Rock-Chic(k) Lit: Vanguard or Old Guard?

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ABSTRACT

A string of memoirs published by women musicians has been revising androcentric accounts of popular music making: onstage, in the studio, and on tour. The memoirs of Patti Smith, Viv Albertine, Kim Gordon, Carrie Brownstein, Chrissie Hynde, and Britt Smith Start provide a rich vein of inquiry into the under-acknowledged role that women musicians have played in the alternative – punk – music that is integral to the soundscape of Anglo-American countercultural and feminist politics. This paper considers their work as one way of substantiating the link between inquiries into the popular culture and world politics nexus writ large and, on the other hand, the embodied, psycho-emotional dimensions of lived lives in the communities of practice that constitute these interconnections. First-person accounts like these provide opportunities and challenges for the analyst interested in exploring the complexities of creative and political agency of the female, rather than androgynous male Other (e.g. girl in a band, girl band, woman-with-guitar) in a (hetero)sexist and corporatized cultural domain sustained by masculinist tropes in music-making and analysis.

These autobiographies - of personal lives but primarily of committed musicianship, artistic and professional collaborations – are much more than stories of single-minded women achieving success in hostile domains. These narratives comprise a rich cultural archive of the individual and collective complexities of musical countercultures that have emerged from within, but also push back against the global music and entertainment industry that underpins Anglo-American political economic hegemony in international affairs. Determined in the wealth of empirical and experiential detail each author provides astute and self-aware commentaries about art, music, and the (sexual) politics of their day. Striking in their range of style and form - introspective, conversational, declamatory, and informative – these accounts offer scholars of the popular music and world politics nexus rich avenues for further inquiry.

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INTRODUCTION

> "As a child I thought I would never grow up, that I could will it so. And then I realized, quite recently, that I had crossed some line, unconsciously cloaked in my chronology. How did we get so damn old?" [1]

> "I regret half of this story and the other half is the sound you heard."[2]

This paper examines seven musical autobiographies, published by six women who have played a formative role in pre-punk/punk/post-punk music and accompanying cultural politics. Five are Americans - two of whom lived in the UK in their formative years, and one is British. These authors - Patti Smith (2010, and 2015/16), Viv Albertine (2014), Kim Gordon (2015), Carrie Brownstein (2015), Chrissie Hynde (2015), and Britt Smith Start (2016) - write not only as groundbreaking musicians but also as visual artists, writers, fashion designers, and television personalities. All of them continue to make their mark as individual performers, in various musical ensembles, as composers and music producers. These memoirs depict their respective musical comings of age in the period spanning the 1960's through to the present-day; times that have seen successive waves of feminist politics, civil rights, and musical challenges to the sociocultural, political and economic status quo. This is also the period that provides much of the visual, literary, sonic and multimedia material for the emerging literature on popular culture and world politics in international relations on the one hand and, on the other, the substantial research literature on the sociological and musicological dimensions to diverse branches of western popular music[3]. For this reason alone, the archival information and insider insights packed into these books, and the role their authors have played in shaping the sound, and the look of alternative musical culture matter to inquires into the (world) politics-music nexus.

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[1] Smith (20115: 251)

[2] Hynde (2015:xi).

[3] The academic literature, in cultural studies, sociology, and popular music research here is vast. It also dovetails influential surveys of key musical moments in this period by music journalists. Marketing genres here also play a role in how the literature can be categorized, and so needs to be problematized; jazz, blues, rock, and punk from which varying degrees of interest in the race and class dimensions follow respectively. In this first instance see Frith (2007), Street (2012), and Hesmondalgh (2013). In the second, Greil Marcus (1989/2009), Paul Morley (2008), provide insider-inflected studies of this period and its underground music-scene. The recent deaths of Lou Reed, David Bowie, along with Prince and Leonard Cohen are generating another set of retrospectives. The ethnomusicological literature has also been providing contributions to non-western ("world") music pop traditions, as well as to their sex-gender dimensions; see Moisala and Diamond (2000), Bowers (2002), Diamond (2003), and Peraino (2001). For perspectives that approach music and politics from an international relations disciplinary perspective see Franklin and contributors in Franklin (2005), Shapiro (2006), Brown (2008), Dunn (2016), Inayatullah (2016), Davies and Franklin (2015).

All of these books were published in the last six years, most in 2015-2016. The overlapping dates of publication underscore some of the personal, professional - and political interconnections between authors despite immediate differences in age, family backgrounds, and the stylistic diversity in their music-making, literary and artistic sensibilities[4]. What is of interest here, in a panel considering music as a relatively uncharted area in the emerging school of popular culture in the study of world politics[5], is that these authors variously self-identify, however positioned over time by pundits, as exponents of "indie" music in which punk is historically an important albeit complex rubric[6]. Writing about their lives making music, for themselves and in various bands, these accounts also map diverse sources of inspiration that come from a wide range of other punk - pop/rock – musical, popular culture and literary figures. But they also generously acknowledge one another through their recollections of performing - and partying - with each other, or as protagonists in overlapping musico-subcultural scenes and iconic episodes in the public record of these times[7]. The music they made, and still make is central to all these accounts of their wider creative practices, as professionals and self-taught multidisciplinary artists. These authors also write as ordinary citizens, social beings with families, emotional networks, and diverse experiences of the political issues of their generation, and socioeconomic *milieux*[8].

[4] The bands that provide these memoirs with their main focus, apart from Patti Smith (the Patti Smith Band post-dates the first of her memoirs), are The Slits (Viv Albertine), The Pretenders (Chrissie Hynde), Sonic Youth (Kim Gordon), Sleater-Kinney (Carrie Brownstein), and The Fall (Brix Smith Start).

[5] Caso and Hamilton (2015), Hamilton and Shepherd (2016).

[6] See Davies and Franklin (2015), and Barrett for thoughts on Pussy Riot (2016: 63 passim). On discussions about how (not) to define "punk", musically or otherwise, see Davies (2005), and Dunn (2016)

[7] In these memoirs we see women writing as starting out, and experienced practitioners, engaged observers of the geo- and sexual politics of their time, and as audience – fans at the same time. As for overlapping expressions of relative fandom - for musicians who are not close collaborators, band members, partners or friends - take for example references to; Janis Joplin, for Brix Smith Start, indirectly for Patti Smith but less so for Chrissie Hynde whose "groupie" attraction was for Iggy Pop; "I'd been in love with this Class A piece of tail for my entire band life and before…" (Hynde 2015: 279). Cher provides Brix Smith Start with her "first lesson in the art of power dressing" (Start 2016: 56) whose love for Disneyland is an emotional leitmotiv throughout her book as well as musical inspiration, and portent of demise for her time with Mark E. Smith and The Fall (2016:190-193). It is Kathleen Hanna from Bikini Kill who Carrie Brownstein notes as one formative influence, and it is Patti Smith herself for Viv Albertine and Chrissie Hynde for Brix Smith Start in turn. These role models straddle musical, and taste divides as well. For example it is Karen Carpenter to whom Kim Gordon writes a fan letter, as well as a song - "Tunic" (Gordon 2015, Chapter 29: 173). For me, as reader, it is at last OK to admit to the "guilty pleasure" of liking The Carpenters, and Karen's singing- as I recall also mourning her death through anorexia nervosa - now that I see Kim Gordon gets it too. Arthur Rimbaud, William Burroughs Sam Shepherd, Marc Bolan, along with other (popular) cultural figures such as Walt Disney, Gok Wan, Burt Bacharach, "Nordic Noir" crime television, Vivienne Westwood, Nigel Kennedy, Sun Ra, Marianne Faithfull, and Malcolm McLaren also make multiple entrances and exits, in various guises. The "Sid and Nancy" story (Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols and his ill-fated relationship with Nancy Spungeon) features in Chrisse Hynde and Viv Albertine from shared albeit different points of view.

[8] They self-identify their family origins as working-class north London (Albertine), working-class New Jersey (Smith), middle-class Mid-west and Northwest US (Hynde and Brownstein), and well-off/middle class West Coast US (Gordon, Smith Start).

This wave of - what I shall (affectionately) call - *Rock Chic(k) Lit* coincides with cross-cutting debates in music research, the study of popular culture in international relations, and feminist contributions to both these domains. The undercurrent that flows through all these academic discussions concerns the ontological, and thereby epistemological implications to stretching key terms of reference and disciplinary boundaries when considering new topics of inquiry. With that come comparable discussions about whether "adding" heretofore demographic minorities (gender, race, sexual, cultural) to the empirical mix is sufficient without some fundamental restructuring of the whole scholarly enterprise.

As for considering rock stars, music celebrities - as chroniclers and agents, but also research subjects in these considerations, this undercurrent also includes how to regard them as political actors, even "resistance fighters" by virtue of their musical, artistic output or public stances on issues of the day. This is not straightforward: First because first-hand accounts, the high-profile protagonist's own claims and experiences along these lines, can disrupt liberationist or exceptionalist agendas and critical positions that would look to them as role-models, vehicles for political programs [9]. Second because of the way the music industry's monopoly market-forces can manipulate access to, and reception of non-conformist or counter-narratives for commercial gain. The very same can also (re)package accounts that might unsettle profitable wisdoms about creative contribution, female sexual (im)propriety, protest, or rattle masculinist tropes about the pursuit of excellence (however defined); applicable in both the academic and music business [10]. This paper will argue, through the words of these authors, that there is still a lot to know, and find out about the personal-political costs and investments that these musicians

[9] Consternation over how Chrissie Hynde accounts her experience of (gang) rape is one example that reviewers of *Reckless* have exploited (O'Sullivan, 2015). Read these pages carefully however, between the lines and with respect to how rape survivors may choose to voice their experiences (off-hand being one), and we learn something else from Hynde (2015: 117-19). See Smith Start for another register when revealing, in her case, a buried experience of date-rape (2016: 119-21). And then there is Viv Albertine's graphic depiction of her experience of sexual violence entering into a seemingly consensual relationship (2015: Chapter 29: 378 passim): Reader - and critic alike, tread lightly.

