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"Voice" or "Sound" in Two Contemporary Finnish Healing Modalities[1]

***Key words*:** linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, metaphoric voice, physical voice, healing modalities, Finnish healing, wailers, healing voice, meditative song, sound therapy.

***Abstract*:** The author presents the results of his extensive fieldwork studying the phenomenon of 'lament revival' in contemporary Finland. He analyses the practices of two contemporary Finnish organizations devoted to "healing" through some sort of use of *ääni*, 'voice', consistently developing an argument that they take two different metacultural stances (two "politics of culture") - the one "modernist" and the other "postmodern".

This article is based on 11 months of fieldwork in 2008–2009, and six weeks more in 2010, focused on the so-called "lament revival" in contemporary Finland and particularly on the one lament-revivalist organization. My fieldwork included participant-observation in, and audio and video recording of, six lament courses; interviews with 12 lament course participants (alumni); videorecording of lament performances in two church services; a series of interviews with a group of women in the small Finnish town of Ähtäri who have continued as a group of "lament sisters" in the years since they participated in a lament course (2006); and analysis of media coverage of the "revival", including interviews with journalists who had provided the coverage and analysis of four documentaries on the contemporary lamenters produced by the Finnish Broadcasting Com-

pany. Given that my contact with the lamenters began in 2003, my attention to another group – Harmonic Song[2] – starting in 2008, is relatively new. This work too, however, has involved participant observation (in two courses) and interviewing.

My investigation, though it builds on excellent earlier work on "the three lives of Karelian lament," the latest being the so-called revival (Tenhunen 1999; 2006; 2007; see below for a summary of Tenhunen's findings), is unique in several ways. First, English-language anthropological studies of Finland are quite rare (for an exception, see the rich ethnographic work of Karen Armstrong, 2004). Second, as far as I know, only one other investigator of contemporary lament has participated and not just observed or recorded, performing his own laments with others (Briggs 2004), and that was in South America. Third, mine is the first published anthropological investigation of a lament *revival*. Finally, the uniqueness of my study consists partly in the uniqueness of this lament revival, which has reinvented the Karelian lament tradition *as a therapeutic practice*; that unique focus, in turn, invites the comparison, provided here, between contemporary lamenting and another local (Helsinki-based) use of the singing voice as a healing modality (the group *Harmonic Song*, described below).

Local ideas and practices of healing are, of course, of central importance in medical anthropology. In the 1960s those interested in "symbolic healing" took inspiration from Lévi-Strauss (1963), in which the late structuralist compared a shaman's childbirth chanting to the process of psychoanalysis. More recently, linguistic anthropologists have turned their analytic gaze on forms of, and discourses on, psychotherapy (Carr 2006; Smith 2005). The models of self and therapy that Smith and Carr describe at least implicitly consider "finding one's own voice" a crucial step toward leading a healthy life.

Independent of this trend, notions of "voice" have been of great importance in linguistic anthropology for almost a century, starting with Sapir's early work (1949 [1927]), later exploding under the influence of Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1981 [1975]; Agha 2005, 2007). Voice in this tradition is metaphorical. More recently some linguistic anthropologists have begun to focus on the physical voice (Black 2011; Briggs 1993; Feld, et al. 2004; Hill 1995; Taylor 2009),[3] and thus

on “vocality.” Vocality refers both to the sheer fact of having a voice, and to vocal qualities – including, from the viewpoint of linguistic anthropologists, the “twang” of country western singers (Feld, et al. 2004), the putative nasality of New Yorkers’ speech (Kolker, Alvarez 1988) – or of *bhut*-spirits in Bangladesh (Wilce 1998) – or the sobbing voice of lamenters (Briggs 1993) that contrasts sharply with the highly resonant “operatic voice” (Smith, Finnegan, Karnell 2005). Sobbing, along with words and melody, appear in the “ideal type” (Weber 1999 [1904]) of lament, though not in all performances; lament has been defined as “sung-texted weeping” (Schieffelin 1987, p. 252). Feld et al. write, “Vocality is a social practice that is everywhere locally understood as an implicit index of authority, evidence, and experiential truth”. “Vocality has become the site where linguistic and musical anthropology most strikingly conjoin a poetics and politics of culture” (2004, p. 341–2).

The metaphoric and the literal/embodied models of voice in linguistic anthropology have their counterparts in the contemporary Finnish alternative healing scene. This article describes two organizations in contemporary Finland devoted to “healing” through some sort of use of *ääni*, ‘voice.’ After distinguishing what each means by *hoitavuus* ‘healing-ness’ and *ääni* ‘voice, sound’ I present an argument for seeing the two organizations taking two different metacultural stances (two “politics of culture,”) the one “modernist” and the other “postmodern”.

The first organization – *Äänellä itkijät*, ‘Those who cry with voice’ (henceforth, *ÄI-Lamenters*) – aims to revive the Finno-Ugrian tradition of *itkuvirsi*, ‘lament’ or literally, cry-hymns.[4] The second calls itself *Harmoninen laulu* ‘Harmonic [or Overtone] song’ (henceforth *H-song*). *H-song* is not particularly revivalist but arose in response to the teachings of French visiting ancient music scholar Iegor Reznikoff in the mid-1980’s. In addition to sharing a common goal – healing – and a common means (*ääni*), the organizations share some students in common. Both organizations’ courses attract middle-class Finnish women. Given my focus on the “lament revival”, how much less fieldwork I have done with *Harmoninen Laulu*, and the apparent total absence of any previous scholarly investigations of the group, I am unable to characterize the Finnish

women who participate in their courses beyond mentioning, once again, that this group overlaps with the group that has taken advantage of lament courses.

