QUEER-DIVA COLLABORATIONS IN 20TH CENTURY POPULAR MUSIC

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Abstract

This thesis explores the practice of "Queer-Diva collaboration" as it pertains to the work of pop music icons Grace Jones and Annie Lennox. Queer-Diva collaborations are a surprisingly common yet undertheorized artistic phenomena wherein female pop singers co-create music and art with members of the LGBTQ community. My study argues that through these collaborations, queer counterculture discourses critique and reform mainstream popular culture. While much scholarship revolves around the Diva and her Queer audience, this thesis draws on theories of artistic collaboration as "utopian modernist sites" (Green 175), forms of "gender collapse" (Butler 41, 121) and testaments to "Queer world-making" (Muñoz 22) in order to recover the Diva's crucial relationship with LGBTQ art directors, stylists, choreographers and music producers.

This study historicises and analyses two pivotal Queer-Diva collaborations as case studies, both of which reflect and broadcast the repercussions of watershed moments in LGBTQ politics. The first case study examines Grace Jones's music video to 1986's "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)," directed by Jones and Queer graffiti artist Keith Haring which fuses Jones's racial and gender pluralism with Haring's HIV/AIDS activism. The second case study analyses Annie Lennox's and DJ Junior Vasquez's "No More 'I Love You's'" (The Sound Factory Mix), a recording released in 1995, which embodies a proliferating era of LGBTQ civil rights and an aural armament against misogynistic and homophobic oppression. Focusing on these distinctive epochs within Jones's and Lennox's oeuvres, this thesis examines the effects, repercussions and implications of these Queer-Diva collaborations and determines how they disrupt anti-Black, anti-Queer and heterosexist discourses.

Key Words:
Grace Jones, Annie Lennox, Diva, Worldmaking, Collaboration, Queer, Gender, Feminism, Pop, Fashion, Styling, Music, Visual Art, Technology, Politics, Civil Rights

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Introduction

At the 2010 MTV Music Awards, pop singer Lady Gaga arrived on the red carpet wearing a dress made entirely of raw meat. *Time* magazine called it the "top fashion statement of the year," noting how it merged style, pop music and politics. The outfit was conceived by Frank Fernández and styled by Nicola Formichetti, two Queer fashion designers, who worked closely with the pop singer to use her public appearance as a means to draw attention to the ban on LGBTQI people serving in the United States military. While such pop culture fashion spectacles might seem trivial, they are in fact a prime example of an important cultural development wherein female pop vocalists and their Queer artist-collaborators use music, fashion, TV and film to intervene in mainstream politics.

This study explores the phenomenon of the Queer[1]-Diva[2] creative relationship as a dynamic site of LGBTQ activism. It argues that Queer-Diva collaboration is a practice wherein Queer counterculture remodels and reconstructs mainstream popular culture to expose and oppose anti-Feminist, anti-Queer and racist discourses. This thesis recovers Queer collaborators as trailblazing individuals whose innovation and skill set inform, support and ignite Diva performance. Rather than dim or deny Queer participation in Diva iconography—which has been

[1] This study understands Queer, as per the work of Rinaldo Walcott, as something that must be acknowledged as a designation under constant renovation (Walcott *Blurred Boundaries* 2022) and as Judith Butler notes in *Bodies That Matter*, "a site of collective contestation" (228). This work also looks to Eve Sedgwick's definition of Queer as an "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality, aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (8).

[2] This thesis recognizes the many contestations and interpretations of Diva. It is primarily guided by a contemporary comprehension of this crown title, one which hearkens back to its original roots to characterize those who go beyond the "mundane assignations" of the Prima Donna in 18th- and 19th-century Italian opera (Cowgill and Poriss xxxiii). According to a 2023–2024 exhibit on the Diva at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the term is used to specifically describe female subjects in music who possess "exceptional artistic talent and power," present a "highly charged aesthetics…which accentuates complex visual and vocal narratives" and a voice which commands an international fanbase while crossing cultures, genres and continents (Bailey et al, 15, 19, 49).

the case in the majority of music journalism and musicological scholarship for decades—this thesis excavates and explores an often dismissed or unacknowledged Queer contribution to pop production. It recuperates the impact of LGBTQ artists within pop invention in the 20th century and re-evaluates creative processes with Diva figures[3] and their marginalized co-producers through an interdisciplinary examination of Queer expression in song composition, music video creation, fashion and album art.

While important strides in Queer Musicology have been made by authors, scholars and theorists such as Sheila Whiteley, Wayne Koestenbaum, Freya Jarman-Ivens and Steven Moon, most studies address Diva-audience relationships. Historians such as Rachel Cowgill, Hilary Poriss and Daphne A. Brooks have cleared the path for "a new awareness of the mutability of the musical work" (Cowgill and Poriss xxx) and the cause to work against "a crisis in our collective cultural memory" (Brooks 5) which seeks to dismiss the existence of key musical producers from their own productions. My project shifts this attention to the Queer-Diva collaborators as cultural producers, examining the socio-political impacts of their work. This study asks, how do Queer collaborators participate in Diva narratives and iconography? How have Diva-Queer collaborations become a critical strategy for contesting the devaluation of Queer life in popular culture? In what ways do Queer/Diva collaborations risk the reproduction of misogyny, cultural appropriation (Horn), racism (Kershaw), and the commodification of marginalized groups (Halberstam; Brooks; Moon)?

To engage in these enquiries, this thesis focuses on two Queer-Diva partnerships: galvanizing works which predate Lady Gaga's famous meat dress spectacle with Nichola

[3] Taking cues from Koestenbaum's investigation of "The Codes of Diva Conduct," which begins an association between the iconography of the opera Diva "as it emerges in certain publicized lives, and a collective gay subcultural imagination" (84).

Formichetti and Frank Fernández. In particular, this study concentrates on the late-1980s video work of Grace Jones and Keith Haring and the mid-1990s musical output of Annie Lennox and Junior Vasquez.[4] It holds a spotlight to Vasquez and Haring as influential audio-visual co-creators, but refrains from sidelining Jones's and Lennox's all-important leadership roles in the co-conceiving of pop. Instead, this thesis assesses the perfect and imperfect storms which occur during the intersection of Diva performers and Queer artists in what I distinguish as the joint work of Jones and Haring, and that of Lennox and Vasquez. It examines how both case studies are informed by Queer, Feminist and racial ideologies and how the co-produced output melds individual and communal worldviews, political positions and personal histories. This work employs Charles Green's theory of artistic collaboration, which avows that artistic alliances are, by nature, a sagacious integration of political agendas. Green's views on collaboration serve as a starting point for the discussion of the Queer-Diva union in art, as his research deems the end-result of co-created work—specifically coming from two artists of dissimilar backgrounds—as being the by-product of a practice which reconciles autobiographical, cultural, social and artistic synergies (111–125).

My analysis includes two case studies organized into two chapters to establish a lineage of Queer-Diva collaboration and unearth the complexities which follow each partnership. The first chapter begins by highlighting and deconstructing Grace Jones's early career with her Queer collaborators during the late 1970s. This history of Jones fueling—and being fueled by—Gay disco dance floors, fashion designers, music producers and visual artists foregrounds an interdisciplinary analysis of her 1986 music video, "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)." My work investigates how the video—which Jones co-directed with her openly Gay, dance

[4] The choice of these case studies are intentional as they survey two decades of Queer-Diva collaboration.

music-devoted collaborator, graffiti artist Keith Haring—is a retaliatory creation for both Jones and Haring. The video's content is assessed as a critique of the homophobic, racist and sexist forces—coming from the mass media, the religious right and government legislation—which opposed both Jones and Haring in the late 1980s. To explicate the efficacy of their co-production, I locate pro-Feminist, pro-Queer and anti-racist sites within the "I'm Not Perfect" video wherein Jones and Haring's blend of activism is underscored and emphasized. This chapter identifies the specific ways in which Jones and Haring's anti-racist advocacy, pro-Queer communication and HIV/AIDS politicking are transmitted into the aesthetics and performances of their video. Theories from Queer Studies, Feminist Studies, Black Culture Studies and Ethnomusicology provide a lens which allow an interrogation of the duo's video work. Theories which speak to Jones's and Haring's cultural origins and affiliations allow for a retracing of their united vision as a work which acts as a direct response to prejudicial institutional systems and discriminatory societal norms threatening their livelihoods. It is through such interdisciplinary discussion that Jones and Haring's racially and sexually charged images can be reconsidered as powerful counterpoints to the moral majority of the late 1980s, the white, dominant, patriarchal media structures of the time—looking at specific institutional intolerances of the music industry, media and the art world. Armed with theoretical frameworks from music historian Francesca Royster, gender theorists Maria Guzman and Judith Butler and ethnomusicologist Kai Fikentscher, this chapter also looks at how Jones's past Queer collaborations in the late 1970s serve as precursors to the radical work she would later co-conceive with Haring in "I'm Not Perfect." Art historian Miriam Kershaw's critique of Jones and Haring's video imagery, Bennet Diephaus's theory on Black camp and José Esteban Muñoz's discussions on Queer worldmaking

bridge a new understanding of the duo's confrontations with white supremacy, homophobia and misogyny—all of which influenced principal spectacles within "I'm Not Perfect."

The second and final chapter opens with an investigation of a selection of Queer intersections infusing Annie Lennox's body of work coming out of the 1980s. It chronicles and examines her collaborations with LGBTQ artists that span a decade of her musicmaking in Eurythmics, the electro-pop group Lennox co-founded with Dave Stewart. This chapter gauges the decade-long Queer alliances Lennox made in Eurythmics which predate and foreshadow the chapter's core analysis: her 1995 collaboration with DJ/record producer Junior Vasquez. By probing the distinctions of the duo's dance remix of "No More 'I Love You's'," the first single off Lennox's 1995 album *Medusa*, this chapter explores the socio-political implications of their co-creation. The analysis in this chapter sees the complexities of this partnership as one which challenges anti-Feminist and anti-Queer detractors and reflects a discourse which privileges white, Anglo-Saxon Gay males. While Jones and Haring's work combats inequality via symbolism, art inscription, costume and film, this study argues that Lennox and Vasquez—via "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix)—oppose anti-Feminist and anti-Queer detraction through radical, innovative and drag and camp-stimulated vocal and sound production. I pay particular attention to how the pop ballad is turned into a club/dance anthem via music technology, which drags and camps the originally recorded material into a gender subversive performance that amplifies Queer and Feminist messaging. It outlines significant moments in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) which fuse Lennox's and Vasquez's political and social philosophies. An interdisciplinary approach to reading and critiquing this remix is employed to expose how the duo's joint work countered oppositions which Lennox and Vasquez faced within

the radio broadcasting systems, the music industry, the media and New York City's flourishing constellation of Queer nightlife in the mid-1990s.

The second chapter looks to Feminist scholars such as Sheila Whiteley and Alice Echols, whose work investigates how specific discographies and videographies from leading women in 20th-century popular music were able to disturb and dismantle patriarchal and homophobic structures (Whiteley 122–3; *Shaky Ground* 182). I lean on Gender theorists Judith Butler and Stan Hawkins and Queer musicologist Freya Jarman-Ivens to assist also in probing imperative moments in Lennox's body of work as a survey of androgyny-fueled, camp-laden performances which disrupt normative ideas surrounding male/female roles and what Butler considers to be the apexes of gender-based power divisions (*Gender* 32–3) The works of literary theorist Giancarlo Frosio and digital arts theorist Eduardo Navas are both crucial in bringing together a sociological understanding of the function of the remix. My work applies Frosio's and Navas's consideration of the methods, processes and outcomes of remixing in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix). I specifically utilize Frosio's theoretical discourses on the remix as a cross-cultural bridge (24) and Navas's ideas surrounding the remix as a tool to obtain legitimacy (196) to uncover politically charged contexts in Lennox and Vasquez's co-production.

Each chapter relies heavily on archival material as sources: newspapers, magazines and journals from the 20th century—most of which have yet to be digitized for library usage. Rare, published reviews, interviews and profiles of all four artists were found offline at the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, the Stonewall National Museum and Archives in Fort Lauderdale, the British Library Archives and Manuscripts collection in London, the James Joyce Library at

University College Dublin, and Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa. From locating *Billboard* musical chart files to reviewing film such as yet-to-be-catalogued handheld cam-corder footage—amateur videos of Jones's performances at the Paradise Garage at the New York Public Library's Performing Arts collection required months of request, as did the securing of a collection of Queer media from the 1970s-1990s, as so much of it is either misdated or incomplete. For the purpose of this study, the two case studies—and the works which predated them—were scrupulously verified and time-stamped to ensure demarcations are as precise as possible. Publications which speak directly to the collaborators in both of the case studies are scarce. To assist in filling in a few historical gaps, I've included quotes from my own previously published interviews with Jones, Lennox and Vasquez for magazines such as *Icon, Flare, FASHION, The Globe and Mail, IN Magazine* and *The National Post*. For the output of both Lennox and Vasquez, archival research was key. Their co-production coincided with the expansion of Gay media in the mid-1990s and the rise of reporting on cosmopolitan Queer nightclub venues in various Gay and Lesbian and heterosexual publications. To analyze the composition of "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) through a technical and ethnomusicological lens, I employed Logic Pro audio production software. It assisted in transcribing and creating sheet music for "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) since, as in the case with most remixes, such sheet music did not previously exist. Logic Pro's software tools allowed a deconstruction of Lennox and Vasquez's post-production and re-composition by singling out particular sound and voice patterns as well as identifying what instrumentation was used in the original pop song and the remixed version of "No More 'I Love You's'." The software also assisted in breaking down the remix's instrumental, vocal and technologically

enhanced sound structures so that spectacles, performances and augmentations within "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) could be detected, dissected and appraised.

As both chapters convey, parallels in Jones's and Lennox's discography and videography are far from coincidental: both artists released a number of manifestations of androgyny, camp and gender convulsion via song recordings, remixes, videos, public appearances and stage performances. Yet this thesis looks beyond comparing the two artists in terms of their respective outputs: it links their artistic trajectories to a number of vital Queer artistic partners in their lives and the Queer inspirations which helped shape their sound and vision for more than a decade. Jones and Lennox are known for being Gay and Queer icons in many circles of the LGBTQ community. As a recent exhibition on the impact of the Diva in popular culture at London's Victoria and Albert Museum made clear, Jones's and Lennox's knack for traversing and transmogrifying the term Diva is slowly achieving recognition. Their respective pop catalogues have been defined as contestations of Divahood through reinvention.[5] Jones and Lennox's deep connections with LGBTQ fan bases and their relationships have been examined through the work of Whiteley, Hawkins and Miriam Kershaw yet the crux of each Diva's Queer intersections—and their long-standing collaborations with LGBTQ artists—have yet to become part of the discussions surrounding the impact of their iconography.

Ultimately this study begins to combat the erasure and/or demotion of Queer innovation in music history. It goes beyond merely locating Haring and Vasquez as artists who assisted Jones and Lennox with their visions; it presents the world with an as-yet-undeclared record of

[5] A relationship which is insufficiently explored in the promotional photos, items and the official book for Victoria and Albert Museum's current exhibit, *Diva*. The image of Jones which is repeatedly used features her accepting a Prima Donna bouquet in menswear. Lennox's "Little Bird" outfit is touted as one of the exhibit's main draws.

what each duo created together. Part of this record includes signposts within each work which counter the discriminations and conventions aimed at Diva and Queer creators. Covering works that were conceived and launched during politically volatile decades, both chapters outline how women's rights, civil rights and Queer rights were under attack and how these co-produced works resisted such confrontations. It uncovers how inequality and the moral majority of the 1980s and 1990s informed Queer-Diva collaborative work and examines the ways such collaborations can be seen as a reckoning against patriarchal, racist and homophobic forces. Most importantly this study identifies how the combined powers of LGBTQ and Diva artistry provide the world-at-large with an aural and visual projection of Queer, Feminist and Black futurity to the masses.

