folk." This concept developed as a byproduct of 19th-century European Romantic nationalism wherein the social elite sought the cultural "artifacts" of a pre-industrial, undiluted society from a "Golden Age" of social cohesion, untainted by the racial diversity and class complexity of modern, urban society. This pure Folk society was, and is, of course, a myth. As Ian McKay writes in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*:

The Folk did not exist either as a self-defined group or as an externally defined population; they existed in the mind of the interpreter. These interpreters, however, traveled in schools and shared a sense of history as entropy. And they all agreed that the real Folk did not live everywhere. The Folk did not generally frequent coal mines, steel mills, factories, or cities. Not only was cultural contamination rife, but the organic solidarities of the true Folk community were being undermined. The Folk did not belong to political parties or read newspapers or mount labour protests. They were the passive recipients of tradition, not its active shapers. (McKay 1994: 21)

This myth therefore had a powerful resonance for those of the elite who feared modernism, multiculturalism and socialism.

Folk *music* was believed by many to lie at the heart of the organic Folk Society. Authentic folk songs were considered to be the free, "uncomposed" musical expressions of the Folk. American folklorist Francis James Child collected what he considered to be the essential folk songs of the British Isles and published them as The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. These "Child Ballads" acquired an authenticity from subsequent 20th-century scholars including Nova Scotian folklorist Helen Creighton. Creighton's quest for the Folk began on Devil's Island off the coast of Halifax in 1929. She considered the residents of this remote island a repository of the true folk songs of Nova Scotia, unencumbered by any outside influence. To her delight, she discovered that the repertoire of the Devil's Islanders included a number of Child Ballads. As with similar Child Ballads "discovered" in Appalachia, these versions were considered more authentic than those that could be then found in Britain because they had been preserved as part of an isolated Folk society. The Creighton collection exhibited a bias towards these "pure" sources, and she consciously disregarded any new songs, particularly any that had modernist overtones: drinking songs, labour songs and songs by Blacks (McKay 1994: 113-119).

Television and radio broadcasting, as well as recording technology, provided powerful new modes of tourism promotion and utilized the region's rich musical heritage as another element in the marketing package. *Don Messer's Jubilee* was broadcast nationally from Halifax, and featured "down home" country music and dancing. Don Messer was a fiddler, though his style was more American "old time" than Scottish. Its replacement show, the *Singalong Jubilee*, which ran nationally from 1961 to 1974, capitalized on the American

urban folk music revival.⁸ The show helped launch the careers of singers Catherine McKinnon, Gene MacLellan and Anne Murray, and was therefore an important vehicle for the development of a music industry in Atlantic Canada. The show was originally intended as a television vehicle for American folk singer Pete Seeger; however Seeger's involvement was cut short when his passport was revoked by the United States House Un-American Activities Committee.

While the American urban folk revival was rooted in the American counter-culture of the 1960s and had direct ties to the communist movement, *Singalong Jubilee* reinforced the Folk culture stereotype advocated by Creighton. The show featured many songs from the Creighton collection, and there was a preference for songs about the simple Maritime life. The house band played banjo, guitar, upright bass and even a washtub bass. As the popular show evolved over its lifetime, new songs were incorporated into the repertoire. However, a number of these added further to the Maritime Folk stereotype, such as Jim Bennett's "Black Rum and Blueberry Pie":

We're living in the age of space as everybody knows. Most everyone is in the race as this here country grows. But, down among the lobster pots you'll find a funny crew. Us Maritimers don't do things like other people do. We just like fishin', fightin', getting tight'n starin' at the sky. Chewin', spittin' and just sittin' watchin' things go by. Climbing rocks and drivin' ox and learnin' how to lie. Drinkin' black rum and eatin' blueberry pie.

Singalong Jubilee was intended to be a more up-to-date, youth-oriented replacement for the Don Messer show, and, as such, some of the women wore colourful miniskirts and fashionable hairdos. However, the sets often depicted rural scenes of rundown shacks, fishing nets and granite boulders. The overriding theme of the show was a depiction of Maritimers as simple, rural countryfolk.

