Edited by
Susan Fast and Craig Jennex

Popular Music and the Politics of Hope

Queer and Feminist Interventions

POPULAR MUSIC AND THE POLITICS OF HOPE

In today's culture, popular music is a vital site where ideas about gender and sexuality are imagined and disseminated. *Popular Music and the Politics of Hope: Queer and Feminist Interventions* explores what that means with a wide-ranging collection of chapters that consider the many ways in which contemporary pop music performances of gender and sexuality are politically engaged and even radical. With analyses rooted in feminist and queer thought, contributors explore music from different genres and locations, including Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, A Tribe Called Red's *We Are the Halluci Nation*, and celebrations of Vera Lynn's 100th Birthday.

At a bleak moment in global politics, this collection focuses on the concept of critical hope: the chapters consider making and consuming popular music as activities that encourage individuals to imagine and work toward a better, more just world. Addressing race, class, aging, disability, and colonialism along with gender and sexuality, the authors articulate the diverse ways popular music can contribute to the collective political projects of queerness and feminism. With voices from senior and emerging scholars, this volume offers a snapshot of today's queer and feminist scholarship on popular music that is an essential read for students and scholars of music and cultural studies.

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To the memory of Aretha Franklin (1942–2018)

> Her murmurs gave shape to a sensuality that defeated repressive moral codes and replaced them with the commandments of tenderness, of sweet bitter love. Her high notes made hope happen. When she sang, we remembered that we could walk on the moon.
>
> —*Ann Powers*

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So much of the academic work that we've explored in the past few years has had the idea of collectivity and collaboration at its center. Judith Butler writes, in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, that "[w]e cannot act without supports, and yet we must struggle for the supports that allow us to act" (Harvard University Press, 2015, 72). In *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Donna Haraway suggests, in her inimitable way, "we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles" (Duke University Press, 2016, 4). Alexis Shotwell, in her book *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, speaks about our "entanglement" with others, both near and far, and reminds us that "[e]mbodiment as a form of implication means that to live, we rely on others intimately" (University of Minnesota Press, 2016, 108). As we argue in the Introduction, and as many of the authors in this collection argue in their chapters, collaboration and collectivity often lie at the heart of a politics of hope. And so it is hugely rewarding to acknowledge here that, yes, bringing this anthology together has been a collaborative effort—which all academic work is to varying degrees—but more importantly that it truly has felt as though we have had such good supports, that we have both built community and relied on existing communities as the project unfolded.

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university and steal what one can" (26). We feel truly fortunate that we have gotten to sneak in and steal alongside these thinkers, and we thank them for engendering hope in the face of cynicism and exploitation.

I (Craig) would like to thank Nisha Eswaran, Meredith Evans, Maria Murphy, and Clorinde Peters for their wisdom. I'm lucky to call these patient and generous thinkers friends. Adam Kuhn is creative, thoughtful, and whip-smart; he consistently responds to my work with unwavering encouragement and enthusiasm and I feel truly fortunate to have him in my corner. Thanks to my family—Mom, Dad, Sara, John, and Cohen—for believing in me, sustaining me from afar, and always offering me a soft place to land. Thanks, finally, to Susan, for being an unparalleled mentor and collaborator. For years, Susan has encouraged me to approach feminist and queer scholarship as world-making endeavors—collective projects meant to push us to imagine and performatively work toward more just and equitable worlds. I consider myself fortunate that I get to do this work alongside such a brilliant and fearless scholar. Among so many others, the aforementioned individuals fill me with a sense of hope. And, as we argue in the following pages, the political potential offered by hope can dramatically alter the world in which we live.

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INTRODUCTION

Craig Jennex and Susan Fast

Following a rich tradition of popular music scholarship, the chapters in this collection are bound together by contributors' beliefs that making and consuming popular music are political activities in the sense that both regularly encourage individuals to imagine and enact a better, more just world. Specifically, in the chapters that follow, authors articulate the diverse ways popular music can productively contribute to the collective political projects of queerness and feminism. In this Introduction, we situate the politics of queer and feminist popular music and scholarship within the generative theoretical frame of critical hope as it has recently been taken up by a number of feminist and queer writers.

Since the terms "feminist" and "queer" are understood in so many different ways, we begin by trying to define what we mean when we use them here. Contributors to this collection build on multiple genealogies of feminist and queer thought to make sense of the politics of popular music in our contemporary moment. What brings together these chapters (and the disparate histories and political movements they reference) is the authors' recognition that our current moment is (still, regrettably) defined by patriarchy—a reality in which sexual oppression is rampant and heteronormativity remains pervasive—and the belief that an alternative, more just world is possible; to do feminist scholarship and "live a feminist life" (to follow Sara Ahmed [2017]) is to believe in and work toward a possible reality in which lives are not structured by oppression, exploitation, and violence. This understanding of feminism is indelibly linked to how the term "queer" is employed in this anthology. Queerness, in what follows, refers to the commitment to build and sustain connections with others that challenge hegemonic modes of relationality—especially around normative ideals of gender and sexuality. For many contributors—and for us as

editors—the meaning of queer is intentionally open-ended; as Judith Butler argues in "Critically Queer": "queer" must "remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (1993, 19). Butler's thinking on queerness informs how we interpret feminism as similarly dynamic. In fact, in this collection, queerness and feminism are often taken up as co-constitutive and predicated upon a capacious form of resistive politics.

