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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* by Theodore Gracyk; *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity and Popular Music* by Lori Burns and Mélissee Lafrance

Review by: Jaqueline Warwick

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In one of several provocative strategies, Murray opens the canon to a more organic repertory, one demonstrating a line of development. The interlinear trope “Gaudeamus hodie” can supplement the Mass for Christmas Day that is included in the Norton anthology. In his discussion of anthologies as canons, Murray asks *what* history is created, and what values are embedded therein. Thus, Palisca might have chosen Perotin’s gradual *Viderunt omnes* to relate to the chant in the Mass for Christmas Day, instead of the Gradual for St. Stephen’s Day, *Sederunt principes*. The student could in this way discern the development from chant around 1000 to the mass with tropes of about 1100 to the setting as Notre Dame polyphony of around 1200. Murray takes the case further: he would choose as his “requisite” Palestrina mass the *Missa hodie Christus natus est*, also based on one of the chants from the Christmas Mass. In Murray’s pedagogy, musical examples become “part of an unfolding world . . . not *the* history but a history that encapsulates values of change and continuity, of borrowing and transformation” (p. 234).

Given the breadth and imagination of its discourse, *Teaching Music History* is essential reading for all musicologists who teach. The contributors’ devotion to teaching will stimulate readers. I urge that our discipline consider the model of this compilation seriously, pursuing Mary Natvig’s recommendation to study the teaching of music history as a critical component of musicology.

JAMES R. BRISCOE

I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity, by Theodore Gracyk. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001. xi, 292 pp.

Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity and Popular Music, by Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance. New York: Routledge, 2002. xix, 255 pp.

My former dissertation advisor has a favorite story about popular music and identity: a professor at a large American university designs and implements a “History of Rock ‘n’ Roll” class for general enrollment. Thrilled to be introducing a university class on music that plays a vital role in students’ lives, he carefully prepares lectures on a wide array of genres, styles, and performers of popular music throughout the twentieth century. Aglow with happy expectations, he turns to his course evaluations at the end of the semester. The first comment reads: “This course sucks—no Blue Öyster Cult.”

Anyone who has taught this kind of class can almost certainly supply a similar anecdote; students’ emotional investments in popular music are so profound that any slight to their preferred artist is bound to be felt as a personal affront. Music from the Western art tradition, of course, can and does inspire deep and valuable commitments from students, but these are generally of a

more consciously reasoned nature. It is difficult to imagine such a petulant response to a class on seventeenth-century music that omitted J. J. Froberger.

But why should a teenager in the mid 1990s feel so strongly about an obscure heavy metal band from the early seventies? Why should an acquaintance at a cocktail party be so offended at my casual remark that Robert Johnson improved dramatically at playing blues guitar because he practiced, and not because he sold his soul to the devil as the legend posits? Why should a neighbor in my apartment building feel the need to spend an evening alone playing the Supremes' "Living in Shame" repeatedly and at maximum volume? Popular music—and I do not mean merely *contemporary* music heard on the radio, for listeners often form allegiances that transcend time and place—plays a crucial role in forging senses of self in ways that are important to understand but difficult to explain. Two recent books, *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity and Popular Music* and *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity*, grapple with the complexities of popular music and identity.

Theodore Gracyk's *I Wanna Be Me* is less a book about popular music than a book about the philosophical issues at stake in producing and listening to popular music. As such, it raises important questions about meaning in music, issues of appropriation, and the politics of gender. Who is responsible when brutish fans misinterpret an anti-rape song as a celebration of misogyny? How are we to understand the notion of authorship when listening to "cover" versions? To what extent can rock music be understood as masculine—and can sound have a gender at all? These are among the questions thoughtfully—and, for the most part, satisfyingly—explored in Gracyk's work.

Gracyk, a professor of philosophy whose scholarly interests focus on aesthetics in rock music, begins by drawing an important distinction between mass art and popular culture. Like popular culture, mass art relies upon a vernacular language in order to be accessible to most members of a society—whether or not one is a fan of Justin Timberlake, his music is comprehensible to most ears because it draws on a conventional vocabulary of sounds and gestures. In Gracyk's formulation, mass art differs from popular culture in that it relies on mass production and dissemination, so that fans of Timberlake around the globe can enjoy his work without having any contact with him or firsthand knowledge of his lived experience. A musician rooted in a local scene, on the other hand, trades in familiarity with specific events and locales, and interacts with an audience exclusively through live performance, thus participating in popular culture but not mass art. This differentiation is useful for understanding the connection between musicians who sell millions of records and recording artists who count their fans in the hundreds. The actual number of record sales has no bearing on whether or not one is a mass artist; for Gracyk, that kind of popularity is beside the point.