[10] Here I note the contribution of *intersectionality* as a mode of analysis, not so much as a flattening out of other differentials such as race (in the US) and class (in the UK) but as a means to maintaining the nuance of focus within wider contexts of privilege, and acceptance at the commercial level. Two cases in point as to how women in music tend to defy feminist and other sorts of explanatory frameworks given their "gender and sexual [and racial] unruliness" as political subject matter, to paraphrase Peraino (2001: 694). The first is Beyoncé as a (self-managed) global brand that now coincides with the kudos her celebrity status lends to the *Black Lives Matter* movement. Second, is Madonna's role in troubling conventional feminist political and analytical categories of sex-gender stereotypes that continues to generate academic literature and cross-references since her glory days in the 1980's. See Shepherd and contributors (2014), Runyan and Peterson (2003), Rowley (2014), and Ling (2004) on these points with respect to how a "gender lens" can be applied to other sorts of cultural artefacts and communities of practice, and the politics of reception.

made in going against the grain of the gender-power politics "stoking the star-making machinery behind the popular song"[11].

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The paper unpacks some of the empirical and theoretical opportunities these autobiographies offer to those working at the popular music and world politics nexus; in particular those interested in exploring how musical material, and associated practice can develop the literary/cultural turn. This turn considers the (geo)politics of everyday life through its multifarious cultural forms in order to reconstitute the field in empirical and conceptual terms. I consider these memoirs in light of the aforementioned methodological complexities of taking such a turn for conventional disciplinary norms; for example imputing political meaning directly off the fictional or (auto)biographical page (rather than through the statistical or public-policy record), off the musical score, lyric sheet, recording, or through meanings imputed to the dancing and singing body (on stage, or in the mosh-pit for that matter). The hazards of interpretative versus empiricist modes of inquiry are in this respect part of recent debates in the music research literature as well[12]. The paper aims to show how these considerations can benefit from treating these memoirs as sociocultural archives, curated yet primary material; and their authors as witnesses of, and protagonists in the (nominally gender-inclusive) countercultures the 'DIY Punk' movement and its various offshoots.

Second, the paper considers how these seven volumes articulate the demographic and, with that, economic disparities between how women in the political and cultural spheres are positioned, and then portrayed by others vis-à-vis how they may regard or choose to depict themselves. In the latter respect, if taken as primary sources these memoirs can offer an additional dimension to inquiries into both the "norm or standard to which women's difference is being measured and so often found wanting. … [and the work that] women do that is not typically regarded as political or politically interesting"[13]. This has relevance for how political research would consider "ordinary" women adjacent to high-profile political and cultural actors who are women at the point where feminist approaches to music and world politics intersect.

[11] Joni Mitchell, "Free Man in Paris", from *Court and Spark* (1974)

[12] See Gilbert (2004), Barrett (2016), Grayck (http://www.iep.utm.edu/music-po/#H3, accessed 2nd February 2017).

[13] Zalewski, (2014: 7, 9)

A third line of inquiry concerns the creeping sex-gender stereotypes that also permeate music research and work on popular culture from other disciplines (IR and Sociology in particular) in the face of successive waves of feminist theoretical frameworks and post-modernist "turns" that look to destabilize core categories and their accompanying social norms. Discussions in critical music research about whether a particular compositional or performance style can be regarded as intrinsically masculine have implications for how these women's contribution to the popular music canon will be assessed. As has been the case in feminist and postcolonial interventions in international relations theory and research, asking the question "where are the women?" is a start, not an end in itself[14]. The last decades of concerted feminist music research literature has included investigations into how women as a demographic category of alleged absence, gender as an analytical category (as more than a synonym for women) and sexuality (here too taken to mean more than explicit references to sexual acts, or recuperation of gay and lesbian composers in the literature)[15]. These theoretical debates and related research literature can also be productively incorporated into how music is considered as part of the study of world politics and popular culture.

The paper is in two parts. The first focuses on these books, as musical memoirs and sources for new insights into the musical material and accompanying communities of countercultural practice. This part includes a section on the music itself, selected tracks that feature in these accounts to provide the sonic dimension to these written reflections. Part two returns to these conceptual issues in light of what these authors, as protagonists and cultural agents, can offer critical theory and research at the intersection of feminist and gender approaches to popular culture and world politics and comparable debates in musicological research. I argue that precisely because they are by women musicians, about their life in music as women but also as independent artists, these memoirs go further than simply affirming a feminist truism about righting the record, correcting the entrenched absenting of "women as a group" from the official historiography and discography of any musical form, let alone politically conscious ones such as punk (and rap/hip-hop for that matter).

Taken together, and with passing reference to the wider context of precursor autobiographical contributions, in this case those from Nina Simone and Simone de Beauvoir, the paper aims to provide some insights into how music making, and its

[14] ibid.

[15] See Peraino (2001) with respect to the approach taken by Susan McClary in her study of Bizet's opera, Carmen (1992), Pasler on the case of Augusta Holmès (2008: 213-48), and the range of perspectives from contributors in the *Music and Sexuality* Colloquy (Peraino and Cusick, 2013).

consumption is not based on actors who are 'born' gendered. Rather to consider what they tell us about how artists and/as consumers - fans and audiences, 'become' gendered. In so doing how musician, audience, and pundits constitute and resist, not merely reflect or invert the sexualized and racialized dividing lines that characterize the global culture industries of today. These tensions, for artist and analyst alike, work along a spectrum of denial, collusion, and confrontation with the geo-economic powerbrokers of the music industry; taken as not just a function of capitalism, big business but also the work of (re)making culture matter beyond the bottom line of record sales, fame. Music making for commercial and non-commercial ends (and the blurred line in-between for what counts as success) is also a political-cultural constellation that undergirds official and unofficial circuits of culture, chains of distribution, habits and modes of reception. All these moments imply gatekeeping powers that decide on the terms of admission to the material cultures (records, digital formats, video, clothing), public archives, and buildings that articulate a cultural heritage in posterity.

PART 1*: PUNKS AND POSES* – COMPOSING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL[16]

> "[F]or the more I saw of the world, the more I realized that is was brimming over with all I could ever hope to experience, understand, and put into words."[17]

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) whose autobiography, written at successive moments in her life takes up five volumes, exemplifies the way a first-person narrative can be both a revelatory and carefully curated presentation of the interconnections between the personal and the political, a private and public life. One of the foremost public intellectuals of post-World War Europe, and academic whose philosophical interventions on the sociopolitical issues of her time includes her classic, proto-feminist treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir was also a novelist and playwright, patron of socially engaged arts and culture. In her writing, Beauvoir is well aware of what a memoir can or cannot offer to the reader looking for a particular sort of revelatory truth. She considers memoirs as one sort of literary fiction, albeit in a form that provides her license to re-articulate autobiographical details that are on record to selected intimate recollections, as these serve her wider (existentialist) philosophical and political project. In short, it is Beauvoir who sets the bar for public circumspection as integral to the necessary selectivity of memoir writing as a form of truthful, authoritative commentary on "the normative

[16] Taken from the chapter entitled "Days of Punk and Poses" in *Reckless* (Hynde 2015: 203-206).

[17] Simone de Beauvoir, her final sentence in the second volume of her memoirs, *The Prime of Life*, (1962: 607).

structures we call family and nation, gender, race, class, and sexual identity … *whatever* looks like the inevitable"[18].

In this respect, women who have been public figures, publishing their memoirs is not in itself a new development in the history of publishing. But this recent "rise of the female rock memoir"[19] is arguably part of the emerging *Femoir* genre, one that includes heavily marketed memoirs of high-profile female comedians "propelling their authors from acts to brands" according to some critics[20]. As Hadley Freeman notes in her review of "bad girl" comedian Amy Schumer's, *The Girl with the Lower Back Tattoo*, the line between authenticity and branding is a fine one indeed. A similar reservation could be raised about memoirs penned by women in the music business, those who rode the wave of the punk movement, its precursors and offshoots included. In both cases these authors are, ostensibly, setting the record straight with respect to the sexual and cultural politics of their generation, correcting an ingrained imbalance between media and scholarly attention granted to male over female artists in these two domains as they do. Nonetheless, the question remains: does *rock-chick lit* confront, or confirm "how narrow the parameters still are for women in the public eye, who are expected to be exceptional but also an everywoman. …a triumph of equality when a woman admits to enjoying sex?"[21]

This question animates some of the explorations in this paper but they do not define these books, nor what critical scholars can learn from them[22]. Borne out by the critical mass that these books taken together can provide for tipping the balance, I would posit that as artists - proponents of the broader timeline of "punk" culture - whatever their approach to making music, life, how to dress, what to sing about, who (not) to have sex

[18] Peraino citing Elizabeth Freeman (2013; 828, original emphasis): Patti Smith, as primarily a poet, comes closest to this self-aware, crafted literary approach in her two volumes, *Just Kids* (2010) and *M Train* (2015).