The artist, if he is a vessel, is also a performer.

—Keith Haring, *Haring-isms*

It really doesn't matter wherever I may go,

We're tied together, that's one thing we both know, YO!

—Grace Jones, "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)"

Chapter 1

Slay to the Rhythm:

Queer-Diva Collaboration in Grace Jones's "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)"

In the summer of 1984, Grace Jones, a Jamaican model-turned-singer, was asked to work with openly Gay graffiti artist Keith Haring by Andy Warhol. The meeting took place at photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's studio in New York City. Haring was assigned to body-paint a naked Jones for the October 1984 issue of *Andy Warhol's Interview* magazine (see Figures 1 and 2). This arts-celebrity hybrid publication is defined in Warhol's diaries as a print media replication of The Factory—a hip New York hangout that brought together a confluence of the city's artists, musicians and Hollywood superstars (Warhol and Hackett 3–7). The core crowd at Warhol's Factory mirrored the editorial office of *Interview* magazine: both venues were seen as incubators for a then-developing LGBTQ+ literary and arts community in New York City (Warhol and Hackett). Jones had been profiled in *Interview* magazine prior to 1984,[6] but this particular photo shoot with Haring was Jones's first cover story with the publication. It also

[6] Jones's previous appearance in *Interview* was in the publication's January 1977 issue.

marked the beginning of a new personal and professional era for Jones and Haring. Following this editorial, Jones and Haring worked on a number of creative projects together. One of the most prolific artistic statements that the duo made was the music video for "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)."

While white and heterocentric mainstream music media in the 1980s referred to this period of Jones's career as "not her finest hours"[7] and as one of her "artistic follies,"[8] I argue that "I'm Not Perfect" is a galvanizing collaboration that requires much-needed analysis and interrogation. In this chapter, I investigate how the video is a production which blurs the boundaries of art and pop and challenges dominant perceptions of Feminism, Queerness, race and gender. I explore how the "I'm Not Perfect" video represents a socio-political meeting of the minds between these two artists and how it represents the ways in which both creators address oppression and liberation. "I'm Not Perfect" is a prime example of what I define as a "Queer-Diva collaboration" in my introduction; it is a practice wherein Queer and Feminist counterculture and discourse penetrates and reshapes mainstream popular culture. The "Perfect" Queer-Diva video collaboration between Haring and Jones epitomizes a unique kind of politically fueled popular imagery that is transformed by creative relationships that can occur between female pop singers and LGBTQ+ pop artists. In analyzing Jones and Haring's Queer-Diva collaboration, I explore how video emerges as a medium of critique of first-wave Feminist discourse, racist discourse, and systems of patriarchy and heteronormativity[9] in the music industry. More specifically, I identify how aspects of the video target, expose and oppose anti-

[7] RateYourMusic.com, archived reviews December 6, 1986
[8] *New York Times*, November 7, 1986
[9] According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, "heteronormativity is what makes heterosexuality seem coherent, natural and privileged. It involves the assumption that everyone is 'naturally' heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is an ideal, superior to homosexuality or bisexuality."

Woman, anti-Black and anti-Queer discourses of the 1970s and 1980s, especially constellated in critical approaches to aesthetics and the idea of human, gendered, embodied *perfection*. Through the investigation of specific expressions of opposition in "I'm Not Perfect," I illustrate how a modern lexicon of resilience emerges from Jones and Haring's partnership—one which forecasts and broadcasts the possibilities of Queer and Black life. To illustrate the potency of their co-production, I locate pro-Feminist, pro-Queer and anti-racist sites within the video wherein forms of activism take center stage. In particular, this chapter identifies the specific ways in which anti-racist advocacy, pro-Queer messaging and HIV/AIDS activism are embodied in the aesthetics and performances captured in Jones and Haring's video.

Through an analysis of the duo's combined vision in "I'm Not Perfect," I discuss how this collaboration typifies a lineage of Queer-Diva-instigated activism which combats patriarchy, racism and homophobia and widely circulates the viability of Queerness, Blackness and Feminism. To home in on the consequences of this partnership, I engage with theories rooted in Queer and Gender Studies, Ethnomusicology, African American Studies and Black Queer Studies to illuminate the socio-political significance of Queer-Diva partnerships. This interdisciplinary framework enables Jones and Haring's racially and sexually charged imagery to be recognized and assessed as protest-laden cinema and considered as a formidable counterpoint to the moral majority of the 1980s, the white, dominant, patriarchal systems of media and the institutional prejudices of the music industry and art world. Each section enlists critical lenses drawn from Queer and Gender Studies, Ethnomusicology, African American Studies and Black Queer Studies to illuminate the significance of Queer-Diva collaboration as a counterattack of the oppressive forces of discriminatory societal norms which threatened to compromise their lives and careers.

The chapter begins by providing a historical overview of Jones's past with Queer alliances which helped fuel, shape and support the launch of Jones's singing career in the 1970s. This section of the chapter begins to trace the overlooked legacies of Queer-Diva collaboration by organizing Jones's own history with LGBTQ+ artists—mainly gay and bisexual men with whom she worked from 1975 to 1986 prior to her partnership with Haring. It is crucial to the discussion of Jones's foundation of Queer collaboration, as it considers the creative motivations and consequences of Jones's past partnerships. Informed by ethnomusicologist Eduardo Navas's remix theory—which speaks to the cultural weight of collaboration when art, new media and technological advances merge to enable a site of activism—this chapter looks at the methods and the impetuses of Jones's early Queer-Diva collaborations. To evaluate this complex relationship, I also examine the work of Interdisciplinary Arts and Theater scholar Virginie Magnat, whose work focuses on the conduits created between spectator and performer and the transgressive nature of spectacle-making. This section also employs Judith Butler's concepts of gender to assist in decoding Jones's pre-Haring performances.

The second portion of this chapter tackles the early days of Jones and Haring's relationship and illustrates how Jones's evolution in music in 1986 shifted with her personal and artistic involvement with Haring. Here, I look at the influences behind their collaboration, and consider each artist's relationship with racism, feminism and heteronormativity. This section details Jones's prior working history with her former lover/art director and collaborator Jean-Paul Goude and her career transition away from Goude (1981-1984) to Haring (1984-1987). This investigation of Jones's past output is examined in light of Francesca Royster, Maria Guzman and Judith Butler's theories to frame Jones's works as acts of reclamation and disruption of late-

1970s and early-1980s Feminist and anti-Feminist ideals. The imperative work of ethnomusicologist Kai Fikentscher is also employed to explore the historic and musical implications of Jones's collaboration with Haring.

The chapter concludes with a new, critical analysis of Jones's and Haring's scenes in the "I'm Not Perfect" video. It relies on the scholarship of Black Queer theorist La Marr Bruce, whose work on the heterocentrism of popular culture helps us to locate the political nuances within this video, and the revolutionary significance it offered to the mid-1980s—a precarious time for both Jones and Haring.[10] This section examines "I'm Not Perfect" as an emancipatory spectacle that addresses Jones's and Haring's marginalized status and their communication stratagems of resistance within the music industry and art world. It applies Charles Green's theory of artistic collaboration—the radical merging of political agendas coming from two dissimilar artists—to investigate how biographical and artistic synergies fuel creative choices. The section also applies theories pertaining to Black camp—a way of rereading Queerness and race critically through humorous, serious and exaggerated communication strategies—to illuminate the parody and urgency at work in Jones's and Haring's work. Art historian Miriam Kershaw's critique of Jones and Haring's video, Bennet Diephaus's theory on Black camp and José Esteban Muñoz's theory on Queer worldmaking create a framework which assists in contextualizing the duo's confrontations with white supremacy, homophobia and misogyny in pivotal moments of "I'm Not Perfect." In this way, it distinguishes "I'm Not Perfect" as a visionary work that imagines both Black and Queer futurity.

[10] Jones's and Haring's livelihoods were threatened by a number of oppressors inside and outside of the music, film and art industry. According to Jones's autobiography and Haring's journals, they both felt scared or threatened in jobs because of who they were, what they looked like and what they represented. New York City police interfered with Haring's art-making on a number of occasions (Jones and Morley 195, 204, 302; Haring 104, 493).

I

Recovering Jones and Her Early Queer-Diva Connections

Well before Grace Jones met Keith Haring, she had long and storied creative relationships with Queer collaborators. These histories have only begun to come to light online within the past five years, and have yet to surface in any serious way as a topic of discussion within mainstream media and academia.[11] This study begins to recover Queer-Diva histories by using the partnership of Jones and Haring as a way to highlight their often-overlooked yet enduring cultural influence.[12] Indeed, prior to her work with Haring, Jones's early career as a singer in the 1970s embraced a number of Queer artistic partnerships during her transition from model to recording artist. The relationships that contoured her body of work in this period were with illustrator Antonio Lopez, art director/photographer Richard Bernstein, and DJ/producer/remixer Tom Moulton, all of whom were openly Gay. Her creative collaborations with these Gay men would lead to the joint production of Jones's debut disc, *Portfolio,* in 1977 (Figure 3), a trademark work that garnered her music attention in New York City, Paris, Los Angeles and Milan in the late 1970s.[13]

At the time, her collaborations with Lopez, Bernstein, and Moulton were seen as defiant acts: two years before she began recording *Portfolio,* it was still illegal for two men to dance closely together in New York City and a visible "Gay hand" in any popular singer's work was to

[11] For example, music historian Barry Walters recently wrote about witnessing Jones live in the 1970s-1980s gay club circuit for Pitchfork.com. Reddit and Magazine.artland.com recently posted Jones's photos (many miscredited or uncredited).
[12] There are many examples of the long-lasting impact of Jones and Haring's work. Rihanna's video to her 2009 hit "Rude Boy" duplicates "I'm Not Perfect" sets, Madonna's current *Celebration* tour uses "Perfect" imagery and pop artist Justin Teodoro has been recreating Jones-Haring body-painting scenes on his June 2023 Instagram posts.
[13] This also includes iconography which Jones continued to use throughout her 10-album career.

be avoided at all costs.[14] Recent data shows that the heterosexism driving the music industry—and still prevalent today—is firmly rooted in the belief that any strong association with overt Queerness damages an artist's reputation and career trajectory.[15] Conversely, artists like David Bowie who presented as androgynous and bisexual collaborated with straight-identified men whose identities as such served as a shield of sorts insofar as the artists' personas might cause alarm within the industry.[16]

Illustrator/photographer/artist Lopez and Art Director/artist Bernstein were nearly not as celebrated or acknowledged as their straight counterparts,[17] due largely to the homophobic times they lived in.[18] Nonetheless, they were inspired by Jones's androgyny and sexually liberated point of view on stage (Padilha 133). Jones's disco performances of the 1970s stemmed from a

[14] Barry Walters's essay notes that Jones's own Midas touch of celebrity could only do so much for the Queer collaborators who were working with her in the disco era (6). He states that Queer visionaries risked unemployment if their sexual orientation became known outside of the confines of LGBTQ+ bars and clubs (4). As a result, these collaborations with Jones were largely closeted creations to the world-at-large.

[15] The conservative figureheads of major music labels were—and still are—cognizant of social acceptances as drivers for/against the purchasing of music. According to Luminate—the data engine which powers the *Billboard* charts—of the top 1,000 artists hitting top 50 globally in 2021, only 2% identify as LGBTQ+. This is despite the assumed notion that the 1970s were a sexually liberating era in music. Currently, artists such as Lil Nas X, Kim Petras and Sam Smith are *still* seen as anomalies.

[16] Archival research in mainstay music publications such as *The Rolling Stone* and *The New Music Express* indicate that links can be made with the trio's straight counterparts, art directors and artists who were on similar playing fields. From 1976 to 1979, the amount of press heterosexual commercial artists working in the music industry—names such as Richard Prince or Drew Struzan—who crafted Roxy Music and Bee Gees album/promo art were considered in-demand and household names, the go-tos for many record companies. Tony Visconti, who co-produced and engineered much of David Bowie's 1970s oeuvre, is another example of this bias.

[17] See the work/legacy of Richard Prince (Roxy Music), Storm Thorgenson (Pink Floyd) and Brian Duffy (David Bowie), non-Queer artists who went on to become internationally celebrated art directors for lucrative, chart-topping rock and pop acts. Prince, Thorgenson and Duffy were also treated as serious artists by the art establishment after working with Roxy Music, Pink Floyd and David Bowie. Institutions such as New York City's Whitney Museum (Prince), London's Victoria & Albert Museum (Thorgenson) and The National Portrait Gallery (Duffy) have launched major exhibitions of their respective bodies of work. In contrast, Lopez and Bernstein have never been embraced or exhibited by recognized art spaces. While smaller retrospectives have been displayed Haring's work after his death, The Broad Museum is claiming that this exhibition is the artist's first major survey.

[18] This was also due to the fact that disco was seen as "the product of homosexuals, blacks and Latins," and was thus perceived as a threat to heterosexual culture (D. Marsh).

refusal to conform to homogeneity and reflected her affiliation with Queer politics.[19] In her memoirs, Jones comments on how her interpretation of disco exuded the Queerness which Bernstein and Lopez gravitated toward:

> Disco got a terrible reputation, like it was anti-music, but its beginnings were in many ways more radicalized, inclusive, and openminded than rock. It was as much an assault on the corniness and narrow-mindedness of rock as punk. Where it ended up was the fault of the white, straight music business, which drained it of all its blackness and gayness, its rawness and volatility, its original contagious, transgressive abandon. (Jones and Morley 207)

The album covers and sleeve art for records such as 1977's *Portfolio* (Figures 3 and 6), 1978's *Fame* (Figures 4 and 7) and 1979's *Muse* (Figure 5) can be counted as stand-out co-creations made by Jones, Lopez and Bernstein. These works speak particularly to both the volatility and transgressive abandon Jones so admired and occupied on stage. The cover images of Jones are tripartite: they present her as androgynous diva, deity and demon—three archetypes Jones frequently revisits. The image of Jones on a red background, photographed by Lopez—with the help of Bernstein's art direction—for *Portfolio*'s inside sleeve (Figure 6) features her in a commanding pose in which she is sticking her tongue out in a sexual, defiant and deviant nature; the graphic red tones reflect Renaissance art—Lopez's main inspiration—to further

[19] As *Vogue* reported, Lopez recognized and celebrated Jones's individualism, claiming he brought forth the idea that there is "no single definition of beauty" via his depictions of Jones (Borrelli-Persson). Bernstein lived with Jones for many years and considered her to be family and his best friend (he was named godfather to her son). Jones would not allow him to revise his depictions, because she insisted he understood her intrinsically and succinctly from the start of each project (Padilha 142–6).

dramatize images of Satan. The Jones-Bernstein-Lopez *Portfolio* concept prefigures Virginie Magnat's exploration of spectacle-making via both artist (in this case Jones) and spectator (Lopez and Bernstein). Magnat identifies a process wherein the interpretation of the performer by the spectator becomes a mode of self-identification and alliance,[20] through a symbolic recognition and empathy (153). As Bernstein and Lopez were Jones fans, both can be identified as crossover spectators who saw her rebelliousness[21] in the context of a Gay disco as a countercultural acknowledgment, an emotional bridge within a site demonized by the outside world that all three artists sought to reclaim.