In regards to lamenting, several sometimes overlapping motives lead Finns to participate in *ÄI-Lament* courses. Something like a third of participants claim some roots in Karelia and are attracted to the course out of a desire to learn this tradition from the Finno-Ugrian region; in fact, even non-Karelian participants sometimes voice a similar interest in the tradition per se. Second, given the way the courses are advertised – as *Healing Lament* workshops – many come expecting to learn to use lament to find some kind of emotional healing. Thirdly, related to the expectation of a therapeutic effect, an estimated one third to one half of *ÄI*-course participants are therapists of one sort or other, including dance, art, music, drama, and sex therapists, as well as psychiatric nurses and social workers. They come not only for themselves, but in some cases to learn a new method relevant to their clients or patients. Finally, even those course participants who are not highly trained therapists tend to be from the middle class as measured in relation to their relatively high levels of education and their white collar jobs, an observation that is hardly surprising, since courses involve nontrivial costs in money and time (a whole weekend).

In sum, Finns who defy cultural stereotypes in order to take lament courses are often seeking both personal emotional release and a greater knowledge of "their own" traditions[5]. Finnish folklorist and ethnomusicologist Anna-Liisa Tenhunen did pioneering studies of modern Finnish lamenters[6], leading her to the following conclusions about lamenting (in and beyond *ÄI-Lament* courses) as a social phenomenon in contemporary Finland:

"Contemporary lamenters may be women from anywhere in Finland, and their reasons for taking it up differ considerably: to seek their own roots, to study folk music, to explore an interesting cultural phenomenon, to provide a therapeutic outlet for their emotions, to express themselves or to admire a traditional aesthetic. The lamenting boom among contemporary women has received great publicity, and the media have done much to arouse interest in the art" (Tenhunen 2007, p. 33–34).[7]

As I mentioned earlier, *ÄI-Lamenters* and *H-Song* sharing the goal of healing, a common focus on *ääni* 'voice, sound' as a therapeutic modality, and even some common students. The commonalities, however, are deceptive. The two organizations understand *ääni* and *hoitavuus* quite differently, and describing that difference is the first goal of this article. The fact that the Finnish term *ääni* can signify both 'voice' and 'sound' is part of what makes the two Finnish healing modalities particularly interesting.

A more idiomatic translation of the Lamenters' name – *Äänellä itkijät* – is "those who cry with *words*". This rendering of *äänellä*[8] (crying *with ääni*, understood as "words") has very old roots in the Orthodox Karelian villages where lamenters once dominated rites of passage. *ÄI-Lamenters'* courses are called *Hoitava itku* 'Healing lament'[9]. They teach students, mostly women, to put strong feelings to words and music. *ÄI-Lamenters'* courses typically start on a Friday evening and last through late afternoon on Sunday, for a rough total of 14 hours. *H-song* offers several kinds of courses, including one-day *Hoitava ääni*, 'Healing voice' – or, as Reznikoff prefers, 'Sound therapy'– and *Meditatiivinen laulu*, 'Meditative Song' courses. Note thus that, for both, *ääni* appears in either their group name or the name of their courses[10], and *hoitava*[11] appears in the names of each respective organization's courses. The difference in the two organizations' approach to healing reflects their unique interpretations of *ääni*. Whereas the lamenters insist on the importance of putting feelings to song and words, *H-song's* main webpage (http://www.harmoninenlaulu.org/cds/sanaton_laulu.htm) is subtitled "wordless song." The *H-song* organization teaches that healing comes from making (vocal) "sound" – not words but pure vowel tones. Singing these pure vowel sounds in a particular way (a particular phonatory quality) can produce a clear overtone series, the effect of which is a bit other-worldly, as one teacher of *Healing voice* put it during a course (numbers between parentheses in the transcript represent pause lengths):

Transcript 1: Meditative song course, June 2010

Speaker: Teacher of the course (T)

1.1 T: ni siellä voi kuulua	then there can be heard
1.2 sen perussävelen	over the basic sound (1)
1.3 yläpuolella	a higher tone— an overtone (.2)
1.4 sellanen hyvin pyöreä huilumainen	that kind of very round flute-like
1.5 joskus metallinen ääni joka	or sometimes metallic sound that
1.6 tuntuu tulevan jostain	seems to come from some
1.7 toisesta maailmasta	different world

This article draws on the results of a two-year (2008 – 2010) ethnographic project designed primarily to answer the questions, *Why would lament be revived in Finland?* and *Why now?* The *Healing voice* (or "*Sound therapy*") courses caught my attention during the lament study, when some lament course alumni pointed out similarities and differences between *Healing lament* courses and *Healing voice* courses in interviews. In what follows, I analyze each group's linguistic self-presentation as to the significance of *ääni* and *hoitava*, and conclude with a discussion of how their teachings also index different positions related to "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1997), and different metacultural stances. We cannot ignore the relationship between, on the one hand, the local Finnish discourse that goes on in both sorts of courses, and on the other hand globally circulating New Age ideas. For example, one easily finds on the web several counterparts of the Finnish discourse on therapeutic voice – a) discourse on "vibrations" and their effects on the body (Gardner 2010), b) depictions of the body as consisting of vibrations, and c) sales pitches for classes that train people to exercise "the healing voice" (Purce 2010) in order to achieve "sound transformations" (Transformations 2010a, 2010b). Still, global connections do not erase the significance of the local *Finnish* story that the two organizations together – and the broader context of various sorts of technologies of the self available in Finland – have to tell us.