In the 1990s, the Nova Scotia provincial government began marketing Nova Scotian music through a series of recordings titled *Sounds of Nova Scotia*. These recordings were simply compilations of tracks from previously recorded albums by local artists. The songs were largely folk-influenced, adult contemporary tracks meant to appeal to a middle-aged tourist audience. Antimodernism and the fun, simple life were overriding themes with tracks such as "The Bluenose," "Small Town Wind," "Sound the Pibroch," "Song for the Mira," "Jigging Medley" and "Good Times." "Good Times" is the first track on

the *Sounds of Nova Scotia*, *Volume 1* recording, and is performed by John Allan Cameron. Each verse of the song begins with: "You ask me what I like about the Maritimes?" and then proceeds to rhyme off a list of Maritime stereotypes. Each verse culminates with a chorus that is meant to summarize east coast life:

It's a big feed of lobster It's a cold Alpine⁹ in my hand It's a quarter to one¹⁰ and the fun's just begun Singing "Song for the Mira" with this good time band.

In addition to Tartanism and anti-modernism, this chorus offers the third pillar in the triad of stereotypes often used to depict the Eastern Canadian lifestyle—that of the fun-loving partier. Staying up late singing and playing music while consuming copious amounts of alcohol is a familiar theme played out in television programs and commercials, travel literature and songs. This was the familiar trope then that was used to reterritorialize much of the Atlantic Canadian popular music in the 1990s: the Celtic, anti-modern, funloving Folk.

As we will see, various signifiers in the songs, videos and images were used to reinforce this regional identity:

- 1. Location Images: the sea, rural settings, sea shanties, boats
- 2. Temporal Images: images that suggest a pre-modern time
- 3. Instruments: fiddles, whistles, bodhran, mandolin, bagpipes
- 4. Language: Gaelic, old-fashioned English verse
- 5. Sounds and Images of Fun: dancing, parties, drinking songs

Recordings, videos and performances that employ reterritorialization strategies adopt these signifiers in order to reconfirm the regional connection, while deterritorialization strategies avoid them.

The Celtic Revival

The 1990s also witnessed worldwide a rise in popularity of various musics collectively termed "Celtic." The touring stage spectacle *Riverdance* began in 1995, and featured high energy Irish dancing to contemporary arrangements of jigs and reels, becoming an international hit show. *Riverdance* was nominally rooted in Irish traditional culture, but was heavily infused with other musical styles and packaged as a Broadway song and dance production. In

addition to *Riverdance*, major motion pictures began utilizing Celtic music in the film soundtracks, and "world music" record labels began releasing Celtic compilation recordings. The soundtrack to the Ron Howard film *Far and Away* featured an Irish-tinged soundtrack by John Williams, along with performances by the Irish New Age artist Enya, and the Irish instrumental group The Chieftans. Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and James Cameron's *Titanic* also used Celtic-influenced film scores by composer James Horner with resulting million-selling soundtrack recordings. The Putumayo record label released *Celtic Tides* in 1998, which blended recordings by Irish, American and Cape Breton artists, and the Real World record label released several recordings by an ensemble with the intriguing name of AfroCelt Sound System. In all of these cases, the musical productions strived to link a sense of cultural antiquity with contemporary pop culture. For example, the promotional material for *Celtic Tides* states that

... Over the years, the traditional music of the world's Celtic regions has been woven into the fabric of contemporary music and culture around the world. Songs and melodies of Celtic antiquity from Ireland, Scotland and Cape Breton (on the east coast of Canada) have become an integral part of the soundtrack for the 21st Century.¹¹

All of these productions extend the range of musical styles that can be considered under the rubric of "Celtic" music. 12 Scott Reiss poses the question:

But what is Celtic music? Is it the traditional music of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany and other nations that share the heritage of the ancient Celts? Or is it something separate, that might be understood as *interacting* with those traditional musics and the communities that produce them? (Reiss 2003: 145) [Emphasis in the original]