After *Portfolio*, Jones and Bernstein went on to concoct provocative imagery for albums such as *Fame* and *Muse*, projects which reshuffled and unsettled stereotypes drawn from old Hollywood, Greek and Roman art and 20th-century European cinema. The image of Jones on the inside sleeve of *Fame* presents her in a naval officer's uniform (see Figure 7), arguably a precursor to Judith Butler's consideration of the collapse of gender within a performance context (*Gender* 132).[22] Butler's notion of gender as an act that someone participates in via reiteration, and conversely as something that can be interrupted or dismantled, especially in the case of drag, echoes in word what Jones accomplished in the 1970s by virtue of her iconic personas and her jointly created videos, music and cover art. *Fame*'s Captain image, in which Jones is cast as a

[20] In *Creative Collaboration*, Vera John-Steiner discusses how the joining of passionate interests and political paths is intrinsic for the spectacle-maker and spectator to arrive at a new arena of collaboration. When both collaborators see themselves in each other's work, a "mutually beneficial" practice occurs which "provides a mirror to an individual, broadening his or her self-knowledge, which is crucial to creativity" (50).

[21] As the 2016 *Antonio Lopez: Future Funk Fashion* retrospective exhibit at El Museo del Barrio and Bernstein's 1967 *One Man Show* exhibit at the Venice 4 Gallery conveyed, both artists presented radical and overtly homosexual works early in their career. Jones's performances in the 1970s theatricalized similar radical/sexual themes.

[22] I apply Butler's theory surrounding gender collapse as it relates directly to Jones's visuals. Butler views gender collapse as an act that someone must partake in, interpret, enact, dismantle and then rebuild via a series of theatricalizations of masculine and feminine roles in public (Butler 132). Jones—with her collaborators—disrupts norms by juxtaposing institutional gender tropes in her album imagery.

patriarchal seaman with the words "I'll Be Seeing You" handwritten next to her—can be understood to foreshadow, in an affective sense, the work of a theorist like Butler, suggesting that Butler's analytic gender theories are a kind of mimesis of the works of Divas and Queers during the 70s, like those of Jones.

Jones's image is a direct address to her Gay disco listeners, saluting the ways in which Gay men tackled old world depictions of gender and power imbalance in their own romantic lives. As someone who spent much of her teens in gay bars and clubs,[23] Jones was acquainted with the rampant promiscuity happening in cities where Gay men congregated and socialized in the 1970s and how urban Gay mating and sexual behaviors echoed stereotypes surrounding sailor-culture and hegemonic masculinity. The naval dialect employed by disco-attending gay men and sailors brings forth yet another re-reading of this album art, one which blatantly tells us that it is presenting the viewer with a language that he/she/they must already know in order to read, or in this case see meanings driving the images.[24]

The Jones-as-Captain image, articulated via Jones and Bernstein's co-produced binary-bashing aesthetic,[25] disturbs the status quo of macho naval imagery coming out of the 1940s and 1950s and also mirrors the photorealist effects seen in the artwork of Finnish erotic artist, Tom of Finland.[26] Through a merge of what is considered traditional (a naval officer's uniform) and

[23] Jones's openly gay brother, Chris Jones, was bringing Jones to Gay clubs when she was 15 and eventually acted as her manager and stylist for most of the late 1970s. He later styled and was a backup vocalist for her in the 2000s (Jones and Morley 46–7, Herbert).

[24] Sailors and gay men of the time used an enmeshed, coded language called Polari. Polari was used as a language for Queer people to secretly communicate, as homosexuality was not legalized until the late 1960s. Polari has deep origins in sailors' slang and was used well into the 1970s (Luu).

[25] Bernstein's color-saturated process cartoon-ified photographs, so that the images look symbolic and project meaning beyond the profile of the subject. Much of his work was a doubling up of sexuality by using glossy, animated enhancements which parodied magazines on mass media newsstands.

[26] Bernstein championed the work of Tom of Finland (real name Touko Laaksonen) in *Interview* magazine and, as Bernstein's biography states, designed Jones's image to mirror the Finnish artist's main subjects: sexual aggressors (Padilha 138–42). Influences in the work of Lopez—who was highly influential in the creation of these sleeves—are often traced to Tom of Finland's depictions of virile and chiseled musclemen (Bruney).

radical (a Black, female disco artist signalling her fans), Jones is resituated in a hunky guise which reconstructs the known and accepted apexes of masculinity (see Figures 7, 8 and 9).[27] The actual cover of *Fame*, however, provides the reverse effect. Bernstein's art direction on the *Fame* sleeve flips to the other side of the gender coin. It promotes Jones in an uber-feminized look, festooned in high glamour, sporting a showgirl-like headdress, sequin accessories and a pronounced red lip with clown-like blush in order to imitate a homogeneous girlishness seen in popular women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*.[28] This femme-glam showgirl image is a critique of the accepted beauty standards of the mid-1970s—ones which predominantly celebrated clear, white-skinned, blonde, thin models. This white/thin/blonde allure was endorsed and consumed at high volumes in a number of the bestselling women's lifestyle magazines of the time.[29] Jones's album covers such as *Fame* and *Muse* provided a subtle critical response to the mass media beauties seen on newsstands and record shelves of the era and mocked the punishing force of white hetero-feminine ideals (see Figures 3-6).

The images of *Fame* render Jones as gender fluid, and can be understood as precursors to Butler's idea of testing and troubling male/female roles in a transgressive way (*Gender* 129).

[27] In *Gender Trouble*, Butler questions the construction of gender, what is considered a naturalized gender identity, and explores the gender-instituting prohibitions that come with a naturalized gender identity classification. Seeing gender collapse in this context provokes us to see a collapse of biological laws of nature and a collapse of the limitations which occur due to the prohibitions which come with these laws. In considering Butler's theory, to blur the lines of masculine and feminine—and go outside what she calls the heterosexual matrix—is to create new laws and elicit status and tap into a radical power which does not adhere to biological constructedness (*Gender* 47–9).
[28] In *Richard Bernstein Starmaker: Andy Warhol's Cover Artist*, Bernstein's work is consistently written about as an homage *and* a critique of popular newsstand magazine culture. His work as art director at *Interview* magazine—which was seen as countering the titles which reiterated gender tropes and traditional family values (glossies such as *Cosmopolitan*)—exemplifies this duality (Padilha 5–11).
[29] Eleven of *Vogue*'s twelve cover models in 1977 fit this description. The August issue—the smallest of the year—featured the ultra-feminine, light-skinned African American model Peggy Dillard on the cover (*Vogue*). *Harper's Bazaar* featured one brunette and all Caucasian women on their magazine covers from 1976–1980 (*Harper's*). Bernstein's art direction at *Interview* repeatedly disturbed and satirized newsstand norms (Padilha 97).

While Butler maintains that transgression cannot simply be facilitated by image or costume,[30] Jones's imagery in these albums serve as captures which point directly to her early stage gay disco performances of the 1970s.[31] As site-specific spectacles, these album images represent Jones and her intersections with her Queer audience in Queer-specific places, made with Queer collaborators who assist in encapsulating Jones's Queer-on-Queer stage action in graphic moments.

These visual accounts of gender disruption were also seen on the cover sleeve of 1979's *Muse*, where Bernstein and Jones presented the world with a third gender, one which blends and negates the extremes of masculinity and femininity at play on *Portfolio* and *Fame*. On *Muse*, Jones is reimagined as a bald-headed, pink-painted, gender-nondescript alien, an image that further crosses the line of the normative societal sexual roles of the 1970s. This looks back at and lifts the veil of the work Bernstein and Jones produced before *Muse*, offering the public a much more uncertain version of Jones's sexuality and gender.

The album covers and sleeve art found on *Portfolio*, *Fame* and *Muse* also serve as a prelude to Butler's idea of harnessing the power to destabilize the constraints of presumed gender construction through performance (*Bodies* 89). To refute publicly what has long since been recognized as irrefutable—specifically for Black women working in the pop music arena of the 1970s—Jones, with her Queer collaborators, ventures beyond the assumed two categories of gender on *Muse* and visually denies the societal confines proposed to her. While Jones's own gender instability is front and center on *Portfolio* and *Fame*, it is convoluted by the merging of

[30] Butler critic Sara Salih argues that Butler believes clothing has the ability to prescribe one's gender as a person from what Salih determines are a "limited number of costumes from which to make a constrained choice of gender style" (Salih 63).

both sexualities and genders on *Muse*. In this way, the Queer-fueled trifecta of album art can be viewed as a repeated radical, public-facing revolt against the prevailing norms of the 1970s. Jones's album covers (Figures 5 and 7) capture the gender volatility showcased in her on-stage performances in Gay discos (Figures 9 and 10). The album images also provide a window through which the rest of the world can peek voyeuristically at these performances. This public peeking of Queerness occurred simply because of the nature and accessibility of albums in the 1970s. Jones ushered the Queerness she created from gay discos into record stores, where non-Queer music fans would have to confront the diametrically opposed extremes of her gender presentation (as created by Jones, Bernstein and Lopez). *Portfolio*, *Fame* and *Muse* can be viewed as radical violations of 1970s female iconography when compared to the album sleeves which shared music store shelves with Jones. While her contemporaries provided the public with a socially acceptable version of femininity that did not disturb the status quo, Jones offered a radical reworking of what female was or could be.[32]

The nightlife origins of Jones's album art also allow us to decipher how her albums denote Jones's aural and visual intersections with Queer artistry. Butler's view of recurring presentations of gender norm non-compliance—which she identifies as acts that overturn presumed paradigms of gender construction (*Bodies* 3-4)—permit us to interpret Jones's co-created album art as public markers of Jones's ongoing gender mutiny. In the face and content of these well-circulated records, Jones's critique of masculine/feminine limitation leap from the gay disco into the record store, from the underground into suburbia, from the clandestine into the

[32] See the sleeves of popular full-length records such as Gloria Gaynor's 1975 debut, *Never Can Say Goodbye*, Diana Ross's self-titled disc of 1976 and her 1977 follow-up, *Baby It's Me*; Thelma Houston's 1976 album, *Any Way You Like It*, Donna Summer's 1977 hit disc, *I Remember Yesterday*, and Blondie's 1978 release, *Parallel Lines*.

masses. This mass transmission of Jones's complex view of gender and sexuality directly foreshadows Butler's ideas on how persuasive citations of sex have the power to contradict what she names "the heterosexual matrix" (*Bodies* 19). Through a wider distribution of Jones's gender variability via her album art, her refutations of the heterosexual matrix are displayed en masse. Many of Butler's critics, such as sociologist Tom Boland, outline how Butler's view of gender disassembly ceases to fully acknowledge the role of self-critique. In his essay "Critique as a Technique of Self: A Butlerian Analysis of Judith Butler's Prefaces," Boland looks at how gender nonconformist acts should be viewed as moments which veer beyond patriarchal commentary. He suggests Butler's early theories take the focus off of individuals performing gender and ignore all the interpersonal estimations which occur when a critique is presented (105). Boland's view of critique as an avenue of self-evaluation connects to Jones's own judicious review of her agency in life and art (117).[33] Boland states that critique is itself a form of performance and should not solely be referred to as a refusal of an identity (106-107). He regards the enacting of self-transformation as something which may cause a "slim ontological separation between the critical subject and its subjection" (116). By presenting contrasting archetypes—captain and showgirl (*Fame*), angel and demon (*Portfolio*)—and morphing them for the cover of *Muse* (alien), Jones reiterates a refusal of identity as singular and thus potentially identity as such through repetition and exposes how she performs self-critique through a series of co-created icons (album visuals) which symbolize the complexity of her multi-persona imagery. By doing this, she divulges the margins and restrictive parlance of accepted visual expression in

[33] Boland is one of many of Butler's critics who disagree with how Butler views the renunciation of gender roles. His work, however, focuses on how self-critique exposes an individual's limitations. For example, Boland suggests that "even subjects who are most actively engaged in criticizing or parodying certain social injustices, hegemonies and powers find their resources exactly in their unavowable past identifications with those things that they thereafter oppose, criticize and expose as contingent" (109-110). As Jones's work with Bernstein and Lopez is constantly claiming and denouncing histories of male and female archetypes, viewers and listeners are constantly challenged to see past such "unavowable past identifications" (109).

popular music (see Figure 5). To uncover and then recover these margins, Jones's choice of collaborators becomes imperative as they support her desire to put forth an easy-to-read language of imagery which translates hierarchical signals and codes to fit her own needs. One of the main things that Lopez and Bernstein share is the idea of restyling and redressing history in their own artwork.[34]

In the essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Butler expands on the effects of reiterating gender non-conformity. She claims that "style" and "stylization" are a means to convey how the fashioning of the self enacts transgression by diverting from accepted dominant blueprints: "If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" ("Performative" 520).

As a former model and a muse for Queer fashion designers such as Azzedine Alaïa, Yves Saint Laurent and Giorgio Armani, Jones's skill at stylizing messages through clothing began developing on the runway and in photo shoots prior to her singing career. Fashion scholars such as Robin Givhan theorize clothing choices as explicable political stances and declarations of the day-to-day performance of self (Givhan 12:50-13:40)—meaning that what performers wear is performative, that garments are not garnish, they are statements. In Jones's case, these expressions of self are used to showcase the spectrum of gender she is constantly negotiating

[34] Lopez's work is known for contemporizing and Queer-ifying images of various dynasties from Arabia and China (examples of this are accumulated in Antonio Lopez's 1985 book, *Antonio's Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*). Bernstein's work reconceptualized newsstand glamour by not using conventionally pretty photos of his subjects. He was known for transforming talents into gods, goddesses and superheroes on page (Padilha 109–15).

with herself and the public. Her ability to use a recognized visual vernacular to showcase the restrictions and probabilities of her occupation, her race, her sexuality offers a myriad of intended and/or unintended readings to heterosexual and Queer audiences.

In looking at the work of Ricardo Montez—a Queer studies scholar who has investigated Jones's pop music career—we can see how her 1970s images with Bernstein exude what Montez identifies as a performance that requires multiple readings and complicates the lines of gender (136). Montez writes that Jones "is continually having to perform within and against intense scenes of social formation and desire," and notes that "the draw of Grace Jones… also evidences something deeply unresolved in excess of binary gendered logic" (130). In other words, it is within the uncertain sites Jones creates where the possibility of an unexplored or as-of-yet undefinable gender identity emerges. To attempt to define Jones's sexuality in a finite way and to calculate her femininity or masculinity challenges her spectator to venture beyond the heterosexual matrix. If Montez suggests that Jones's allure and talent present themselves as an unanswered question about gender and sexuality, Jones's inquiry—in all of its dramatic trimmings—demands a judgment, a response or, at the very least, invites introspection from her audiences.

Throughout Jones's early career, she and her Queer cohorts continued to play with gender roles, utilizing strategies of camp (518-521)[35] to continually propose a vision which presented sexuality with a kaleidoscopic range. In her lyrics and in live performances from 1977–1979—which mainly took place in Gay disco venues and were largely reported on by the Gay media—

[35] As defined by Susan Sontag in her 1964 essay *Notes on Camp* as "the love of the exaggerated, the 'off,' of things-being-what-they-are-not" as well as "a mode of seduction—one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation (518-521)."