In what follows, I first present a historical-ethnographic account of Karelian lament and its use in *Healing lament* courses, and later offer an account of *Healing voice* courses. Both descriptions are grounded in transcripts of recordings made in the two sorts of courses.

Karelian Lament

Lament traditions like the Karelian *itkuvirsi* have thousands of years of history in the area where speakers of Finno-Ugrian languages dwell. Funerary and wedding laments thrived in Orthodox areas of Russian Karelia until the dawn of the twentieth century, and funeral laments have persisted in some villages – preserved by one or two elderly women – until today. Skilled *itkijänaiset*, 'cry women' (i.e. lamenters with noteworthy ability) would lead mortuary rituals, and other women would join them in choral response. Villagers understood the singing of these laments in a sort of shamanic model. These crying songs magically aided the newly deceased in their journey to *tuonela*, 'the other world' (Stepanova 2009a, 2009b; Tolbert 1990a, 1990b). Across the region, it was fairly common that cry-women would not only use their skills at the time of communal rituals, but also at times of personal suffering. Present-day Finnish lamenters (i.e. lament revivalists) look to those "occasional" or "situational" laments (Nenola 2002) as a model for their own, and a tool for legitimating what they see as the healing quality of neo-laments – i.e., their therapeutic potential vis-à-vis contemporary lamenters.

It is not only the case that in some general sense Karelian people understood lamenting and shamanic songs as similar. It is also important to note that Karelian laments had to be performed in an esoteric register of the language called the *itkukieli*, 'lament language,' or *itkusanat*, 'lament words,' i.e. lament's particular linguistic-poetic-textual-pragmatic features. Those features included free meter, pervasive alliteration, and (perhaps most importantly) a conventional set of at least 1400 "metaphoric" or "formulaic expressions," "circumlocutions," or "substitute names" (Stepanova 2009a, 2009b)[12]. Use of the *itkukieli* 'lament register' marked all laments as sacred (*Wilce in preparation b*). That is, spirits of various sorts who *only* understood the *itkukieli* were the prime addressees of all lament genres – laments for funerals, weddings, and other farewell rituals, as well as "situational laments." These "lament words" or expressions comprise an "avoidance register" (Silverstein 2010) – i.e., they were obligatorily used to avoid directly addressing at least one class of spirit (the dead or *vainajat*) but also the bride, etc. That is, the lament register provided metaphoric alternates to

standard kin terms (*Wilce in preparation a*). *Itkukieli* had to be used even in the situational laments described above, in which cry women went off by themselves into quiet wooded spots to bemoan their own lives.

The *ÄI-Lamenters* picked up the traditional Karelian phrase designating lament – *äänellä itkeminen* 'crying with voice [words]' – to use (in slightly modified form) in their name (*Äänellä itkijät*). Evidence that *äänellä*, at least in that phrase, really means "with words" comes from interviews (Tolbert's [1990] and mine [2008 – 2009]). Karelian cry-women told Tolbert that "men cry only with eyes" whereas cry-women (and perhaps women more generally, insofar as they participated in lamenting at funerals, weddings, etc.) "cry with voice/words" (Tolbert 1990b: 81). We can also infer that *äänellä* signifies "with words" from the facts of traditional lament practice and the language ideology that surrounded it. That is, it was the *itkukieli* that gave laments their sacred power. That, at least, is the upshot of interviews with Karelian lamenters conducted by Alexandra and Eila Stepanova (A. Stepanova 2003; E. Stepanova 2009a, 2009b). Thus, even considerations of voice quality (the "crying voice" (Urban 1988; Feld, et al. 2004) took a back seat – along with melody, rhythm, and a convincing demonstration of feeling – to the linguistic features of Karelian lament.

Here we must mention two caveats. First, we do not know all of the semiotic form-function intersections that might have produced the following fact: the laments of different cry women possessed different degrees of magical efficacy. For example, we do not know how an expertly performed wedding lament produced a lasting marital bond while other laments did not (Tolbert 1990a, b). Second, at least in its modern incarnation in the service of healing, the practice of lament explicitly entails the crying voice; that is, voice quality is indeed crucial to the realization of the healing result promised for those who practice *äänellä itkeminen*. All of the vocal-anatomic and acoustic-physical features that make sobbing different from opera singing – less resonant in the purely acoustic sense but more resonant in the sense of potentiating a particular kind of intersubjectivity (Smith, et al. 2005; Wilce, Black in preparation) – are of vital importance. As *ÄI* founder Pirkko Fihlman says, one cannot lament without words, but

neither can one lament without a demonstration of strong feelings, indexed by the sobbing-singing voice[13]. In the context of lament and of the Karelian semiotic ideologies surrounding it, the contrast between men's and women's *itkeminen* 'crying'- with "eyes" vs. "voice" – must have included the open sobs of women's *itkut*/ *itkuvirret*. And thus for lament revivalists and particularly *ÄI-Lamenters, ääni* – despite evidence to the contrary – is not only "voice" in a metaphoric sense but also the embodied, physical voice.

The past pervasiveness of lament traditions might lead us to ask whether there are others besides the Karelian tradition getting a makeover in this New Age. As far as I know, the so-called "lament revival" in Finland (so-called because some non-Finnish Karelians and some academics consider neo-lament to be so different from the Karelian tradition as to constitute a reinvention) is unique, with one possible exception (Maori lament, http://www.ourpacificocean.com/newzealand_maori_music/index.htm). Where lament has not been driven out of existence, where it is still hanging on or even (relative to the rest of the contemporary world) thriving, its function is not therapeutic, despite others' claims to the contrary (Gamliel 2007). And where it has perished, nowhere besides Finland and New Zealand (among Maoris, Sinclair 1990, and Daniel Rosenblatt, personal communication, 2002) has there been anything like a revival.

