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Playing with a Different Sex: Academic Writing on Women in Rock and Pop

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INTRODUCTION
This annotated bibliography of academic writing on women in rock and pop should provide an overview of most of the scholarly literature on the topic and reflects my personal interest in methodology. When I returned to graduate school in the late 1990s to study American studies and popular culture, I discovered that academe had changed considerably from my undergraduate days when I studied history of art. Although traditional academic disciplines continue, I found that in the humanities and social sciences, there were no longer neat categories for disciplines and disciplines no longer were isolated from each other.

The topic of rock and pop music, in particular, attract scholars from an amazingly broad array of disciplines. Academic areas range from musicology to sociology to history to literature to religious studies to psychology as well as newer disciplines including cultural studies, gender studies, and queer studies. Pondering an overall organizational structure for this bibliography, I came up three basic criteria to break up the content: is the material:

1) about specific female performers or
2) about special genres, topics, related subcultures and/or women as fans or as listeners or
3) of a more general and theoretical nature, touching on multiple performers, topics, etc.

Although I could have chosen to organize this bibliography by discipline, I think most users would find more pleasure in moving from specific to general by perusing by personality, then genre or topic, and then ending with some of the broader works. Who wouldn’t enjoy considering the massive collection of academic writing on Madonna or on Riot Grrrl? I have added to many of the annotations, in italics, a few keywords or comments related to discipline. Journal articles are not annotated but integrated into the bibliography in the first section under topic. In the second section where materials are annotated by methodology, journal articles are listed at the end of each subsection.


Many reading this piece will not recognize my chapter’s title. By choosing an album by a relatively obscure band to title my piece, I follow in a long tradition of rock writing insider hermeneutics. Some explication is in order since excessive mystery is not less than coy. Playing with a Different Sex was perhaps the feminist recording that spoke to me as a young woman. This 1981 album by the British post-punk band the Au Pairs had angry feminist lyrics sung by a woman, great bass lines, angular and tense guitar riffing, and was all about gender and sex. Best of all, it was mysterious: it had minimal information about the band and a cover of image of two bayonet Maoist women charging forth. In those pre-Internet days, it was often hard to get information about more
obscure bands. Simon Frith, also amused by the varied possible interpretations of the album title, used it for one of his articles, so with apologies to Frith, I will follow suit.
I. SUBJECTS AND TOPICS

Citations for journal articles, which are not annotated, are integrated alphabetically with annotated materials in section I. This is done in order to bring together as closely as possible what has been written on what are often more narrowly focused subjects, for example, specific performers.

A. INDIVIDUAL FEMALE PERFORMERS

It is challenging to find material on the many specific female rock and pop performers since success is dependent on how the cataloging or indexing service tags the material: by name only or also by the broader topic of “women in popular music,” “women rock musicians,” etc.

Tori Amos

Close readings by Gordon of two Tori Amos songs, “Me and a Gun,” and “Silent All These Years,” that speak of Amos’ experience as a rape victim. The author focuses on Amos’ voice and her bodily gestures in performance; methods include both musicology and women’s studies/feminist analysis. Musicology; Women’s studies

Joan Armatrading

Hisama applies some methods from cultural studies as well as musicology. Armatrading occupies hybrid spaces and her music conveys her identity as a black, British woman. Cultural studies; Musicology

Joan Baez

Argentinean folksinger Mercedes Sosa and Joan Baez are considered side-by-side in this analysis of two iconic women folksingers and social activists. The author blends musicological and feminist methods. Musicology; Women’s studies

The Bangles


Zeck, an academic who teaches film, analyzes some Bangles videos to consider the band’s ambivalent relationship to feminism. Film studies

Toni Braxton

Kate Bush
Kruse writes a paean to Kate Bush and includes close analysis of her recordings. The analysis is more in the mode of literary analysis, focusing on lyrics, and is non-theoretical.


Vroomen, a popular culture scholar, looks at how the Internet helps connect older, female fans of Kate Bush. Popular culture; Fan culture

Ani DiFranco

Amy Grant

Deborah Harry/Blondie

P. J. Harvey


Billie Holiday
Brackett, a musicologist, compares renditions by Billie Holiday and Bing Crosby of “I’ll Be Seeing You.” Closely reading vocal and music performance of the song and considering issues of reception and style, Brackett views Holiday’s work as “undercoded” (underdetermined and likely to be considered more “authentic”) and Crosby’s “overcoded” (overdetermined). Musicology; Reception theory


Joan Jett
Janis Joplin


Carole King

k. d. lang


Mockus, using personal narrative modes, discusses lang’s music and lyrics from a queer studies perspective and touches on lesbian identity, lesbian camp, butch-femme, lang’s reception by the country music industry and how gay and lesbian culture has recently embraced country music. Queer studies; Personal narratives; Country music