Almost all the chapters in this collection focus on minoritarian performers and this is certainly important: giving analytical attention to those who have been and continue to be marginalized is, in and of itself, a worthwhile goal. But simple representational politics are perhaps the least interesting aspect of how gender and sexuality get addressed here. The very idea of a coherent, stable, or simple subjectivity is challenged in almost every chapter. Further, gender and sexual politics are inevitably taken up intersectionally, either in dialogue with issues of race, class, ability, age, or, in one case, incarceration, and are understood through other webs of connection and influence.

When we began this project, we wanted to bring together both junior and more senior scholars of popular music who would give unapologetically queer and/or feminist analyses of popular music, analyses that contribute positively to pressing contemporary social issues—that work to heal, to encourage, and to imagine a different world. Much of our own work attempts such reparative readings (to follow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick [2003]; see below), aiming to locate, examine, and explain what is empowering, unifying, and celebratory in popular music performances that we, ourselves, have often been empowered by (see for example Fast 2001; 2008; 2010; 2012; 2014; Jennex 2013; 2016; this volume). At a particularly bleak moment in global politics (headlined by Donald Trump's election to the office of President of the United States in November, 2016, coincidentally the precise moment we started working on this book) and weighed down by what often feels like overwhelmingly negative critique in academic work, we wanted to create a collection that was "hopeful"—not naively hopeful or uncritically optimistic, but hopeful in the sense that contemporary queer and feminist thinkers such as Sara Ahmed (2017), Jill Dolan (2005), Elizabeth Freeman (2010), José Esteban Muñoz (2009), Rebecca Solnit (2016), and others have been articulating in recent years.

Like those writers, our interest in queer and feminist hope as a scholarly approach comes from our dissatisfaction with contemporary leftist critique that simply identifies the problems we face as insurmountable—those pervasive claims that rely upon (and reify) the negative, "everything is getting worse" narrative that has become commonplace in certain strains of critical scholarship. Sedgwick identified this scholarly impulse in her book *Touching Feeling*, differentiating between "paranoid reading"—a dominant (and dominating) method

of inquiry that is anticipatory, mimetic, and negative—and a style of reading she calls "reparative." The latter, she writes, is both "additive and accretive.… It wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self" (2003, 149). Neither reading, Sedgwick argues, "can be called more realistic than the other.… Of the two, however, it is only paranoid knowledge that has so thorough a practice of disavowing its affective motive and force and masquerading as the very stuff of truth" (138). "In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression," she writes, "to theorize anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naive, pious, or complaisant" (125–126). She makes clear that either a paranoid or reparative approach can be fruitful, but not when the form of reading overshadows all other possibilities; the most generative examples of scholarship and activism find ways to call upon both practices, to hold the complexity of cultural objects, and provide a more accurate reading of how individuals extract "sustenance" in the process (150–151). For Solnit, leftist despair is not unique to the academy but is pervasive in critical thought more broadly. There are many causes for this despair, she argues, including the fact that "[t]he only story many leftists know how to tell is the story that is the underside of the dominant culture's story. They conceive of the truth as pure bad news, appoint themselves the deliverers of it, and keep telling it over and over" (2016, 22). What's worse, she continues, is that this gloom becomes a way of approaching the world for some scholars and activists. She argues that "[t]here's a kind of activism that's more about bolstering identity than achieving results" in which "the point becomes the demonstration of one's own virtue rather than the realization of results" (23). Reparative, hopeful thinking is difficult; it is also precisely what we need. The current moment is a complex one, at once nightmarish and ripe with beauty and promise. According to Solnit, "[f]ull engagement requires the ability to perceive both" (xii).

Negative critique, particularly when things are so horrendous, is both simple and reductive—it's the easy way out. As Paulo Freire writes in his book *Pedagogy of Hope*, "while I certainly cannot ignore hopelessness as a concrete entity, nor turn a blind eye to the historical, economic and social reasons that explain that hopelessness … I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, outside of hope and dream. Hope is an ontological need" (1994, 2). In this moment, it is neither difficult nor impressive to point out the obstacles we face and to leave it at that. In fact, Solnit argues that despair in dark moments is often "more predictable" than hopefulness and "in a sad way safer" (2016, 20). Hope is often a far more difficult path—it requires coming face-to-face with profound difficulties but knowing they are surmountable. In her book *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed suggests: "[w]here there is hope, there is difficulty.… Hope is not at the expense of struggle, but animates a struggle; hope gives us a sense that there is a point to working things out, working things

through. Hope does not only or always point toward the future, but carries us through when the terrain is difficult, when the path we follow makes it harder to proceed" (2017, 2). Similarly, in her book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor writes that "[j]ustice is not a natural part of the lifecycle in the United States, nor it is a product of evolution; it is always the outcome of struggle" (2016, 5). This struggle, she argues, must be collective and collaborative, as "there is a lot more to gain by building unity and a lot more to lose by staying in our respective corners" (2016, 189).