The meanings of "äänellä" and "hoitava" in contemporary lament courses

The *ÄI-Lamenters* became an officially government-registered organization in 2001, following several years in which a very small handful of lament courses were organized. Documentarian Kristiina Tuura filmed one of them (in 1998). *ÄI*'s founder and President, Pirkko Fihlman, together with its Vice-President Tuomas Rounakari, show excerpts from the documentary in almost every class they hold. The film highlights the words of those who taught Fihlman when she was just learning – particularly Martta Kuikka's.

Transcript 2: Excerpt from a 1998 documentary filming of a lament class

Speaker: Martta Kuikka

2.1 MK: sanoja on etsittävä	Words have to be sought
ja kerättävä	and collected
2.2 ja jopa kirjoitettava ylös niitä	and even written down,
2.3 jotka on kelvollisia siihen	those that are acceptable in that
itkuvirteen	lament – (4)
2.4 että siis niitä sanoja	that is, those words
pehmennetään ja[14]	are softened, and
2.5 tehdään suloisemmaksi	made sweet.
2.6 ja ne ei saa olla kovia	They can't be hard.
2.6 sanat ei saa olla kovia	The words may not be hard.
2.7 siinä täytyy tapahtua	There must happen
semmonen asia	that sort of thing
2.8 että ne sopii siihen	that those words fit
2.9 itkun ominaisuuteen ne sanat	the character of the lament.

Although Martta Kuikka made no mention of "healing" in the passage from the documentary transcribed above, she stressed what her forebears had – that lament words must be *soft*. Lament words and expressions are "softened" by, among other things, lengthening. This softening (as a metapragmatic comment on morphological lengthening), together with the core denotation of *hoitaa* ('to care for, nurture') exemplifies the feminine quality attributed to lament words – a quality befitting the gender of those who traditionally performed laments.

More than a decade after the lament course captured in the documentary, Pirkko Fihlman was teaching course participants the following:

Transcript 3: Pirkko Fihlman (PF) speaking at an *ÄI-Lamenters'* course, February 2009

3.1 PF: itkukieli on enemmän	Lament language is more
semmosta	that sort of (.5)

3.2 kuvakieltä	pictorial language,
3.3 jossa niinku tavallaan	in which somehow
3.4 puetaan joku SANA	a WORD is dressed up
3.5 eh hyvin kauniisen muotoon	in a very beautiful form or shape,
3.6 ja hyvin hoitavaan muotoon	and a very healing shape.

The soft beauty of the lament register is, for Fihlman, the source of its healing power. She puts special stress on *sana* 'word' (line 3.4, above).

Transcript 4 captures a different moment in the same February 2009 course, in which Fihlman did most of the teaching:

Transcript 4: February 2009 Lament course, second excerpt
Speaker: Pirkko Fihlman (PF)

4.1 PF: mut jos me itketään niin et	But if we cry in a way that
4.2 se itku tulee ulos	the crying comes out
4.3 ni sillon se myöskin	then it also
4.4 vapauttaa ja helpottaa	frees us and brings us relief.
4.5 ja useesti	And many times
4.6 jos et ne saa ne itku saa ne sanat	if crying gets words
4.7 ni sillon se on se mikä hoitaa	it's THEN that it is something that heals,
4.8 koska koska	because, because
4.9 jos niinkun	if, like
4.10 vaan jos ne sanat puuttuu	if there are no words
4.11 ni se pelkkä itku ei ole	then the mere crying isn't —
4.12 ei ole niin sillä tavalla hoitava	it isn't that healing.

Clearly, for the founder of *Äänellä itkijät* (*ÄI-Lamenters*), to cry *with voice* pertains especially to *words* (lines 3.5, 3.6, 4.6, 4.10, in the two transcripts above). The Karelian lament register and its beauty pertain to linguistic-poetic-textual features, and not to voice quality or emotional persuasiveness. To speak

or sing in this old way is to use traditional linguistic features. For the lament revivalists, "voice" is largely a matter of words, despite Fihlman's frequent reminders that feeling and melody are important, too.

Later in the same course, Fihlman was speaking about a lament she had once sung for her husband and his deceased mother.

Transcript 5: February 2009 Lament Course, third excerpt
Speaker: Pirkko Fihlman

5.1 PF: vaan se tunne voitti niin voimakkaasti että	But the feeling won out so strongly
5.2 halus tuoda sen ulos	that one wanted to bring it out,
5.3 ja ja tunte- sanoa sen niinkun	and, and say that feeling
5.4 niinkun itkusanoin	like with lament words.
5.5 se hoiti häntä sillon	And it healed him.

During a 2009 discussion that involved Fihlman, a journalist-documentarian, and myself, Fihlman spoke about lamenting – putting sorrows into words – in terms that evoke the vaguely psychoanalytic or perhaps more generically psychotherapeutic benefit of revealing what has been hidden, i.e. what is unconscious. Whenever an *ÄI-Lament* course is offered, Freud is not far away. Transcript 6 illustrates this:

Transcript 6: Pirkko Fihlman's 2009 discussion with the author and a journalist

6.1 PF: et ihmises[sä] tapahtuu tämmönen	There happens in a person
6.2 just tämmönen vapautuminen	precisely that kind of liberation
6.3 *kun 0* ***uskaltaa*** *avata jonkun*	*when 0* [one][15] ***dares*** *to open*
6.4 sopen tiedätsä	some dark corner, you know,
6.5 sielt sisältä ja	from there inside
6.6 ja joka on kipee	that is hurting

Beyond the President of *ÄI-Lamenters* (Fihlman, Transcript 3-6), at least one participant judged the lament course she had attended successful, because it was an effective imitation of an ideal course of psychotherapy. For her, the "lament process" – developing one's own lament in a safe environment – closely parallels the normative psychotherapeutic process. The former lament course student speaking in Transcript 7 links her embrace of the course and the "lament process" with the therapeutic process as described in books she had read before her lament course.