Indeed, what is the relationship that allows the Scottish band Silly Wizard, the Irish band The Chieftans, the Breton musician Alan Stivell, the Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster, and the Welsh harpist Robin Huw Bowen to all be considered "Celtic" musical acts? Their musical repertoires are largely different, yet the music industry and, to a certain extent, the artists themselves, embrace the all-encompassing term "Celtic" as a way of classifying the music for potential consumers. James Porter summarizes the potent

semiotic associations of Celtic music that can be co-opted for the construction of an identity myth:

"Celtic music and song" as a blanket category may suggest to some, no doubt, a preoccupation with the decorative, the elemental, the erotic, the grotesque, the parodic, racy or satirical. On the one hand, it is true, the modes, textures and signs of Celtic music and song recount a harshly real, a bitter and often political world of subjection and suppression. On the other, they can conjure a world both evanescent and idealized, those "faery lands forlorn" dropped by the Romantic poets, like a semantic veil, between us and historical reality. (Porter 1998: 219)

These individual projects reveal interesting international marketing strategies for Celtic music. There is a reterritorialization of the music that is not specific to any particular geographical locus. Instead the reterritorialization revolves around a mythical past with a collective exotic cultural characterization that includes but is not limited to: druids, faeries, ancient clans and kings, a society in perpetual struggle and a natural affinity for storytelling, dancing and song. Thus the *Celtic Tides* compilation can include Irish traditional bands such as The Chieftans, "New Age" groups like Clannad, Scottish singer Dougie MacLean and Cape Breton fiddlers and singers such as Ashley MacIsaac, Natalie MacMaster and Mary Jane Lamond. And *Riverdance* can enlist the fiddling talents (and highly marketable look) of Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster for its Broadway production. At the same time, there is a deliberate attempt to package this music in contemporary stylistic dress, whether by means of "new age" synthesizers, or by using rock and dance beats.

The Canadian market for Celtic popular music was therefore fuelled by the international Celtic revival. Eastern Canada, with its established Celtic scene and Celtic identity myth held great potential for the Canadian major record labels¹³ to capitalize on the heightened public appetite for all things Celtic. The remainder of this paper will analyze songs by the Rankin Family and Great Big Sea to show how these acts were brought to a national market through a combination of reterritorialization and deterritorialization strategies that either reinforced or nullified the trope of the ancient, funloving Celt.

East Coast Music Industry

When the commercial music industry in Eastern Canada began to really develop in the early 1990s, Halifax, Nova Scotia emerged as its industrial centre. Recording studios, booking agents, management companies, independent record labels and satellites of the major Canadian record labels all began to proliferate in Halifax, and many artists relocated there from other parts of the region.

Despite this, Halifax did not produce the bulk of the artists who made up the scene. While the entire Atlantic region contributed to the rich mix of music emerging during this period, there were two places from where the majority of the artists and bands originated: Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia and St. John's, Newfoundland. This can be clearly seen by examining the history of the East Coast Music Awards show and conference. This annual event began in 1989 as the Maritime Music Awards in a small gathering at the Flamingo Café and Lounge in Halifax "to focus on the diversity of music and musicians in mainland Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick and to raise the standard of recording" (Gueller 1997). Newfoundland and Labrador were included in 1991, and the name was changed to the East Coast Music Awards around the time when east coast music started to garner national attention. The awards continued in Halifax, showing to larger audiences, and were eventually televised locally. By 1994, the national success of The Rankin Family (they were nominated for four Juno awards that year) had resulted in this music becoming very popular across the country, and the awards show was moved outside of Halifax for the first time and broadcast nationally as an abridged form. The 1995 show was broadcast across Canada in its entirety, at possibly the peak moment of the music's national popularity. It is telling then that these first two locations outside of Halifax were St. John's, Newfoundland in 1994, and Sydney, Cape Breton in 1995. Both shows featured high-profile signings with major record labels, and the majority of artists nominated for awards were from both Newfoundland and Cape Breton. This trend continued for much of the 1990s. 14

In the remainder of this paper, I will analyze how deterritorialization and reterritorialization strategies were used in different ways by the most prominent acts to come out of Cape Breton and Newfoundland: The Rankin Family and Great Big Sea, respectively. While I will be discussing marketing strategies, it is important not to deny the agency of either of these acts in constructing their own sound and image. Both groups were firmly grounded in their regional musical roots, as evidenced by the repertoire they chose to record and perform. However, the members in each group were also well-

versed in contemporary Western popular music, and therefore freely blended these styles without any concern for lack of authenticity or a loss of tradition. They were simply artists who fused multiple musical interests, and the results just happened to be very appealing to the marketing divisions of their respective record labels, and spurred other such fusions that further fuelled the scene.