Jones parodied societal norms and straight-acting behavioral codes on stage.[36] In her earliest shows in the 1970s, Jones would often carve her own Queer agency, often out-Queering the mainly all-Gay crowds. These significant sites of performance would later be recorded by actor Ian McShane on Jones's *Slave to the Rhythm* album of 1985. On the album, within a track titled "The Frog and the Princess," McShane retells an eyewitness, first-hand account of Jones and her gay following in the 1970s: "That night, she was singing her hit song 'I Need a Man' to a room full of shrieking gay bobbysockses. The ambiguity of her act was that she herself looked like a man—a man, singing 'I Need a Man' to a bunch of men. I could see how the average guy could get a little scared by her physical advance. It was so powerful" (*Slave*, track 3, 0:30-0:36).

Music journalist and Black Queer historian Barry Walters notes Jones's gender non-conforming spectacles in gay discos as moments that unified Jones with her core Queer audience and allowed her to use her own performance as a bridge to their lived experiences. In many senses, her actions, reactions and interactions on the dance floor proved she was more than just an ally. Often simulating sex with her audience and employing hedonistic costumes which channeled Greco-Roman gods,[37] Jones's improvisations between songs and within the pockets and pauses of her set list would contain orgasmic yelps, carnal snarls and a group of gyrating, overtly suggestive dance moves and erotic gestures pulling focus to her (imaginary) phallus and gyrating vagina and anus.[38] As Walters notes, this was a showcase to declare that she was unapologetically among her own kind.

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[36] Seen throughout the coverage of her career in leading Queer magazines of the 1970s, 80s, 90s and 2000s, in profiles by Queer music critics such as *The Advocate*'s Charles Herschberg, Richard Laermer and Barry Walters, who all featured Jones prominently and wrote on iterations of some of these performance codes throughout a three-decade span.

[37] As evidenced in a number of photos taken by Frances Ig in 1977 for *After Dark* magazine, in which Jones is wearing imperial capes and bedecked in wire bracelets resembling ancient Greek *manicas*, or arm guards.

[38] In her memoir, Jones mentions how dancing at gay discos like Better Days informed how her body reacted to "sharply syncopated, rampantly suggestive" music and inspired her to create a choreography of "raunchier moves" by interpreting the music she heard on such dance floors. (Jones and Morley 124)

> Grace Jones sang "I Need a Man" just like a man—tough and lusty, she was a woman who was not just singing *to* them, but also *for* them, *as* them. She was as queer as a relatively straight person could get. Her image celebrated blackness and subverted gender norms; she presented something we had never seen before in pop performance—a woman who was lithe, sexy, and hyperfeminine while also exuding a ribald, butch swagger. In '79, *Ebony* got her *je ne sais quoi* exactly right: "Grace Jones is a question mark followed by an exclamation point." (3)

It was in these early 1970s gay disco performances where Jones interpreted, explored and gave life to (what is now considered to be) extreme butch/femme visuals[39] seen on her albums *Portfolio*, *Fame* and *Muse*, images she created with Lopez and Bernstein, and which she would later revisit in the 1980s (see Figure 13). Jones's early Gay-inspired shows could often run the gamut from subtle to literal Queer referencing. An early profile of Jones in the September 1977 issue of *Mandate* magazine (see Figure 11), one of the most popular Gay erotic publications of the time, chronicles the latter. In the issue, writer Regina Rose[40] reports on the way Jones styled herself in performance as a direct reaction to the aesthetics of her global Gay crowd. "She slowly descended a long staircase… with hundreds of phosphorescent tubes circling her tight outfit, silk-screened in an amyl nitrate motif, some of the poppers[41] depicted as broken" (21). Performances like the one *Mandate* covered showcase how Bernstein—who designed the dress

[39] Terms derived from popular lesbian vernacular of the 1970s and used to identify those who employed masculine (butch) or feminine (femme) codes and styles. These terms were later adopted by the 1980s Ballroom scene and Gay community (Rubin 241–3).
[40] This was likely a pseudonym. Many male magazine writers who wrote for Gay adult magazines took on a female drag-like pen name. The feature was likely written in Spring of 1977.
[41] Poppers are a term used for alkyl nitrites, a drug which gained popular usage by Gay men in the 1970s as a means to enhance sexual pleasure.

with Jones—caricatured and revised dominant patriarchal culture for their own purposes[42] (Herschberg 49). To non-Queer crowds**,** the whole Jones-Bernstein-Lopez vision was easily dismissed or misread as an extension of her disco: tawdry, epically long reinterpretations of standards such as "Send in the Clowns" and "La Vie en Rose." As Sontag indicates in her analysis of camp, the straight gaze would misunderstand and/or reject such lush, baroque, excessive bursts of style (*Notes* 196, 200). A Queer camp read of Jones's promotion of Gay drugs and gender fluidity on stage, would—as Moe Moyer suggests in his study of camp as a political communicative tool—see the performance as a shrewd critique of heterosexism and normative gender-roles.[43] Using both Sontag's and Meyer's lenses allows a reviewing and re-hearing of Jones's disco through camp, recognizing the genre as a visual and aural medium that consists of LGBTQ+-fueled markers and anthems that include themes of hedonism, self-liberation and sexual agency in the midst of oppression.[44] The *Mandate* magazine feature on Jones was one of the only ones in that era that publicly acknowledged both Bernstein's and Lopez's involvement in Jones's visual personas. It also discussed the Gay disco parties of Fire Island and New York City's 12 West and Les Mouches (see Figure 12), events that influenced

[42] Lopez was a Puerto Rican immigrant who divided his time between Paris, Milan and New York City. Bernstein was born to a Jewish family and worked in London, Paris, Venice and Amsterdam. Moulton, whose background was Anglo-Saxon, travelled the world extensively. Jones's disco was heavily influenced by the Euro-centric ways in which these men lived. Jones's prior modelling career in Europe also shaped the ways in which her collaborators knew her. Jones has defined herself in her memoir as "Black, but European. European, but Jamaican… I moved around, constantly relocating myself physically and mentally" (Jones and Morley 81).

[43] In Meyer's essay "Reclaiming The Discourse of Camp," he (re)defines camp as something that is uniquely made by those who are Queer or associated/entrenched with/in Queer culture to counter what is going on in the world around them. Meyer labels this mode of camp communication "as a critique of ideology through a parody."

[44] Heard on disco tracks such as "Saved" ("I don't pray for a normal world" and "I found a battle every place I've seen"); "I Need A Man" ("Say that you will find him/Creepin' up behind him") and "That's The Trouble" ("Every man I see, that's the trouble"); "All On A Summer's Night ("Maybe I should feel a twinge of shame/We're almost lovers I don't know your name" and "Don't Mess with The Messer ("Johnny, now you're all trapped in my honeycomb/You should have known better/Should have known better, leaving queen bee alone/Don't mess with the messer."

Jones, Bernstein, and Lopez to develop, create and experiment with a camp-fueled aesthetic within the context of the works they produced collaboratively.[45]

Arguably the most vital Queer collaborator who aided in manufacturing Jones's oeuvre in the 1970s is DJ Tom Moulton, who produced Jones's first three albums: *Portfolio, Fame* and *Muse*. Although Moulton's work is only being recognized more than three decades after being made, the music he and Jones's produced turned out to be the most influential of Jones's early career.[46] A former Marlborough Man cigarette model, and the only openly Gay music critic working at *Billboard* magazine in the early 1970s, Moulton teamed up with Jones and Gloria Gaynor in the mid-1970s to bring the concept of the 12-inch extended mix[47] record to the masses.[48] Discussions about Moulton as a major innovator and pioneer in the music industry have only just begun; most recently, he has been credited as the creator of the remix record format.[49]

According to research from Gender studies scholar and music historian Alice Echols, Jones's earlier disco recordings can be traced to protest and activism. Moulton's remaking of dance-pop songs went beyond just entertainment—they were meant to challenge a system of laws that were stacked up against them. "Gay men not only created the market for music," she writes, but "they consumed it, eager for the chance to let go, [and] be lost in music [because they

[45] For a 1977 performance at the Ice Palace, Bernstein created masks of Grace's face for many of the shirtless Gay fans to wear during and after her performance. This practice continued throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.
[46]For example, Moulton's name and legacy is still left out of major pedagogical musicology publications such as *The Oxford History of Western Music* and Stefan Koska's *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music*. These two tomes are widely respected and used for musicology curriculum in institutions ranging from Berklee to Yale, Oxford, York and NYU. Music publications such as *Rolling Stone, Q* and *Spin* magazines began to write about Moulton's innovations in a comprehensive way in 2018. As of 2021, *The Guardian* newspaper is the only publication found to credit Moulton as the creator of the 12-inch remix.
[47] Considered a "long-play record" outside of North America in 1973.
[48] For years, Moulton remained largely uncredited for creating Gaynor's 19-minute disco suite for her debut album, 1975's *Never Can Say Goodbye.* The early pressings of the record do not mention his name.
[49] A small handful of Queer magazines such as *Next, Fab, Icon, The Advocate, The Windy City Times* and *Out* printed small acknowledgements of Moulton's invention. Nothing was fully explored, however, until *The Guardian* newspaper's major feature in 2015, which comments on Moulton's invention of the remix.

were] accustomed to being surveilled and harassed on the dance floor and arrested during bar raids, this was a revolution. Denied the opportunity of uninterrupted dancing with other men, Gay men took to disco like a drug" (*Hot Stuff* 57).

As Echols writes in *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks*, before Stonewall took place "upwardly mobile lesbians and Gay men relied upon each other to get into the 'right' bars and clubs and to ward off suspicions of sexual deviance, especially when the police were an issue" (139). Echols outlines a number of instances where the police monitored dance floors in the 1960s and 70s, making arrests between songs. These violations motivated Moulton to create longer disco odysseys. In an effort to thwart the police from stopping his jam from pumping *and* motivating "action" (i.e., any hint of sexual activity on the dance floor), Moulton elongated pieces of music by Jones, which would have slowed down the number of arrests made. Undercover and plainclothes NYPD officers surveilled Gay clubs well into the late 1970s. Moulton also accentuated lyrics and notes from certain songs that he Queer-coded or that he Queer-ified in all three of Jones's albums.[50] Moulton re-pieced the narratives of disco's most hetero-centric romantic tracks, songs such as Grace Jones's "La Vie en Rose" and lengthened notes, choruses and instrumentation to repeat and reframe the music into sweeping, campy lyrical moments. He cut, pasted and elongated "straight" lyrics for non-hetero crowds, creating the first batch of remixes in popular music.[51] The research of ethnomusicologist Tim Lawrence chronicles how Moulton—and Queer DJs like him—were firmly aware that the Queer people

[50] Examples range from Diana Ross's "I'm Coming Out"—which was a North American expression for the declaration of a Queer person's sexual preference and/or identity and/or affiliation to LGBTQ+ communities—to Gloria Gaynor's "Honey Bee," in which Moulton emphasized and repeated lyrics such as "come on and sting me" in his 12-inch remix of the song to re-read and present the verse of the song as a plea for anal sex.
[51]The album version of Jones's "La Vie en Rose" was extended to 7 minutes and 27 seconds by Moulton.

dancing in discotheques assumed that the dance floor they were sweating on could be their last (51).

In her memoir, Jones states that she was well aware of how her music and image were part of a cycle of cultural revisioning that extended dreams of liberation: "Richard [Bernstein] remixed images of the famous to make the stars more obviously famous looking, from a wonderful fantasy that must never end, and Tom was remixing dance music to make it more obviously about the fantasy of dance, to ensure the rhythm never had to stop" (Jones and Morley 143).

Jones's early work with Bernstein and Moulton is obviously significant to popular culture, Queer politics and music history, yet it also exemplifies moments where all three artists are seeking agency. As digital art theorist Eduardo Navas suggests, remixing "speaks to the paradigm of metacreativity through selectivity and cultural background" (191). Navas equates remixing with the "legitimation" of disenfranchised persons because the practice invites a mutual ideological acknowledgment between the DJ remixer and the dance floor audience. Although Moulton is a white Gay man, his history among the sexually repressed and as a social outcast—which spurred his quest for sexual liberation—connected with Jones's firsthand experiences with otherness and racism. Both Moulton and Jones were former models who witnessed the rise of globalism in the marketing and fashion industry of the 1970s. By virtue of being on set for campaigns designed for the masses, both were also reminded of what was deemed acceptable for the moral majority in the 1970s.[52] Music, then, became an expression against traditional value

[52] Moulton was a regular attendee at the Haven, the Sanctuary and the Loft, underground Queer clubs where police raids occurred regularly through the end of the 1970s and well into the 80s. These clubs in particular were so plagued with arrests that they installed a color-coded lighting system which would alert the DJ and the attendees if

systems, and Moulton and Jones's resistance to their former occupations[53] was interlaced in the cross-cultural music they made together.[54]

By looking at the act of remixing via Navas's scholarship, we can also see that their partnership in art, politics and outside of majority values occurs throughout a half-decade of work co-produced by Moulton and Jones. In the three albums the pair created together, Moulton and Jones can be seen as an example of Navas's great hopes for remix as resistance, in that it can work against what is conventionally considered appropriation to achieve mutual understanding and empathy between the artist, the audience and remixer (Navas 193). Considering Moulton's remixes of Jones with Navas's theory in mind, we can see that their combined efforts are more than just musical techniques. Instead, Jones and Moulton's music can be read as socio-political statements that include Queer, Black and Feminist perspectives which counter the moral majority of the 1970s. Navas's concept of the remix[55] as "a way to revise history and society through technology and curation led by political, social and aesthetic biases" (196) allows for an assessment of how Jones and her Queer collaborators such as Moulton are able to build on the "original" recording and amplify a two-pronged, multi-voiced set of ideologies within the sound and images they create together.

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the authorities were entering the party (*Maestro* 30:40-40:47). This affected the length of the sets and the behaviors associated with the length of the songs.

[53] Both quit modelling in the early 1970s, claiming the commercial fashion world was rife with sexism and homophobia.

[54] As a former model for Marlborough cigarette ads, Moulton was asked to "look the part" of the traditional American male—a rugged, dependable, heterosexual male ideal which represented what was deemed desirable masculinity in the 1970s. Jones, also a former fashion model, faced challenges on runways and in photoshoots where staff tried to soften her skin color and facial structure to help sell clothing and cosmetics in the early to mid 1970s. It was during this time that Jones became increasingly aware of the rise of globalization and how her body was a symbol of the shifts in marketing campaigns of the time.

[55] Oxford dictionary's definition of the remix is "a new version of a recorded piece of music made by using a machine to arrange the separate parts of the recording in a different way, add new parts, etc."

This is evident in a number of the epic songs that Moulton and Jones worked on together in the 1970s, which Moulton produced, remixed and expanded to the 12-inch record format for Queer nightclub sets.[56] The lyrics and imagery of Jones's songs resonated with a community that was in the midst of remixing itself: In the 1970s, many people who sought out same-sex relationships were also discovering the formation and development of Gay and Lesbian communities. As these political groups[57] began to organize in the name of self-acceptance, societal resistance, and sexual revolution, Moulton made music that reflected their situation. The crowd Moulton was spinning for was the audience he had in mind for Jones's debut disc, *Portfolio,* which reflected a Gay and camp sensibility;[58] it revisited and elongated Broadway showtunes such as "What I Did For Love" and "Send In The Clowns" for the dance floor. Unsurprisingly, the demographic Moulton and Jones catered to the most—Gay men—ended up becoming the first group to embrace Jones. This was not sheer luck: allusions to anal and oral sex, modulated vocal manifestations of camp theatricality and reiterations of public rejection can be heard in Jones's Moulton-produced disco singles.[59] However, as Moulton noted in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2015, this co-creation was far from a one-way street.