Cyndi Lauper


Annie Lennox


Courtney Love

Coates writes about Courtney Love, as well as Patti Smith, Mo Tucker, and Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders and other rockers as “bad mothers.” The media coverage of Love’s efforts to blend motherhood and her rock career was overwhelmingly negative. However, since Love plays the “bad girl,” this should not be surprising. Coates suggests that Love’s maneuvers are ultimately non-subversive. *Feminist studies; Motherhood*

**Madonna**


Although most of the material is this book is written by journalists, a section is devoted to academic writing. Daniel Harris provides an overview of academic writing on Madonna. Lisa A. Lewis, who mostly writes feminist scholarship on music videos, looks at Madonna as a pop feminist. The performance art aspects of Madonna feature in a wildly discursive essay by Jane Miller. Cathy Schwichtenberg’s work, the most “academic” of the lot, utilizes a variety of methodologies but focuses on postmodernity. “Guilty Pleasures,” by Pamela Robertson is a well-known essay on feminist camp based in gender studies. Mark Watt’s essay looks at Madonna’s performances as postmodern and his method touches on star studies. *Variety of methods*


Burns examines Madonna’s groundbreaking performance of three songs at the MTV Video Music Awards from televisual vantage, e.g. considering camera angles. *Film studies.*


Feminist as well as cultural studies theory informs this monograph. Faith focuses on Madonna’s reception and her fan culture. Madonna’s constant reinvention of herself is considered as an expression of “natality.”: the intrapersonal need to continually rebirth and renewal oneself, a concept coined by feminist theorist Drucilla Cornellia. Faith sees Madonna’s high sexual performance as a parodic power play and compares her to Mae West. Both popularized aggressive female sexuality and although both freed themselves from their working-class roots, they perpetuated working-class stereotypes in their personas. Madonna’s sadomasochist imagery is analyzed in the context of feminist theory. Faith devotes an entire chapter to comparing Madonna to Michel Foucault. *Feminist theory; Queer studies*


A broad collection of essays on Madonna primarily written by musicologists covering issues of gender, sexuality identity and Madonna’s queer audiences, Madonna’s play with ethnic identities and Madonna as celebrity. *Musicology; Media studies*


A mixture of experimental journalistic and quasi-academic writing on Madonna. Andrew Ross’s “This Bridge Called My Pussy,” relates Sex and queerness. bell hooks in “Power to the Pussy: We Don’t Wannabe Dicks in Drag,” explores Madonna’s transition to a figure playing with sado-masochistic, lesbian and racial tropes. Madonna’s *Erotica* album is discussed by Simon Frith in “The Sound of *Erotica*: Pain, Power and Pop.” *Queer studies*

Guilbert, Georges-Claude. Madonna as Postmodern Myth: How One Star's Self-Construction Rewrites Sex, Gender, Hollywood, and the American Dream. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2002. The author draws from a broad palette of theory: postmodernism, gender theory on performativity (Judith Butler), camp, and colonialism. Guilbert considers Madonna’s persona to be unfixed and calls her a Trickster (36) and postmodern. Madonna’s stardom is contingent on self-created myths loaded with irony, borrowing from different ethnic and sexual identities. Gay culture in particular continually informs Madonna’s career. Several chapters discuss how Madonna appropriates performative strategies appropriated by both drag queens and Hollywood icons Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Mae West. A concluding chapter incorporates themes from American studies including how Madonna relates to the American Dream, shifting American mores, and political and racial discourses. Postmodernism; Queer studies; Feminist studies; Star studies; American studies;


hooks, bell. “Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?” in Black Looks: Race and Representation. Boston: South End Press, 1992. hooks describes Madonna as a threat and endangering to black culture as a manipulative appropriator of blackness who uses race to add piquancy, “‘nasty’ blackness,” (147) to her image. Young women, Madonna’s core audience in the black community, often intensely hate Madonna expressing sublimated envy or desire of her “blonde ambition.” In order to connect with progressive black culture, Madonna must explore her working-class roots. Black studies

Leonardi, Susan, and Rebecca A. Pope. “Express Yourselves: Divas Pop and Pomo,” in The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. Leonardi and Pope situate Madonna in a long lineage of divas. The authors, drawing extensively on journalist content, focus on Madonna’s sexuality and gender disruption. In the pop music diva war between Annie Lennox and Madonna, the authors consider Madonna postmodern and Lennox more of a traditional diva. Musicology; Gender studies; Postmodernism