[19] Edgers (2015)

[20] Kaitlin Fontana, cited by Hadley Freeman (2016)

[21] Freeman (op cit)

[22] Freeman (2016). It bears noting that these authors broach the topic of sex, and sexuality in a range of ways. For instance Albertine makes a point of her own in her first chapter "Masturbation". Brownstein is the only author to depict, discretely, her relationships with women including her closest musical collaborator, Corin as well as her father's struggles with his own homosexuality. *Just Kids*, Patti Smith's memoir of her early career and life with Robert Mapplethorpe does address his emerging homosexuality, and with the link between his art and interest in sadomasochism. *M Train* does not dwell on these matters, bar an occasional reference to intimacy with her late husband, Frank "Sonic" Smith. Kim Gordon's memoirs are framed by the break-up of her marriage with Thorston Moore, co-founder of Sonic Youth; ending her book with how on retreating from a sexual encounter with "a player, I knew full well" she realises that she has become "someone else entirely" (2016: 273). Smith Start and Chrissie Hynde provide more classical, rock stars-behaving-badly stories, though not without their dark side (rape, violence, depression, substance abuse).

with - these authors can be regarded as both exemplary yet also unsettling countermanding examples of how such parameters may be at work on the page, in the song, or onstage. As ground-breaking as these memoirs may, or may not be as literary form or commercial vehicle, in this paper I consider them a contribution to the social history of popular culture that require careful attention by scholars at this disciplinary conjuncture. At the very least they are a testimony to how women have been present, creative forces, musical equals their male colleagues and counterparts so often given the star billing in the trade press and academic tomes. This material reveals just how fundamental the contribution of these authors has been to the development and musical output of these bands; as composers, musicians, lyricists, managers, and arrangers. That said, like Beauvoir and arguably with female comedians and their "femoirs", these musicians are also conscious that they are writing with hindsight; looking back from a different personal and historical vantage point than when they started out in the misogynist, and corporate domain in which they consciously crafted their generation of not-strictly-commercial, non-conformist music, along with performance art, lyrics, and poetry.

Musicians as Memoirists

> "I'm going to remember everything and then I'm going to write it all down. An aria for a coat. A requiem for a café. That's what I was thinking, in my dream, looking down at my hands". [23]

> "When you sit down to think about your life, as I have had to for this book, you have to look back over some things you've kept out of the daylight of your mind for years, and they can catch you…. It's funny too how you don't have much control over what it is you do remember; how the most inconsequential, unimportant events sit in the front of your mind as clear as yesterday and the moments you just ache to relive stay out of reach for days or weeks a time."[24]

In the first of these two excerpts, Patti Smith distinguishes her second volume of memoirs from the first, which is a relatively chronological narrative of her relationship with the artist Robert Mapplethorpe in 1960's/1970's New York; a story "that was obliged to wait until I

[23] Patti Smith, her last sentence in the penultimate, chapter of *M Train* (20015/16: 253). The very last sentence, In postscript addressed quite explicitly to the reader (echoes of Charlotte Bronte) ends one of her most moving paragraphs about loss, time passing (shades here of Proust as other reviewers have noted) with an image of her sitting down " to open my notebook. And begin to write something new" (ibid: 275)

[24] Nina Simone, Prologue (1992: ix)

found the right voice"[25]. This period is also when Smith moved from writing Rimbaud-inflected poetry, living with Mapplethorpe and sharing together the first steps in their respective artistic-literary paths (some call this being Mapplethorpe's muse) to acting, writing plays, and then incorporating piano and guitar into the sung-recited performances that were to establish her as musician-poet. The second quote is from Nina Simone's autobiography. Whilst outside the generation, racial divide, and musical genre of the authors this paper is considering, this passage articulates the psycho-emotional, rather than the literary dimensions to memoir writing, the curiosities of memory and forms of recollection as sources for narrative – and analysis. How much detail is enough? Where to draw the line between over-sharing, and candid revelation? How to write about others who are still alive, with whom relationships have been both positive, fraught, or destructive in one's life out of respect or, perhaps, the need to avoid litigation? How to crosscheck one's memories with the official, personal, and community historical records?

For women who have carved out a career as musicians, from jazz through to the blues, punk, and other sorts of stadium-rock stardom, these books also point to the role that voice plays, the putative authenticity of the autobiographical account of an artist's life and work. These issues concern the memoirist as well as the researcher who is drawing on autobiographies, recording oral histories, narrative interviews, or extrapolating from qualitative interview material in which personal lives, careers, and political or cultural aspirations are part of the weave of the story told. Should we take these memoirs as more truthful, more legitimate than the rich literature of (feminist and trade) biographies of women in music? [26] Moreover how do these memoirs square up against how reviewers and purchasing publics have responded to those by Bob Dylan, and Keith Richards (lead guitarist and mouthpiece of the Rolling Stones) for example? [27]

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[25] Smith (2010: 288)

[26] See Bowers (2002) and Peraino (2001) on the contribution that the spate of biographies of women in music (popular and classical art music) can make to the historical record, and also the concomitant debates about which feminist framework best frames such a life from a sociological, political, or aesthetic point of view; reception of biographies and studies of the influence of Janis Joplin and Madonna on sex gender stereotypes in the music business being two prominent cases in point.

[27] Rob Sheffield, in *Rolling Stone* magazine rates Smith's *Just Kids* as second to Bob Dylan, just ahead of Keith Richards in his 2012 league table of the '*25 Greatest Rock Memoirs of all time*" (Sheffiled, 2012; http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-25-greatest-rock-memoirs-of-all-time-20120813, accessed 9 February, 2017). Out of this list only three are women (Smith, Kristin Hirsch, and Ronnie Spector). Five of these 25 are Black, including Ronnie Spector. Chrissie Hynde, who worked as a music journalist for New Musical Express in her early years in the UK is clear about the negative effects of trade publications in this regard; "I was as frustrated as the rest of them—a frustrated musician (the cliché of music journalism), opinionated, hungover, illegal in the workplace, devoid of ambition and if I couldn't find a word in my dumb guy vocabulary I would make one up. … The more dismissive and poorly written my reviews, the more the NME applauded me. …They liked it bad and that was good" (2015: 146, 148). Brownstein also makes very clear what she thinks of some of the sexist ways the music press covered Sleater-Kinney, complete with examples of some of the worst offenders in her eyes (Brownstein 2014: 167-171). Albertine also attests to entrenched prejudice.

Nina Simone's memoirs also remind us of the under-articulated race-gender dimensions to the music industry that these seven books do not actively engage; Chrissie Hynde's sense of racial divides along socioeconomic lines in the mid-West, and the legacy of African-American music to the industry, and her own musical education notwithstanding. Nina Simone's book opens with a chapter about her hometown, her Indian and African slave descendants from the outset and her childhood in the segregated south, despite "very cordial" relations between the black and white communities[28]. Part of Simone's politics, but this also underscores that white is the default setting in these others. Whilst they speak of sexual politics, class backgrounds, college educations, most of these authors do not reflect on their relatively privileged position as white performers in an industry divided along racial as well as gender lines. Being a "girl in a band" is ostensibly the key marker of belonging, and difference in a period in which punk claimed to change the name of the game.[29]

Style, Truth, Form

> "Great rock memoirs don't always come from great artists: sometimes it takes one-hit wonders, losers, hacks, junkies, crooks. Every rock & roll character has a story to tell. " [30]
>
> "And in the end this story is a story of drug abuse"[31]

Each book, a life-story with early years and up to time of writing, follow usual timeline chronologies. Five of them start with variously entitled prologues, (Smith, Brownstein, Albertine, and Hynde), two with epilogues (Smith and Smith Start) that consciously address the reader. Kim Gordon's *Girl in a Band* is the exception in this case and also for not providing a Table of Contents. With or without such a table (two separate ones for Viv Albertine's memoirs in two parts), the chapter titles can be read as both chronologies and play-lists that start at the end (Gordon, Smith) or somewhere in the middle of dream-

[28] Simone (1992: 5)

[29] That the musical form, and inspirations for The Slits draw from Reggae – Jamaican, and African music traditions is an element that is somewhat understated in Albertine's recollections of how their sound developed; the impact that these rhythms and styles had on generating their sound that was at the outer edges of the thrashing, three-chord, three-minute punk songs of the time, the groundbreaking roles that Dennis Bovell played in producing their first album, *Cut*, and Don Letts in producing their first videos for instance.

[30] Sheffield (2012).

[31] Hynde (2015: 115)

worlds (Smith, Smith Start), biographical and creative timelines in strict chronological order; e.g. Brownstein organizes hers in three parts; Youth, Sleater-Kinney, and Aftermath, Hynde opens with her earliest memory. These organizational decisions, chapter titles and order, indicate care in the selection of memory and shaping of a particular narrative arc between introspection and confessional. The inclusion of photos, artwork, and facsimiles of personal correspondence are more than add-ons to the textual content and the obligatory photographic archives. These visuals are also part of the record, substantive creative material of the story, in the story. They also provide a haptic quality to how a reader handles these books, as containers for written artefacts that also evoke sonic, and visual material that exists elsewhere.

As is the case with public figures and this literary genre, all include various levels of caveat emptor with explicit, and no doubt coded messages in their respective acknowledgement sections. In terms of style and tense, some use direct quotes from diary entries, Albertine in particular. She also includes asides to the reader in italics, meta-comments at-time-of-writing as another way of providing multiple voices from times-past into the present narrative; the voice of young Viv and her mates as pop/punk music devotees and 'dedicated followers of fashion' narrates Part One in *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys, Boys* (feel the rhythm in the title). Part Two of the latter memoir belongs, in part, to the "desperate housewife" then cancer survivor and rehabilitated artist and performer of more recent years. In *Reckless*, the present-tense voice of the young, "reckless" and drug-addict Chrissie Hynde merges in to that of her straight, older self. The point here is that none of these books rely on the single narrative voice-over or linear chronology in the strictest sense. They all look to mix tense, voice, and with that perspective on past events retold within the formalities of a lifetime, relationship or creative arc: beginnings are endings; endings are positioned as returns - of bands, relationships, families, educations, health, creativity, lust for life.

ON THE MUSIC-MAKING: CONFRONTATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

> "Being a woman and playing bass guitar, or any guitar, seemed about the coolest thing in the world to me. Too bad I couldn't *really* play. I didn't realize that it didn't matter. Punk had changed all of that. In less than a year I'd be writing my own songs, and playing in my own band. In three years' time I would be in England recording the first song I'd ever written. I'd be playing guitar and singing a duet on an album for The Fall."[32]

[32] Brix Smith Start (2016: 113, 189, original emphasis). As a gratuitous, personal aside, The album she is referring to, *Perverted by Language* (1983), is one that I bought around that time, vinyl needless to say as I am a lifelong fan of The Fall. The live performances of The Fall that I have been to however predate, and come after Smith Start's time with the band.