The Rankin Family

The Rankin Family from Mabou, Cape Breton, signed a contract with EMI/ Capitol Records in 1992. Various incarnations of this band had been performing at weddings and dances in Cape Breton throughout the 1970s but by the late 1980s, five of the twelve siblings in the family had formed the core of the band. Their music combined aspects of folk, pop and country music in addition to traditional Gaelic songs and sets of Cape Breton fiddle tunes. Successful performances as part of the *Cape Breton Summertime Revue* and *Mabou Jig* tourist productions in Cape Breton led to an independent eponymous recording in 1989, with a follow-up independent record in 1991 titled *Fare Thee Well Love*. These recordings were phenomenally successful for an independent band playing traditional Cape Breton music. By 1992, they claimed to have sold nearly 70,000 independent records (Leblanc 1992: 38).

This success prompted the Canadian office of EMI/Capitol Records to sign the Rankin Family to a Canadian recording contract, with an additional agreement to nationally distribute the independent recordings. Both of these early recordings feature songs in Gaelic, sets of fiddle tunes and regionally inspired original songs such as "The Orangedale Whistle," "Lonely Island," "Fisherman's Son" and "Gillis Mountain." The album cover to *Fare The Well Love* features a picture of the band members looking off into the sea, with an image of a rolling Cape Breton coastline in the background.

It is difficult to imagine how these highly territorialized recordings could be deterritorialized for a wider market. However, the title track to Fare Thee Well Love offered the potential for diluting this regional identity just enough to break the band to a national market. The song was released to radio as a single in combination with a music video that received a coveted regular rotation spot on the Canadian music video network MuchMusic.

The single and video to "Fare Thee Well Love," while containing no concrete regional references, employs some of the signifiers that reconfirm its Atlantic Canadian origin. The title, subject and use of antiquated language in the lyrics of the song suggest a bygone era.

Fare thee well, love,
Fare thee well, love,
Far away, you must go.
Take your heart, love,
Take your heart, love,
Will we never meet, again no more?

In fact the topic of parting lovers is found throughout the Child Ballads. On the surface then, the song is reterritorialized in its subject matter and lyrics. The structure of the song is also largely strophic and lacks the big chorus of most hit pop ballads. The verses alternate between Jimmy and Carol Jean (Cookie) Rankin with all five band members joining in for a B section, which is really just a modified version of the verse structure, melody and harmony.

However, the overall sound of the recording is generated by a contemporary easy listening arrangement, which easily transcends any regional style. The fiddle, a common component of many Rankin Family songs, is missing here, while the bulk of the sound is characterized by a thick synthesizer patch and a highly processed drum kit, with a piano and oboe providing surface melodic accompaniment.

The video for "Fare Thee Well Love" also offers a combination of reterritorialization and deterritorialization. The entire video is tinted with a sepia colour scheme, suggesting an old photograph. There are frequent shots of a man on a boat out at sea with his distant lover pining for him in a shanty on the shore, both of them dressed in pre-20th century clothing. However, the band members themselves are deterritorialized with neutral clothing and contemporary (1990s) hairstyles. None of the band members play instruments in the video, and only appear as singers. There are no overtly "Celtic" images anywhere in the video.

This strategy was immediately successful: the re-release of *Fare Thee Well Love* achieved multi-platinum¹⁵ sales figures in Canada and resulted in four Juno awards, including Best Single for the title track and Group of the Year. The single "Fare Thee Well Love" reached the number one spot on the Adult Contemporary Pop charts in Canada and was licensed for the film soundtrack to the Disney movie *Into the West* (LeBlanc 1993: 1).