Schwichtenberg, Cathy, ed. The Madonna Connection: Representational Politics, Subcultural Identities, and Cultural Theory. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. This collection of essays on Madonna uses cultural studies methodology and generally focus on Madonna’s audiences and fan culture. Essays are clustered in four groups: race and audiences, reception in the gay community, feminist theory and praxis, and the force of material or commodity culture. The authors, some of whom are well known (Susan Bordo, E. Ann Kaplan) come from a variety of academic disciplines. Analysis of the visual aspects of Madonna, particularly her representation in music videos, plays a major role in many of the essays. Cultural studies (scholars in variety of disciplines)


Vickers, Nancy J. "Maternalism and the Material Girl.” In Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture, edited by Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, 230-246. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. The author uses a 1989 Pepsi Cola commercial by Madonna to show how it encapsulates the themes and other aspects of a two-year cycle of cultural production by Madonna (including recordings, videos, and performances) which related to her autobiographical album, Like a Prayer. The focus is on Madonna’s imagery. Feminist theory


Joni Mitchell
Smith, Larry David. Elvis Costello, Joni Mitchell, and the Torch Song Tradition. Westport: Praeger 2004. Although Smith is not per se an academic, his writing is scholarly. His book on Elvis Costello and Joni Mitchell continues his exploration of songwriting. He uses both auteur theory and narrative criticism to consider the melodramatic love stories known as torch songs. Both songwriters are celebrities who ask difficult political and social questions in their music. Smith considers Mitchell’s relationship with the media as well as her lyrics. Auteur theory; Literary criticism


Holly Near and Redwood Records

**Stevie Nicks**

**Sinead O'Connor**


Mayhew looks at O'Connor’s star-text through the prism of gender as it relates to conceptions of authenticity, the construction of the diva, and the schism between the public and the private. *Star studies; Gender studies*


**Yoko Ono (music only)**

**Suzi Quatro**


**Queen Latifa**

**The Raincoats**

**Michelle Shocked**
The author explores the connection between gender and authenticity by comparing Shocked and Bragg. Each used authenticity to further their careers. He concludes that “the criteria by which we judge authenticity is always multiple and most often not transparent,” (45).

**Patti Smith**


**Britney Spears**


**Spice Girls**


Dusty Springfield
Dusty Springfield, a pop singer who was very popular during the “swinging sixties” in London, was a closeted lesbian who expressed and disguised herself by blurring race and gender boundaries. Smith describes her as posing as a black woman and a femme gay man. *Queer studies*

**B. FEMININE SUBCULTURES AND SPECIFIC MUSICAL GENRES AND STYLES AS THEY RELATE TO WOMEN AS FANS AND LISTENERS**

**Country music**

**Fan culture in general**
In this essay on the experience of the female music fan, Beatlemania is discussed in psychological terms with considerations of teenage girl sexuality and the economics of mass hysteria. The last part of the essay is an interesting consideration of the erotics of the star-fan relationship that oddly concludes with a discussion of Janis Joplin as martyr. *Feminist studies; psychological theory*
Garratt incorporates personal narrative in this early (1984) essay on female fan culture and groups. *Fan cultures; Gender studies; Personal narratives*
Savage (media studies) interviews women music fans of feminist rockers to better understand what the music means to them. Almost of her respondents are white and working or middle class. Savage examines why her subjects were attracted to this music and how they perceive changes in the music industry. More importantly, she
examines the impact of the music’s politics and feminism in the lives of her subjects; no other scholar other than Barbara Brady has been similarly focused. Media studies; Ethnographic method

**Girl groups, Brill Building songwriters**

These topics are listed together since both relate to the early history of rock and roll.


Bradby argues that academic rock history marginalizes women by overemphasizing “cock rock.” The American girl groups of the early 1960s brought innovation to rock music and were far more subversive than given credit. Bradby is particularly interested in the contradictory text of many girl group song choruses. Feminist studies


Warwick contends that the “stageiness and artificiality of girl group songs can serve as a metaphor for the experience of girlhood.” (192). Feminist studies

**Hip-hop and rap**


Similar to Pough, this earlier essay by Berry looks at how specific female rappers have appropriated this genre of music for their own feminine and feminist ends but her argument is far more simplistic in its optimism that female rappers are breaking down sexism. African American studies; Feminist studies

Bost, Suzanne ”'Be Deceived if Ya Wanna Be Foolish’: (Re)constructing Body, Genre, and Gender in Feminist Rap.” *PostModern Culture*, 12.1 (2001).