Alexis Shotwell has a particularly generative way of viewing this collective struggle and the roles individuals may play therein. In her book *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, Shotwell contends that we are all complicit "in situations we (at least in some way) repudiate" (2016, 5), that there is no standing outside of the complex, entangled processes that have, for example, wreaked havoc on our environment or sustained settler colonialism. "To be against purity," she writes, "is to be against the rhetorical or conceptual attempt to delineate and delimit the world into something separable, disentangled, and homogenous" (2016, 15). Purity politics attempt to simplify incalculably complex situations, arguing, from both the left and right of the political spectrum, for a kind of fictitious "primordial state" to which we can return or to which we can aspire (politically, bodily, environmentally, etc.). So often leftist critique espouses a kind of purity politics that shuts down dialogue instead of opening it up. As Shotwell says, "[purism] is a de-collectivizing, de-mobilizing, paradoxical politics of despair. This world deserves better" (2016, 9). In all cases, the authors in this book reject a politics of purity, hold on to complexity and contradiction, and tease out the myriad ways that popular music artists work to build collectivity across lines of difference.

The Past is Present and Future

There is a central argument in all of this scholarship that informs our thinking around the political necessity of critical hope: as Solnit argues, "though hope is about the future, grounds for hope lie in the records and recollections of the past" (2016, xix). The stories we tell about the past, she argues, inform what we perceive as possible in the present. Ahmed similarly urges us to "give time" to the stories of the past (in her case, "feminist classics"): "to say that what is behind us is worth going over, worth putting in front of us. It is a way of pausing, not rushing ahead, not being seduced by the buzz of the new" (2017, 17). "Citation," she continues, "is feminist memory. Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way" (2017, 15). In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz performs a similarly backward-facing temporal move, mining the past for smoldering embers of collective and concrete utopian possibilities that can inform and

animate the present and, ultimately, the future. "My approach to hope as a critical methodology," Muñoz argues, "can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (2009, 4). In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Freeman suggests that the point of queer performance, politics, and scholarship "may be to trail behind actually existing social possibilities: to be interested in the tail end of things … because we can't know in advance, but only retrospectively if even then, what is queer and what is not" (2010, xiii). These recent calls for a return to and engagement with the past recall Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, which Martin Irvine beautifully summarizes as "[e]very level of expression, from live conversational dialogue to complex cultural expression in other genres and art works is an ongoing chain or network of statements and responses, repetitions and quotations" (Irvine n.d.). This theoretical frame was much applied in popular music studies (and everywhere else) a generation ago. But its political neutrality is quite far removed from the more recent calls to summon the past that animate our thinking here. To cite, to situate, and to pay homage are vital acts in queer and feminist world-making projects. This is also true of other minoritarian art forms and knowledges that intersect and inform contemporary queer and feminist thought; as Tricia Rose reminds us, "[t]he history of African-American music and culture has been defined in large measure by a history of the art of signifying, recontextualization, collective memory and resistance" (Rose 1990, 113). Her writing, like Ahmed's, filled with acknowledgment of what has come before, models how this also applies in the best examples of scholarship.

This central tenet of a queer and feminist methodology centered on hopefulness—that potential for hope and transformation in the present can be sparked by our recognition and re-assessment of the past—leads us to look back and linger over feminist and queer scholarship on popular music that paved the way for scholars contributing to this anthology, that pushed back against prevailing narratives and, in so doing, created the space for us to glean the possibility of something new. We want briefly to return to the work of four scholars whose work has been particularly influential in this respect: Richard Dyer (1979), Sue Wise ([1984] 1990), Tricia Rose (1990), and Angela McRobbie ([1980] 1990). While none of these thinkers frame their analyses in terms of "hope"—let's face it: without the recent critical apparatus of hopefulness this language is easy to dismiss— the issues they raise and the theoretical approaches they employ afford a hopeful sense of agency, collectivity, and resistance in both popular music and popular music scholarship. They offer hopeful possibilities: of listening and interpreting differently, of connecting with others in profoundly moving ways, of imagining a radically different future informed by queer and feminist politics.

First published in the UK-based socialist gay liberation journal *Gay Left* in 1979—a cultural moment when disco was condemned by both politically Left

and Right perspectives for being vapid, capitalistic, and overplayed on airwaves and in dance spaces—Richard Dyer's article "In Defence of Disco" positions disco music and culture as empowering and validating of minoritarian experiences and desires. Dyer's work is not a simple, naive celebration of disco, but a critical exploration of its "ambivalently, ambiguously, contradictorily … positive qualities" (1979, 102). His analysis is both additive and accretive: he takes this music, and the forms of socialization that it inspires, seriously; in approaching the musical sound and its broader political force with consideration and imagination, Dyer opens intellectual space for others to do the same. He argues that dominant perspectives on this music culture regularly flatten out the diversity, difference, and political possibilities that exist therein and reminds us that we lose a great deal if we dismiss music and its effects as "irredeemably capitalistic" (1979, 101). Capitalism, Dyer memorably writes, "constructs the disco experience, but it does not necessarily know what it is doing, apart from making money" (1979, 103); one could substitute almost any genre of popular music in this formulation, for the tension among the commercial, political, and artistic aspects of popular music is ubiquitous and has long shaped arguments about authenticity and political potential (see Negus 1996).