It can be argued that the single and video to "Fare Thee Well Love" offer an incomplete or perhaps even false representation of the Rankin Family, whose sound, repertoire and stage show was rooted in the east coast Celtic music scene. The song and video avoided sonic and visual references to the east coast and thus allowed the band to become well known across the country through radio and video exposure. It would have been a natural outcome for the band

to further deterritorialize by jettisoning their regional sound and stage show, and adopting a more contemporary pop aesthetic. However, the band parlayed this initial success into future successful recordings and performance tours by promoting their traditional Maritime roots. They appeared live on MuchMusic and performed live at the 1994 Juno awards, each time performing a song in Gaelic. Their live concerts always featured sets of fiddle tunes with step-dancing, while they continued to record traditional Cape Breton music and Maritime folk standards. This reterritorialization capitalized on the Celtic revival referred to earlier, and established a national market for east coast Celtic pop music.

The Rankin Family's first major label release, *North Country*, again featured sets of fiddle tunes, Gaelic songs and songs about Cape Breton and Eastern Canada. In fact, the album's release was preceded by a release of the single "Rise Again," a Cape Breton anthem about overcoming hardship.

When the waves roll on over the waters
And the ocean cries
We look to our sons and daughters
To explain our lives
As if a child could tell us why
That as sure as the sunrise
As sure as the sea
As sure as the wind in the trees
We rise again in the faces of our children
We rise again in the voices of our song
We rise again in the waves out on the ocean
And then we rise again

Once again, though, the instrumentation on "Rise Again" featured the synthesizer, piano and oboe combination that was so successful on "Fare Thee Well Love," and avoided any sonic reference to Cape Breton music. The video too does not show the band playing any instruments, and is even more neutral with respect to location than the video for "Fare Thee Well Love"; there are no shots of the ocean that the song lyrics refer to. Songwriter Leon Dubinsky explains that the ocean serves as a metaphor in the song for the outmigration of Cape Bretoners to other parts of Canada, and indeed the song is a cry of hope in the face of a dying population and economic hardship (Dubinsky 2007). Yet the struggle portrayed in the video has no social or economic connections at all. The five band members are portrayed as struggling for survival in a pre-modern videoscape. The video opens

with a shot of singer Raylene Rankin kneeling in a bleak winter snowstorm, then joined by her sisters Heather and Cookie, and eventually by the two brothers Jimmy and John Morris bearing lit torches. Eventually, the band members end up in a colourful field of wildflowers having made it through a presumably hard winter. So while the video does conform the trope of premodernity associated with Eastern Canada, it makes no overt references to Cape Breton or Atlantic Canada at all.

These singles from the Rankin Family therefore offer a complex combination of reterritorialization in their repertoire, their live show and to a certain extent their public identity, but their music and videos were skillfully packaged to better fit standard radio formats. They subsequently charted singles in Canada on country, pop and adult contemporary radio.

Following the success of the Rankin Family with EMI, the other major record labels began scouring the east coast for other potential success stories. Record industry lore began to spread regarding the untapped wealth of musical talent in Eastern Canada. Over the next few years, each of the major record labels operating in Canada signed east coast acts: The Barra MacNeils (Polygram)¹⁶, Lennie Gallant (Sony), Ashley MacIsaac (Universal/A&M), Natalie MacMaster (Warner) and Great Big Sea (Warner).

Great Big Sea

The Newfoundland band Great Big Sea first gained attention for their energetic live show consisting of Irish and Newfoundland folk songs as well as derivative original music. Initially a mainstay of the Atlantic university pub scene, the band benefitted from the Canadian recording industry's brief interest in east coast music during the 1990s. Their marketing campaign made every effort to juxtapose the musicians with their Atlantic, neo-Celtic roots. Television interviews and music videos were shot next to the Atlantic Ocean, and the first major label release, Up, displayed pictures of an accordion, a fiddle and an old broken bridge on the CD cover, which was lined on its right side with a picture of the sea. The album largely contained a mix of traditional and original songs including "Lukey," "The Old Black Rum," "Mari-Mac," "Billy Peddle," "The Jolly Butcher" and "Rant and Roar." The original five members of the band played a mix of instruments commonly associated with Celtic music, including tin whistle, bodhran, bouzouki, mandolin, fiddle, accordion and guitar. In their live performances, the members of the band reinforced their Newfoundland roots with their stage banter, and played upon the stereotype of Atlantic Canadians being fun-loving partiers. Thus a reterritorialization of image and music was used to capitalize on the market created by the Celtic Revival and the success of the Rankin Family.