Gaunt, an ethnomusicologist, connects hopscotch and female hip-hop and rap music fans. Hopscotch and double Dutch jump rope games are playful, use handclapping, allow for individual variation or mediation of lyrics, have a sing-songy, declarative quality, emphasize rhythmic punctuation, and use musical breaks: all qualities of hip-
hop and rap. Gaunt’s writing blends ethnography, autobiography, poetry, prose, and fiction akin to “sampling” (282). *Ethnomusicology; Personal narratives.*


Pough explores the complex relationship between all facets of hip-hop culture, feminism, and black womanhood. The author’s background is in African American studies and she teaches in a women’s studies program. She situates influential female rap performers, including Queen Latifah, Missy Elliot, and Lil’ Kim, in the broader context of black, female historical struggle. Female rappers use their lyrics for self-empowerment; Pough sees the appropriation of the misogynist language of rap and hip-hop as another means of seizing control. Overall, the book focuses more on the cultural products of hip-hop than on its audience. *African American studies; Feminist studies*


Woldu sees women in rap as having matured and evolved into the mainstream of the genre. *Black studies*

**Punk**


This sociological exploration of female punks focuses on punk as subculture more than punk as music. The author is an insider, having been a punk herself. This book is important in terms of the depth of the ethnographic
exploration of the subject. The author employs feminist theory and cultural studies methods in order to add more theoretical depth to her interviews. Leblanc provides a chapter on the history of punk with special focus on female musicians and bands and detail about specific punk subgroups. Sociology; Cultural studies; Feminist theory; Ethnography


The authors focus on how lyrics in punk music represent the struggle for social change and specifically how punk rock fights capitalism. However, the authors also tackle racism, sexism and classism in punk and marginalization within the community. Using a relatively unusual methodology, the authors use a quantitative method of content analysis to analyze punk lyrics, which required them to create categories for their data. Lyrics are excerpted at length. The authors conclude that despite the white, male, heterosexual roots of punk, greater diversity within the punk movement is burgeoning and this diversity is a positive force towards social change. Punk music and culture; lyrical content analysis

Riot Grrrl and Girl culture

Cateforis, a musicologist and her colleague Humphreys, look at the New York City Riot Grrrl enclave of the early 1990s through an ethnographic perspective with particular focus on the more radical members of the movement. Ethnomusicology


The popularity of grunge rock in the early 1990s propelled some of the female-fronted Riot Grrrl bands into mainstream popularity: how did this affect their intrinsic subversiveness and how were these bands different from their male counterparts? Some of the female-fronted bands tried to avoid gender labels entirely. The magazine Sassy played a major role in trivializing Riot Grrrl’s political intent. Cultural studies; Feminist studies


An overview of American girls and “girl culture” as it relates to all forms of media, Kearney focuses on Riot Grrrl in particular and other recent spaces for girls to rock including the Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls. Girls had little to do with music with the exception of post-World War II teenybopper fandom until the advent of punk music in the late 1970s and early hip-hop a few years later. The author feels that Riot Grrrl, which formed in 1991, was the first truly feminist girl culture to emerge. The bulk of the book focuses on visual culture and zines, not music. Riot Grrrl, Cultural studies

Riot grrrls use separatism as a means of empowerment. Kearney looks at the movement’s reformulation of girlhood and the construction of a collective identity. Riot Grrrl challenges the idea of “bedroom culture”: a teen culture predicated on passivity/fantasizing about boys. Feminist theory; Sociology; Cultural studies


Schilt, a sociologist, conducted interviews, analyzed publications (zines) and tracked journalistic coverage of Riot Grrrl. She examines how the threads of punk and feminism created the egalitarianism of Riot Grrrl and how the movement evolved to fracture overtime. Sociology


Stewart, a communications professor, writes a simplistic essay on women in popular music and considers Riot Grrrl a new direction in subversion. Communications


Wald (African American and cultural studies) looks how contemporary female rock musicians represent girls, girlhood and ‘girl culture’ (192) in an ambivalent manner. She analyzes Gwen Stefani, Shonen Knife and the Riot Grrrl band Bratmobile. Cultural studies

Women’s music/lesbian music culture


Dowd, Liddle (sociology) and Nelson (women’s studies) compare three very different music festivals, including the Michigan Womyn’s Festival, to understand how subcultures need physical separation from outsiders in order to maintain themselves.

Lont, Cynthia M. “Women's Music: No Longer a Small Private Party.” *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, edited by Rebee Garofalo, 241-253. Boston: South End Press, 1992. Lont notes the silence from the both the musicological community as well as the broader media on women’s music. The author superficially considers the differences between feminist and lesbian performers (and their audiences) since the two can be very different. The essay is essentially the history of women’s music with not too much analysis or theory. *Communications (no theory)*


Rodnitzky, Jerry L. “Songs of Sisterhood: Music as a Countercultural Tool,” in *Feminist Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of a Feminist Counterculture*. Westport: Praeger, 1999. This book chapter is a non-theoretical, historical overview of feminist music culture in the counterculture. In the early 1970s, independent record labels and collectives such as Olivia Records provided an alternative. 1974 represented a first peak for women’s music with Paid My Dues, the first feminist music journal, and the first National Women’s Music Festival held in Champaign-Urbana Illinois. Holly Near receives substantial discussion. *Counterculture; Women's music; Historical overview*

**C. PORTRAYAL AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN**

These entries relate to representations of women in music and women performers in film and video media. There is a sizeable body of work on misogyny in music videos and I chose to include a few outstanding works.