> "Oh how I loved guys in bands. When a band played, time stood still." [33]

The key device for shaping and organizing the timeline material is the artistic output, here mainly albums, songs, and in the case of Patti Smith, the poems. These books provide valuable insights from the musicians themselves about the labour, and emotional if not metaphysical processes involved in writing and performing music as part of a collective, of a movement that included variously articulated allegiances to feminism[34]. For trained musicologists who focus on the musical material, analysing form and lyrical content, arrangements, and sound mixes live or in the studio the musical output of all these artists is enough grist to the mill to debates on the aesthetics of the pop-rock/punk rock continuum[35].

For "girl bands" such as The Slits and Sleater-Kinney, egos and personalities also play their role. Albertine does not pull any punches here in how she recalls her clashes with equally strong characters in the group, or arrogant, opinionated sound technicians, publicists and managers. Brownstein's memoir is all about Sleater-Kinney (Part two is named after the band, the subject matter for pages 79-224 – most of the book) as an emotional and ferociously original force. She writes a lot about their "habit of meta-songwriting, where we were in a band writing about being in a band, singing about singing"[36]. This is also the case for Kim Gordon in her recounting of life as "the (ex-)wife of", "girl" bass-player, and all the while co-creator of much of Sonic Youth's output. In all these examples, being a female is both relevant and restrictive:

> "Mostly, I didn't want to be a girl with a guitar. "Girl" felt like an identifier that viewers, especially male ones, saw as a territory upon which an electric guitar

[33] Hynde (2015: 173)

[34] How these authors articulate, and reflect on their feminist sensibilities – in light with how they dressed, or perceived themselves on-stage, bears closer examination; see Albertine (2014: 201), Gordon (2015: 202-203), and multiple statements in Brownstein, for instance. Hynde has another take on these matters, and register (2016: 257-8, 278). Albertine provides a detailed inventory of what she wore in successive periods of her life, along with the music she listened to, and the names of the "boys she (almost) "f*cked" when part of the "music scene" (title of a track on *Live at the Witchtrials*, by The Fall, 1979 . before Brix Smith Start arrived).

[35] See Frith (2009) for a sociologist's take on the thorny question of what constitutes an aesthetics of popular music, and Grayck for an overview of key lines of debate in philosophy around the "value of popular music" and related "debates about art and aesthetic value" (Grayck: 1/22). C. Douglas Barrett (2016) articulates a radical perspective on shifting the sonics of this object of analysis away from the ontological centrality given to sound as an indispensable element of "music" in the modernist tradition of western classical music (2016: 2-10). He argues that his notion of *critical music* responds to how music "is in need, then, of both a new concept and context…a music beyond the limitation of sound" (2016: 7).

[36] Brownstein (2015: 109)

> was a tourist, an interloper. I wanted the guitar to be an appendage—an extension even—of a body that was made more powerful by my yielding of it. … I set out from a place where I never assumed that those were acceptable choices or that I could be anything but an accessory to rock 'n' roll. The archetypes, the stage moves, the representations of rebellion and debauchery were all male. … We wrote and played ourselves right into existence ".[37]

The broader context in which these artists were making their way is articulated in various ways as well, this context being the usual first-stop for inferring the sociocultural or political significance of the artwork, or artist. There are many, many references in all these memoirs to the opportunities that the punk movement and its politics of inclusion, DIY, and anti-commercialism gave to getting many acts started. In the case of Patti Smith the post-Beat Generation and Greenwich Village/Chelsea Hotel scenes in New York of the 1960's and 1970's provides the backdrop to her account of life, on the streets, at home and then in clubs, with Mapplethorpe. For Chrissie Hynde, and to a certain extent Brix Smith Start and Viv Albertine, it is the cultural and political upheavals of the Vietnam War and rise of explicitly political folk and rock music that mark their youth. For Carrie Brownstein and Kim Gordon punk and experiments with pop and contemporary art music mark the 1990's and the Grunge and Riot Grrrl scenes of Northwest USA. In conventional terms, politics here are marked by reference to respective US administrations (Nixon, Reagan, Bush Snr and Jnr, through to Bill Clinton), Thatcherism in the UK; the US-UK and allies wars in Iraq, up to the September 11 attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Centre in New York.

At these points the first-person narrative shifts up a gear. For instance, in a key chapter in Carrie Brownstein's memoir, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Gir*l, close to the halfway point in the book the author takes leave of the chronological (career) narrative to make a musico-political statement. In this chapter (Chapter 8, "Call the Doctor", named after their second album) Brownstein reflects on how Sleater-Kinney started out unwittingly as a "girl band", becoming a major proponent of the *Riot Grrrls* movement, the vanguard for feminist, women-led punk rock scenes in the northwest of the USA in the 1990's[38].

> "[P]eople were staking out territory, constructing niches in a punk landscape that felt vast. Parcelled out like land claims, punk [in the US] was divided by city, by sound, and indexers like gender and sexual orientation. … Much of it boiled down to identity, a way of differentiating punk from the rest of the world, making it

[37] Brownstein ((2015: 101, 109, and 110).

[38] See Brownstein (2015: 99), Reddington (2007), Coen (2012), and Street Howe (2009)

> subversive, confrontational. Whether quiet or loud, fast or slow, pretty or ugly—it was not about a sound or a look—punk was about making choices that didn't bend to consumptive and consumerist inclinations and ideologies, that didn't commodify the music or ourselves. We [Sleater-Kinney] didn't want to be associated with a brand. Mostly, we didn't want to *be* a brand. There was no middle ground." [39]

But she is also writing in this chapter on the inception and development of the band itself in terms of how she and Corin Tucker (co-writer, vocalist and guitar) collaborated musically, intuitively and 'amateurishly' as the founding core of Sleater-Kinney, yet aware of others' influence on how they would come to perceive the music-work: from male stars of US punk, such as Joey Ramone from The Ramones - " a performer who embodied both gawkiness and grandiosity" - to Donna Dresch and her "queercore" band, Team Dresch[40].

But it is collaboration that is the strongest theme in these accounts, as well as a key organizational device for linking the personal to the political, and both to the musical in the respective narratives. Artistic endeavour and achievements, disappointments and dud albums included are not solitary processes. They are part of lifelong, if not significant periods of working together. Whether this is specific to being a woman or not, the demands of a music industry and music press looking for heroes and stars is a constant pressure on keeping the collaborative, social dimensions to music-making to the fore. These creative and professional relationships constitute the lion's share of close to 2500 pages of musical life. This means discussing the (mostly male) egos of their collaborators and managements. This is integral to Brix Smith Start's account of her decade with The Fall, married, and then divorced life with Mark E. Smith, the band's notoriously autocratic leader and creative impulse. Writing credits, presence (audible) in the final mix; where to stand on stage, how to cope with infidelity, and the practicalities of life on the road for a woman, or as the female spouse ("what happens on the bus, stays on the bus") all require constant negotiation.

We see here not so much treatises on the sexual politics of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll but thick descriptions of the everyday live and slog of making music, performing, and recording. There is in this regard little glamour to these gritty, in some cases gritted-teeth accounts. Brix Smith Start is particularly explicit about these internal tensions as these are integral to the timeline of the band itself, before, during and after her time (and return)

[39] Brownstein (2015: 99, 103, 132, original emphasis)

[40] ibid: 103-105

to performing with them. Part two of the book (161-326) is all about The Fall and in this regard can be taken as a conscious corrective to both audience and music press perceptions of her contribution to the band's output[41]. And here is Chrissie Hynde, ending her memoir with an eulogy to her deceased collaborators, underscoring the formative influence key members of The Pretenders had on her musical development and emotional life, guitarist with The Pretenders, James (Jimmy) Honeyman-Scott in particular [42].

> "I loved taking my songs to the band and having them transformed. I knew I loved singing but it took me a long time to feel like I owned it…. The feeling of being at home overrode the rest, and that feeling came with a guitar slung over my shoulder while standing in front of a microphone. Home at last." [43]

The predominant tone therefore is about music-making as process: as community, a socially engaged and creative undertaking that requires the necessary labour of writing, rehearsing; of making collaborations work. And when personal relationships start to change or disintegrate, how to maintain a professional approach to performing and recording. For anyone looking to find "dirt" on the deficiencies of famous friends and acquaintances in this regard, other band-members or creative collaborators there is relatively little to find[44]. That said, the generosity in giving credit where credit is due (perhaps more than need be for in the case of Smith Start she remains loyal to Mark E. Smith's creative intuition despite his many excesses – drug and alcohol induced, and sexual) is not sentiment. We see also enough moments where the authors talk about the sexual politics of misappropriations and erasures by pundits[45].

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[41] "The Fall was an autocracy, with Mark as the dictator. When it began in the 1970's it was very much a collective but [by the time she joined] the last remnants of democracy were gone. It was Mark's band" (Smith Start 2016: 182). There is a lot more to discuss here. Suffice it to say, any Fall fan can remember the negative treatment of Brix's arrival and supposed negative influence on the music in the press. She notes how these criticisms of creeping commercialism undermined her creative contribution at the same time as she admits her desire for the band to have more commercial success. Smith Start is now fronting Brix and the Extricated with other former members, founding members of The Fall. Mark E. Smith continues with successive line-ups as The Fall.

[42] Hynde writes, "Jimmy would transform my songs in a way I could only have hoped for in my wildest imaginings. … It was clear Jimmy could play, but I was too blinded by punk to remember how great a great guitar player was (2015: 234, 235).

[43] Ibid: 252

[44] There are plenty of dry, often witty and well-written accounts of variously enjoyed sexual, and platonic encounters with other key figures such as Iggy Pop, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Courtney Love, inter alia. Read and smile

[45] See Hynde (2015: 238 and 259) on the consequences of "giving credit away" with respect to androcentric reporting in the trade press.