Five years later, in 1984, Sue Wise published "Sexing Elvis" in *Women's Studies International Forum*. In this short piece, Wise analyzes her personal fandom of Elvis Presley as empowering: a form of music participation that affords her agency, power, and joy. Through her infatuation with Elvis, Wise simultaneously disidentifies with the dominant image of an Elvis fan and the mainstream image of feminists of the moment. Wise makes clear: Elvis' music is not really meant for her, a lesbian feminist participating in political communities in which Elvis was perceived as "a central part of the patriarchal plot, for 'Elvis' consisted of a social phenomenon and personal image which downgraded women by elevating the male macho hero to unprecedented heights" ([1984] 1990, 394). But her disidentificatory embrace—to call on Muñoz's claims in his 1999 book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*—of this music sustains her—"[i]n my own private Elvis world," Wise writes, "I could forget that I was miserable and lonely.… Some people who feel so alone in an alien world turn to religion or to drink or to football teams to give their lives purpose. I turned to Elvis" (395). Like Dyer's work, Wise's writing opens up space to re-conceptualize music performance and participation. Her work shows that there are new worlds that can be created (or, at the very least, imagined) when we participate in queer and feminist recuperative work—when we (re)claim something we are not meant to claim.

In her 1990 *Camera Obscura* article "Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile," Tricia Rose made a similar kind of claim about the role of women in hip hop. Arguing that women rappers' "presence in rap has been consistently ignored or marginalized" (1990, 110), and pointing to media critics' "consistent coding of

rap music as male in the face of a significant and sustained female presence" (111), Rose centers the contributions of women in early rap, lingering over a number of seminal videos by Salt-n-Pepa, MC Lyte, and Queen Latifah. Arguing against the frequent charge that rap music is irredeemably sexist and misogynist, Rose calls for a re-evaluation of what constitutes "feminist expression" (111), contributing, in the process, to the early articulation of intersectional feminist politics and the critique of white feminism. Rather than separating themselves from black men and aligning with white women in the feminist movement, black women rappers "sustain an ongoing dialogue with their audiences and male rappers about sexual promiscuity, emotional commitment, infidelity, the drug trade, racial politics, and black cultural history" (113). In carving out a public space for black women to be in dialogue with men on such a wide range of issues, these women help reshape what constitutes female sexual pleasure, freedom, and resistance.

Rose also points to the way that rap music as a genre is coded as masculine, calling out critics who, during the 1980s, equated its growing commercialization to "emasculation" (1990, 110–111). Angela McRobbie similarly intervened into the discipline of youth studies in 1980. In her article "Settling Accounts With Subcultures: A Feminist Critique," which first appeared in the journal *Screen Education*, she challenged the singular focus on young men in studies of "youth culture" or "subculture," so many of which are defined by their affinity to popular music styles. Focusing on what she calls a feminist re-reading of Dick Hebdige's influential book *Subculture: The Meaning Of Style* (1979), with its analysis of punk and reggae subcultures, and Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (1977), McRobbie points out that these studies focus on a narrowly defined notion of the liberatory and revolutionary potential of youth culture without taking into consideration—indeed, neatly bracketing off—the public activities of these young men from family life and the domestic sphere. She cheekily notes: "few writers seemed interested in what happened when a mod went home after a weekend on speed. Only what happened out there on the streets mattered" ([1980] 1990, 68–69). And yet, McRobbie does not abandon the idea of the liberatory potential of the public spectacle of subcultures, pointing to the importance of holding onto contradictions. She ends her chapter with a nod toward the "possible links between youth subcultures and feminist culture": "[f]or as long as I can remember, collective expressions of disaffiliation from authority and the hegemony of the dominant classes (by either sex) have sent shivers of excitement down my spine" (79). Indeed, in the years after this article was written, we've witnessed extraordinary examples of how, in both the domestic and public spheres, women and girls have participated in such collective expressions, often with popular music at the heart of the movement.

The texts we take up above are just a few examples of the scholarship that has provided a foundation on which this collection is built—the scholarship that has, to return to Ahmed's phrasing, "helped us find our way" (2017, 15). This scholarship makes space: for non-hegemonic experiences of bliss and political possibility, for perspectives on music performance and participation that are not limited to conventional notions—for something else to manifest. Each of the examples above offers ways to think about our scholarship in this current moment: it refutes dominant discourses, is additive and empowering. We believe that the chapters in this collection do similar, hopeful work.

The Hopeful Politics of Pop

While popular music regularly provides listeners with a sense of hope in challenging times, this hopefulness is not only, or not even primarily made manifest in pop music lyrics; as we ourselves have often tried to articulate in our own work, and as much of what is written in these pages demonstrates, the politics of popular music, whether they be about hope or anything else, resides in musical sound, in the embodiment of that sound, by both performers and fans, in the discourses created around the music, and so much more. We can both recall times in the past when we relied on these many facets of popular music to glean a sense of hope (and with it, a sense of agency and empowerment) when faced with limited and limiting social realities. In these instances, being enabled by participation in popular music had tangible effects on the broader world and how we interpret our individual roles therein. Such an experience of pleasure is not an escape from the social sphere or the political realm—as Ray Pratt argues, it instead serves "catalytically, helping to empower and reinforce the energies of those who have gained real capacities for action" (1990, 39).