Mass art is often despised for its commodifying ways; critics assert that "authentic" musical experiences ought to connect listeners to performers and bring people closer together in an ongoing process of musicking (Christopher

Small's influential term conceiving music as an activity). The paradox of mass-disseminated, commercial recordings is that listening to them can be at once an isolating and deeply intimate practice. Instead of sitting by the fireside making music with family members in some idealized folk tradition, the listener of commercial records can retreat to her bedroom to partake alone, shutting out siblings and parents. At the same time, the persona encountered through the cherished recording—what Gracyk terms a *token*—may seem closer and more sympathetic than anyone in her actual community, in spite of the fact that listener and performer will probably never meet. What is more, the listener can feel a sense of community with the millions of others presumably interacting with tokens in their own bedrooms around the world.

As in his earlier work, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*,¹ Gracyk is interested for the most part in music that uses the vocabulary and conventions of rock: guitars, drumkit, untutored vocal styles, production values that emulate concert performances, and the valorization of expressive sincerity—this last concern being central to an ideology of authenticity which holds that interpreting the music of professional songwriters is less worthy than writing and performing one's own, ostensibly unmediated, material. Gracyk is conversant with the work of many of the most influential scholars working in the area of popular music studies, writers whose fields range from musicology to sociology, cultural studies, and mass communications. His engaging writing style often draws on his own experiences with popular music, and he illuminates his theoretical concepts with references to musical examples from a wide range of genres and eras. Occasional errors imply that this breadth may sometimes overreach his familiarity; for example, a mention of Neil Young's "Before the Gold Rush" presumably refers to Young's "After the Gold Rush," an apocalyptic vision rather than a prelapsarian fantasy (pp. 64–65). The reader should not doubt, however, that here is a scholar who is invested in rock music as a fan and as a critical thinker. It is small wonder that this book was identified as "Book of the Year" (along with Gary Giddins's *Bing Crosby: The Early Years*) by the U.S. branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. For the reader interested in the issues and concerns of popular music studies, *I Wanna Be Me* provides an excellent introduction.

One of the most provocative sections of the book tackles the question of appropriation—what kind of musician has "gotta right to sing the blues?" By tracing biographies of songs such as "Goodnight Irene" (popularized in the 1950s by a white folk quartet, the Weavers, and credited to black bluesman Leadbelly, but probably derived from a nineteenth-century minstrel tune), Gracyk ably illustrates the cross-pollinations and borrowings that keep popular music vibrant and meaningful. He then ponders the complexity of musical appropriation by considering reactions to different kinds of borrowings:

1. Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

It is often asserted, with minimal argument, that appropriation is fine unless one belongs to a dominant cultural group. No one, so far as I can tell, has ever criticized the Navajo people for appropriating drypainting and weaving techniques. No one sees any problem in African Americans in New York's South Bronx creating hip-hop music by borrowing Jamaican DJ practices and Puerto Rican syncopation from recent immigrants. Yet many cultural theorists and persons of color believe that appropriations by white Europeans and Americans from other cultures are automatically exploitative and fundamentally wrong. (Indeed, many recent writers treat "appropriation" as synonymous with "wrongful cultural appropriation.") Since rock would not exist without appropriation, this is a deeply troubling charge against rock.² (pp. 96–97)

Gracyk makes a convincing case for more nuanced understandings of appropriation. He distinguishes between the *hybridization* that gives rise to new musical styles, the *immersion* of respectful musicians who endeavor to learn the traditions of cultures not their own, and *aestheticism*, when sounds and other signs are used to create an interesting effect without any acknowledgment of their original significance or function. This last kind of appropriation is most offensive in Gracyk's formulation.

Unsurprisingly, much of this discussion hinges on Paul Simon's controversial 1986 *Graceland* and the criticisms that have followed its release. Simon recorded much of this album in Johannesburg during the years of the UNESCO boycott of the South African music industry (although, Gracyk notes, he did not technically violate the ban, which prohibited only public performances). In creating wonderful tunes such as "Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes," "I Know What I Know," and "You Can Call Me Al," Simon worked with Black South African and Senegalese musicians such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Youssou N'Dour. Recording with Simon launched many of these musicians to international fame, and Simon shared credits and royalties fairly, as he did with his American *Graceland* collaborators, Louisiana's Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters and Los Angeles band Los Lobos (and, presumably, with the more famous musicians heard on the record, such as the Everly Brothers and Linda Ronstadt).