At the same time, the members of Great Big Sea maintained that they represented the next generation of Newfoundlanders. The oft-employed tokens of Newfoundland culture such as sou'westers, lobster pots and fishing boats or nets were not permitted to adorn any stage on which the band performed, and they maintained the contractual right to refuse to perform if the epithet "Newfie" was used in any promotional materials (DePalma 1998: E2). Great Big Sea successfully negotiated the seemingly contradictory images of the traditional Newfoundland Celtic group and that of a young rock band. Other bands have, of course, combined Celtic music with rock arrangements—The Pogues, Thin Lizzy, Figgy Duff, Runrig and Spirit of the West all successfully integrated elements of both genres. Unlike these other bands though, Great Big Sea did not sound like a rock band—they did not use electric guitars or drum sets very often. Their sound was firmly planted in Newfoundland, but their up-tempo renditions of traditional songs, lead singer Alan Doyle's growly, rock-like baritone voice, and their rock star stage persona offered enough deterritorialization to appeal to audiences outside of Newfoundland.

Great Big Sea's major label recordings and videos also employ a balance of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Their first single release was a "Celtic" cover version of the song "Run Runaway" by the British glam-rock band Slade. When recording the tracks for *Up*, producer Danny Greenspoon became concerned that none of the traditional and original music that they had recorded would sell to commercial radio and video. Great Big Sea had been performing "Run Runaway" as part of their live show, and when Greenspoon heard an impromptu performance of it in the studio, he immediately decided to record it as their single. Thus, while the sound and image of the band were reterritorialized, the single employed a deterritorialization strategy, using a song that not only had no regional references, but was also an international hit song in 1984, reaching number 15 on the Canadian RPM chart and number 20 on the US Billboard charts.

At first glance, "Run Runaway" would seem like an odd choice for an emerging Newfoundland Celtic pop group in 1995. Slade's original recording features distorted electric guitars and a driving drum set groove typical of 1980s rock. However, Slade's lead singer and co-writer Noddy Holder described the song in 1984 as a "rock beat behind an old Scottish jig" (Holder 2010). Indeed, the middle instrumental section of the song moves to a 6/8 jig metre and uses violin and bagpipe sounds. The original video for "Run Runaway" features many "Scottish" symbols, including a pipe band, a kilted man swinging a caber, a mob of kilted dancers, with a castle as a backdrop.

The format of the song is call and response, similar to that of the drinking songs and sea shanties that made up much of Great Big Sea's repertoire. Still, Slade's "Run Runaway" *sounds* like an eighties rock song with some surface Celtic elements.

Great Big Sea's version is much faster than the original (ca.157 bpm vs. ca.128 bpm) and dispenses with Slade's electric guitars and driving drum set grooves. Instead they employ tin whistle, accordion, bodhran, a driving acoustic guitar and a snare drum. The arrangement aligns well with their uptempo arrangements of Newfoundland songs such as "Mari-Mac" and "Lukey." The video alternates between shots of the band singing and playing their instruments on a rocky beach and in front of a stone wall, with shots of four nuns(!) driving down a coastal highway in a red Volkswagen Beetle.

Great Big Sea's follow-up album, *Play*, featured a similar treatment of the popular R.E.M. song "It's the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)." Once again, the tempo is much quicker than the original song (ca. 130 bpm vs. ca. 103 bpm), to the point where most of the verse lyrics are unintelligible. The song has acoustic instruments instead of the electric guitar of the original. While the original "Run Runaway" features some Celtic elements, R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World as We Know It" is a guitar-driven, apocalyptic stream of consciousness, indie rock rant with no connection to Celtic music. Great Big Sea's video alternates between shots of the band performing in front of large stacks of speakers with shots of them walking the streets of St. John's. The video therefore bisects the two sides of Great Big Sea's image: the traditional Celtic group with roots firmly planted in Newfoundland, and the deterritorialized band of rock stars.