**Films on women in music**


Kooijman takes on two biopics about black female performers: *Lady Sings the Blues* and *Tina: What’s Love Got To Do With It*. The author considers neither film to be a valid historical representation of their subject but rather vehicles for Diana Ross and Tina Turner to confirm their iconic status. *Star studies*


Vize’s essay examines dance-based movies of the 1980s that were inspired by the success of the 1977 *Saturday Night Fever*. These movies require different methods of analysis than traditional musicology and film theory: the author interconnects analysis of these films’ visual, sound and dance components. *Women’s studies; Film studies*

**Heavy metal and depiction of women in music, general**


Pop/lite heavy metal songwriters portray female sexuality in lyrics that portray women as victims who willfully degrade themselves in order to please men. Themes include woman as sexual receptacle, cock tease, dead siren, and masochist object of physical violence and rape. This misogyny is part of the broader continuum of misogyny in rock music. Feminist studies

Music videos and MTV

Goldstein considers how MTV has created “crossover” (263) and how “crossover” creates possibilities of gender and sexual fluidity. Most of the videos discussed are dance music-related and feature men or drag queens such as RuPaul. Ultimately, the gender confusion in MTV videos is superficial: the author uses the phrase, “lip-servicing queerness,” (268). Queer studies


Kaplan was the first to bring a theoretical approach to music videos and she uses methodology from film studies to provide a theoretical overview on the medium and to analyze specific videos. She also makes reference to postmodernism. A lengthy chapter uses the Lacanian trope of gender and the gaze that informs feminist analysis of film as well as postmodernist thought. Kaplan’s book is an early effort to consider Madonna theoretically and she also looks at videos by other performers of the early days of MTV including Tina Turner and Annie Lenox. Feminist film theory; Postmodernism


Lewis, who has written extensively on music videos, employs a semiotic approach to how girls consume music videos. Drawing on Angela McRobbie and Marjorie Garber, interior spaces are relegated to girls and exterior spaces, e.g. the street, are male spaces. Lewis analyzes two specific videos from Madonna and Cyndi Lauper. Her methods draw largely from cultural studies and star studies with a dash of semiotics. Stockbridge’s essay, informed by French feminist theory and Laura Mulvey’s feminist film theory, is interested in pleasure in rock videos. She is open-ended about how music videos vary and how men and women respond to them based on gender. Feminist theory; Semiotics

Lewis, Lisa A. Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. MTV has helped some female musicians, specifically Tina Turner, Pat Benatar, Cyndi Lauper and Madonna, reach new audiences and otherwise has enhanced their careers. Videos by the four performers are analyzed in depth and Lewis finds a “coherent textual system of female address emerges,” that challenges male hegemony in popular music. The relationship between female performers and female listeners is dynamic and generative. Fashions and fan style imitation in specific are considered as conscious symbolic expressions of gender. Gender theory


Tapper and Black apply quantitative methods to look at misogyny in music videos. Communications


D. WOMEN AS MUSICIANS


Bayton, a sociologist, does extensive ethnographic work on women as instrumental musicians in Britain from the 1970s to the 1990s. Her subjects are local musicians, not pop stars. She attended women’s music workshops, interviewed musicians, and attended many performances. Her main objective is to understand why there are so few women instrumentalists in bands, why those women who chose to play in bands make their choice, and what were their experiences and how did gender affect their careers. Sociology; Ethnographic interviews


This 1988 article is a predecessor piece to Bayton’s book-length work on local British women musicians. Sociology

This book chapter doesn’t really cover any new turf in regards to Bayton’s work on British local women musicians. It employs interviews and Bayton uses sociological methodology. Sociology


The authors, without getting theoretical, take the history of women in rock into somewhat fresh territory. Most works on women in rock tend to focus on describing the various female figures in the history of popular culture but do not, as do Carson, Lewis, and Shaw, address the personal experiences of female rock musicians. By virtue of being a woman, gender and sexual identity issues come into play for most female rock musicians whether they choose to embrace these identities or not. Often female musicians just want to be accepted as musicians without considerations of gender or sexuality. Feminist studies


II: Methodologies: General and Overview Works

These works often cover multiple musicians, merit arrangement by methodology over subject matter, or simply are more wide-ranging in scope.