Nevertheless, Louise Meintjes (with whose authoritative work on *Graceland* Gracyk does not engage), Timothy Taylor, and George Lipsitz are among many scholars who have criticized the symbolic relationships enacted in *Graceland*: Simon superimposed his voice as a soloist singing new melodies and "lyrics about cosmopolitan postmodern angst over songs previously

2. Gracyk cites the work of anthropologist Michelle Moody-Adams, who problematizes assumptions that cultures are internally integrated and self-contained. He also responds to Martha Bayles's wish for contemporary rock music to return to its blues roots and regain its "soul." See Michelle Moody-Adams, *Fieldwork in Familiar Places: Morality, Culture and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Martha Bayles, *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

situated within the lives and struggles of aggrieved Black communities.”³ Gracyk reprimands critics like these for allowing a repugnance for the commodification of music through the mechanisms of mass art to color their responses to a case of hybridization, the kind of process that is crucial to the continued vitality of music. South African music-making, he argues, was unharmed by the *Graceland* phenomenon: the original meanings of the songs were not changed by their new contexts, and Simon and Warner Bros. thus did no damage. Although Gracyk avoids stating explicitly which kind of appropriation is involved in *Graceland*, his rebuttals of Taylor and Lipsitz suggest that he considers Simon to have engaged in a benign, perhaps even beneficial, act of hybridization. Simon’s own statements about the record, in his liner notes and elsewhere, seem more in keeping with the attitude Gracyk has identified as aestheticism: “exoticism for the sake of novelty” (p. 145).

Gracyk calls for responsible listening, urging listeners to *participate* in music by making the effort to understand what they hear: “The problem arises when a person approaches all music as an item for pleasurable consumption, as if music were, say, of no more cultural significance than a candy bar that one buys for oneself at the market” (p. 157). As long as there are listeners less sophisticated and critical than Gracyk’s ideal, however, it is difficult not to feel uncomfortable with the enormous success of *Graceland*, and with the accolades bestowed on Simon for his musical “discoveries.” The album was bought by millions who had only the vaguest notions of the creative processes behind the music, and who accepted Simon as a sole author who dictated and controlled the contributions of the other musicians. As George Lipsitz notes, Simon’s initial response to criticisms of the album was to insist on music’s autonomy from politics (aestheticism), and it was only in the face of continued objections that he began to emphasize the positive effects of *Graceland* on African politics.⁴

Ultimately, it is hard for me to accept that harm to African music is the only possible negative outcome of the *Graceland* album (even if we accept, as many readers will not, that African music-making was not compromised). Surely we should also be concerned with the consequences *within Western society* of representing a relationship in which a famous American male can insert himself as soloist over the music of “township” bands. The song “I Know What I Know” evolved through a process that is closer to karaoke than collaboration: Simon invented a melody and witty lyrics that fit over a preexisting record by

3. George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994), 57. See also Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Louise Meintjes, “Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning,” *Ethnomusicology* 34 (1990): 37–73.

4. Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, 57.

Shangaan musicians General M. D. Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters, creating the illusion of call and response between him and female “backup” singers.⁵

Indeed, this song might have been a useful object for discussion in the final section of Gracyk’s book, where he examines the politics of gender in rock. The phenomenon of a male soloist supported by a group of undifferentiated women is a mainstay of many genres of popular music, and one that can certainly be understood to symbolize the unacknowledged female drudgery behind male success that is critiqued by Marxist feminists.⁶ In these chapters, Gracyk problematizes the commonly held assumption that rock is coded male and sexist, and ponders the options available to women in rock. Drawing on the work of scholars of gender like Judith Butler as well as musicologists like Susan McClary, Gracyk explores the strengths and weaknesses of strategies of gender solidarity (e.g., “women’s music,” Riot Grrrl, and Lilith Fair) and gender transgression (Patti Smith, Tina Turner, and female performances of men’s songs, such as Aretha Franklin’s recording of Otis Redding’s “Respect”).