Indeed, we are struck by how such a sense of intersectional feminist and queer agency and empowerment, enabled through popular music, is contributing to a number of movements attempting to make radical changes to our world as we write this Introduction. Student-led activism against a culture of gun violence in the United States seems primed to have a profound effect on the nation; it's not lost on us that the #neveragain movement, begun in the wake of the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in which thirty-one people were shot by a gunman, fourteen of them fatally, was led by students in the drama club in that school, and that the anthem for the movement was written by young women students (nor that one of the leading voices of the movement is a young queer Latinx woman named Emma Gonzalez) (Reed 2018; Witt 2018). The Women's March on Washington that followed Trump's election brought many activists back to the streets—and many others to this type of activism for the first time; it was the largest single-day protest in US history and it was headlined by

popular music artists such as Madonna and Alicia Keys. But perhaps even more importantly than appearances by celebrity musicians, protestors out in the street mobilized both traditional and new forms of protest music: the artist MILCK, for example, organized flash mob performances of her song "I Can't Keep Quiet" throughout the streets at the Washington, DC march, and many different chants, from traditional to newly composed for the occasion, could be heard (Jarnow 2017; see also Manabe 2018 for transcriptions of many of the chants). Indigenous activists across Turtle Island are voicing more just and equitable alternatives for the future, articulated in no small part through the music of Indigenous artists such as Tanya Tagaq, A Tribe Called Red, Jeremy Dutcher, Eekwol, and the many Two-Spirit activist musicians such as Melody McKiver and Shawnee Talbot ("Great Videos" 2017). And writing about a contemporary musical revolution informed by the Black Lives Matter movement, Daphne A. Brooks argues "we are experiencing a new golden age of protest music, that much is sure (2016)." In our contemporary moment, she argues, "[t]he new wave of black pop protest music captures and grapples with racial catastrophe in the 21st century: the prison-industrial complex, globalized wealth inequality and the violent expenditure of women and children … Black pop radicalism should shake our culture to its core" (2016). In Brooks' reading, contemporary popular music engenders a sense of belonging, a language for political action, and a sense of alternatives for the world in which we live.

In a social reality structured by patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy, and ongoing processes of colonization, imperialism, and exploitation, experiences of aesthetic beauty and hopefulness are particularly productive for queer and feminist political action. As Angela Davis argues, participation in art can encourage "a special form of social consciousness that can potentially awaken an urge in those affected by it to creatively transform their oppressive environments. Art can function as a sensitizer and catalyst, propelling people toward involvement in organized movements seeking to effect radical social change" (1998, 236).

In a broad sense, the feelings of hope afforded by participation in popular music share similarities with other forms of hopeful aesthetic participation. The hopeful potential of aesthetic participation is well articulated: in *The Principle of Hope*, for example, Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch argues that art enables us to imagine alternatives to the world in which we live by fueling a critical and transformative political imagination that is not limited to the hegemonic sense of the present (1986). Jill Dolan builds on Bloch's work to argue that performance encourages participants to recognize "what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (2005, 5). More recently, in his book *Landscapes*, John Berger argues that "we live in a world of suffering in which evil is rampant, a world whose events do not

confirm our Being, a world that has to be resisted. It is in this situation that the aesthetic moment offers hope" (2016, 206). For Berger, that we find beauty in an aesthetic interaction "means that we are less alone, that we are more deeply inserted into existence than the course of a single life would lead us to believe" (2016, 206). For each of these thinkers, a sense of hope gleaned through aesthetic participation is potentially transformative at individual and collective levels: each instance allows us to recognize the meaningful connections possible with others and imagine alternatives to the world in which we live.

For those skeptical about these claims, consider the alternative: a situation devoid of music, utterly lacking in aesthetic beauty and pleasure. Writing in *The New Yorker* on the eve of Trump's Inauguration, Adam Gopnik remarked that from the 1930s onward, "politics and our political life have always been wrapped and unwrapped around [popular] music, left, right and in between"; music, he stresses, "that was often made in protest, and frequently made best by the most oppressed among us." Gopnik continues:

> And so the inability, so far, of Donald Trump to get any significant musicians from any of those traditions, rock or country or blues or Broadway, to sing at his Inauguration is not a small comic detail but a significant reflection of this moment in history. It reminds us of just how aberrant Trump and Trumpism is. When the Rockettes have to be coerced to appear at your show—or you're left to boast of the military bands, directly under your orders, who are playing—one is witnessing not just some snobbish hostility on the part of "Hollywood" entertainers but a deeper abyss between the man about to assume power and the shared traditions of the country he represents. There is no music in this man.
>
> *(Gopnik 2017)*

Gopnik captures, at once, an example of the profoundly significant force of music in the conventional political realm and the way this vibrant force was silenced—not *by* Trump but by musicians who refused to participate, "a rare moment in which Trump's weakness was exposed, music's power evident" as Annie Randall put it (personal correspondence). If Barack Obama's Presidential campaign in 2008 was defined by hope and his presidency (however flawed) marked by a celebration of music—including his widely circulated year-end playlists, Aretha Franklin's performance at the 2009 Inauguration, and Kendrick Lamar's performance at the White House in 2015—then the overwhelming musical silence in the Trump administration is a metaphor for the hopelessness and despair many around the world feel in the wake of his rise to power and the ruthlessness and ignorance of his (lack of) leadership.

Themes and Connections

We have grouped the chapters in this collection into five parts, the titles of which try to capture a predominant theme that runs through each of the three or four contributions therein. We invited scholars whose work helped shape, and continues to shape, the landscape of popular music studies to introduce each part in a way that speaks to those themes. Their own work is certainly centered around a politics of hope: focused on minoritarian cultures and offering reparative readings of artists, works, and genres of music often dismissed. The titles of these parts and the book are intended to signal the active and ongoing work, the struggle, demonstrated by the artists taken up in the chapters and often in the scholarship itself, of challenging hegemonic ideas about gender, sexuality, race, class, age, ability, and incarceration. Including relatively substantive introductions to each part was a way to bring in a level of meta-perspective that we thought would prove valuable: a group of (exceptionally smart) voices to reflect on the themes and writing, rather than simply relying on our own in this Introduction.