A. New Musicologists


Fast, a new breed musicologist, employs traditional close readings of the music (including transcription) and gender and star studies theory. Surveys and other fieldwork-style methods provide “data” on the fans. Fast also includes detailed observations of concert performances. At the heart of her book are questions about gender and sexuality in the music and its listeners. Robert Plant, the lead singer, strikes an androgynous pose with his slender, hairless body and his long, beautiful hair. Women Led Zeppelin fans are asked by Fast to consider how, as heterosexual women, their gender and sexuality are informed by Zeppelin’s cock rock. Musicology; Gender studies; Star studies


This book is a collection of lengthy essays on identity, including gender and sexuality, by a musicologist. The author is well versed in non-musicological theory. Hawkins take on Madonna is that through her destabilization of her gender and sexuality (deception), she is subversive. His work is one of the few studies of Madonna that
brings in close musicological reading. Annie Lennox’s video Money Can’t Buy It also gets a close reading. The author discusses Lennox as the first female gender-bender in rock. Musicology; Gender studies

McClary, Susan. Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991. McClary is most highly regarded of the first wave of feminist musicologists to consider popular music. Although Feminine Endings is largely about classical music, two chapters cover Laurie Anderson and Madonna. The chapter on Laurie Anderson looks at how her music “resists analysis as we practice it in the academy … because her premises are different,” (135). McClary considers Anderson’s use of time and space as well as her origins in the bodily discipline of performance art. The discussion of Madonna is, unlike almost that of almost all other scholars, largely focused on her music. McClary writes about Madonna’s supreme control of her music and performance. Her music is liberating. Musicology; Feminist theory

Warwick, Jacqueline. “I’m Eleanor Rigby: Female Identity and Revolver.” In Every Sound There Is: The Beatles' Revolver and the Transformation of Rock and Roll, edited by Russell Reising, 58-68. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. Warwick probes how female listeners respond to the Beatle’s Revolver via a musicological analysis of specific songs. Interestingly, she compares various versions of songs. Aretha Franklin’s version of “Eleanor Rigby” manifests a type of split identity as both subject and object and what is a difficult song for the female listener to negotiate. Musicology; Feminist theory

Whiteley, Sheila. “‘Love, Love, Love’: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Selected Songs by the Beatles.” In Reading the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four, edited by Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis, 55-70. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. Whiteley considers if the Beatles’ representations of sexuality and gender enforce the status quo or mediate and reframe them. She interrelates the music, the narrative (words) and a third entity, the lyrical focus, the tension between the meaning of the words and the music and vocals. Did the young, white female fans see themselves in the Beatle’s songs? Did the Beatles shift in their representation of femininity over time? Musicology; Gender studies; Cultural studies

Whiteley, Sheila. Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity. London: Routledge, 2000. This monograph by the scholar currently best known for writing on gender and popular music, covers a wide range of topics. The book has a chronological organization. Opening chapters cover the counterculture, sixties rock, women’s liberation, and feminist culture, Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, and folk singers including Joan Baez. The punk and new wave periods focus on Patti Smith and Siouxsie Sioux. Whiteley follows up with considerations of Annie Lennox, Madonna, k. d. lang, Tracy Chapman, Tori Amos, Courtney Love, P. J. Harvey and Björk. The book concludes with Brit Pop and the Spice Girls. Whiteley neatly combines musicological analysis with gender, queer, and feminist theory. She is very fluent in all academic discourses related to her topic and her writing brings fresh insight to her subjects. Musicology; Gender, feminist theory; Focus on performers not subcultures

Articles


B. FEMINIST AND WOMEN STUDIES

Here are works that use a feminist or women’s studies methodology or perspective. Some works may focus on specific female performers but not on any individual performer. Differentiating feminist and women’s studies methods from gender studies can be challenging since both can be theoretical and gender studies derives in part from feminist and women’s studies.


Biggs taught feminist theory by having her students analyze popular music lyrics and found success in her method because of the visceral and bodily aspects of the music experience. The author provides some background on popular music and gives examples of the popular music artists she incorporates into her pedagogy. Feminist theory; Pedagogy


Caputo takes a Canadian focus in the performers she analyzes: k. d. lang, Sarah McLachlan, and Alanis Morisette. She also considers “Girl Power” in terms of Riot Grrrl as well the Spice Girls. The author works along a simplistic, feminist position of looking at music as either oppositional or as upholding stereotypes. Feminist theory


Cusick introduces concept of embodied music criticism based on theories of Judith Butler. Feminist theory


Feelings, considered feminine and irrational, are dangerous, particularly anger, the root of all radical resistance. Many scholars and critics are dismissive about anger in popular music and Nehring, influenced by feminist theory, seeks to reclaim anger in music and debunk postmodern cynicism and apathy on both the Left and Right ends of the political spectrum. Nehring criticizes the work of many scholars on the left, specifically Frederic Jameson, Lawrence Grossberg and the influential British critic Simon Reynolds (who was one of the first to write seriously about gender in rock). Riot Grrrl is analyzed in depth. Nehring says many interesting things about rock and gender, repositioning the complex debate on this topic. Feminism; Cultural studies; Postmodernism; Riot Grrrl