His often sophisticated discussion is sometimes marred by uninformed references to genres that clearly do not engage him as a listener, as with the truism that women in rock in the 1950s and 1960s were dependent on “the men who were the *true creative forces* (a Phil Spector or Berry Gordy behind the scenes)” (p. 205; emphasis added). In the very next sentence, Gracyk applauds Carole King as one of only a few women in rock who were able to challenge the dominance of male creativity in the seventies. But King was one of the most prolific and successful composers of the Brill Building in the early sixties, collaborating regularly with producers like Spector and writing hits for all of the major Girl Groups as well as many male performers. Even if we fail to recognize “true creative force” in singing and other forms of interpretation, Carole King’s role as a composer in the early sixties, along with Ellie Greenwich, Cynthia Weil, Jackie de Shannon, and Valerie Simpson, surely ought to complicate Gracyk’s assessment of a male-dominated system. Gracyk considers that “it’s not enough that there are women in rock: their presence must *disrupt* rock’s dominant masculinity. . . . If rock accommodates women’s voices and yet those voices express femininity *as ordinarily constructed*, what’s gained?” (p. 200). By bringing the concerns and experiences of teenage girls

5. Simon’s liner notes for this song state: “The music for ‘I Know What I Know’ comes from an album by General M. D. Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters, a Shangaan group from Gazankulu, a small town near Petersburg in northern South Africa. As more and more Shangaan people have migrated to Johannesburg, their music has grown increasingly popular, and several Shangaan records have recently become hits. An unusual style of guitar playing and the distinctive sound of the women’s voices were what attracted me to this group in the first place” (Paul Simon, liner notes for *Graceland*, Warner Bros. LP 25447-1 [1986]).

6. See, for example, Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983).

to center stage of mainstream culture with songs like “Will You Love Me Tomorrow?” Carole King and the Shirelles surely introduced a radically new construction of femininity—the “nice” girl who articulates sexual desire—into rock.

There are, of course, many genres of popular music where representations of femininity as ordinarily constructed are meaningful and valuable to millions of listeners, if only “rockist” critics could bring themselves to acknowledge them. Gracyk gestures in this direction by suggesting that

it is also important to celebrate artists whose musical performances are unlikely to be taken as authentic expressions of the singer. . . . An interpretive “singer” like Dusty Springfield or Linda Ronstadt may be as central to the rock canon as an “artist” like Joni Mitchell and Patti Smith, and today we need the Spice Girls, Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez as much as we need Ani DiFranco and Tori Amos. (p. 216)

This assertion, it seems, would ring hollow with Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance, whose *Disruptive Divas* comprises close analyses of songs by four female artists who have carefully positioned themselves as peripheral to the mainstream. Burns, a theorist of popular music who has also written on Bach’s music, and Lafrance, a cultural theorist informed by French critical thought, have collaborated on a book that examines songs by Tori Amos, Courtney Love’s band Hole, Me’shell Ndegéocello, and PJ Harvey, musicians who “have disturbed the boundaries of ‘acceptable’ female musicianship in ways both socio-cultural and musical, and are thus important objects of inquiry” (p. xi). These writers uphold the singer/songwriter as the most creative model of musicianship in popular music, relying on a valorization of authenticity that contrasts with the ideas proposed by Gracyk. The notion of authenticity—truthfulness in performing music that stems from intensely felt (and usually painful) personal experience—is at the heart of central debates in popular music studies.⁷

A scholarly book paying careful and respectful attention to the work of four women artists represents a significant and welcome shift in popular music studies. In the relatively short history of the discipline, case studies like this have tended to be devoted only to male artists (I think of the legion of books on the Beatles), even though the confessional lyrics, untutored vocals, self-taught tunings and fingerings, and heartfelt expressions of personal experience upheld by the ideology of authenticity are all, arguably, coded feminine.⁸ It is

7. See, for example, Kevin J. H. Dettmar and William Richey, eds., *Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

8. See Sarah Dougher, “Authenticity, Gender, and Personal Voice: She Sounds So Sad, Do You Think She Really Is?” in *This Is Pop: In Search of the Elusive at the Experience Music Project*, ed. Eric Weisbard (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 145–54. Perhaps the perceived feminine aspects of the singer/songwriter style may partly explain the aggressiveness with which men working in this genre have been valorized.

laudable to accord the same kind of attention to women musicians who exert a powerful force in the lives of countless listeners, male and female.

Burns and Lafrance describe their choices of artists and methodologies: “This book endeavors to read [the selected] musical works for their disruptive, subversive, and countercultural potential. It also attempts to disrupt the conventional mores of academic disciplinarity by combining cultural and musicological perspectives” (p. xiv). They point out that, because all four of the artists represented emerged during the 1990s, their book can serve as a “ ‘snapshot’ of [the epoch]” (p. 2), and they are candid about having selected music that they liked. Their apologia for choosing to write about music they love instead of aspiring to some ideal of neutral, quasi-scientific objectivity is supported with apt citations from writers ranging from Antonio Gramsci to John Shepherd.