Jones's Queerness not only informed Moulton's music, but her ambitious and dominant persona, which countered the majority of female acts played on the radio and dance floor at the time, also instigated a new vision of disco for Moulton, one which reflected a community that

[56] Typically, the process in the past was that major singles like "La Vie En Rose"—which clocks in at 7 minutes and 28 seconds—would be edited down to less than 3 minutes for release. Both Jones and Moulton ignored industry standard practices and rarely edited their "club" versions, so that the release would get a sense of the Gay club world they were playing to and from.
[57] Ranging from the Gay Activists Alliance to the Gay Liberation Front. Groups such as Radicalesbians and the Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (STAR) soon followed.
[58] The lingo and dialect of camp secretly laughed at the heteronormative mainstream by magnifying the parody, pastiche, theatricality, extravagance, excess and exaggeration of the times.
[59] For example, on tracks such as "On Your Knees," "I Need A Man," and "Pride."

was invested in becoming visible and finding its own power and resilience—much like Jones was.

The Nottingham Museum 2021 art exhibition entitled *Grace Before Jones: Camera, Disco, Studio* helped reframe this resilience. Images from the 1970s included in the exhibit explore the tensions Jones created on and off stage during the disco era, a time when mainstream media and the general public perceived her as a radical and sometimes polarizing and incomprehensible body and voice.[60] In her memoir, Jones speaks to how her own radical Queer presence was misread and how she and her work were often given a Queerphobic reception: "The first critique of my voice on 'I Need a Man,' said that it was like a combination of Ethel Merman and David Bowie. Maybe more because of my androgynous look than because of how it really sounded. Being a man and a woman all tangled up. I sang so low people thought I was a transvestite—there were definite suspicions that I was not a girl" (Jones and Morley 153).

Moulton recounts Jones's penchant for evening the odds—for both her and the Queer community—in his 2015 interview with *The Guardian*.

> "Grace was incredibly aggressive and determined**,**" Moulton said of his three-album partnership with Jones. "'[She epitomized] the whatever it takes, I'm going to make it [attitude],' and boy, she meant it…I was looking for songs that she could relate to, that captured her aggressiveness, you know: 'I'm the boss.'…That was the impression I always got of Grace: 'I don't give a damn what happens, I'm going to do it my way and if you don't like it, screw it, someone else will.'"

[60] The exhibition featured images by Lopez and Bernstein as well as Jones's collaborations with Azzedine Alaïa.

In contrast to the top hits of the year by Debby Boone ("You Light Up My Life"), Barbra Streisand ("Evergreen") and Thelma Houston ("Don't Leave Me This Way"), Jones's output broadcast Queerness by virtue of challenging sexual norms which countered songs which focused on gendered, heterosexual relationships. In the dictatorial performance of songs such as "I Need A Man," Jones seeks to eradicate the gender stereotypes heard in the aforementioned hits of the period. Instead, in "I Need A Man" and "That's The Trouble" (both off her *Portfolio* debut), Jones performs a deep, low-contralto counterargument to the idea that men seek maximum sexual gratification with minimal emotional commitment while women seek maximum emotional connection with sexual interactions.[61]

II

Jones and Queer-Diva Collaboration post-Disco:

Disrupting Identity on the Dance Floor

Jones continued to entrench herself in the Queer nightlife scene for more than half a decade after working with Tom Moulton, Richard Bernstein and Antonio Lopez. However, a shift in venues began to reshape her outlook on making art and music. After meeting Keith Haring for her *Interview* magazine cover story in the summer of 1984, Jones became reacquainted with the visual artist on the dance floor of a New York Gay nightclub called the Paradise Garage. The pair went on to frequent the space together from 1984 to 1987. Also known

[61] Particularly in the delivery of "I need a man, perhaps a man like you?"—in which she was known to point to anyone in the audience during performances, female or male, thus Queering the song's meaning even more. The audible wink-wink, nudge-nudge phrasing of "I'm gettin' tired of cooking / Wastin' all my cookin'" also stands as a sonic critique of the expectation of women in the household in the 1970s.

as the "Gay-raj," the Paradise Garage's Queer clientele was predominantly Black, Latino and Italian, with a lesser segment of Anglo-Saxon Gay men, all coming from the city's five boroughs to "rage," a practice that involved taking recreational drugs, having sex in bathroom stalls and socializing in long, laborious dancing shifts (*Maestro* 00:10:07). The latter practice was referred to as "werking" the beats for exceedingly long hours (*Maestro* 00:35:40).[62]

The build-up of Jones's relationship with Haring progressed on the Garage dance floor as well as behind the curtains of the club's stage. On special occasions, Jones performed at the venue, styled and body-painted by Haring. Their Garage time together led to a number of artistic co-productions in and outside of the club. Many of these productions—occurring within a four-year time period—can be traced to the futuristic-tribalistic-alien-like motifs Haring fashioned on Jones's skin and body for the feature photographs belonging to her 1984 *Interview* cover story (see Figures 14 and 15). These images became the duo's signature joint statement for years and represent a crucial turning point in both artists' lives.

As documented by Queer cultural critic Vince Aletti for publications such as *The Village Voice* and *New York* magazine,[63] Haring and Jones "worked it" overtime at the Garage (Cruz-Malavé 160–1). They regarded the space in the same way that one of the venue's DJs, Frankie Knuckles, did: "church for people who have fallen from grace" (Smith 93, Jones and Morley 276, Haring 273). In some ways, Jones and Haring shared parallel lives: Jones's family was deeply religious—her father was a bishop—and she fled her hometown in Spanish Town, Jamaica, to go to New York City. She feared she would not live to see her next birthday because she was not conventionally feminine and did not adhere to proper heterosexual codes of conduct

[62] As relayed in *Maestro*, the 2003 documentary on the Paradise Garage.

[63] As well as underground publications such as *The Daily Note*.

(Jones and Morley 15). Haring, who grew up in a devoted and strict church-going Christian family in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, left home for fear he would be murdered for expressing his sexuality (*Universe*).

Jones praised the Garage's spirit-raising, all-Queer DJ lineup as a recalibrating experience for her own spirituality, as did Haring (Jones and Morley 277, Haring 273). In particular, Jones extolled the Garage's Queer DJs such as Larry Levan for their vaunted sets that, for the first time, blended hip hop, soul and disco into what would become Underground Dance Music (UDM). This was the formation of house music—before it was co-opted by white heterosexual male producers in the music industry.[64] This burgeoning genre of UDM, which Queer ethnomusicologist Kai Fikentscher probes in his book *"You Better Work!": Underground Dance Music in New York City*, was a lure for Jones and Haring's weekend bonding sessions at the Garage.[65]

Fikentscher notes that the house music of the mid-1980s was the sexual and sensual soundtrack to Gay liberation (x-xi) and it was a musical genre that overturned the leave-your-politics-at-the-door mandate created by famous 1970s night clubs such as Studio 54 (Shapiro 155). Fikenstscher's study of UDM emphasizes how house music's early compositions build community by blending gospel, activism and sexual liberation into various multicultural soundscapes (104).

[64] As Transgender music historian Zel McCarthy has identified, UDM has since been retitled and remarketed as EDM—Electronic Dance Music for a straight, white "bro" audience who are trying to erase the Queerness and Blackness of the genre while appropriating it.

[65] While so much attention has focused on the amount of drug usage at the Paradise Garage, both Haring's and Jones's works from 1984–1990 were highly influenced by the music spun, the fashions worn by the crowd and the changing Queer audience who were the main patrons of the venue.

Both Jones and Haring shared a spiritual connection to house and the Paradise Garage. As Jones's memoirs reveal, the pair would arrive on Saturday nights and stay until it closed mid-afternoon on Sunday. The daughter of an Apostolic clergyman, Jones recalled the club being pulpit-like in that it was "the place you'd be hit by the holy spirit" if you were "ready to sweat your ass off to get closer to God" (Jones and Morley 275). Jones, like Haring, went to the Garage on a creative fact-finding mission and ultimately made the decision to treat the Garage's sound as a template for her 1986 album, *Inside Story*. Jones writes about this moment in her memoirs, stating: "I would call Keith and turn up with him. He gathered a lot of information at the Garage, about himself and others which I identified with" (279).

Footage of Keith Haring's "Party of Life" birthday event at the Paradise Garage, which appears to date back to May 16, 1984,[66] was donated to the New York Public Library in August of 2022 (Harmel).[67] The footage embodies a raw sampling of Queer-Diva collaboration in action: it shows the profound aesthetic synergies at work between Jones and Haring in performance, in Jones's costume and props, and within the Garage's surrounding stage area. These visuals—which were later reused in Jones's *Interview* magazine cover shoot (see Figures 14 and 15)—are a blend of hieroglyphic, tribal, geometric, folkloric and banned underground pornographic comix. The complex insignias that Haring makes for Jones, which she dons and engages with, are a series of gender-specific and gender-ambiguous caricatures; they are painted on Jones and decorate the walls and stage of the Garage. The presentation of the Garage echoing Jones's skin

[66] As the first viewer of this archival video, I found the work to be undated, uncredited and containing major flaws in its digitization, which prevent me from seeing and hearing key audio and visual components. After petitioning for months to have the video recovered properly and in its entirety, I was able to review it.

[67] Previous to my viewing the video, the Library had no correct date or correct venue name for the event. With the help of archivist Danielle Cordovex, I was able to locate proper credit information by matching photographs of the event with a credible online art auction site named artsy.com—which auctioned a ticket in 2021.

and clothing (and vice versa) offers the predominantly Queer male audience a space rife with political tension about race and sexuality. The overlapping of Jones's and Haring's ideas by way of explicitly phallic drawings and otherworldly, gender-elusive figures introduces a new code of communication that centers Jones as an icon who convolutes and refutes identification. Two of the pillars that support Black Queer cultural historian Uri McMillan's study of Jones's work, "'You Can't Trace My Footsteps As I Walk The Other Way': Grace Jones, Black Camp, and the Aesthetics of Slipperiness," assist in analyzing this Jones-Haring clubland collision. "She has astutely (and presciently) transmogrified her body into pliable matter, a dense representational space," McMillan notes, hinting at why Haring's partnership with her in and outside of the Garage was so politically charged. "[She is] a volatile locus for complex conflicting desires, be they sexual, racial, or colonial." (Footsteps 1)

McMillan's estimation of Jones's work, which uses words such as "volatile" and "colonial," can be read as a guide to help us assess Haring's perceptions of Jones as someone he was both connected with and disconnected from. As Haring's letter to Timothy Leary dated July 15-16, 1986, conveys, Jones was seen as part of his own spiritual re-awakening at the Garage, someone who embodies what he calls a transformation and re-programming of life from his childhood in Pennsylvania (Haring 272–4), someone he associated with liberation via her mindset and alliance with the LGBTQ+ community. According to Ricardo Montez, however, Haring's privileged status and his shaky, complicated and, at times, fetishistic relationship with racialized lovers, collaborators and friends skewed the way in which he created art (20). These two extremes are tensions that pervade Haring and Jones's creations. In Haring's diaries, the graffiti artist depicts the Garage as a gathering place for disenfranchised Queer people who ached for equality even as they were suspicious of mainstream acceptance. As Haring writes, "[the

Garage] affected my life incredibly through various 're-imprinting' experiences" and its "tribe of people who have shared many a collective spiritual experience there" (Haring 270-273).

By the time Jones began working steadily with Haring, she had already attracted a devoted, global fanbase of Queer admirers.[68] The time period before their co-creations is what most academics focus on when speaking of Jones's output. The work of Daphne A. Brooks, a musicologist and gender studies scholar who has taken the lead in critically analyzing the nuanced presentation of Otherness that Jones has projected during the early 1980s, provides an astute example of this. Brooks coined the term "Afro-alienation"—a mode of performance that accentuates what can be perceived as "strange" by a broader, white, mass audience. Brooks does so on the basis of a discussion of Jones's *One Man Show*, her long-form video project released in 1982, which was directed by Jones's lover, artist Jean-Paul Goude. Although Brooks intended this term to be directed at Jones's early 1980s oeuvre, it helps distinguish Jones's early work with Goude from her collaborations with Haring. Enlisting Brooks's theory of Afro-alienation within an evaluation of Jones's co-productions at Paradise Garage *with* Haring offers another perspective on Haring's complex relationship with people of color. For example, if we look at the ways in which Haring body-painted Jones for the inside photos of *Interview* magazine and revisit the Paradise Garage performances, we can see that the visual emphasis that joins the Other with the Otherworldly is front and center. The Other is earthbound, a known, foreign entity, while the Otherworldly works as an unknown: supernatural, superpowered and, superhuman. In Haring's eyes, his art went "beyond gender and race" and so his work with Jones was both an attempt at emancipation from racist powers and at the negation of the reality of racism and colonial history.

[68] For almost a decade Jones was headlining primarily Gay establishments in North America and Europe. Queer club tours were—and remain—one of Jones's greatest sources of revenue.

The research of music historian Francesca T. Royster sees Jones as someone who is constantly converging and clashing with ideas of race and racism in her work. Royster considers Brooks's ideas about Jones's Afro-alienation to be an example of "one's looked-at-ness as a black subject by making 'strange' gender and racial categories through disruption, discomfort, and alienation" (Royster 150). With this in mind, we can surmise that Jones's trend-breaking, butch-femme aesthetics and hedonistic spectacles—built into her live performances and videos such as *One Man Show*—kept a tension-filled place in and outside of the Queer club spaces in which she reigned (Royster 154). These images made with Goude—primarily from 1980-1984—become a visual text which Jones responds to when she begins her "Perfect" collaboration with Haring. By the time Jones met Haring, she was one of the only women in popular culture representing what Royster calls an "unco-optable," in that she was a "confrontationally androgynous" presence (Royster 147). This can be seen in a variety of ways when Jones parlayed her recording career into acting roles, starring in a number of top roles in blockbuster films such as *A View to a Kill* and *Conan the Destroyer*. Her acting career led to bookings on a number of late night talk shows, where Jones was vocally and publicly loyal to her LGBTQ fanbase and was constantly questioned about her own sexuality.[69] As in many of her interviews, Jones refused to be labelled as heterosexual or homosexual, thus creating further disruption and alienation outside of the presentation of her art.

In 1986, despite the global reach she had achieved with her chart-topping 70s disco and her hybrid new wave music of the early 80s, Jones's music career was waning. By this time, her last album to make it into the *Billboard* top 50 was 1981's *Nightclubbing*.[70] The accompanying

[69] See her appearances from 1983-1987 on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and *The Late Show Starring Joan Rivers*.
[70] According to Billboard.com, 2022.

music videos from *Nightclubbing* and the acclaimed album *Slave to the Rhythm*, however, did get her a great deal of exposure and further propelled Jones's image as an iconic androgyne—making her one of the most recognizable Black women in the entertainment industry. Many of these pre-Haring images, art directed by Jean-Paul Goude, cast her in cropped, military-style hair and hyper masculine men's suits designed by Giorgio Armani. This wardrobe paired with the conventional ultra-feminine makeup of the time went on to disturb the status quo of the pop market which catered to white audiences (see Figure 16 and Figure 17). These Goude visuals—which Haring was well-aware of before meeting and working with Jones—fought against what Black Queer theorist La Marr Bruce dubs "heteroperpetuity," which entails political imperatives, social laws and cultural practices and productions that are mobilized to perpetuate heteronormative dominion (Bruce 168). Jones's contemporaries from the mid-1980s brazenly flaunted heteroperpetual works on MTV while exploiting Queer talent whose sexual identity and/or creative contributions were concealed. Many Queer music producers of the 1980s—who co-produced some of the top pop acts of the era—went unrecognized or improperly credited (Bruce 169). Artists ranging from Madonna[71] to Janet Jackson[72] crafted works with Queer collaborators which safely exuded heteroperpetuity.[73] Jones's Techno-Dietrich video persona was seen as a radical anomaly for MTV in the early 1980s. Jones's fashion statements in the

[71] Madonna's famous collaborations with Queer fashion photographer Herb Ritts include the album cover and promotional images for her bestselling album to date, *True Blue*. Nonetheless, Ritts is credited as photographer, not art director. Her brother, Christopher Ciccone, who was her stylist and choreographer for nearly 10 years, was never given any credit on her videos; he was finally acknowledged on her *Truth or Dare* tour of 1990.
[72] Both Madonna and Janet Jackson used Queer DJ Shep Pettibone to remix all of their output for club and radio play in 1986. Pettibone's dance floor reworkings of songs such as "What Have You Done For Me Lately?" and "Control" use syncopated sounds typical of the then-growing vogue/wacking ballroom scenes coming out of Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City. His name was never mentioned by either artist in mainstream media interviews ranging from *Rolling Stone* to *Q* magazine during this time period.
[73] In 1986, mainstream pop was rife with flagrant heteroperpetuity. Madonna's donning of a traditional wedding dress on stage was, at the time, read as radical or unconventional in most parts of the world.