These cover songs by Great Big Sea are stylistically very different from their rock progenitors; they sound like the rest of the band's repertoire of Newfoundland traditional and original Celtic-inspired songs. However, the popularity of the original versions of these songs allowed the music to become deterritorialized as part of an international pop repertoire. Other east coast acts applied the same strategy of reterritorialization of style and image, and deterritorialization of musical content. The Cape Breton band The Barra MacNeils released John Sebastian's "Darling Be Home Soon" as their first single on their first major label release *Closer to Paradise*, while the Newfoundland band The Irish Descendants released Donovan's "Catch the Wind" on their breakthrough release *Gypsies and Lovers*.

This strategy of reterritorialized sound and image and deterritorialized repertoire was not aimed at increasing the appeal of this music for a potential American audience; none of these cover recordings received widespread distribution or radio play in the United States. Rather, these recognizable pop

standards were aimed at a national Canadian market. The artists increased their national marketability by releasing older, deterritorialized pop hits. Yet the stylistic aspects of the original versions of these songs were transformed to fit a reterritorialized ideal of Atlantic Canadian culture. In the process, the lyrical content and the semiotic associations of the original releases were nullified, and the songs were refashioned as east coast Celtic songs, with their implications of a rural seaside setting, party atmosphere, and quaint, simple lifestyle. Great Big Sea's version of "It's the End of the World," for example, changes the message from that of apathy toward the pending apocalypse to that of enjoying a simpler life partying in Newfoundland, while the rest of the world destroys itself.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most successful manifestation of this deterritorialization and reterritorialization strategy is Cape Breton fiddler Ashley MacIsaac's hit single "Sleepy Maggie," which reached number 29 on the Billboard Dance charts. The track is based on the traditional fiddle tune by the same name and includes lyrics in Gaelic sung by Mary Jane Lamond. The musical arrangement, though, features a looped dance drum beat, synthesizer loops and driving electric bass line that firmly identifies the song as a dance/club single. MacIsaac himself also projects a complex image of traditional musician and pop star. He regularly performs in a kilt, speaks with a distinctive Cape Breton accent and step dances while he performs. However his stage banter, performance theatrics, openness about his sexuality and controversial interviews present a more complex alternative rock persona. Even his stage costumes are contradictory, with sunglasses and a toque often accompanying his trademark kilt.

Ashley MacIsaac perhaps presents an extreme example of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In fact, I would argue that the reteritorialization/deterritorialization mix essentially became the product in MacIsaac's case. While the single "Sleepy Maggie," and indeed his entire album *Hi! How Are You Today*, demonstrates substantial creativity and musicianship, I believe much of the success of this album relied on MacIsaac's growing reputation as an unpredictable and somewhat freakish genius. The idea of him as a rural Cape Breton fiddler who challenged tradition by creating atypical rock and pop arrangements of traditional fiddle tunes, and the dissonance between his rural Cape Breton roots and his urban and liberal lifestyle became more marketable than the music itself. Indeed, his follow-up album, *Fine.Thank YouVery Much*, which contained exclusively traditional fiddle

arrangements featuring piano and guitar accompaniment, failed to generate the same level of interest and sales as his previous recording. This confirms that both strategies of deterritorialization and reterritorialization were necessary, acted simultaneously and reinforced each other.