The quartet of musicians they choose to investigate nevertheless troubles me. This is certainly not a snapshot of the 1990s as I experienced them, and it seems instead a lopsided view in which events at the margins of culture are more valuable than activity at center stage. This approach to making sense of popular music typifies the work of writers associated with the Birmingham School of cultural studies, who celebrate subcultural, marginalized practices as forms of resistance, and it developed in response to Adornian views of mass culture as a tool of capitalism that controls and regulates the hapless proletariat.⁹ Recent scholars such as Adam Krims (and, indeed, Theodore Gracyk, as discussed above) have developed alternate understandings of mainstream hit music and subcultural scenes.¹⁰ As compelling as are all of the recordings discussed by Burns and Lafrance, there is a sense in which such dissenting messages coming from figures who take great pains to position themselves as outsiders are predictable, and perhaps even reaffirm the status quo.

Why was Alanis Morissette not mentioned at all in this study? The aggressive musical language, defiant stance, and vitriolic lyrics of her *Jagged Little Pill* were undoubtedly disruptive in 1995, earning it comparisons with the work of Tori Amos and Liz Phair, and making its Grammy award for Album of the Year all the more astonishing. Morissette’s use of the language of so-called alternative rock—a term used to describe the punk-influenced, guitar-driven music of 1990s bands such as Sonic Youth and Jane’s Addiction, who positioned themselves as outside the market—irritated many because it was appropriated by a former pop singer whose material is cowritten by industry professionals. Because of her success, Morissette represented alternative music

9. See in particular Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).

10. See Adam Krims, “Marxist Music Analysis Without Adorno: Popular Music and Urban Geography,” in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan F. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131–57; and idem, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

and values to mainstream audiences, adding insult to injury to those invested in notions of a pure, anti-commercial subculture. The importance of this artist to discourse about women in rock during the 1990s and beyond would be hard to overstate, and yet she is nowhere to be found in this book.

Still more problematic in an explicitly feminist project is the preservation of an image of the isolated creator, rather than the acknowledgment of the many layers of collaboration in performance, recording, and production.¹¹ The solo artist, facing the onslaughts of the world armed with only “three chords and the truth,” is one of the cherished romantic ideals of rock, and female artists who perpetuate this myth are, in a sense, highly conventional. Furthermore, if one of the goals of feminism is to break down artificial barriers between women and foster a sense of solidarity (as in the seventies slogan “Sisterhood is Powerful”), then the adulation of solo artists who present themselves as loners brooding earnestly over the dangers of personal relationships seems counterintuitive. What is gained if we can only uphold lonely, tortured women as feminists, dismissing as too upbeat the collaborative work and collegiality enacted by ensembles? Even if hip hop groups like TLC and Salt ‘n’ Pepa cannot be considered in this kind of study (for reasons I shall address presently), it is disappointing to find bands like Bikini Kill, L7, and Sleater-Kinney accorded no space.

Mélysse Lafrance identifies the dangers of isolating women from their peers in her perceptive introduction to the section on Courtney Love and her band Hole:

The popular media’s portrayal of Hole as a serious and accomplished alternative rock group and of Courtney Love as a confused and hysterical woman allows the press not only to elaborate Love as radically distinct from the creative work of her group, but to oppose Love and Hole in a vertically dichotomous relationship of “good” and “bad.” (p. 98)

Thus, Burns’s and Lafrance’s focus on Love as the driving creative force behind Hole is a well-intentioned effort at rehabilitating her as a formidable musician. As admirable as this endeavor is, there is also a risk of perpetuating a sense of her talent as exceptional, even freakish, by maintaining the Love/Hole division. Many feminist thinkers will applaud the approach taken here, but I cannot altogether ignore its possible pitfall. This criticism indicates the healthy variety of positions available in feminist thought, and it points the way for lively and fruitful debate.

The discussion of Me’shell Ndegéocello would similarly be strengthened by a more thorough discussion of Ndegéocello’s peers. Lafrance and Burns connect the artist to the hip hop genre in their analysis of her “Mary

11. Although Hole is a band, Burns and Lafrance focus almost exclusively on Courtney Love in their discussion of Hole’s album *Live Through This*, correctly recognizing that Love was the main force in the band as well as its official spokesperson. Indeed, the relevant section of the book is titled “Courtney Love (Hole), *Live through This* (1994).”