1980s—made with Queer Tunisian couturier Azzedine Alaïa—hinted at the Afro-futuristic, radical and gender fluid representation, something that was extremely rare on any network.[74]

When Haring met Jones, she was looking to break down MTV's Berlin wall once again. The channel had paused playing videos she made with Goude, and popular music was once again at a crossroads between one public that embraced electronic, experimental sounds, and another public that shunned them. As Jones recounts in her memoir, she was looking for a partner who was hooked into something that went beyond the new romantic; she was also searching for more than just a husband or a co-worker: she was looking for a co-creator who ticked a number of boxes that both Goude and Moulton could not (Jones and Morley 406).

Haring's career was on the rise in 1984, but unlike Warhol, he did not yet have much in the way of celebrity acceptance, nor the record of parlor tricks that had brought Warhol into the global vernacular. As culture writer Ingrid Sischy writes in her now-famous essay "Kid Haring," "[his] struggle for recognition as a 'serious artist' was not won in his lifetime… the sense of connection that freed him and spurred him on came from other artists, and the life he found in the heart of Gay New York" (106).

His art was that of New York City streets. It was originally considered vulgar and vandalism (Warhol and Hackett). Indeed, his art led to his harassment and arrest by New York police (*Universe*), that is, until Warhol and Jones rocketed him into another universe. His exhibitions were often called out "for absorbing the Black and Latinx culture surrounding him and infusing it into his work" (Rodriguez). In 1989, Haring was also listed as one of the most

[74] The top 10 MTV videos of 1985-6, according to IMDB.com, were white, heterosexual rock acts Peter Gabriel, Bon Jovi, Robert Palmer, Steve Winwood, Kenny Loggins, ZZ Top, Eddie Money, Inxs and Rod Stewart.

"overrated artists in the world" by *Rolling Stone* magazine[75] and as a "product of a racist environment" (Herring 329).

To pinpoint Haring's ascent, a timeline on the Keith Haring Foundation's website suggests that the artist's *Crack Is Wack* mural of 1986, located on New York's FDR Drive, was his first major breakthrough. Yet, as Gil Vasquez, Haring's former gallerist and the executive director of the Keith Haring Foundation notes in the documentary *Keith Haring: Street Art Boy*, the artist was aching to be noticed within the North American art world and popular culture. When he met Jones, he had yet to have a major show in a U.S. museum or crossover into the level of fame that Warhol had attained.[76] Jones's avant-garde pop performances—which were broadcast to an international fanbase during her entry into popular music via disco—offered Haring a potential gateway to fame and a graduation ceremony of sorts. Unpacking the Queer-Diva collaboration in Jones's "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)"—a music video directed by Jones and co-directed, co-produced, styled, and costumed by Keith Haring—offers an opportunity to uncover the political fusion at work.

The conception of "I'm Not Perfect" began as a Queer/Diva co-creation before Haring had a hand in it. Archival searches of the cast and crew[77] of the video indicate that Jones had an earlier Queer collaborator—artist Richard Bernstein, who created *Interview* magazine's vivid, patina-infused cover images.[78] He remained an uncredited co-author of the video's script and

[75] Haring's work was not covered extensively by *Rolling Stone* magazine before he started working with Jones. The first major feature Haring had with the publication came two years after their collaboration, in the August 1989 issue.
[76] The first major survey of Haring's work is currently at the Broad Museum in Los Angeles. It is touted as the most comprehensive curation of the artist's work in North America to date.
[77] Accessed via IMDBPro. It should be noted that Jones was living with Richard Bernstein after she broke ties with Goude.
[78] Often miscredited to Andy Warhol.

storyboards until 2015—29 years after his work with Jones was broadcast.[79] "I'm not Perfect" was the first piece of music Jones would release since she had parted ways with her lover and former art director Jean-Paul Goude. It also marked the end of her long-time contract with Island Records. Throughout her career, Goude perpetuated the myth that he was the sole mastermind behind Jones's post-disco images and often presented himself as the Pygmalion-like creator of her persona and works such as 1980's *Warm Leatherette* album, 1981's *One Man Show* long-form video album, and 1981's *Nightclubbing* album, as well as the *Living My Life* disc in 1982 and 1985's *Slave to the Rhythm* album. This claim was repeatedly made by Goude throughout a number of his interviews, as well as his own publications.[80] On the cover of Goude's 1981 book, *Jungle Fever*, Jones is shown in a tiger-like pose, naked in a cage and flanked by a cow carcass, an image that is often contested by art critics.[81] Goude's Svengali narrative is also reiterated decades later in his 2005 tome, *So Far So Goude*, in which the art director infers that Jones was a medium and muse rather than a collaborator, stating that thanks to him and producer Chris Blackwell, "her transformation was a success; she was no longer just another Disco singer, but a credible recording artist with an original repertoire…" (138). In both books, Goude refers to Jones as his "work" rather than his artistic partner, explaining his frustration with his constant need to control her, and Jones's constant need to escape the confines of their conventional heterosexual relationship by going out to clubs and partying with her fans and admirers. In *Jungle Fever* (see Figure 18), Goude addresses all of the above by stating: "My masterpiece was

[79] Jones acknowledged Bernstein's co-authorship in her memoirs, yet no call sheets or crew lists found in the process of research contain Bernstein's name on them. To date, IMDB—the world's largest and most comprehensive online database of information related to film and tv production—does not include Bernstein on any of its production credits.

[80] Particularly in Goude's books such as 1982's *Jungle Fever* and 2005's *So Far So Goude*, where he reiterates his position as the sole creator/author of Jones's aesthetic. Throughout all of his books, he has cast himself as the Svengali of Jones's career.

[81] In 2019, art critic Min Chen evaluated Goude's early work with Jones and deemed it as critiqued it for being "fetishistic" and an "exoticization of black skin…with no nuanced exploration of race or identity (Chen).

a vision entirely my own of what was essentially a simple, naive person, holding back to what she had always been. Trouble. By the time *One Man Show* reached the U.S., I knew I had lost her. The 'party n—r' had gone back to what she knew best, and I would have to find a new vehicle" (107).

While Jones maintains that she created work with Goude as a "fuse and not a muse" (*State* 33), their imagery has resonances with story of Sarah Saartjie Baartman. Baartman was an Indigenous woman from Southwestern Africa who was sold into slavery and brought to London and other parts of Europe in 1810 by her owner, Hendrick Cezar, for the purpose of being exhibited in salons, museums, universities and circuses (Gordon-Chipembere 14, Young 60–1). Cezar, who was in charge of marketing her as an "event," created a fictional public identity for Baartman and often presented her in a cage—much like Goude does with Jones on the cover of *Jungle Fever*. This identity was defined by Women's Studies scholar Janell Hobson as a prototype of "an anomaly, a freak, oversexed and subhuman" (6). In Jones's memoir she uses the words "alien" and "savage" to describe the ways in which she and Goude created various images of her (Jones and Morley 318, 324). Goude also uses these same words to claim authorship of what he refers to as Jones's personas in his book, *So Far, So Goude* (Goude 18). Jones's memoirs explicitly state that she—unlike Baartman—co-created her art with Goude to counter what many claim to be his canon of racist imagery. Jones's collaborative period with Goude remains the most analyzed of Jones's career in the mainstream media and academia because of these racial tensions and Goude's fetishistic predilections—while Goude himself has been critiqued for exoticizing, Othering Jones and denying his own racism.[82] Scenes in Jones's

[82] Theorist Ricardo Montez has critiqued Goude at length in his book *Keith Haring's Line: Race and Performance of Desire*. He singles out Goude's "fetishistic manipulations" on racialized people as an arrogant, racist and disrespectful practice (143).

Goude-directed *One Man Show* longform film of 1982 and her "Slave to the Rhythm" video of 1985 contain a series of Baartman-esque images ("Slave" 0:54-0:58, 1:38-1:39; 2:12-2:15, *One* 1:52-2:47).

Goude's attempt to diminish Jones's role in her own artistry is countered by Black music historian Francesca T. Royster's essay on Jones's 1980s pop oeuvre. Royster wants us to think past Goude's version of Jones's "sexuality, her race, her gender, her very humanity" and look beyond how the image is "still constrained by the social history of other images of Black female sexual animality." Royster also urges that "we must credit Jones's own role as cocreator in this production and note the ways that her work engages contemporary movements in art and feminist discourse" (29).

Gender theorist Maria Guzman acknowledges Jones as a willing, conscious and powerful participant in the works that Jones and Goude created together. In her essay "Pull Up to the Bumper: Fashion and Queerness in Grace Jones's One Man Show," Guzman writes of Jones symbolizing a "dismissal of gendered authenticity" (84); she describes Jones as a co-creator and a co-director of the images she made with Goude and specifically calls attention to the video work the pair made. The video medium, which essentially brought much of Goude's *Jungle Fever* images to life, is something Guzman named as a game-changing platform for Jones, who had to perform in a non-static way: inhabiting, enacting and reacting on camera with her own body—with or without Goude's direction. Guzman insists that the film challenges the prior concept of Grace Jones as "a *real* being in the Modernist sense of the word" (84). Instead, Guzman points out that Jones uses the *One Man Show* as a celluloid platform to double up on contesting conventional gender norms and perceptions of race. Nathalie Weidhase, whose 2015

study of Jones builds on Guzman's notion of the artist ungendering and degendering,[83] suggests that when Jones associates with Queerness and evokes, exudes or interprets it, she becomes "an identificatory figure for marginalized audiences," seen as "unsettling and disrupting identity configurations such as gender, sexuality and race" (97), and this challenges both hegemonic and heteronormative versions of Blackness, Queerness and womanhood.

Guzman's theory can be best applied to the 1985 video "Slave to the Rhythm," where Jones is cast in both hyper female (from a Black Marilyn Monroe to a new wave Josephine Baker) and male roles (from a mock Cary Grant to a gorilla). In hindsight, these norm-disrupting images are not unlike Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity via drag. By looking at Jones's pre-Haring work through Butler's *Gender Trouble* lens, a paradox arises. Jones's markers of female and male are aesthetically amplified and already aligned with Butler's concept of gender "as a corporeal style" (*Gender* 177).[84] In "Slave to the Rhythm" Jones worked with Goude to transform her body using costumes, make-up and special effects to reiterate the seductive and caustic relationship she—and her fanbase—have with the male-female roles.[85]

With "I'm Not Perfect," Jones strived to say and do more than her prior androgynous images suggest. The "I'm Not Perfect" video was the first that Jones chose to direct herself and the first Jones worked on without her former lover/art director. It was also the first song to be distributed on her new record label, Manhattan Records. Indeed, this music video is a

[83] Both refer to the act of trying to remove the gender of a subject or person.
[84] In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler further explores how gender requires more than just a "styling" or costuming. As mentioned earlier, fashion scholars such as Rebecca Arnold argue that the shaping of political messages and the decision to engender oneself begins with clothing and the styling of oneself (Arnold 101). Arnold sees garments as binary-crashers, and states that when they are carefully chosen, they become politically implicated testimonials. Arnold discuss the full history of androgyny in her book *Fashion, Desire and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th Century*. In it, she outlines how clothing continues to signify a biased social stand and stance—specifically when the wearer knows she/he/they will be viewed/judged/assessed by a vast number of people (124).
[85] This includes using photography plucked from Jones's work in the late 1970s, when she posed with her first Queer collaborator, her brother Chris Jones ("Slave" 1:40-1:45).

manifestation of Jones's emancipation from the personal and professional relationship with Goude as well as her former record label, Island Records.[86] Scenes in "I'm Not Perfect" mock "Slave to the Rhythm"[87] and provide a textbook example of what social critic Camille Paglia once called "the dissolution of sex roles" (322). Yet, as Jones's memoirs suggest, she was also able to slay[88] her past work—and the perceptions it elicited[89]—with "I'm Not Perfect." It was conceived to be just that: a new set of statements which countered and slayed the work she was once known for with Goude. As cultural critic and music scholar Abigail Gardner so succinctly described in her analysis of Jones's pre-Haring early 1980s work, Goude's rendering of Jones[90] was "a white man's rendition of the African feminine—her limbs oiled sleek, set in an almost equine position and…artificially elongated to make her literally *more*" (67). In an effort to battle what Goude's "more*"* actually represented (i.e. an exoticized, idealized, discriminatory vision of Jones's body and music), Jones responded through a creative rebuttal with Haring in "I'm Not Perfect"—one which mocked Goude's Pygmalion claims on not only their works, but also her own artistic talents and insights as singer, performer, and model. Jones makes a point of writing about the significance of this co-produced rebuttal in her memoirs, stating that the video with Haring responded to "how Jean-Paul rearranged me, as a combination of advert and art…to look like one of his impossible Graces" (Jones and Morley 406). In an interview I conducted in 1998

[86] Jones left her longstanding contract with Island Records to sign a lucrative deal with Manhattan Records. *Inside Story* is the first album she co-wrote and co-produced.
[87] The particular scene I am referring to begins at 1:42-1:49 where Jones is taking a milk bath and getting her skin whitened in "I'm Not Perfect." This scene satirizes/criticizes what Jones and Goude shot in "Slave to the Rhythm"—where Goude hired Black dancers whose skin turned white after mounds of white powder flushed into their faces ("Slave" 2:21-2:23, 2:54-2:57).
[88] For a full definition of this word as a critical term, see p. 47.
[89] In her memoir, Jones reiterates that she was in charge of the video and set goals to re-examine her own past in producing music and how, with Goude, she felt she was working toward an impossible vision of perfection (Jones and Morley 405).
[90] To clarify, Gardner was specifically speaking to Jones's videos for "Slave to the Rhythm" and the album sleeve for Jones's compilation disc of 1985, *Island Life*.

for *Icon*, a Canadian Gay lifestyle magazine, Jones reiterated her stance on the vast difference between her creative partnership with Goude and Haring. In the interview, Jones acknowledged how Goude's narrative misled the public into believing she was solely created by him, and she compared her collaboration with him to that of her partnership with Haring.[91]

> Most people would call me a muse. I even named one of my albums *Muse*… musing to me is fusing through collaboration—it is the fusion of art and amusement. No one will experience this in a first class way, the way I have with Keith [Haring] and Andy [Warhol]. There is a joy to the memories of working with them because they remind me of how to keep doing what I'm doing in the way I want to do it—in my own time. I learned a lot from them in that way. Collaboration doesn't mean being pushed into something that doesn't feel right. Keith's and my relationship was so great that we would have ideas at the last minute to create something else [beyond the initial project at hand]. We would create for creativity and not a thought was given to whatever was to come after—like the money or reward. ("State" 35)

[91] In many press interviews, Jones felt the need to answer to Goude's claim that her work was his sole creation. She dedicates a few pages in her memoir to indicate a number of personal and professional conflicts this claim brought to her life (Jones and Morley 284–5).