The Rankin Family, Great Big Sea, Ashley MacIssac and other successful Celtic pop stars from Atlantic Canada recorded songs and videos that relied on both reterritorialized and deterritorialized sounds and images. Ashley MacIsaac and The Rankin Family recorded material with clear regional ties but with contemporary pop arrangements. Great Big Sea, The Barra MacNeils and The Irish Descendants recorded mainstream pop singles with traditional Celtic arrangements. In all cases, the deterritorialization was necessary to appeal to a wider market, but the east coast sound and perceived lifestyle was a market unto itself that was fuelled by the international Celtic Revival. While these east coast acts were searching for ways to make their sound fit a more contemporary pop aesthetic, they also worked hard to preserve their regional ties. Indeed, both Ashley MacIsaac and The Barra MacNeils released recordings of traditional Cape Breton fiddle tunes as follow-up recordings to their major label pop releases, and fiddler Natalie McMaster's 2002 Live album features a second disc of her playing traditional tunes and arrangements at a Glencoe Mills dance as a supplement to the primary disc of her band performing rock, country, easy listening and flamenco arrangements of traditional fiddle tunes. And nearly all of these east coast Celtic artists include traditional songs and arrangements on their major label releases.

As with most music industry trends, the Atlantic Canadian Celtic Pop movement of the 1990s was relatively short-lived and began to subside along with the Celtic Revival by the end of the decade. Most of the artists mentioned in this paper did not continue their contracts with the major record labels, with the exception of Great Big Sea, who maintains a relationship with Warner Canada. Indeed, the brief explosion of popularity of east coast Canadian music suffered a similar boom-bust fate to that of many east coast industries such as fishing, coal and steel. That said, this period did produce a substantial industry infrastructure in Atlantic Canada with the establishment of more agencies, management companies, independent labels and recording studios. The current crop of east coast pop stars including Joel Plaskett, Wintersleep, Two Hours Traffic, Rose Cousins, Old Man Luedecke and Jill Barber, to name a few have, unlike their pop and country predecessors, been able to remain on the east coast while having national and international success. None of these artists, though, maintain the sonic and visual signifiers of the east coast Celtic artists from the 1990s.

The combination of deterritorialization and reterritorialization was pivotal for the creation of a Canadian market for east coast Celtic music in the 1990s and the subsequent establishment of an industry infrastructure in Atlantic Canada. Artists like Great Big Sea and The Rankin Family were able to capitalize on an idealized regional identity myth and an international cultural fad to establish themselves on a national stage by combining elements of reterritorialized and deterritorialized sounds and images.

Notes

- 1. The term "east coast music" is widely used in the Canadian music industry to represent music produced in the Atlantic region, often implying Celtic-oriented popular music. I will use this term frequently throughout this article.
- 2. Though not used here, these terms were first applied by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari in their 1972 book (English translation in 1977) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.
- 3. See Hennessy 2008: 16-17 for an account of this bar experience in Vancouver and Calgary.
 - 4. One hundred thousand welcomes.
- 5. "Cèilidh" is Scottish Gaelic for "visit," although, depending on where the term is used, it has come to mean different kinds of social gatherings (pronounced KAY-lee).
 - 6 A cabin
- 7. As in McKay 1994, I will capitalize the word when referring to the formal theoretical group that is being called the *Folk*. I will use the lowercase *folk* to refer to folk music or musicians.
 - 8. See Dick 2004 for a history of the Singalong Jubilee.
- 9. Alpine Lager brewed by Olands in Halifax. The name of the beer actually changes with each chorus to highlight other local brews: Moosehead, Ten Penny and Alexander Keith's.
 - 10. The time gets progressively later with each chorus.
- 11. "Celtic Tides," *Putumayo World Music*, http://www.putumayo.com/en/catalog_item.php?album_id=54.
- 12. See Chapman 1997: 29-44 for a discussion of the processes of creation of a "Celtic" music cultural identity.
- 13. These are Canadian branches of the major international record labels. During the 1990s, EMI, Warner, BMG, Polygram and Sony all had Canadian satellite labels.
- 14. See the official ECMA website for an archive of past award nominees and winners.
- 15. This term refers to a specific number of recordings sold in a particular country. Platinum indicates 100,000 units sold in Canada. In the United States,

platinum certification requires sales of 1,000,000 units. For more information, see the *Canadian Recording Industry Association* website: http://www.cria.ca/cert.php.

16. See McDonald and Sparling 2010: 315-316, for a discussion of how the Barra MacNeils employed this same strategy to achieve success with their 1995 album *The Question*.

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