Magdalene,” but to my ears, this song demonstrates all the hallmarks of a soul ballad: a 12/8 meter, slow groove, saxophone solo (rather than sampled riffs used percussively), and quiet, nonpercussive speaking that alternates with warm, full-throated singing. Here, the conventions of a style associated with the tender, sexily vulnerable confessions of men like Otis Redding and Percy Sledge have been boldly adopted by a bisexual woman singing a love song to a female object of desire—and a character from the New Testament, no less. Identifying Ndegéocello with a specific genre might have been more carefully nuanced if the authors had chosen to position her alongside other artists, such as Erykah Badu and Mary J. Blige, who helped to transform r&b during the 1990s.

For many readers, the most controversial aspect of *Disruptive Divas* will certainly be Lori Burns’s staunch avowal of the value of formalist music-analytical techniques, and her claim that “reductive analysis can be modified to accommodate the distinctive features of popular music harmony, melodic design, and form” (p. 43). I agree wholeheartedly that attention to musical detail—the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax with which tunes make themselves understood—is crucial to popular music studies, and that many scholars working in this area have been too quick to dismiss the tools of musicology and music theory. As Allan Moore insists in the introduction to his recent essay collection *Analyzing Popular Music*, to ignore sounds in our study of music is ultimately disabling: “Listeners everywhere are encouraged to conceptualize the invention of music as a branch of magic, to believe that musical actions and gestures cannot be subject to any level of explanation, and hence understanding, beyond the trivially biographical.”¹²

I share Moore’s dismay at the suspicion directed at music analysis; I also consider that explicating the musical structure of a rock song cannot be an end in itself, and that the methodologies employed by Burns are not always helpful in getting at how and why a song works. Her emphasis on “harmony, melodic design, and form” goes a long way toward explaining why hip hop artists are not among the objects of study here; harmonic reduction can do little to illuminate groove, rhythm, and the percussive register—to say nothing of timbre, a crucial carrier of meaning in popular music. Indeed, focus on melody and chord progressions is sometimes a limitation even in the repertory she does examine. For example, Tori Amos’s “Crucify” features a prominent African drum on the backbeat throughout each chorus that is not discussed in the thirty-four pages devoted to this song. The hollow, booming timbre dominates the lower sonic range, suggesting repeated blows to the body or the

12. Moore, introduction to *Analyzing Popular Music*, 7. The issues of music analysis of popular music have been widely debated; for some recent discussions apart from Moore’s volume, see David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Susan Fast, “Same as It Ever Was? Musicology Continues to Wrestle with Rock,” *Canadian University Music Review* 21, no. 1 (2000): 40–53; and Stan Hawkins, *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

“cannonball in my stomach” that Amos describes in her lyrics, and it is essential to the mood of barely controlled fury and self-inflicted violence in the piece.

The history of rock (and indeed, history in a larger sense) has been peppered with moments of discovery of the participation of women; during the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed that every year was proclaimed “the year of women in rock” as cultural institutions became suddenly excited about female activity. These moments of attention to and praise for women who have managed to infiltrate rock are dependent upon other (longer) moments when the contributions of women are forgotten or erased, so that each crop of female artists can be perceived as a fresh new trend that does not disturb the historical norms of male dominance. Although I find it disappointing that the book should reinforce a sense of women in rock as singular and marginal, *Disruptive Divas* is nonetheless part of a sustained and steadily growing effort to work against this phenomenon, resolutely carving the names of women into the scholarly literature on popular music.

I am intrigued by the implications of a coincidence in the publication of these two books: the cover art is strikingly similar. In both cases, a black-and-white photograph under a title in a coarse, irregular typeface captures a young white woman, seated and facing right, arching her back and leaning her head back, eyes closed and mouth open in what looks like ecstasy as she fingers her instrument. The pictures of Tori Amos at her piano and Ani diFranco with her guitar are arresting, and were doubtless chosen for the way they depict a moment of introspection and authentic feeling (to say nothing of the sexual pleasure they hint at). What fascinates me is the fact that the figure of a woman should be the symbol of this deep communion with music, replacing—with apparent ease—the more usual images of men such as Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton. What might it mean that the notion of identity should be represented by a white woman? Has feminist scholarship led to a belief that only women have complex, painfully constructed identities? Or do these images connect to conventional Euro-American depictions of the Muse as an attractive, if melancholy, female? Are we to contemplate these pictures with an awareness of gender, but not race, as though the artists’ whiteness is somehow neutral? These are questions that may come to engage all of us interested in the role that music plays in forging a sense of self.

JACQUELINE WARWICK