III

Jones and Queer-Diva Collaboration Perfection:

Slaying the Past in Protest

In "I'm Not Perfect," Jones and Haring slay and conquer Goude's Svengali narrative on film to expose what Jones describes as "all the painful, intrusive processes of self-healing and beautification" she put herself through with Goude in order to become what she calls "the ultimate primal Diva" (Jones and Morley 406).

In Jones's case, "slay" can be defined in two ways. The first definition, from the Oxford English Dictionary, is "to kill" and/or "eliminate." The second meaning is drawn from the vernacular of the late 1980s Queer ballroom culture wherein "slay" is used as a verb meaning "to succeed." Slaying depicts conquering or a triumph over an obstacle, a rival, a competitor or a goal.[92] The work of Black Queer theorist Jafari S. Allen allows us to draw further conclusions about the intentions behind "I'm Not Perfect." Allen's scholarship on Queer and Black artistry that is rooted in a "desire for political empowerment or autonomy" that, at the same time, is "fun and carefree play in the face of social suffering" (Allen xi) is a critical lens through which Jones's and Haring's work can be considered. In the early frames of "I'm Not Perfect," Jones and Haring disturb and distort traditional notions of Blackness, Womanhood and Queerness because they expose the otherwise veiled inner workings of the systems by and within which each group is oppressed. Jones and Haring's video is lively in its club scenes, humorous by way

[92] The word was popularized in *Paris is Burning*, a 1990 documentary on the vogue/drag and ballroom culture of New York City and the African American, Latino, Gay and Transgender communities who participated in it (Livingston, 1990), but was being used at the Paradise Garage and other Queer clubs in and around New York in the mid-80s.

of its poking fun at beauty practices and shrewd in the ways in which it positions Jones as critiquing herself while navigating the industries in which she is partakes and on which she shrewdly commented.

"I decided I would direct the video for the song [as] a retort…to not being able to live up to the image that my lover had literally created for me," Jones writes in her memoir. "[I]t seemed important that I be in control of the video, rather than act as the subject" (Jones and Morley 405). To contextualize the extent of the trio's collaboration is to also understand how it is an artistic clapback to Goude's Svengali/white savior rhetoric. The excavating of Jones's collaborations with Goude and Haring allow us to unveil how the entertainment industry narrative of the 1980s and 1990s pushed the same old sexist and racist origin stories regarding Black female artists.[93] For Jones, a greater stake in self-creation in the mid-1980s (i.e. directing her own video) opposed her early 1980s process with Goude and was viewed as a way to dispel the myth that her stage identity was created solely by a white, heterosexual man. Yet the "I'm Not Perfect" project also allowed for a space wherein self-critique for Jones could occur. Looking back at her own body of work and the ways in which Jones participated with Goude on their work from 1980-1984, her video with Haring includes his point of view of her past in the midst of commentary as he is co-directing the imagery in it. This Jones-Haring video creation is, of course, informed by patriarchal beauty standards, which went on to deform the notion of a Diva into its negative definitions[94] yet this points to Butler's views on the way she sees the performer hyperbolize

[93] bell hooks explores this in her essay of 1992, "Selling Hot Pussy" by way of exploring Aretha Franklin's relationship to white male producers—who are positioned as her rescuers in a PBS documentary. Hooks also dissects Tina Turner's role in the film *Mad Max Beyond The Thunderdome* and condemns Turner's performance in the film as a modern mammie slave figure who is saved by a white male hero. hooks connects this fictional script to Turner's own life in rock n' roll (113-115).

[94] As mentioned in my introduction, the word's earliest incarnations highlighted women of talent and success. The definition of Diva has, as the Welsh National Opera Company has explained, "mutated into an unflattering and disparaging description with its roots in sexism (Davies)."

gender to "confuse and seduce an audience whose gaze must, to some degree, be structured through accepted hegemonies" (*Bodies* 132).

Butler's ideas surrounding what she names the "contesting of realness"[95]—the performance sites created by racialized Queer people which reconstruct and rework images of privileged whiteness and femaleness (*Bodies* 133)—allow another interpretation of Jones's and Haring's work as a political vehicle.

Jones, Bernstein and Haring take on both the Svengali-like claim on Jones's career and the complex reading of divahood seconds into the "I'm Not Perfect" video. While Jones's legs are being waxed aggressively and her forehead is attacked by an aesthetician who applies facial acupuncture with surgical pins (played by Queer supermodel/designer Tina Chow), Jones is presented as visibly in agony ("Perfect" 0:42). Closeups of Jones's thighs, cheekbones and back are spliced with images of Jones's alarmed expressions to showcase the violence associated with grueling and misogynist beauty practices (0:50-0:59). These early scenes can be understood to illustrate or distil Viren Swami's findings from her study of the sexist and discriminatory beauty industry of the 1980s, which revealed that more than 75 percent of American women in urban centers endorsed the use of cosmetic products and services because they believed it would "increase their chances of receiving gender-related rewards" (Swami 374). Read through the lens of cultural Feminists such as Sheila Rowbotham and Linda Alcoff, however, the video reflects Jones's own engagement and denouncement of a 1980s beauty myth with which she was faced.

[95] Butler's concepts of contesting the realness are largely applied to the film, *Paris Is Burning*. "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)" mirrors the ethos of the Drag Ballroom. But while Butler believes realness is a practice "to compel belief" or "an impersonation of racial and class norm" (*Bodies* 129), I regard what the drag artists are doing in *Paris is Burning* and Jones does in the video for "I'm Not Perfect" as far more of an interpretation than an impersonation. As I've stated earlier, Jones and Haring's co-directed video goes beyond mimicry and assesses Jones's past and present in the music industry.

These ideas, as seen in the work of Rowbotham, pertain to living a "liberated life" (Rowbotham et al. 41), free of societal demands, which was promised by cosmetic companies. The journey to attaining an unattainable beauty standard of perfection is a subversion of one's identity to conform with what Alcoff calls the "natural biological divide between men and women" (Alcoff 411). Jones, Bernstein and Haring toy with, magnify and spoof the impossible beauty standards of the 80s with art direction that broadcasts glamour's pain and ecstasy—as well as its tractions and detractions. For example, twenty seconds into the video, from 0:21 to 0:41, Jones performs a distinct anti-cultural Feminist message. Here, while her legs are waxed and her buttocks are pummelled by butt firmers,[96] Jones not only re-enacts the distress that comes with the process of high glamour, but she also campily mocks and then embraces and idealizes the outcome in later video scenes. She does so insofar as the video highlights this excruciating, mind- and body-harming process as the only way to get to that mythic "perfect" diva status for which she appears to yearn in the video (see Figure 19).

To view the video to "I'm Not Perfect" through a Butlerian lens requires a pinpointing of elitist beauty and glamour practices of white privilege but also a deep dive into how Jones and Haring were citing and dramatizing these practices in order to comment on Jones's relationship with her prior, present and future personas. Most would question why Jones would invite Haring—a young, white artist whose life was steeped in racial privilege—to assist in commenting, building on and evaluating her career in a video. One need only look to Jones's prior pool of long-term Queer collaborators for some clues. Like her work with Lopez, Bernstein and Moulton, "I'm Not Perfect" extends, embellishes and revises the original sounds and images (starting with a citation of socially prescribed/idealized versions of glamour) and remodels them

[96] Massage devices from the mid-80s which looked like large vibrators could, according to their marketing, firm your buttocks.

into what 1970s/1980s society considered out of bounds for heteronormativity: the grandiose Diva-centric, deific portrayals of womanhood. To complicate things further, in between scenes highlighting these sadistic beauty treatments, the video cuts to a crowd of Paradise Garage groupies who are eagerly waiting for Grace to take center stage ("Perfect" 0:47-49, 1:27-1:28, 2:47-2:52). By the last minute of the video, Jones is fully made up, playing and winning the Hollywood game (3:15). Yet, in Jones's contradictory fashion, there is a slight change in tempo in both the music and the pace of the filming. Something goes awry in the realization of perfection: a few frame freezes of Jones raging in anger (2:31) and giving the camera distrusting and suspecting facial expressions (1:26) creates a question for the viewer that revolves around the price *and payoff* of fame and the spiritual debt incurred versus the rewards of glitter, all of which occurs when navigating the contradictory landscape of the Diva. These spliced scenes are complicated further by the timing of appearance relative to Jones's first chorus: "Had we met at a different time we'd be perfect for each other / Now we're spending all our time, in this world come together / My heart is aching, from all the love you're giving / We're not faking, is this the life we're living?" Rather than sing to a lover or romantic interest in the video,[97] or to her audience, Jones begins to recite these lyrics to herself, while she is in the thick of a Diva-fying transformation, part of a preparation to present her "Perfect" body to an audience of club-goers.

In a pivotal chapter of her memoir recounting the making of "I'm Not Perfect," Jones offers an artist statement of sorts, perplexing first-wave Feminist discourse and exposing patriarchal systems, stating, "I am the ultimate primal diva under pressure to stay youthful, going through all the painful, intrusive processes of self-healing and beautification—mud baths,

[97] As was prevalent in the videos of *all* the female singers on MTV's top rotation in 1986, including Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach" and "Live To Tell," and Whitney Houston's "Greatest Love of All" and "How Will I Know," Belinda Carlisle's "Mad About You" and Janet Jackson's "When I Think of You"—videos where each artist is singing directly to a male romantic lead.

waxing of body hair, acupuncture to repel aging around the eyes, violent massage, near drowning in a milk bath, and a nightmare psychotherapy session" (Jones and Morley 406).

The video's interrogation of harmful beauty practices provides insight into what many performers—specifically marginalized ones—are subjected to in order to appear, behave and exemplify homogenized perfection and greatness in relation to the standards of whiteness. Indeed, the video as a critique is as relevant today as it was when the single was released 36 years ago. This is also evidenced by the recent popularity of hashtags such as #BlackExcellence and #QueerExcellence that have flooded social media platforms since 2015. Both hashtags venerate marginalized individuals who showcase a wealth of acceptable accomplishments revered by a society that prizes whiteness and gender roles. These "excellent" descriptive hashtags reinscribe a societal fixation that reinforces the idea that "Other" people are imperfect and must strive for perfection. In her essay "Our Obsession With Black Excellence Is Harming Black People," anti-racist scholar and author Janice Gassam Asare has outlined how current-day influencers who reflect this "perfection" are seen as deserving of humanity and approval because they are read as exceptional against a standard or system that was built to oppress them. Asare's work discusses how those who are outside of the spheres of exceptionalism are viewed as being protected from oppression. These exceptionals are encouraged to follow their "perfect" leaders to be protected and are expected to climb unreachable peaks. "I'm Not Perfect" is an object lesson that exposes how excellence is and can be a mode of assimilation and oppression because it showcases how health and mental wellbeing are abandoned or deprioritized for the sake of becoming the "Perfect" Diva.

What cannot be ignored is that Jones and Haring's cinematic Queer-Diva collaboration also speak to Susan Sontag's concept of camp. The scenes in the video go beyond the new wave

baroque style of the 80s, which was *de rigueur* for the majority of popular musical acts on the MTV rotation. From its feature film-style of lighting, garish sets and color palette to the plethora of celebrities overacting in their cameos (Timothy Leary, Tina Chow, Warhol and actor Russell Clark all make appearances), the video moves from farce to comedy to drama within several frames. While Jones casts herself as a number of Hollywood archetypes in "I'm Not Perfect" (e.g., Damsel in Distress, Aging Starlet, Noble Savage and High Priestess), these clichéd caricatures are rebuffed by her through what scholars such as Bennet Diephaus consider to be a deep commitment to Black camp.[98] While Diephaus, like many academics who analyze Jones's work, centers on her work with Goude in the early 1980s as opposed to her work with Haring, he nevertheless dissects Jones's and Goude's racially charged imagery and praises it for how it "highlight[s] acts of disidentification with traditional conceptions, an accomplishment that is a central trait within of all of Jones's works and collaborations" (Diephaus 13).

Jones and Haring used camp in a manner that realizes disidentification[99] in the video for "I'm Not Perfect." They did so by recontextualizing Jones's past iconography with Goude. In light of Sontag's view of camp, Jones's and Haring's modes of communication are a Gay-coded cultural language that exaggerates and reveals the slipperiness of gender in the performance and presentation of androgyny. According to Sontag, camp "draws on a mostly unacknowledged truth of taste: the most refined form of sexual attractiveness consists in going against the grain of one's sex. What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine" (*Notes* 193).

[98] As Ethnics Studies scholar Brian Stephens defines, "Black camp values racial, sexual, and gender indeterminacy and has a brassy and absurdist way of communicating the paradoxical power of the marginal" (Stephens 649).
[99] Diephaus uses José Esteban Muñoz's definition of disidentification to help him navigate Jones's work: "Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications" (*Disidentifications* 31).

Black articulations of camp take this a step further in that they consist in going against the grain of one's race in order to heighten and embroider identity to expose the myths and fallacies embedded in normative perceptions of race (Stephens 646). Various scenes within "I'm Not Perfect" inflate Jones's past imagery with Goude and specifically turn the tables on what was depicted as "cartoonish" and "primitive savagery" in the videos for songs such as "Slave to the Rhythm" and the video album *One Man Show*.

To illustrate how Jones liberates herself from objectification—while reclaiming the ploys, joys and cloys of divahood—Haring, under Jones's direction, creates an emancipatory spectacle that Jones then embodies in the video at its end. At 3 minutes and 6 seconds into the video, the camera pans up slowly and showcases Jones donning a 60-foot dress that has been hand-painted by Haring. The garment was noted in *The New York Times* as the epitome of garish indulgence, a costume that was assumed to reflect only the era of excess from which it came. Nevertheless, Haring's patterns on the dress tell another story. Created in a year where the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported more people being diagnosed with AIDS than in all prior years combined[100], Haring's dress prints for Jones are a prelude to his AIDS activism and his work with ACT UP in 1989 (Montez 130–1).

At the 0:54 mark of the "I'm Not Perfect" video, Haring himself makes a brief cameo appearance in a sped-up time lapse sequence wherein the viewer sees Jones's gigantic garment being created on the floor of an art studio (see Figure 20).

[100] According to HIV.Gov, the official site for United States federal domestic HIV and AIDS resources and information.

What the viewer cannot see is Haring's face or body clearly. His blink-and-you'll-miss-it appearance in the video is a fascinating quick-second group of scenes, bringing forth complex issues regarding how Haring is framed in the video.

Here, once again, Jones's flips the script on her previous videos, where Jean-Paul Goude was the man-behind-the-woman. Instead, Jones recasts herself as both the director and the Queen Diva star. Her new co-director (Haring) is the man under her command and, quite literally, under her skirt. In these short, unclear moments of film where Haring is included, he is given minimal screen-time while creating the focus of the video's showstopping scene of Jones's in a 60-foot dress. Here, Haring is seen coding the fabric of the dress in anti-oppressive, anti-homophobic symbols that are a fusion of Gay and Tribal histories and Black, Feminist and Queer futurities.