Displacing Whiteness

This part is introduced by Daphne A. Brooks, whose book *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (2006) chronicles how musical, theatrical, and other public performances by black artists and activists during the long twentieth century served as a politics of hopeful resistance, challenging narrow categorizations of race, gender, and class. The part includes an chapter on Janelle Monáe's Afrofuturism by Marquita Smith, in which Smith points to the "plasticity" of Monáe's performance of gender, relating it to the flexibility required for black people to survive in the Americas. Francesca Royster examines Beyoncé's "Daddy Lessons," which appropriates the traditionally white and male genre of outlaw country, arguing that it offers a "powerful blueprint for reaching across communities to resist." Craig Jennex addresses questions of belonging—in this case to the nation—in relation to queer subjectivity, contextualizing Kanwar Anit Singh Saini's (also known as Sikh Knowledge) "More Than Aware," a musical pastiche that references reggae, dancehall, EDM, and qawwali, within debates in Quebec over the banning of religious garments in public.

Rethinking Difference

Annie Randall's work on protest music (in *Music, Power and Politics*, 2004), which seeks to unravel the ways in which music works to shape political ideologies, and her multifaceted analysis of Dusty Springfield's camp subjectivity

through her music (2008), serve as models for the work that she introduces in these pages. Here, Laurie Stras contrasts Lady Gaga's 2017 revelation that she suffers from chronic pain, which she long concealed from the public, with three artists—Mandy Harvey, Viktoria Modesta, and the Sisters of Invention—whose disabilities are centered in their music; they "use their creative output to articulate views on gender, disability, and activism," from Modesta's bold display of her prosthetic leg—sometimes adorned with Swarovski crystals—to the Sisters, who have a range of learning and physical disabilities, insisting in their song "This Isn't Disneyland," that they "are not a novelty/this is as real as it gets." In her analysis of Bruce Springsteen's memoir, Pamela Fox focuses in part on his revelation there that he has long suffered from bipolar disorder and she asks how we might understand his performance of masculinity in light of this new information, even as we must check our conventional notions of femininity, or, indeed, feminism, in light of how Chrissie Hynde, in her memoir, refuses to be understood in terms of her gender. Freya Jarman takes up questions of musical influence in the music of Amy Winehouse, Adele, and Lily Allen, acknowledging the "white sonic colonization" of African American musical styles, but reaching further in her analysis (aided by her own lived understanding of British culture) to explicate how these artists also draw on discrete London accents, both historical and more recent, influenced by the city's multicultural populations.

Decolonizing Sound

One of the earliest essays by a musicologist or music theorist to address the issue of cultural appropriation in pop music is Ellie Hisama's "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn" (1993). Hisama has written extensively on issues of race and gender since then, foregrounding women musicians and writing early in her career of her desire to "devel[op] a branch of music theory that is markedly feminist" (2000). In this part, she introduces chapters by Alexa Woloshyn, Liz Przybylski, and Elliott Powell that center on processes of collaboration in which minoritarian artists and their musical traditions—Indigenous and South Asian respectively—decenter and destablize not only white colonial narratives, but stultifying ideas about femininity, masculinity, and heterosexuality. Woloshyn notes the ways in which the men in A Tribe Called Red reject the toxic hypermasculinity—the white, settler idea of masculinity—that has been forced upon so many Indigenous men as part of the colonizing process. Przybylski takes up an unusual collaboration between the Canadian hip hop artist Eekwol and the new music ensemble Camerata Nova in the year of Canada's sesquicenntenial, a collaboration intended to "showcase Indigenous music and model Indigenous-settler relationships for national reconciliation," a complex and thorny issue to be

sure—many Indigenous artists in Canada refused to participate in the 150th birthday celebrations at all and many also refuse the politics surrounding the idea of reconciliation. And Powell's chapter traces some of the complicated genealogy of the hugely influential hip hop song "Addictive" by Truth Hurts, critiquing the link some have made between the song's inclusion of South Asian music and the expansion of the post-9/11 "war on terror," based on the intricate play of gender and sexuality—aspects that critics have not much taken into account—that radically alters the politics of the song.

Refusing Conventions

Maureen Mahon's book *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (2004) is a study in refusing conventions. Rock music, despite its beginnings in African American culture, quickly became identified with white musicians; but in the 1980s, black rockers formed the Coalition to push back against the assertion that they were not interested in or could not lay claim to this genre. Mahon has also written extensively about black women musicians, including black women backup singers—the ubiquitous, but so often invisible presence in so much pop music (2011a; 2011b; forthcoming). In this part, Jack Halberstam asks us to rethink the generic divisions that kept the politics of "women's music" and "gay music" separate in the past, and to think of these musics together, as a form of coalitional politics, in the present. Susan McClary and Jacqueline Warwick, in dialogue, discuss the significant, if often belittled and dismissed, role of women's and girls' voices in pop music, past and present.