Reading these books together, as a complex whole but also each on their own, musical and lyrical terms, provides a rich vein of inquiry for further research, not just a treat for their fans (many of whom may well be academics). There is new knowledge here of how the music was made, on the process of song writing in term of lyrics, melody, and sound; as a formal pop-song approach to more experimental and the mix of the band as a key ingredient. This means we are reading about music-making from inside the process. These authors are not onlookers. They are describing the emotional, physical, and creative paths they took to make their music, and what making that music meant to their lives at the time and since. They are also providing a multi-layered account of overlapping cultural and political movements that are embedded in their respective *musicking*. [46]

Selected Tracks

> "After thirty years of playing in a band, it sounds sort of stupid to say, "I'm not a musician". But for most of my life I've never seen myself as one and I never formally trained as one. I sometimes think of myself as a lowercase rock star. Yes, I'm sensitive to sound, I think I have a good ear, and I love the visceral movement and the thrill of being onstage. And even as a visual, conceptual artist, there's always a performance aspect to whatever I do". [47]

> "There was a thunderous greeting from the crowd; it as a "HELLO" so enormous I could climb inside. And I did. … I was in my body, joyous and unafraid. I was home."[48]

It would be remiss not to take a closer look, listen to some of the music that these authors discuss, as compositions, performances, and recording events along the timelines of their respective bands. Musicologists traditionally concentrate on music as temporarily defined organizations of sound in terms of how these artefacts are organized as (sonic)

[46] I discuss this term in Franklin (2005). In terms of the role that lyrics played in this music, all the authors are writing as lyricists as well as composers. Albertine notes, in her musco.political statement on what The Slits stood for that their "lyrics were very carefully thought about and scrutinized. No peddling clichés and lies for us. No lazy escapism. Words have to be true to your life. Write about what you know. And make people think" (2014: 208).

[47] Gordon (2015; 10).

[48] Brownstein (2015: 241) ends her memoirs with the reunion concert of Sleater-Kinney in 2014 after breaking up in 2006. A 2015 concert available at http://www.npr.org/event/music/388196234/live-tuesday-sleater-kinney-in-concert and on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6r1-HTiwGiY (accessed 15th February 2017) serves as good point of comparison to how Brownstein discusses their live performances in the early days and after getting back together.

compositions, and then rendered as performance. For popular music similar criteria can apply. But there are also differences in terms of a greater focus on the role of technologies such as amplification, feedback, digital techniques, and studio production values in which the producer (not unlike a conductor) can exert varying amounts of creative control. Allbertine and Gordon go into some detail on the processes, and stresses of recording in the latter regard. Gordon as well as Brownstein and Smith Start concentrate on how songs, as guitar riffs and lyrics, came about as individual and collective processes. Patti Smith discusses the first steps towards her career as singer, rather than poet and essayist, in *Just Kids* but says little about her musical output after that.

All these authors have something to say about the lyrics – their role in writing them, and the importance of crafting a song lyric, along with what they consider to be the musical qualities of successive albums, as raw material and after production. Smith Start is particularly candid about this aspect in light of the push and pull between her and Mark E. Smith as a musical partnership[49]. All these books provide insights into what the musicians themselves think about their work, in retrospect and from an aesthetic point of view; which albums, songs worked better than others, why some albums could have been better, and so on. Authors also discuss their music making in terms of their emotional attachments to (first and successive) guitars, as compositional and induction vehicles for aspiring performers without formal musical training. The importance of the (bass) guitar riff and playing style are also key points of technique, identity, and pride in all these accounts.

The discussion below takes a look at some of these tracks as discussed in the books; an annotated play-list compliments of their creators. The aim here is not for me to assume the role of music critic, rather to juxtapose the authors' views next to the tracks themselves. One point does bear mentioning; in terms of musical form, the point that binds The Slits, Sonic Youth, The Fall, and Sleater-Kinney is their conscious experimental impulses. Not just reducible to respective levels of (lack of) technique or musical training but in terms of their commitment to an avant-garde/punk aesthetic to push the boundaries of the verse-chorus conventions of the pop-song form. That said, these tracks do follow a verse-chorus form, in one way or another. Where we can hear the differences to what has

[49] The politics of attribution – song-writing credits, play a major role in the history of The Fall, which affects how to read off the official credits in the extensive online archives about this band by its fans. In this sense Smith Start has more than a passing point to make about what it means to be written out of the official credits, and at times out of the final mix in the recording studio. Talking about one of the last albums she was to record with the band, *Frenz Experiment* (1988) – in her mind a relatively commercial success but a "creative low point", Smith Start notes that whilst half of the songs on this album are credited to Mark, every "single one of these songs was a collaboration. It seemed to me that the deterioration of our relationship was reflected in my dwindling song credits" (Smith Start 2016: 236),

come to be regarded as a classical pop song (a Beatles song, or twelve-bar blues for instance) is in terms of the "mix"; e.g. inversions of the balance between instruments and vocals, different sorts of guitar tuning (a characteristic of Sonic Youth), unconventional time-signatures[50], instrumentation though other sorts of sound effects (e.g. glasses, matches, spoons), rhythmic combinations, and how these elements all came together (or not) in the studio from the point of view of production values.

The music of Patti Smith[51], and Chrissie Hynde with the Pretenders on the other hand does tend to be on more conventional lines of the rock ballad or pop song in terms of structure - verse, chorus, bridge and variations thereof; minor/major harmonies and melodic line for lyrics that also include combinations of rhyming couplets[52]. This is not an aesthetic judgment given the impact both Hynde and Smith have had on other women as role models for their generation, and since. Viv Albertine writes of when she first saw the Mapplethorpe cover of the first album Patti Smith released (*Horses*, 1975) and the impact that Smith's delivery of the music had on her, impressions shared by many [53]. Rather it is an organizational decision to concentrate on the more, self-identified as *experimental* music here. Considering the thin line between analysing and assessing any piece of music, the discussion below leans mainly on the author's own words. As Albertine notes about how The Slits music ended up, they "were trying to write great pop songs, but ended up creating something new by accident"[54]. The selection of tracks below and respective commentaries from their creators are organized in order of release[55].

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[50] "Our songs come out in funny time signatures and structures – and we like it" (Albertine 2014: 206, 221).

[51] "I wanted to infuse the written word with the immediacy and frontal attack of rock 'n' roll…strong rhythmic chords and electric feedback"-

[52] For instance, Patti Smith's poem/song "Wild Leaves" (dedicated to Robert Mapplethorpe), is comprised of four eight-line verses – two lots of four lines of an extended couplet; "Wild leaves are falling - Falling to the ground - Every leaf a moment - A light upon the crown" and so on.

[53] "I have never seen a girl who looks like this. She is my soul made visible, all the things I hide deep inside myself that can't come out. She looks natural, confident, sexy and an individual. I don't want to dress like her or copy her style: she gives me the confidence to express myself in me own way. … I… put the record on. It hurls through stream of consciousness, careers into poetry and dissolves into sex. … Up until now girls have been so controlled and restrained. Patti Smith is abandoned. Her record translates into sound, parts of myself that I could not access, could not verbalise, could not visualise, until this moment. … Hearing Patti Smith be sexual, building to an orgasmic crescendo, whilst leading a band, is so exciting. It's emancipating." Albertine (2014: 79, 80).

[54] Albertine (2014: 206). Brownstein and Gordon, as well as Start Smith and their bands write more consciously about their aims to push the envelope of pop song/guitar rock conventions through musical experimentation.

[55] The analyses that follow are based on listening, by ear, and are still work-in-progress. Corrections and permutations welcome.

The Slits – So Tough (*Cut*, 1979)

Albertine devotes three chapters (52-54) to the band's first recording, a cover of Marvin Gaye's "I heard it through the Grapevine", and then how the 1979 album *Cut* was made. This was the band's first studio album, still considered by Albertine herself and critics as their best work; ground-breaking musically for the use of reggae and African beats, improvised instrumentation, the vocal style of Ari Up's not-quite-singing in tune, and Viv Albertine's guitar and backing vocals. This album also had its visual impact, the (in)famous record cover of the three band-members topless, covered in mud and in a sort of "jungle" attire.

Chapter 54 entitled "Cut" takes the reader through each track, one by one. The track "So Tough" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tg6FKSZGrsY) is a good example of their style; what classical music analysis would call *Sprechgesang* or speak-singing (at times screaming and yelling) vocals. The lyrics (http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/Slits:So_Tough) are based on a conversation Albertine had with John Lydon (Johnny Rotten) from the Sex Pistols about Sid Vicious and his deteriorating wellbeing. Albertine notes that she tried to make a guitar riff she already had fit the words. The eventual repeating of this original motif in this riff is attributed to Sid himself. It was his suggestion to "repeat the first part of the riff, do it twice… a great idea and I liked that he contributed to the song about himself"[56].

This track opens with voices (Ari Up and Viv Albertine) muttering, and then half-humming the refrain in a sort of buzzing effect, over the 4/4 beat of the drums; "He had fun experience - Nothing he does ever makes sense - He is only curious - Don't take it serious". At this point the riff in question enters (20" into the track) for the first verse of the three verses. This first verse has four lines interspersed with two, backing vocal phrases, "so tough" (twice) and "so hard" (twice). The second verse has eight lines, more snippets of the Lydon-Albertine conversation, punctuated with "so strong" (twice), " too long" (twice), "too much" (twice), "too fast", "slow down" sung in a descending scale: the conversation juxtaposed with asides (so tough, so hard, so strong, too long, too fast, slow down).