Kaplan examines Pratibha Parmar’s 1999 Righteous Babes, a documentary about women rock stars of the 1990s, in order to compare contemporary feminism to feminist theory of the 1980s in terms of their positions on postmodernity. Kaplan sees both possibilities in postmodernism and the documentary reflects both the superficiality and the potential liberation of women. Postmodernism; Feminist theory

In late 1960s rock music, Whiteley finds representations of women rooted in mid-Victorian era iconography. The first part of the article looks at women’s roles in the counterculture and the second considers women within the broader rock discourse. Whiteley particularly focuses on music from the Beatles and, to a lesser extent, the Rolling Stones. **Feminist studies; Counterculture**

**Articles**


**C. Gender studies**

I generally exclude gender studies work focusing on male performers including male performers who appropriate feminine identities or who play with gender boundaries. Most works using cultural studies in this bibliography are found in this category.


Written by an academic tag team composed of a musicologist and a feminist popular culture scholar, these essays discuss four subversive female musicians: Tori Amos, Courtney Love, Me’Shell Ndegocello and P. J. Harvey. The authors consider how these musicians negotiate their identity through their music. The themes of the book are “gender consciousness, sex/gender performance and performativity, agency and resistance, social
relations of domination and subordination, representations of the ‘female’ body, religion, sexuality, desire, race (especially ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’)” as well as how these “articulations” exist within popular music (xiv).

Cultural studies; Musicology


Coates looks at gender in the online academic discourse on rock via the Rocklist email discussion group. Coates and other female posters to this listerv, including sociologist Donna Gaines, created an alternative female group within the listserv after female participants who tried to address issues of gender in rock “were ignored, argued with, or trivialized,” (78). Cultural studies


Frith takes on the timeworn issue of whether or not rock is for boys and pop music is for girls. Punk did little to transform the (male) sexual core of rock culture. Female-fronted bands may be embedded in traditional conventions of pop but speak to female audiences. Cultural studies; Gender studies


This essay, originally written in 1978 for the journal Screen Education, is considered the first theoretical discussion of the relationship between rock and gender. The authors view rock as both a means of expression of sexuality and as repressive of (women’s) sexuality. Frith and McRobbie situate the discussion with the listener: how users “constitute their sexuality,” (372) when working with an art form that has multiple and contradictory representations. Cultural studies

This special issue of Popular Music is devoted to gender and sexuality. Noteworthy articles include: Helen Davies on the representation of women in the British popular media; Diane Railton provides a theoretical overview of gender in popular music; Kay Dickinson connects the vocoder, Cher and camp; Cynthia Mahabir traces the rise of feminism in calypso music; and Mark Mazullo discourses on P. J. Harvey’s Dry and her ambiguous and untidy imagery of drowning, loss of virginity and whoredom.

Neal looks at lyrics in rhythm and blues express the negotiation of gender and sexuality in the black community. He notes a change in the relationship between men and women post-Civil Rights era. The change is evidenced in rhythm and blues, albeit with trepidation and hesitation. Disco culture, however, was an opening for public gay life and engendered a backlash in the black community. Gender studies, Black studies

The Sex Revolts is one of the first books to consider the issues of gender and sexuality in rock and roll. In the second part of the book, the authors analyze how women are idealized in rock as the ultimate home, representing the urge to return to the oceanic/womb of prebirth. Specifically, psychedelic music is related to this impulse. The last and third section of the book looks at female musicians and a specifically feminine form of rebellion of masquerades and mysticism, deconstruction of traditional femininity, and confessional modes. Gender studies

A collection of sixteen essays written by scholars from different disciplines. *Sexing the Groove* “describes and debates issues which are directly located within the discourses of femininities, masculinities, musicology and cultural studies” (xvii). A section on rock music culture includes Sara Cohen on gender in local music scenes in Liverpool and Norma Coates writing more broadly on the gendering of rock music. Feminine constructions, the focus of the third section, features David Sanjek on the women of rockabilly, Charlotte Greig on women songwriters, Keith Negus on Sinead O’Connor, Stella Bruzzi on k. d. lang, and Mary Celeste Kearney and Marion Leonard on Riot Grrrl. The fourth section covers the issues of visual identity. *Gender studies*


A groundbreaking 1984 essay on Elvis and gender, Wise looks at how Elvis evolved from an object of his fans into a subject (397) and thus became less threatening to other men. She describes Elvis as two contradictory selves, “butch god” and “teddy bear.” Wise uses an autobiographical, personal narrative form. *Personal narratives; Gender studies*

**Articles**


**D. QUEER STUDIES**


The queer community within Riot Grrrl and punk is a cohesive but diverse group. Fuchs discusses a specific performance by queer-core bands Tribe 8, Pansy Division and Sexpod as well as other gay performers. *Queer studies; Queercore; Riot Grrrl*