Murphy's chapter on Anohni's album *HOPELESSNESS* might at first seem like an uneasy fit for this volume, however it is anything but. Anohni's seeming collapse into despair at the state of the world, which Murphy explores through the close reading of two songs, one on climate change ("Four Degrees") and one on surveillance ("Watch Me"), is actually a way of "staying with the trouble," as Donna Haraway would put it (2016). This is a particularly important perspective, one that brings us back to the idea of hopefulness as struggle, as engagement with the world as it is, in all its imperfection, in the present, and finding there (here) a way to, as Haraway puts it, "write stories and live lives for flourishing and for abundance, especially in the teeth of rampaging destruction and impoverization" (2016, 136).

Voicing Resilience

Our final part is introduced by Murray Forman, whose earlier work on hip hop (including *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip Hop* [2002]) explores ways in which hip hop culture is tied to urban space, and how minority youth use the music to articulate their subjectivity in these spaces.

More recently, Forman has been concerned with the process of aging and popular music consumption, as well as aging within hip hop culture, both how older hip hop music is taken up by younger generations, and how different generations of hip hop musicians interact (2012; 2014). And so it's particularly fitting that he introduce a section in which two chapters grapple with questions of aging in popular music: Tiffany Naiman and Christina Baade explore the difficulties of aging as a woman pop artist, in particular how two icons, Madonna and Vera Lynn, negotiate the challenges of careers that have long-exceeded the conventional temporal boundaries for women pop stars. Naiman considers Madonna in the context of critics who decry her continued public presence as a woman nearing 60, and, more specifically, the continued display of her sexuality at this age. Baade argues that Lynn, who became a star during World War II and who is still known as the "Force's Sweetheart" and is considered "a national treasure," has been engaged in the labor of maintaining her legacy.

While resilience, for these women, has meant shattering the glass ceiling of age (among many other things), for Consuela Gaines, the co-author, with Benjamin Harbert, of the final chapter in this part, it meant something of a different magnitude altogether: using music as means not only to survive, but to flourish inside the walls of prison. The anthology ends with this powerful chapter by Harbert and Gaines that offers an insider's view of singing in lockdown at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. While incarcerated there, Gaines used music as a way to survive the silence, but also the noise of prison, to regulate the acoustic environment, to add structure to the day, to create community among both fellow prisoners and guards.

* * *

Given the diverse scholarly interests of our contributors—something we worked hard to achieve in assembling this group—and our relatively open-ended instructions to them ("unapologetically queer and/or feminist," "informed by a politics of hope") there is a truly remarkable synergy among many of the chapters well beyond those found within a particular section. These larger themes might productively be called "strategies" within contemporary popular music for forging hopeful interventions, and the authors' deployment of them a methodological blueprint for popular music scholarship that builds on reparative readings of the past. They are: (a) holding onto complexity and contradiction in our own lives and the lives of others (there are no easy answers; there is no purity); (b) disrupting normative ideas about time and temporality, thus engaging with the past as future prospect; and (c) collaborating in, among, and beyond usual musical affiliations, including genre. Many of the chapters employ all three of these strategies, some only one or two, and to varying degrees. Further, while all contributors have crafted chapters that focus on reparative, rather than paranoid critique, and while they have offered readings of artists who are certainly engaged in a hopeful politics,

few have opted to contextualize their analyses within the framework of "hope" or "critical hope." From our perspective, that's not a shortcoming; we have tried to do that contextualizing in this Introduction.

The chapters in this anthology identify and embark upon a queer and feminist scholarly project for our current moment: one framed by the concept of critical hope that is animated by anti-ableist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-xenophobic politics; one that pays critical attention to violences enacted through social inequalities, environmental degradation, the prison–industrial complex, and unfettered neoliberalism; one that, in the face of all of these realities, is attuned to coalitional and collaborative political movements and the profound potential afforded by retaining, as the title of Solnit's book puts it, hope in dark times.

Note on Citations

Since there are multiple ways to access songs and albums, we have decided not to include citations for these in endnotes or Works Cited. When discussing musical performances, each author has clearly indicated the performer, the name of the performance, and the year of release to ensure ease of access for readers, whatever their preferred medium of musical listening.

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PART I

Displacing Whiteness

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INTRODUCTION

Displacing Whiteness

Daphne A. Brooks

For a moment, it seemed like the party was over, like the jig was up. Back in 2017 during those closing moments of that year's hotly anticipated Grammy ceremony, it seemed like a superstar pop artist at the height of her fame and an utter darling in the music entertainment industry, was about to break the codes of silence and putative civility in awards show culture in a way that rivaled that classic moment when old-school Kanye bumrushed the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards stage to protest Taylor Swift's victory. In those first few seconds when she made her way to the microphone to accept the "Album of the Year" honor, it seemed like Adele, the latest British pop sensation with mad black music love in heart might do the deed, speak the unspeakable on a global telecast, and lay bare not only the way white institutional power works in pop but also expose the ways that that same power remains inextricably linked to her own fame and a string of accolades and achievements. Her initial faltering and her tearful opening address to fellow nominee, Beyoncé Knowles suggested that something might be afoot. "I'm very humbled and very grateful…," she began, "but my life is Beyoncé."

Adele's words marked the first time in pop music history that a white female artist, from the awards show podium, directly addressed a contemporary black woman musician in the prime of her career and publicly expressed humility, heartfelt debt, and a deep and abiding recognition of longstanding influence on her own work. "The artist of my life is Beyoncé and … the *Lemonade* album," Adele continued, "was … so monumental, and so well thought out, and so beautiful and soul-bearing … all us artists adore you. You are our light." Never before had any white pop artist—woman or man—so closely flirted with momentarily bringing the wheels of institutional racism to a dramatic halt.