Transcript 7: Interview with a lament course alumna (M)

7.1 M: itkuprosessisa	In the lament process,
7.2 tässä *Hoitava itku* -prosessissa on ne	in the healing lament process,
7.3 samat samat asiat mutta	there are the same things,
7.4 vähän eri nimet vain	just called something different.

"Healing" and "voice" in *Harmoninen laulu* courses

The contrast between the cultural models, belief systems, or ideologies embraced by the two organizations – *ÄI-Lamenters* and *H-song* – is nowhere clearer than in statements from one regarding the other. The example below (Transcript 8) reflects one *H-song* teacher's view of neo-lamenters' emphasis on words:

Transcript 8: Interview with *H-song* teacher (T), Spring 2009, Excerpt 1- (.) designates a very short pause

8.1 T: My experience is, but when ah
8.2 ahh, when you (.) use words so
8.3 it is, more, you know, it is intellectual, more intellectual
(15 lines omitted)
[The teacher continues, saying that in her own course, what mattered was that the use of the "healing voice"…]
8.18 without any, any connections to words

Note the sharp contrast between the teacher's (T's) words and those of *ÄI* President Pirkko Fihlman to the effect that there are no laments *without words* (see 4.10–4.12, above).

The organization *Harmoninen laulu* or *H-song* arose in Finland in response to the teachings of ancient music scholar, Iegor Reznikoff (Professor of Philosophy, University of Paris X [Nanterre]). Reznikoff began to visit Finland and to offer courses at its only music university (the Sibelius Academy) in the mid–1980's. He still argues that authentic, early Gregorian chant and the sacred singing traditions of peoples around the world hold the secret to inward (but physical) healing. The key, he argues, is the production of certain *vocal sounds* – "pure" vowel sounds sung in a pure tone. These are tones sung without vibrato but with much internal space (a wide open jaw, lips rounded) – tones whose "purity" is unaffected by the fact that, when they are sung, they produce a series of overtones. Reznikoff says this kind of "sound therapy" is something shamans have used for some tens of thousands of years. And what those shamans were doing was manipulating the laws of acoustic physics.

Transcript 9: June 2010 Interview (conducted in English)

Speaker = Professor Iegor Reznikoff (IR),

9.1 IR: Because as a string VIBRATES, the body vibrates

9.2 [according to] … the same LAWS of course, acoustic laws

(5 lines omitted)

9.10 At least we try to sing in just natural intervals[16].

9.11 This has a very strong impact on the body;

9.12 moreover, it has in fact on DEEP consciousness. (15 lines omitted)

9.28 I mean it would have to be I would say PURE sounds

For Reznikoff, the goal of singing with overtones whose vibrations heal our bodies can only be achieved through singing "natural intervals" and "pure sounds." That was the vision that launched *Harmoninen laulu* (*H-song*) in the 1980s.

Reznikoff's personal journey into sacred sound followed an early career as a pianist. It led him eventually to rediscover the acoustics of, for example, Gregorian chant, which he concluded had been a soloistic tradition. In this understanding, medieval church singers produced clear, pure vowels, resulting in overtones that seemed to travel up to – or come from – the heavens, or some Other World. Indeed, that is the theme addressed in the 2010 *Meditative Song* course that the author attended – one of the several sorts of courses *H-song* offers, which overlapped significantly with the content of the *Healing voice* course in which the author participated two years earlier (see Transcript 1).

The key to *H-song*'s teaching is captured well in the following excerpt from an interview with one of the group's popular and regular teachers. Here, J represents the author, and T represents the *Healing voice* teacher. The interview took place in English.

Transcript 10, Interview with *Healing voice* teacher, spring 2009

10.1 J: So it's like vibrating along with the voice, is that re/sonance?/
10.2 T: /No but/ but the voice is vibrating YOU
10.3 J: yes ((voiceless))
10.4 T: Your whole body

Although I used the word voice (10.1), and indeed the particular sound to be learned in *Healing voice* courses is human vocal sound, especially the singing of pure vowels, the H-song teacher clearly represented the voice in its physicality, and in terms of its physical effects.

In Transcript 11 the same teacher offers a minimal vision of how our own vocal resonance could affect our bodies as a whole. Once again here, J is the author and T is the *H-song* teacher.

Transcript 11 Interview with *H-song* teacher, spring 2009, second excerpt

11.1 J: Is there, is there some perspective on the body that is BASIC,
11.2 you may not talk about it

11.3 or, maybe you do, but it underlies the course
11.4 T: Eh, yes, um, when we are working with sound so it's,
11.5 it's, MOSTLY, in this vibration
11.6 because, music and sound, it's, it is vibration. … It's very PHYSICAL.
11.7 So that, you simply you can FEEL the vibration of sound…
11.8 But I, I, I'm not sure that there is a connection for ah for about,
11.9 for example, this when we uhm talk about chakras for example but
11.10 J: ahh
11.11 T: Because this kind of system is (1.0) — it's UNIVERSAL

The *H-song* teacher (T) speaking in Transcript 11 (above) gives stress to the word *universal*, whereas lamenters dwell primarily on the local, Karelian roots of their neo-laments and only occasionally mention that lamenting once occurred around the world. Perhaps because T thought her audience might more easily appreciate a tradition labeled local than one whose globality was obvious, she is anxious to point out the Finnishness of the kind of vocalization she is asking course participants to practice, as Transcript 12 shows us.