A prose poem incorporating feminist theory and personal narratives. Each author calls herself “informant A” and “informant B” respectively. *Queer studies; Personal narratives*

Schippers’ book is the first book to address sexuality as well as gender in rock sociology. Riot Grrrl, as well as the do-it-yourself small label ethos of independent rock of the 1990s, ushered in new roles and opportunities for women. Old presumptions about the essential maleness of rock shifted and an overall queering of rock culture has occurred. Schippers uses the idea of gender maneuvering strategies to express the mutability and performativity of gender in this new terrain. Using an ethnographic approach, Schippers writes in the first person, and subsequently her observations of the post-punk, alternative music subculture have a liveliness rarely found in academic writing. *Queer studies; Gender studies; Ethnography; Sociology*


Judith Halberstam explores lesbian subcultures including riot dyke punks and drag kings and posits that subcultural theory fails to address queer subcultures. Jason Lee Oakes looks at the appropriation of Stevie Nicks in the queer and transgendered community. Karen Tongson connects between lesbian music and emo, a male heterosexual low-fi punk style. Emma Mayhew considers Sinead O'Connor’s outing as a lesbian performer. Jennifer Rycenga’s essay looks at the large-scale form in rock and considers in part P. J. Harvey’s *Is This Desire* and how provides an immediate musical experience. Sheila Whiteley’s essay explores queer desire as fantasy and fantasy denied. Her three linked case studies are Freddie Mercury, Patti Smith and Rob Halford. *Queer studies*

**Articles**


**E. OTHER METHODOLOGIES; ANTHOLOGIES**


An anthology of previously published articles (many annotated under subject in this bibliography) includes Susan McClary on Laurie Anderson, David Brackett on Billie Holiday, Sarah Thornton on women in “clubland” as a subculture, Tia DeNora on identity in music from a musicological viewpoint, Mavis Bayton on women musicians, Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald on Riot Grrrl, and Susan Fast’s on women and Led Zeppelin. *Anthology: Variety of methods*


This anthology features a quartet of scholarly essays on women in popular music; three by Linda Dahl, Karen Saucier Lundy, and Therese L. Lueck focus on genres (jazz, country and pop music) and Virginia W. Cooper’s essay analyzes popular music using quantitative methods. None of the essays employ theory and but all provide good historical overviews. *Anthology: History*

One of the first American essays on women in popular music, this book is focused on the business aspects of the music industry with an interesting chart of the percentage of women in year end Top 50 albums and singles charts from 1950 to 1974 using data from the industry magazine *Cashbox* and further commentary drawing from industry perspectives. *Business aspects of music industry*


How are women in rock viewed by media? Mayhew focuses on the producer in music and how it is so male-dominated and the role producers play in creative control. *Communications studies*


A nice survey of women popular music singers, the author looks at the image of the woman singer has evolved to reflect broader trends in the history of popular music. Mellers is a professor of music but his writing is accessible to the non-musicologist as well as the non-academic. His focus is on the biography and the creations of these singers and not on the reception or audiences. Mellers works historically starting with the blues and covers all genres from country to punk. The book has three section: black women as earth goddesses, white women as survivors and women as singing poet. *Straight music history, no theory*


Millard and McSwain define a guitar hero as a man (143) and traces the guitar hero back to early blues guitarists and the imagery based in this culture (e.g. guitar as woman). The authors provide good historical insight into the intrinsic masculinity of the guitarist and the hypermasculinity of the heavy metal players but their arguments are not too complex. *American studies*


The author, a British cultural critic, adds to the discourse on gender and rock by analyzing her topic through the lens of Greek mythology. Padel positions rock as intrinsically masculine and then, in course, traces contemporary masculinity, sex and heroism, to Western classical culture, which was male-oriented as well. The author, however, complicates her thinking by relating her theme to opera as well as how female rock performers contend with the intrinsic maleness of rock. Themes include the guitar as phallic symbol and weapon, woman as siren and bewitcher, the hero’s journey, and romantic notions about race. *Classical studies*


Rhodes explores the connection between the feminist movement and 1960s and 1970s rock through secondary figures in the history of the music: women rock journalists and famous female groupies. Journalists discussed are Lillian Roxon, author of the influential *Rock Encyclopedia*, Ellen Sander (*Saturday Review*), and Ellen Willis (*New Yorker*). Groupies, Cynthia Plastercaster for example, became national media figures and used their connections to rock stars to forge careers of their own. By featuring these figures that functioned as interpreters and intermediaries between the music, the media and the public, Rhodes considers her subjects as active figures in the intermediation between feminism, sexuality and the complexities of misogyny in rock music culture. *Media studies*