It is the chorus, "He had fun experience - Nothing he does ever makes sense - He is only curious - Don't take it serious", repeated four times that the guitar riffs link in to and build from. In each reiteration of these lines the musical, rhythmic, and vocal shapes differ with the last phrase ("Don't take it serious") repeated as a build-up and then release into the

[56] Albertine (2014: 217-8). Albertine notes later, with respect to the track "Typical Girls" that she had to practise the song, and riffs in order to remember them the next day as she cannot write music (ibid: 221).

next verse. The song ends with a coda combining lines from the chorus and verses, ending with the final phrase “don’t take it serious” three times; Albertine’s reggae-based strum builds to the abrupt ending at the end of the third, and loudest declamatory “DON’T TAKE IT SER-I-OUS” in dissonant harmonies, to finish with the recapitulation of the muttering voices from the intro.

All in all this track is two minutes and forty-one seconds of a tightly crafted “pop song” with minimalist instrumental backing, two guitar-lines on two tracks, with drums played by guest drummer, Budgie (Peter Clarke who went on to the band, Siouxsie and the Banshees). His contribution to the album is something that Albertine considers an important ingredient to her satisfaction with the record. Not only because of the way “his presence transforms the dynamic between us” [57] but also because he

> “has a light touch, is rock-steady and, most important of all, has no problem whatsoever with Ari giving him extremely detailed instructions abo0ut the rhythms, the hi-hat patterns and no cymbal bashing. He’s respectful and confident. Ari’s getting stronger and stronger musically and needs a drummer who can play her vision as well as add his own ideas and technique. …to be able to take that from a sixteen-year old girl who doesn’t play drums, that takes a very special person”[58].

The Fall - U.S. 80’s-90’s (*Bend Sinister*, 1986)

This album is one in which Smart Smith talks about her sense of a deterioration in Mark E. Smith’s vision of writing, and then recording songs as live improvisation. This aspect to how he controls the sound, and effect of Fall tracks as conscious “first takes”, with mistakes not edited out of the final mix, is an integral aspect to what Smith Start considers the essence of the Fall’s sound. It is also to her mind integral to the continuity of Smith’s hold on the band despite innumerable changes in line-ups: “Leaving in the mistakes, insisting on first takes, simplifying arrangements to the most elemental, tribal cacophony…aren’t recipes for brilliance, but herein the magic lies”[59]. Her verdict on this album is that despite his “edicts [not] coming from an objective musicality, but from a

[57] Albertine (2014: 214): In this comment she also notes that part of his contribution was that it was “great to suddenly have this male energy in the room“ (ibid); make of this statement what you will from a strictly feminist point of view.

[58] Ibid (213-14)

[59] Smith Start (2016: 224)

strange, angry place" the final result "isn't bad, by any means, but it could have been incredible"[60].

Smith Start talks about how the lyrics (http://www.songlyrics.com/the-fall/u-s-80-s-90-s-lyrics/) of U.S. 80's-90's (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXDaz8LLT5I) draw on an experience of being interrogated about prescription pills at US Customs in Boston, generating their "own version of a hip-hop track" in which "Mark proclaims 'I am the original white (big shot) rapper…" [61]. This track is based on a repetitive, "blistering and hypnotic"[62] combination of rhythm that opens with a standard 4/4 drum intro; two main riffs from both lead and bass guitar back the *Sprechstimme* style that characterizes Mark E. Smith's vocals as he recounts, and meta-comments on this episode [63]. He never sings in the conventional sense of the word, he intones; indeed raps over the music backing in all the Fall's line-ups, ones that include two drummers, bass guitar, keyboards, lead and rhythm guitar and (Smith Start often singing) backing vocals in various combinations and registers.

Smith Start considers the riff on this track as a heavier example of her riff-writing[64]; based on her adapting her playing to what she considered would go "really well with what [The Fall] were doing and develop this kind of lead guitar technique – very hooky, simple, powerful, leads"[65]. The hook in the song is the title, sung as refrain with a two-tone bass rhythm. The riff that Smith Start speaks of enters at 10" into the track, a rocky, melodic lead-guitar line that provides the hook. Additional sound effects are provided by Smith's "idiotic megaphone" (discernable towards the end of the track at 3.33) [66]. Four minutes

[60] ibid. These sections also relate the various episodes of band-members being thrown out of the band whilst touring and, then, the band turning around and basically throwing Mark E. Smith himself out of the band. The point here is that Smith's on-stage and in the studio habits of interfering with other band members while they played cannot be separated from the effects this sort of "Dadaist" (Smith Start calls it self-destructive) approach to making and mixing music *in situ* has on the sound of The Fall, as one articulation of "DIY" as unpredictability. According to Smith Start, their move into writing opera, and with that dance (*Kurious Orange*) imposed an external discipline on this behavior, and the album of that music that ensued.

[61] Smith Start (2016: 222)

[62] ibid

[63] This style of speak-singing is attributed to Arnold Schoenberg, the founder of atonal composition in early twentieth century classical music; this term is for vocals that are closer to speech than the style of *sprechgesang* that I consider to be closer to the vocals of The Slits; there are still melodic lines to the articulated words (as is the case in operatic arias).

[64] Smith Start (2016:224)

[65] ibid: 182

[66] Smith Start (2016: 225).

and forty seconds of recitation held together by a bass-guitar and lead-guitar riff and a solid 4/4 drumbeat.

Sonic Youth – Little Trouble Girl (*Washing Machine*, 1995)

Chapter 35 of Gordon's *Girl in a Band* focuses on Sonic Youth's 1995 album, *Washing Machine*, which coincides with the birth of Gordon and Moore's daughter, Coco. Some songs on this album reflect Gordon's concerns with parenthood, such as "Little Trouble Girl" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJWJcSTPNpM) . Here too we hear another example of vocals based on "half singing, half speaking style"[67] to deliver lyrics (http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sonicyouth/littletroublegirl.html) such as "cross my heart and hope to die, I cannot tell a lie" (at 3.33) as her "homage" to the Shangri-Las and their "over-dramatic songs with morbid scenarios and unhealthy relationships"[68].

It is a track that also includes backing vocals from Kim Deal (bass guitar in The Pixies), singing a melodic line – "sha la la". Gordon considered Deal as "perfect" for this song about the "pressure to please and be perfect that every woman falls into and the projects onto her daughter"[69]. The darker sentiments in the lyric are contrasted by Deal's melodic line, and the quality to her voice that Gordon describes as having "an incredibly cakelike quality – like the sound when you say *cake*, a lightness, its body thinned out. That's so classic pop"[70]. An arpeggio line on the lead guitar plays in unison with the two vocalists, singing almost but not quite in tune with each other for the first verse that ends with "— that I'm really bad, little trouble girl", over a slow 2/4 beat on the drums. A slightly echo-chamber effect contributes to the sense of foreboding and strangeness that Gordon evokes in her notes for this track. It is a gentle-sounding song without the feedback, grunge-sounding guitars of other Sonic Youth tracks. But this is the point - the sonic dissonances and sense of unease are subtle, through slightly off-key harmonies and guitar lines that wobble in pitch at the end of the phrase (4.07-4.09)

The album title, the title track of which is over 9 minutes long, could have been the new name for the band. Gordon here is commenting on the need for a change as the band had "been around awhile, plus *Washing Machine* seemed like a good "indie rock"

[67] Gordon (2015: 203)

[68] ibid: 202

[69] ibid: 203

[70] ibid 204

name"[71]. These branding concerns aside she notes that recording this album included having Coco, a young toddler, in the studio and is one of her "favourite sounding records" of "fun songs to record"[72].

Sleater-Kinney - Faraway (*One Beat*, 2002)

The first chapter of Part 2 in Brownstein's *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*, introduces the reader to how Sleater-Kinney's sound worked; first as a three piece without a bass guitar and, secondly, as a three piece with two vocalists and guitarists working closely together, in unison and alternating. Brownstein notes that neither she nor Corin Tucker "were interested in playing too many bar or power chords. So my chords were half-formed; I was always trying to leave room for Corin. … a story that on its own sounds unfinished, a sonic to-be-continued, designed to be completed by someone else"[73]. As with the other bands examined above, their guitar tunings were not standardized;

> "Corin had always tuned her guitar to her own voice. .. [for example] in C-sharp…one and a half steps below standard tuning, which creates a sourness, a darkness that you have to overcome if you're going to create something at all harmonious and palatable, So, even when we're getting toward a little bit of catchiness or pop sheen, there's always an underlying bitterness to it. The tuning also forced Corin to sing differently – it pushed her into her higher registers, into a wailing, the outer edges". [74]

So in this account, the circumstances of tuning a guitar to fit the natural range of a voice, without deference to conventions, is behind the vocal qualities of this band. Once they had found their drummer (Janet Weiss), Brownstein maintains that they did not need to add a bass player for the obligatory "depth and low end" [75] despite wanting to "sounds like a full rock band"[76]. To the listener these details may not be apparent given the effect of "ways of playing that were very compatible with each other"[77] comes across as tight

[71] ibid: 201

[72] ibid: 204

[73] Brownstein (2015: 87)

[74] Ibid: 87-88.

[75] Ibid: 86

[76] ibid: 87

[77] ibid

ensemble playing and the intensity of Weiss's drumming that are part of, rather than simply backing the crossing lines of the two vocals and guitars in close counterpoint. Brownstein reckons that "the uniqueness of our sound is that we rarely land on a basic chord—the music stays somewhere in between, it's always not quite right, which of course can sound more right than anything, or at least like nothing else[78].

How does this work out for the album *One Beat*, in the three minutes and forty-five seconds of the track "Faraway"? (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPZWHdkr2s) The lyrics (http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sleaterkinney/faraway.html) here evoke first reactions to hearing about the 9/11 attacks, and their geopolitical aftermath – "Why can't I get along… with you"[79]. The first verse goes like this; "Seven thirty a.m.- Nurse the baby on the couch -Then the phone rings -Turn on the TV - Watch the world explode in flames - And don't leave the house". No musical intro in this track, the first line begins on the 4th beat of the first bar, both guitars in unison with drums in full throttle and Tucker's "wailing" vocals around two-three notes. The second verse follows the first after a brief link with guitar (1.02), which follows the same intervals of this melodic line. The song takes off in the middle section (1.14), upping the tempo with the two vocal lines separating into lead and backing to come together again on the main refrain "Why can't I get along - Why can't I get along - Why can't I get along with you?" (Sung twice). The last minute, a third of the song, consists of repeated variations of the main riff, to finish off with a de capo to the second part of the main verses (3.11); "Standing here on a one way road - And I fall down, and I fall down - No other direction for this to go- And we fall down, and we fall down" and four bars of guitars in unison to the end.