Transcript 12: Excerpt from Meditative Song Course, Helsinki, 2010
Speaker: Course teacher

12.1 T: JÖÖ koska	[We sing]"YÖÖ" because
12.2 öö on meijän	"öö" is from our
12.3 suomalais-ugrilaisesta[17] maailmasta	Finno-Ugrian world
12.4 ni lähe tekemään ensiks	So go and make first
12.5 JÖÖ JÖÖ JÖÖ ((all singing))	JÖÖ JÖÖ JÖÖ ((all singing))
(Two minutes omitted)	
12.80 TÄÄ on meijän perin--	THIS is our tra-
12.81 lähempänä meijän perinnettä	closer to our tradition
12.82 miten te muuten selitätte että	How else do you explain, that (.2)
12.83 tossa te teette niinku	you make there
12.84 te oisitte aina tehny	like you had always made

12.85 tollasii arkaaisii ääniі[18]	those kinds of archaic/mystical sounds

If we want a clearly explanation of why overtone singing would be healing –and particularly more healing than singing that is less bright and resonant (Smith, et al. 2005) – the webpages of *Harmoninen laulu* (*H-song,* http://www.harmoninenlaulu.org/cds/sanaton_laulu.htm) include one dedicated to the idea of *Healing voice* (http://www.harmoninenlaulu.org/hoitava_aani.htm). There (Transcript 13) we find an explanation, one with obvious affiliation to globally circulating New Age ideas.

Transcript 13: *H-song* webpage on *Hoitava ääni* course content

13.1 Näitä ääniä kutsutaan	Those sounds are called
13.2 ”ylä-säveliksi” tai ”ala-säveliksi”	overtones, or or undertones,
13.3 ja ne erityisesti auttavat	and they particularly help
13.4 palauttamaan olemukseemme	return our being
13.5 terveen värähtelyn	to healthy vibration.
… (5 lines omitted)	
13.10 Äänet vaikuttavat paitsi kuulon,	Sounds have their effect through hearing,
13.11 myös kehotuntemusten kautta,	and also through embodied knowledge,
13.12 auttaen kehoa rentoutumaan	helping the body relax
13.13 ja voimaan paremmin.	and feel better.
13.14 Äänen hoitava	The healing
13.15 ja eheyttävä vaikutus	and harmonizing/integrating influence of sound
13.16 on luonnollinen ominaisuus	is a natural characteristic
13.17 kaikissa ihmisissä	of all human beings.

Competing pulls: Healing words (lament) and the "crisis of language"

Parallels in twentieth-century Western thought

This article opened with a consideration of medical and linguistic anthropological perspectives on local modes of healing and on local understandings of "voice." I also suggested that examining local meanings would lead to explorations of global circulation and of the cultural politics associated with vocality. I said that linguistic-anthropological discussions of voice had for several decades been influenced primarily by Bakhtin, and had thus treated voice as a metaphor (for social personae).

I would like to introduce a set of questions whose answers must be somewhat speculative: Does the rise of a group defining voice as sound – in sharp distinction from another group for whom voice refers to "words," and healing is a vaguely psychoanalytic process resulting in exposing to the light psychic material that had been hidden – signify a transition from one stage of modernity, or modernist metaculture (Urban 2001), to another? Is it legitimate to understand "voice-as-sound" (a rejection of voice-as-words-with-cathartic-potential) in relationship to what has been described as the postmodern crisis of faith in language and the centered subject (Baym 1992, D'haen 1990)? Will *H-song* someday displace the Lamenters because its courses fit better with who Finns (and perhaps the rest of us) are becoming? And does that mean that "healing" in Finland as elsewhere will evolve in the direction in which *H-song* has already moved, indicating that the self to be healed will be of a different sort than the self targeted by cathartic logocentric therapies?

The "therapeutic self," be it the product of one's own course of psychodynamic therapy or of one's consumption of media and popular culture, has circulated ever more widely for some 80-100 years (Rose 1996). However, it has never lacked for competition. Freud's faith in the healing power of language-in-interaction has ongoing echoes, but thinkers from Nietzsche to Derrida have suffered (and tried to transcend) a crisis of faith in language.

Although Bakhtin and his colleague Volosinov were highly critical of Freudian thought (Todorov 1984), Freud and Bakhtin contributed, each in their own way, to the "decentering of the subject," even though both maintained a kind of confidence in language (Yerushalmi 1992). Whatever faith in language Freud, Breuer, Jung, and other early psychoanalysts might have had, a polyphony of voices certainly emerged on their couches. The notion (Bakhtin 1981 [1975]) that one person's utterance is always already half someone else's – that it resonates with voices which the speaker, writer, or character would scarcely recognize as her own – reflects both strands of twentieth century thought (i.e. faith vs. disbelief in the ability of language to faithfully reveal our innermost truth (Sass 1992).