"I can't possibly accept this," sobbed Adele while the Staples Center audience held its breath. She ultimately (and disappointingly to many) did—but in even uttering such seemingly unvarnished remarks she came closer than any artist before her to shining a light on the absurd racial inequities in awards show culture and popular music culture more broadly. Leave it to Adele, the Brixton lass, to push back against the American Recording Academy whose repeat offense in overlooking black women artists in its major categories came to a head that night when it chose the safety of white, female, big-voiced pop convention over the edgy, experimental, overtly black feminist protest music soundtrack for the woke generation. Adele's salvo was a big one—even if it sounded intimate and personal—the testimony of a fan genuflecting before her "queen" while filled with remorse and a bit of shame. Her claims bespeak larger histories of both white and black women musicians' complicated entanglements with one another, and perhaps even more importantly, black women artists' surprisingly precarious and paradoxical position as highly influential yet critically undervalued figures in popular music culture.

Adele is just the latest iteration of the kind of artist who sits at the center of this web. One might think of how, with her earthy timbre, her curvy, zaftig figure, her open affinities toward black women musicians like Beyoncé and Nicki Minaj, she recalls the early twentieth-century Jewish immigrant songstress Sophie Tucker ("the Last of the Red Hot Mamas") whose dominance in those outback frontier years of the blues during the Gilded Age era especially reflected the recording industry's appropriative, anti-black attitudes. Tucker and other white blues vocalists soared while African American musicians were sidelined from the studio until Mamie Smith broke through with her "Crazy Blues" in 1920. Yet, in spite of segregatory divisions and racial stratification in the record business, this was also an era that produced meaningful networks of collaboration as well as charged competition between white and black women musicians, as scholars such Elijah Wald, Jayna Brown, Lori Harrison-Kahan, and others have noted.[1] Tucker was emblematic of the kind of musician who walked these faultlines carefully. Called a "coon shouter," that repugnant title given largely to white vocalists who trafficked in musical aesthetics (lots of vibrato and a deep, lower register range) perceived to be culturally "black" and capable of performing bawdy tunes about sexual agency and independence, Tucker aspired to sing the blues like the African American women performers whom she greatly admired, going so far as to ask blues legends like Alberta Hunter and Ethel Waters for vocal lessons to sharpen her game (Hunter declined but Waters took the pay). With roots in blackface performance and a penchant for ethnographically "observing" and incorporating black style into her repertoire, she was hardly an innocent ally. But largely behind the scenes in Jim Crow culture, she championed the likes of black women entertainers like dancer Ida Forsyne and quietly bonded with other women of color (African American actress

Mollie Elkins, pioneering Asian American female physician Dr. Mom Chung) later in life (Brown, 2008; Harrison-Kahan, 2011). Adele's globally heard embrace of Beyoncé's regality and her pathbreaking iconicity marks that 100-year leap from Tucker's tacit adoration of black female genius to proudly—if awkwardly—aspiring toward kinship ("I want you to be my mommy," said Adele. Country artist Faith Hill would second the sentiment that evening).

Delivered with Adele's trademark brand of sincerity and emotional authenticity, as well as a heaping dose of reverence, such a line is, nonetheless, cringeworthy to the extent that it, of course, calls up the fraught history of black women imagined as nurturing, service-oriented maternal figures—mothers, maids, and caricatured "mammies"—who were subjugated in captivity to breed against will and—both before and after slavery—to care for children not their own. They are, as scholar Farah Griffin has famously argued, often thought of as the "nurturing, healing, life and love giving for the majority culture" (2004, 104). While African American women's aesthetic contributions have literally supplied some of the fundamental DNA of our modern popular music culture, rarely have they been recognized for their mainstream impact and the superior quality of their craft and artistry. Aretha Franklin, of course, comes to mind as the consistent exception, and even in her passing she still towers over other vocalists with that gospel melisma heard round the world. Her long-running domination at the Grammys in its "female R&B vocal" category was a streak so notorious that, for a time in the 1970s, she became synonymous with the award itself.[2] Yet still, mind you, the Grammys' "Album of the Year" category, the category that acknowledges a long-playing masterwork collection of songs, even eluded the Queen of Soul.

How is it possible for black women popular musicians (an Aretha, a Whitney, a Beyoncé)—some of the most deeply impactful and widely imitated artists in the world—to exist simultaneously at the fringe and yet also at the critically under-acknowledged center of the culture industry? It is a problem that political science scholar Richard Iton once characterized as, for African Americans, an "outside/inside dynamic … experienced asymmetrically: as political disfranchisement on the one hand and overemployment in the arenas of popular culture on the other" (2010, 4). These are old battles that continue to be fought across new eras and on many fronts. Think, for instance, of Nicki Minaj who put it ever so plainly in her summer 2015 "Twitter beef" with (yet again) Swift about that year's MTV Video Awards nominations when she declared that there is "a system that doesn't credit black women for their contributions to pop culture as freely/quickly as they reward others.… We are huge trendsetters, not second class citizens that get thrown crumbs. This isn't anger. This is #information" (qtd. in Webber 2015).

The press covered Minaj's infamous tussle with Swift as a micro-spat between two pop egos, but the conflict was indicative of truths that exceeded