This song is one good example of exactly the points Brownstein is making above as they looked to sound like a full line-up, eschewing a "lo-fi trebly noise…each used to compensating Yet unafraid of space or discord"[80]. It works on its own terms and within the terms of a three-four minute verse-chorus structured "pop song" albeit with their own style of sonic arc and harmonies: drive, build and release.

[78] ibid

[79] See Brownstein on the explicitly political position they were taking towards the George W. Bush administration in this instance (2015: 182, 183-4, 192) for a band with members who identified, implicitly with radical, feminist politics in the US context (2015: 62).

[80] Brownstein (2015: 86, 87)

PART II: *CHANGING CHANNELS* – CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS [81]

> "[T]his duality—bad girl vs. good girl—points to larger, more pervasive problems to do with how women are viewed in culture." [82]

> "No. I didn't think I qualified as a musician. But we were on the brink of punk so, you see, I was in the right place. … How I fit in that scenario I had no idea. It would have to be something that transcended gender. Rock was masculine but its listeners were feminine. It was never gender-restrictive—men loved to see a woman play a guitar; they always had. I'd have to figure it out as I didn't want to be a waitress again." [83]

Returning to the analytical possibilities of approaching these memoirs and their musical material from the perspective of the new topics and methodological agendas that accompany the burgeoning interest in popular culture as a domain for study in international relations. Interest to date has been predominately on analysing the visual, and with that the literary content of popular cultural artefacts, from computer games, to comics, to popular television, film and cinema. This focus on the visual[84] and related interpretative modes such as semiotics or discourse analysis has its counterpart in the IR literature looking at "high culture": fine arts, theatre, or jazz (I would argue that jazz in this literature is regarded through a high-art lens). Along with an interest in the imputed political meaning of lyrics, current interest is in ways of apprehending the political implications of music through how practitioners and audiences gather and respond to events; how as subjects they experience the psycho-emotional dimensions of music as sonic and embodied *affect* on hearing and sharing music (online or in the crowd)[85]. These memoirs offer these approaches lots of material to work with, albums to go back and listen to more attentively, concert videos to watch again, lyrics to (re)analyse from a range of interpretative, and empirical perspectives.

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[81] And here I borrow from the title of Chapter 2 of M Train (Smith 2016) in which Smith continues on her ruminations about the travails of "writing about nothing" interspersed with reminiscences of trips to foreign parts, moving from her local cafe, to apartment in New York.

[82] Kaitlin Fontana (2012).

[83] Hynde (2015: 190): and neither did Brix Smith Start even though she ended up working as a waitress again between her time with The Fall, and afterwards.

[84] Thanks to Matt Davies for thinking this aspect through for me.

[85] See Caso and Hamilton (2015) and contributors to that volume, Shepherd (2009) on theorizing the body, gendered embodiments in world politics. See also Rühlig (2016) on music, politics, and memory.

Troubling Music-Gender Stereotypes: Bodies, Sound, Sexuality

> "Since our music can be weird and dissonant, having me centre-stage also makes it that much easier to sell the band. *Look, it's a girl, she's wearing a dress, and she's with those guys, so things must be okay*. But that's not how we had ever operated as an indie band, I was always conscious not to be too much out front". [86]

> "I wanted to play rhythm, not so much because I thought it was easier than lead, but because rhythm turned me on. I'd never once been tempted to play a single note. Chords for me, three; less is more." [87]

Theories of sexuality, race, and gender have been playing a role in music research over the last years, which can be drawn upon more consciously in studies of popular music by scholars of international relations. As Peraino notes this literature has been exploring "how music-- rock no less, and perhaps more—demarcates a space and time wherein gender and sexuality lose clear definition. … this is part of music's appeal and cultural work. The fact that men dominate the world of rock and pop does not mean that music itself uncomplicatedly represents masculinity, as many 1970s feminists held [88].

The literature about women musicians in music research in the 1990's, with retrievals of forgotten, or invisible women in popular culture and the arts also resonate thereby with debates elsewhere in academe about the depoliticizing effects of 'post-feminism' since the mass mobilizations of the 1960"s and 1970's[89]. These concerns overlap with a move away since the turn of this century from a "homogeneous approach in gender studies" [90] in "third wave" feminist approaches in music research that look at the role that gay and lesbian composers and musicians have played in the history of (western) popular, and classical art music[91]. Peraino notes that this brings a "pragmatic and postmodern

[86] Gordon (2015: 4)

[87] Hynde (2015: 190).

[88] Here she distances herself from McClary to some extent.

[89] With women, of all ages and political dispositions, going on to the streets this year to take part in the worldwide series of Women's Marches to protest the attitudes, and foreign policy agenda of the current US administration, there is hope for those second-wave feminist generations who have wondered not only where the women are (see contributors in Shepherd 2014) but also where to locate feminist politics if it does not conform to the liberal ideals of equal representation in visible forms.

[90] Koskoff (2000: 2-3)

[91] Gay composers are a particular focus in Alex Ross (2010), less so women.

approach to gender, and, in reaction to the sexual conservatism of many second-wave feminists, is particularly concerned with sexuality"[92]. Peraino notes the link between how music industry publications began to address imbalance towards women's role in popular music in the 1980's and 1990's and this rise of "third wave feminism" and its "very rock 'n' roll sensibility"[93]. She sees this as a problem, however, when looking to redress the relative neglect on gender terms by perpetuating stereotypes of any women in music as outsiders, misfits, or "bad girls". Following Joan Scott, Peraino advocates moving the analysis from empirical categories up "to the next level of inquiry: how rock is a discursive practice of gender and sexuality such that women are constituted as "trouble""[94].

This insight is invaluable for considering the overlaps, and contradictions about just what it means to be a "girl in a band" over a lifetime of being a musician first and foremost. A range of emotions and positions are contained in these pages, experienced along these six women's lives. For instance, Gordon writes about how she felt about Karen Carpenter (drummer and vocalist of the sister/brother act, The Carpenters), who died of anorexia, as her unravelling becomes visible on stage: "She couldn't make peace with her body's curves. … It was easier for her to disappear; to free herself finally from that body, to find a perfection in dying"[95]. And to Karen herself, she asks in a letter she reproduces in the book; "who were your role models? …what's it like being a girl in music?"[96]. Or consider how Chrissie Hynde recalls her first meeting with Albertine in the early days, In commenting on how Albertine looked at the time she makes a sharp observation about the link between gimmick, sexualisation, and branding that was an undertow in the punk era as well[97].

[92] Peraino (2001: 693)

[93] ibid.

[94] Peraino (2001: 694) and the tripartite framework for feminist approaches to music research in Koskoff (2000: x). The historiographical and political dimensions to categorizing feminist research as successive, if not mutually exclusive, waves is critiqued further in Peraino (2001, 2013). It is also discussed in Bowers (2002: 11-12, 15) and Diamond (2003). Approaches that have been gaining traction within the so-called "third wave" of queer and lesbian theories that have preoccupied gender and music studies more recently are developed further in a colloquy of essays on *Music and Sexuality* (curated by Peraino and Cusick 2013).

[95] Gordon (2015: 172)

[96] ibid: 173. See also Brix Smith Start on her recurring eating disorder issues, and Viv Albertine on the effects of cancer treatment on her morphology and body image, which dominates the second part of her memoirs

[97] Hynde (2016: 214),

What has *Rock Chic(k) Lit* got to do with World Politics?

> "The shows happened and people liked us. The band [The Pretenders] was magic one night, but inconsistent and shit the rest. I never knew what to expect. But that's what's good about a show – the unpredictability. It's sex after all".[98]

> "[W]e just never thought to create a narrative other than the one we were living, ever thought to heighten the story. The music was the only story. It really felt like a scratch or a scrawl—it didn't have an intentional design but you could read into it, you could wonder about it; the mystery was in the plainness, the starkness." [99]

Writing about the geopolitical context in which the 2002 Sleater-Kinney album, *One Beat*, was released and her ambivalence about its positioning as an explicitly political album, Brownstein notes how "writing songs after 9/11 felt treacherous" in the face of "the xenophobia and jingoism that took hold of the culture post-9/11"[100]. At the same time she puts her finger on the tension for analysts (musicological and 'politicological') between assessing how much a cultural form is overtly political – as content - and the sorts of political meanings that are encoded in what she calls the "vernacular" of everyday emotional experience. Brownstein takes care to note how "the political landscape was not the only thing fuelling our songwriting or the element that defined the sound on [this] record"[101]. Not unlike Bob Dylan's lifelong unease with being pigeonholed as intentionally, if not implicitly "political", here a representative of the aforementioned "third wave" feminist politics of the Riot Grrrls articulates familiar issues for theorists of the cultural, the political, the musical.

It is not only pop musicians and critics who are occupied with how the arts, including western classical music traditions, are confronted by and, in turn, look to take a stand against social injustice or political events. The New York Time music critic, Alex Ross, classical musician Doyle Ambrust, and musicologist Lucy Caplan have gone on record recently to reflect on the implications of the 2016 Presidential election for the future of arts and cultural life in the US. They recall musical precursors, such as ways in which Ludwig van Beethoven's music has been put to use for political purposes in 19th and 20th century western Europe, Richard Wagner and the Nazi regime, or more recent political stands by

[98] Hynde (2015: 253).

[99] Brownstein (2015: 100).