Freud may have had a substantial faith in language, but both in Europe and the United States, psychoanalysis soon departed from Freudian orthodoxy. One of the interesting American branches of psychoanalysis – one that maintained a Freudian belief in the power of repressed material, but found the repressed and the key to liberation were not where Freud had looked – was Wilhelm Reich's work. Post-Freudian therapists like Wilhelm Reich were part of a proliferation of modes of "body work". Such theories – clear departures from Freudian thought – represent both symptoms of and responses to the crisis of language. Reich found the repressed not in language but in the body. Our muscles, argued Reich, can come to embody psychosexual blocks (Reich 1994). Those blocks represent an embodied voice – for example, metaphorically shouting "no!" to sexual pleasure. Although embodied vocality – the workings of the muscles of chest, throat, and face – was not necessarily Reich's concern, it should have been. Like muscular tension or abdominal cramps, blockages of – or changes to the functioning of – our vocal apparatus (diaphragm, lungs, larynx, tongue, lips, teeth, and the hard and soft tissues of the mouth and nasal passages) are also reflections of psychophysical function. It is precisely this sort of recognition that gives *H-song* its identity as a healing organization.

Body work as the new depth therapy, and psychoanalysis ("the talking cure" Showalter 1985) as the old, represent two very different strands of nineteenth and twentieth century thought about "the voice." *Healing Lament* courses

teach people to find their own “talking cure”. With more than a hint of Freudian influence, lament revivalists cling to their faith in language and specifically its power to collect unto itself overwhelming feelings, and to purge them. *H-song,* like Reichian thought, locates the contradictions and agonies of (post)modern life in the interstices of the body, and prescribes a cure that works without the now distrusted medium of language.

Conclusion

The two organizations – small-scale social movements, perhaps – teach people to use two very different semiotic modalities – *texted* weeping (Schieffelin 1987, p. 252) vs. the wordless singing of pure vowel sounds – as royal roads to that which is buried within and in need of healing. They may well attract two different audiences – a topic for future research. If it is true that late modern (Martin 1992) or postmodern ways of being entail a loss of faith in language, and that various versions of (post)modernity may have followings in contemporary post-industrial societies, *Healing voice* courses may well attract a clientele less convinced of the necessity to “go straight to the emotion” using words (Sirpa Heikkinen, 2008 interview) and more comfortable with cultivating wordless sounds that do their own work on the body. *Lament* courses, on the other hand, may attract participants who are a) older, b) more likely to have Karelian roots, and c) more likely to embrace a logocentric “therapeutic self”.

Leaders of both organizations – *ÄI-Lamenters* and *H-song* – draw inspiration from antiquity. But *H-song* draws on ancient musical traditions from around the world (with the occasional exception, see Transcript 12 above), while *ÄI-Lamenters* is an explicitly Karelia-centric organization, even if it occasionally asserts the near universality of lament traditions. At least some, if not all, of the courses offered by the umbrella group *H-song* present Gregorian chant as a model of meditative and therapeutic singing. *H-song* discourse represents chant as a style of singing that has long been lost, one involving soloistic singing in ancient Greek musical scales, with pure vowels, and overtones. If this betrays at least some Christian influence on *H-song*, *ÄI-Lamenters'* discourse is ambivalent toward Christianity. On the one hand, *ÄI-* founder Pirkko Fihlman is among several in the group for whom lament is a spiritual practice,

connected with her Orthodox faith. Indeed the parts of Karelia where lament thrived were Orthodox, and Orthodoxy was far more willing than Lutheranism (which dominates western Finland) to tolerate the custom. Yet, in the last decade, at least some Finnish Lutheran churches have not only tolerated but apparently blessed the modern lamenters. Lutheran parishes actually host many of *ÄI-Lamenters*' courses. Still, several leaders of the so-called lament revival stress the "pagan" roots and resonances of Karelian lament.

In general, the question of whether to locate *itkuvirsi* in pre-Christian antiquity or in some relation to Orthodoxy or even Lutheranism is secondary to *ÄI-Lamenters*, whereas it is of primary importance to assert the clear Karelian cultural roots of even (as they claim) modern Finnish neo-lament. By way of comparison, although Gregorian chant may constitute the default model for therapeutic singing in *H-song* courses, many of which are also sponsored by Lutheran parishes, *H-song* – following Reznikoff – frames overtone singing as a global heritage of music and healing. This is to underscore the contrasting metacultural stances of the two kinds of courses and the two organizations, the different politics of culture the two groups embody. *ÄI-Lamenters* have a great deal to say about culture – they wear their culture on their sleeve – whereas *H-song* courses like *Healing voice* rarely invoke the concept at all. Insofar as they do invoke culture, such courses emphasize the globally dispersed traditions of chant and shamanism while *ÄI-Lamenters* focus quite narrowly on Karelia.

Still, metaculture need not be so discursively explicit as I have suggested. *H-song* courses, without directly addressing culture, weave together disparate cultural threads – the particular sacrality of Gregorian chant and an ethnomusicological interpretations of shamanic techniques. They combine two old cultural forms into a new (pastiche) form, exemplifying what Urban (2001) calls a "metaculture of modernity." On one level, *ÄI-Lamenters* also offer a modern synthesis of older cultural "stuff" – weaving their representations of "Karelian tradition" together with vaguely psychoanalytic (broadly therapeutic) "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1997). But, once again, fundamental differences cannot be ignored. Vocal exercises fill up most of the time in *Healing Voice* courses, leaving almost no room for lectures about either chant, medieval

Christianity, shamanism, or any other global musical tradition. By contrast, *ÄI-Lament* courses feature a balance between lament exercises and lectures on such topics as Karelian culture and the features of Karelian lament – specifically, the (free) meter, melodic patterns, and vocal qualities of old Karelian lamenters, captured on archival recordings. Given the revivalist goal of *ÄI-Lamenters*, it is not surprising that they not only model what a particular lament might sound like, nor set students free to attempt to lament based on anything as simple as how to modulate the production of one sung vowel. Instead, they teach students precisely what they mean by *ääni*, exposing them to the poetics of old lament texts and the traditional melodic and rhythmic means of *giving voice to feeling*.

Vocality, thus, is indeed "the site where linguistic and musical anthropology most strikingly conjoin a poetics and politics of culture" (Feld et al. 2004, p. 342). This essay has described two different therapeutic harnessings of human vocality – one (*ÄI-Lamenters*) that prioritizes the metaphoric sense of *ääni* as words, while also stressing the importance of feelings-as-expressed-also-through-the-sobbing-voice; and another (*H-song*) whose pedagogy makes the voice a healing resonator whose effects cover the singer's whole body.[1] Healing for the former entails catharsis of the sort people have sought, for instance, in psychodynamic therapy. For the latter, healing entails re-tuning the body through a kind of sympathetic vibration – "the voice vibrates YOU" and sets things right internally. *ÄI* and *H-song* envision a different sort of interiority as the site of healing. The former offers a faith not only in language but in the centered self, while the latter reminds us of the "logic of late capitalism" vis-à-vis the "end of the body" (or of the centered self vis-à-vis the body): "The self has retreated inside the body, is a witness to itself, a tiny figure in a cosmic landscape, which is the body. This scene is one that is both greatly exciting and greatly bewildering" (Martin 1992, p. 125). More work is needed to better theorize the relationship between vocalities, cultural politics (and logics), and metaculture. Such work should shed light on heterogeneous cultural practices in which the body becomes its own healer, the soulish voice its own therapist.

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Notes

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2. As I say later, the group's Finnish name is *Harmoninen Laulu*, and throughout most of this paper I refer to them as *H-Song.*

3. Hill 1995 deploys a notion of voice that defies the dichotomy I have proposed.

4. *Virsi* today signifies a hymn or sacred song in some Christian tradition. It is unclear what the older Karelian word *virzi* (Eila Stepanova, personal communication, January 2011) meant. The compound word *itkuvirsi* denotes lament as a crying song. The question as to whether referring to laments as *virret* (plural of *virsi*) indexes their sacredness (i.e., in some pre-Christian tradition) is unclear.

5. "Their own" in quote marks indicates my attempt at neutrality in relation to Finnish feelings about the larger Finno-Ugrian cultural world, and specifically the tendency, traceable at least since the time of Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884, DuBois 1995, Utriainen 1998, Anttonen 2003, 2005), to treat the cultural contributions of (for example) Ingrians and Karelians as "Finnish."

6. See also Rounakari 2005 and Miettinen 2005. Documentarians have made at least four films of contemporary Finnish lamenters, including Tuura (1998), Laurinen and Leinonen (2001) and Härmä 2004.

7. The sentence immediately preceding the quote reads thus: "Having a Karelian background no longer matters." Toward this statement I am ambivalent. As I have said, a large minority of lament course participants have either a "Karelian background" or some sort of identification with Karelia and Karelian culture.

8. The word *äänellä's – llä* suffix indicates the *allative* case, which has among its common meanings, the" 'instrument' by means of which an action is performed" (Karlsson 2002: 115).

9. Note that, although *itku* technically means 'a cry' or 'crying,' among lament revivalists, it is an abbreviated form of *itkuvirsi*, 'lament,' or designates the same thing (not unmarked crying, but crying with words, melody, etc.).

10. I am treating the *Hoitava Ääni* courses as the ultimate expression of *Harmoninen laulu* (H-song). I attended one *Hoitava* Ääni course, and one *Meditative Song* course. Although I was only able to record and closely analyze the latter, because I had attended the *Healing voice* course, I was able to pay particular attention to the portions of the day-long *Meditative Song* course that were nearly identical to my *Healing voice* course. Moreover, the two were taught by the same woman.

11. *Hoita-va* is the active present participle of the Finnish verb *hoitaa,* 'manage, treat, nurse back to health' (and hence, loosely, 'heal').

12. This list of alternative terms for the "circumlocutions" that mark lament registers in the Ingrian (Nenola 2002) and Karelian (A. Stepanova 2003) derives from Eila Stepanova, personal communication, August 2010).

13. The description is what Weber (1999 [1904]) called an "ideal type." There are many exceptions to the generalizations Fihlman or I have invoked from time to time. For example, archival recordings include laments without sobbing – for instance those of Domna Huovinen, as Haapoja reminds us (Heidi Haapoja, personal communication, February 2011).

14. The passive present form *pehmennetään* derives from the verb *pehmentää*, which is not used often, and never in regards to *sanoja*, 'words.'

15. The zero-person constructions have no overt subject, and the predicate verb appears in the 3rd person singular form. The implied subject is translated in English as you or one." "The zero person finds a referent in the immediate speech context if someone of the participants identifies with it. This openness, non-specificity and potentiality of indexical reference makes it basically dissimilar to personal pronouns" (Laitinen 2006, p. 209, 230).

16. Reznikoff is contrasting natural intervals with the artificial intervals of the tempered scale (i.e., of the piano).

17. Among the many Finns who might invoke the term "Finno-Ugrian" in and in regards to the contemporary cultural scene are those involved in neo-shamanism and neo-paganism (personal communication, Heidi Haapoja, February 2011).

18. Haapoja believes that in this context *arkaaisii ääni* does not denote sounds produced in prehistoric time. Rather, it seems to be a synonym for "mystical" or "holy" (Heidi Haapoja, personal communication, February 2011).

It is also true that *H-song* teachers offer private sessions in which *their* voice carries out healing work on clients' bodies.