[100] Brownstein (2015: 182, 183),

[101] ibid: 182

major musical figures in the classical tradition (e.g. Leonard Bernstein, or Daniel Barenboim). These three commentators all wonder where to draw the line between art and politics at times of stress [102]. Consternation at the hostile stance taken by the Trump administration towards not only "high" culture but also popular culture Alec Ross underscores, as does Carrie Brownstein, that like any other artists, musicians are not unaffected by wider political events, whether or not they self-identify their creative practice as political practice. On visiting the "Musical Crossroads" exhibit at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC where African American music and artists are centre-stage, Lucy Caplan asks how, in times of political and social upheaval, best to respond to such crises as an artist; through or alongside one's art? Whilst seemingly an academic question, Caplan goes on to argue that even when these decisions may reside in personal conviction, or professional (even commercial) decisions, the relationship between music, art and the social and political world is both circumstantial and co-constitutive. The relationship is not always visible, not always audible as an explicit, deliberate articulation of "The Political"[103].

These connotations are brought into relief at times of crisis, or though those who defy conventions. Or, in the case of cultural institution building, whose music – artworks are granted access to the pantheon. Axes of inclusion and exclusion, headlining and sidelining on basis of race, class, and gender are an integral part of the history, educational and scholarly canons of western, and non-western musical traditions. But they are also embedded in how publics get access to alternative versions. Her conclusion is that interventions along the lines of this exhibit can make a difference; in this case exposing how "music – and especially African American music, which is the lifeblood of American music – is inescapably intertwined with politics"[104]. Recognizing this, as artist or analyst, is not the same, however, as knowing what exactly to "do with music in this moment, and how [to] …discern its limits"[105]; play on with more feeling, change the set list, or take action by non-musical means? Caplan goes on to argue that positing art and politics as either mutually exclusive, or indistinguishable from one another is missing a deeper political point:

[102] See Ross (2017), Doyle Ambrust (2017), and Lucy Caplan (2017

[103] As she goes on to argue, the ways in which a musical figure or piece music can be deployed for contrasting political agendas (in making war or forging international treaties for peace for instance, or performing at a presidential inauguration) is a different question. There are also practitioners identifying with political persuasions, such as fascism or xenophobic nationalism, who make music for these ends. And then there are those, in both the classical and popular music domains whose music can be interpreted by different audiences for quite diverging political meanings. See Franklin (2005), Barenboim and Said (2003), and Ross (2010)

[104] Caplan (2017)

[105] ibid.

> " this connection between music and politics is real and necessary, and the most notable distinction between {these two extremes} is that they point the arrow linking art and politics in opposite directions. …[to] use music to inspire political action, … [or to imagine] politics that create a space for art. Either way, making art remains the essential part of the equation. Perhaps that's why neither perspective, alone, satisfied."[106]

Musicking Politics – the bridge

Since the inauguration of President Trump, and in the preceding months, many artists have been mobilizing online, on the streets, and in award ceremonies to express their objections to this administration's policy agendas, sexist and xenophobic pronouncements. Comparable alliances have been taking place in the UK and (other) European Union countries in the face of rising xenophobia, and right-wing extremist electoral campaigns. These circumstances can be a catalyst for a new wave of overtly politicized art and culture. The direct intervention of musicians opposing, or indeed supporting governmental policies has been a feature of political history. But as Brownstein herself notes, this pressure to make overtly political music has creative, and aesthetic implications for how an artist perceives her work as alternative, independent of any mainstream.

> "We had spent years attempting to exist free of excess and arbitrary labels that were not descriptions of our music: female, indie, queer. Riot Grrrl, post-Riot Grrrl music. Now here we were with the potentiality of being a "political" band. But in the interim years we'd realized that denial is a form of compliance and self-erasure. Plus, it's exhausting. We would go out on the road and play these songs and people could interpret them however the hell they wanted."[107]

The above qualms are more than being precious about labels, or misappropriation of one's creative output, with implications for how an artist may choose to render her political interests or responses to current events: as manifest content (angry lyric), or in more metaphorical, impressionistic terms through poetic devices, analogies or the sonic mix (a characteristic of how Smith Start discusses the way personal and current events were combined elements in her songwriting with Mark E. Smith).

[106] ibid

[107] Brownstein (2015: 185)

This tension between "denial and compliance" also speaks to the aforementioned theoretic-methodological controversies around politics and/as aesthetics, music and/as politics[108]. These discussions are beyond the space of this paper but before concluding it is worth pausing to take a leaf out of C. Douglas Barrett's book, *After Sound*. In this polemic against the constraints of the "absolute" music tradition he sets out to "reimagine music as a critically engaged art form in dialogue with contemporary art, continental philosophy, and global politics"[109]. His project is based on a rejection of both the legacy of treating music as a thing-in-itself (the "absolute music" tradition continues to predominates in classical, western musicology) and "sound art", its polar opposite[110]. He wants to show that there are artists and performers who have been challenging the notion that music and/as sound are immutably linked by returning to a pre-modern notion of music as "*not* sound art" in the first place"[111].

Given the current status of topics in popular culture and world politics in this disciplinary space, let alone how music has been considered to date, I would not want to go quite as far in stipulating that music, as object of analysis or medium for meta-critique, should be completely stripped of the sonic, devoid of any attention to form. That said, the memoirs explored in this paper go some way in affirming Douglas Barrett's project to consider music as "not an object but a process engaging bodies, time, and space" [112].

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: VANGUARD OR OLD GUARD?

> "What does it feel like to be a woman in a band? I realized that those questions—that talking about the experience—had become part of the experience itself. … I feel that this meta-discourse…is part of how it feels to be a "woman in music" (or a "woman in anything" for that matter—politics, business, comedy, power). There is the music itself, and then there is the ongoing dialogue about how it feels. The two

[108] See Bleiker (2012) and Shapiro (2004), and on two views on aesthetics of music see Gracyk, and Frith (2009).

[109] Barrett (2016: 1). H

[110] Barrett argues that this stretching of music as a category means suspending "the notion of music as a series of discrete sounds identifiable as tones, or "notes" with determinate pitches etc. and which, taken together, compose what is commonly referred to as a musical work" (ibid). Barrett is signalling a comparable moment of extension in music research as international relations scholarship of late has been engaging in of late with respect to popular culture as a disruptive device in turn.

[111] ibid

[112] Barrett, citing Mockus (2016: 167)

> seem to be intertwined and inescapable. … I don't know what it's like to be a woman in a band—I have nothing else to compare it to. But I will say that I doubt in the history of rock journalism and writing any man has been asked, "Why are you in an all-male band?" [113]
>
> "The question here is how widely or narrowly one defines political action" [114]

The awarding of the 2016 Nobel Prize for literature to Bob Dylan has brought popular music into the hallowed halls of the world's bastions of high culture/high politics. Dylan did not attend the ceremony. He sent Patti Smith instead to receive the prize on his behalf. On YouTube you can watch (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVXQaOhpfJU) Smith's rendition of Dylan's "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" with orchestral backing, including the moment she forgets the words and has to start again ("I'm so nervous" she says). The Nobel prize itself, Dylan's studious indifference to it, and Patti Smith's presence on that stage together provide a contemporary moment for considering, in light of this wave of rock memoirs by women, what counts as recognition in an artist's life, when, and who has the power to grant such recognition.

Summing up: This paper has unpacked a selection of themes and analytical lines of inquiry based on an inductive, cross-referenced reading of these seven autobiographies First I have taken them as a prism that first-hand accounts can hold up to scholarly and journalists' studies of the same period and, second, considered how they work as musical and cultural archives in their own right. In both respects the rise of the "fremoir" has much to offer the study of popular culture and world politics at this time. Not only does the public record, and discography of their output and that of their colleagues and collaborators over these six lifetimes sound, and look different as a result. But so does the substantive material that international relations scholars would look to draw upon when considering music as one line of inquiry and critique of the wider intellectual politics of the discipline.

Before ending, a couple of words of caution; first the way I have approached these books, on their own terms and in their own words, is not to suggest that these accounts are impervious to alternative interpretations, or criticism. Approaching these texts as primary material does, however, allow them to "speak", to provide that missing sense of "another voice" to mainstream studies of punk and indie music cultures, and their critics whether feminist or otherwise. They also offer an invitation to consider lives and artistic output as

[113] Brownstein (2015: 111)

[114] Peraino, (2001: 706)

phenomena that, through their complexity, defy essentialising approaches to women and/in music – and/in politics - that may end up contributing to "widening the gender gap and building rock music [and politics] as a battlefield rather than a discursive field of the sexes"[115]. Second, taking my cue here from the vibrant feminist literature on women, sexuality, and gender critical music scholarship I would want to note that as much as these memoirs are testimony to their pioneering role as women artists and musicians, all these authors are writing from relatively privileged positions. They do so within a sociocultural, and commercial domain that remains deeply skewed in gender, race, and class terms for creative expression and opportunity. In that sense there is still a lot of reading between, and across these accounts to track themes and events that bear closer examination.

And to answer the question posed in the title to this paper? I would say that these examples of rock-chick lit are indeed the vanguard in providing first-hand, albeit edited and curated accounts of the punk movement and its music, broadly defined, as this "discursive field of the sexes"[116]. As they are written by women who, by virtue of their age and the place they have in their respective musical generations, they are also in this respect 'old guard'. Nonetheless, as musicological and cultural archives, these books provide signposts for scholars interested in exploring the popular-culture and world-politics nexus as a multi-sited, audio-visual, and multidimensional one.

For the final thought on these matters, I turn again to Simone de Beauvoir. She ends the final volume of her memoirs, *All Said and Done*, with what could be construed as a very "DIY" attitude: "This time I shall not write a conclusion ... I leave the reader to draw any [they] may choose" [117].

[115] Peraino (2001: 709)

[116] ibid

[117] Simone de Beauvoir, *All Said and Done* (1982: 499)

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