Cultural theorist Daniel Harris's ideas on the importance of such Queer creation in the 1980s offers some context to Haring's "I'm Not Perfect" encoded couture. Harris says that Queer art, when presented to a straight public or, in this case, to a pop artist's platform, represents "an aestheticism of maladjustment" (Harris 26). This mode of expression provides a means to what Harris refers to as disturbing heterocentric and "protected divisions of elegance" (27). To express freely and Queerly, Harris observes that many artistic members of the LGBTQ+ community commonly ignore or dislocate the "structures of society intolerant to abnormality" and create "a glamorized rebelliousness" (253). To analyze Jones and Haring's "I'm not Perfect" video in this way, is to see the dislocation of glamour throughout various scenes by way of peering around the Wizard's curtain to see who is making what in a behind-the-scenes/in-front-of-the screen kind of way. This is evident in the video's telling visuals wherein Haring is crafting Jones's dress (1:49-1:50), Tina Chow is applying beauty treatments (0:15-0:40), and Jones is the person behind the theatrical Diva on stage (3:15-3:34) once her grooming regimen is done.

Jones's club diva moment in the video requires an awareness of Haring's experience of Jones through the years. Haring's perception of Jones on the stage or on the dance floor of the Garage helped to create the video's epic ending. One of his own mixed media works, which prophesize the finale of the video to "I'm Not Perfect" (see Figure 21) provides insights on his vision of Jones. His early mixed-media work which depicts Jones at the Paradise Garage, well before they worked together on "I'm Not Perfect" re-envisions Haring's own Diva/larger-than-life warrior-Queen view of Jones[101] through his own artworks before working directly and regularly with her as a collaborator.[102] Haring revered Jones as "everything he admired in the global crossroads of postmodern New York" (Gruen 95). This included her own belligerent attitude to homophobic music criticism, which was rampant at the time. In fact, watching this Diva moment in the video is to witness how Jones deliberately included a visual point of protest that was directed at the mainstream media, which declared that underground dance music was either dead, or a genre that had to be dismissed because of where it came from (Queer clubs) and thus did not adhere to the heterosexual culture of the rock canon. It should be noted that the prominent club scenes within "I'm Not Perfect"—depicted in the video from 1:23 to 2:56—were extended even though Jones and Haring were well aware that underground dance music was being condemned. For example, mainstream media outlets from 1983-1998 were treating the sounds coming out of Queer clubs as non-music (Lawrence 363–94).

Charles Green's theory of collaboration sums up Jones's faithful and vital relationship with LGBTQ+ art directors, stylists, choreographers and music-makers. Green suggests that in

[101] Which links to the work of Wayne Koestenbaum, who summarizes a history of Gay adoration for Prima Donnas in the opera, a relationship of idolization, glorification and fetishization. Regardless of Haring's intention, Koestenbaum views Haring's work on "I'm not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)" as Othering Jones. bell hooks writes extensively on the harm that the masking of Othering creates in her essay "Choosing The Margin."
[102] In his diaries, Haring includes his *Portrait of Grace Jones* and writes about Jones's warrior-like/empowering performances he saw.

the process of artistic collaboration, two or more people with different ideologies may generate "utopian modernist sites" (175) that "world-make" (125) through a process of co-creation. As witnessed in Jones's visual and recorded output pre- and post-"I'm Not Perfect," her collaborations cross-pollinate political activism and counter, amplify and/or disturb oppressive forces and societal norms (11).

This video can also be considered a visual propagation of what Tavia Nyong'o suggests is dance music's activist powers. Nyong'o's view of dance music's closeted history situates this video as a win against the 1980s music industry trying to rid itself entirely of the Queer "odor of most outsiders" whilst trying to erase "the pungency of gender, racial, and sexual difference" on the dance floor" (101). In many ways, Nyong'o's work can help to frame Jones's "I'm Not Perfect" as a tonic in response to the Bee Gees and John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* phenomena, which arguably operated as an effort to eclipse, consume, commercialize and then dispose of Queer dance music genres. The Jones video in its visual, in-your-face ode to Queerness and Blackness fights off what Nyong'o refers to as the "white men occupying vocal registers and striking choreographic poses" in an effort to "usurp the disco diva and the Gay man" (102).

In "Postcolonialism and Androgyny: The Performance Art of Grace Jones," Miriam Kershaw outlines how Haring—whose penchant for appropriating Black culture and fetishizing Black bodies is well documented[103]—disrupts the utopian collaborative ideals that Green suggests the two artists share (Kershaw 23). In contrast, Kershaw breaks down how Haring's whiteness and white urban Gay experience both fed into pre-existing racist notions of Black street culture and negated it (24). Kershaw's work also evaluates Haring and Jones's post-**"**I'm

[103] Particularly in Scott Herring's "Keith Haring and Queer Xerography" and Ricardo Montez's *Keith Haring's Line: Race and the Performance of Desire*.

Not Perfect" co-productions in the film *Vamp*, and Jones's preceding and subsequent appearances at the Paradise Garage[104] as events that merge, crush and mix dogmas and stereotypes that derive from the lives and experiences of White urban homosexuals and African Americans (24).

Kershaw considers the duo's work as a critical re-conception of primitivism through the eyes of modernism's Black female Other. She sees the Jones/Haring co-production of "I'm Not Perfect" as one that recognizes and destabilizes racist, sexist and homophobic clichés. For example, Kershaw examines Haring's fascination with East African Maasai men and how the recontextualization of their white ceremonial lines on Jones's "Perfect" dress is also a characterization of the tribalistic elements of Queer life. To build on Kershaw's observations, Jones and Haring's Queer activism is presented in the video on both skin and fabric. Haring applied geometric patterns on Jones's dress which interpolated the white and red clay that was traditionally painted only on male members of the Maasai people; the white and red clay significations are applied for a ceremonial ritual that signifies the transition from boyhood to manhood (see Figure 22).[105] Haring paints Jones in these symbols to mark the lines in defiance and critique of a traditional, ancient culture as he amalgamates a combination of aboriginal and indigenous symbols together.[106] In looking at the work of Ricardo Montez, assumptions can be made on Haring's Feminist-leaning, Western-fueled work and the ways in which he used it to

[104] Wherein Haring's 60-foot "I'm Not Perfect" dress was used by Jones on stage to promote the song. It was later used by Jones for a number of concert appearances for HIV/AIDS charity events, which Jones performed at.
[105] Common in Kenyan and Northern Tanzanian communities where the Maasai people live. Named the Eunoto ceremony, the boys are expected to marry women (who are not permitted to be warriors or engage in this ceremony) and become warriors who defend their families and surrounding community after this rite of passage.
[106] As indicated in Kershaw's essay, which states that Paradise Garage photographer Tseng Kwong Chi saw Haring study images of East African Masai men painting their bodies with white stripes before collaborating with Jones (23). The artist, whose work has been called neoprimitive by Montez, described his drawings to be linked to Eskimo, African, Mayan and African insignia (Montez 147).

convey notions of equality. Montez's work points to how the graffiti artist was an artistic conduit to what he calls Jones's own "historical and political transformation (131)" and views Haring's spectacle with Jones as "a vehicle that inspires change, movement and a provocation of the spirit (150). The white clay lines applied to the bodies of Maasai males who are participating in these coming-of-age ceremonies also promote and enforce heteroperpetuity. The concept of being a male whose role is to be a strong hunter and gatherer—a role that is never applied to Maasai women—reiterates centuries-old patriarchal systems wherein females must perform their own traditional duties that do not overlap with men's duties in the community. This includes domestic work, child-bearing and child-rearing (Parsitau 2017). In contrast, Haring and Jones adapt the ritual lines to crash the borderlines of Maasai gender norms[107] to reposition the traditional and modern-day limitations set out for women—something Jones continued to do for years to come (see Figures 22 and Figures 30-32 and Figure 33). Haring and Jones destabilize and counter traditional and patriarchal modes of expression through their mid-80s fashion statement, which aims to dismantle and re-filter what are ancient patriarchal symbols into a visual demonstration of what in the 1980s were contemporary demands for equal rights.

The friction that exists within the "I'm not Perfect" video stems from Haring's own intimate relationships with racialized people. The authorized 1991 biography of Haring, written by art critic John Gruen, includes a statement by the artist that claims his romantic preferences for Black and Latin men allowed him to understand and experience life as his romantic and/or

[107] Scholar Damaris Seleina Parsitau has spent decades working directly with young Maasai girls and has observed the inequality which restricts the lives of Maasai women. In her 2017 report for the Brookings Institution, Parsitau writes: "In the Maasai community, women not only lack voice, but their opinions are equal to those of children, suggesting that women's opinions are neither consulted or considered worthy. Cast as the weaker sex, girls are taught to obey, respect, and submit to the leadership of men."

sexual partners did: "…my spirit and soul is much closer to the spirit and soul of people of color…I firmly believe that a sexual relationship—a deep sexual relationship—is a way of truly experiencing another person—and really *becoming* that other person" (Gruen 88). Ricardo Montez unearths the issues which surround Haring's sentiments by quoting Bill T. Jones—an acclaimed dancer and artist and another significant collaborator in Haring's work in the 1980s. Montez relays how Bill T. Jones viewed Haring as someone who "doesn't understand he is a product of a racist environment" (Montez 26) and chronicles how Haring's own intersections with Black Queer talents such as DJ Larry Levan and artist Angel "LA II" Ortiz and lovers such as Juanito (Xtravaganza) Rivera and Juan DuBose led him to seek people of color as escape routes from whiteness (34). Montez also sees Haring as profiteering from the appropriation of Black and Latinx Queer people and connects Haring's art practices and sees facets of Haring's relationships to racialized minorities as a continuation of the historic violence and damage that white people have been responsible for causing BIPOC artists (Montez 34).

Despite the privilege Haring came from and profited from and the ignorance he held regarding racialized people, Haring and Jones endeavored to destabilize and counter historic, patriarchal modes of expression through their mid-1980s fashion video statement. While the images they created contain the unrealized problematic elements that Montez identifies, Jones and Haring's "I'm Not Perfect" (But I'm Perfect For You)" video attempts to dismantle and re-filter injustice into its scenes through a modern reconstruction of ancient symbols used as visual demonstrations.[108] This includes the plea for equal rights for women and Queer people of all races who suffered under patriarchal rules and/or were devastated by the emergence of what

[108] Yet another factor to contend with is the idea of the sweeping rise of fashion literacy in the mid-1980s. Rebecca Arnold's work discusses how status and power were displayed in a new vernacular during the MTV era and speaks to how artists such as Madonna communicated through clothing, using Feminist symbols and signifiers to transmit their desired agency to the masses (Arnold 15, 78–80).

some scientists called “the gay plague” and evangelists designated a punishment for sodomites who engaged in deviant and/or promiscuous lifestyles (Hoppe 1–3).

During the creation and release period for Jones’s “I’m Not Perfect” video, the *New York Times* reported 15,527 new cases of AIDS.[109] Haring—whose work was informed by current news and his own community experience—wished to replicate scenes of the Paradise Garage (see Figure 23), which was a safe haven from the shame and repression that accompanied the HIV/AIDS crisis, as the finale of the video.

As mentioned previously, Haring’s dress markings predate his ACT UP activist series[110] (which followed a year after “I’m Not Perfect” was released), and they reflected what can be regarded as artful premonitions.[111] This coagulation of HIV/AIDS and modern African tribalist motifs (Figures 24-29) painted on fabric and displayed on film demonstrates Haring’s activist intentions and what Bennett Brazelton observes as Jones’s “Black diaspora from the pre-colonial past” in an effort to create a utopian future (67). The costume casts Jones as a warrior-queen replete with a tribal crown, and her dress becomes engorged as it consumes her facsimile Garage audience beneath it (“I’m Not Perfect” 3:20; Figure 30), thereby implicating them in her and Haring’s signals and messages. Looking at this scene closely and with what Virginie Magnat calls the aspiration and imperceptible merging of two techniques of theatricality (159), Jones and Haring’s Queer visual presentation of the Diva in the video is used as a technique that symbolizes the enlisting of Jones’s audience/tribe as her followers/warriors (see Figures 27 and 29). This double-punch, dual vision proved to be so impactful that Jones and Haring revisited it

[109] This was September through to December 1986. The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is reflected in the tragic outcomes of the majority of the crew of the video. Jones remains one of the few survivors of the cast: Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe, Tina Chow and storyboard co-author Richard Bernstein all died of HIV/AIDS complications within five years after it was made.

[110] Seen in Haring’s drawings and paintings post-1986, works such as *ACT UP for Life*, *Ignorance = Fear*, and *Safe Sex*.

[111] Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988, but saw signs of declining health as early as 1987.

for subsequent performances at the Garage post-"I'm Not Perfect" and included a version of this intersecting Queer-Maasai mashup in the costume for her starring role in the 1986 horror film *Vamp*. This last scene of the "I'm Not Perfect" video also echoes what Montez has observed in Haring's racialized work. Montez sees the culmination of Jones and Haring's creative output in the video as something that throws up multiple Queer-Black-Feminist signifiers, what he deems a "multiplicity of exchange," which fight oppressive forces within the art market, the church, the music industry and patriarchy (Montez 138).

As this chapter details, the merging of politics and identity from both Diva figure and Queer artist cannot happen without significant repercussions. Jones hailed Haring as someone who understood that in her "the truly beautiful was bizarre," and she wrote of how she was grateful that he could help her transcend her past with Goude and "get covered with his light and joy, his swoops and strokes, his handwriting" so that she could "feel [her]self change" (Jones and Morley 276–7).

The ways in which Haring viewed Jones—as "the diva and disco queen of the whole Paradise Garage scene… the embodiment of everything that's primitive and pop" (Gruen 116)—and how he saw himself in their artistic equation suggests that their work together, which aimed to combat subjugation, also echoed it. This act of Queer-Diva collaboration does not erase or veil the problematic practices which emerge when white male collaborators and Black performers come together. In the "I'm Not Perfect" video, Jones and Haring produce a new imagining of ancient cultural rites with a newly invented tribe, inspired by traditional Maasai markings and the culture of the dance floor of the Paradise Garage, a Queer, underground social clan of its own kind. The freedom in citing and colliding these extremely different geographic, racial and sexual worlds and creating costume, film and performance with such disparate reference points hints at

what is to come in the 1990s, when world music and the rise of remix culture begins to take shape in and outside of the confines of gay nightclubs. Regardless of the issues which delimit their partnership, the fact remains that these two artistic forces—through the inception and execution of "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect for You)"—proved to be forerunners in the broadcasting of Queer futurity on a global scale. The success of their joint invention is a testament to their combined powers, and the repeated rotation of the "I'm Not Perfect" video on MTV's global channels is a testament to its impact.[112] One of the most commercially viable videos Jones has ever made, the project propelled her back onto the *Billboard* charts for the first time in 10 years.[113] Jones continues to perform with iterations of Haring's "Perfect" 60-foot dress: she opened her set wearing Haring's ensemble while taking part as the headliner and curator of London's Meltdown Music Festival on June 19, 2022 (Figure 31); she brought forth a version of the dress for her show at New York City's Blue Note Jazz Festival on May 31, 2023 (Figure 33); and wore another version of the garment for her concert at the Los Angeles Pride Celebration Mainstage on June 3, 2023 (Figure 32).

Chapter Conclusion

One of the most reposted video excerpts of London's Meltdown Festival, a two-day music/performance/film/art hybrid event, was Jones singing, "This is my voice, my weapon of choice," while performing her song, "This Is," in Haring's 60-foot design (see Fig. 22). The video of this recent re-presentation of Jones/Haring's co-produced spectacle has, to date, amassed more than 3 million views across digital platforms. The event spun a renewed interest in Jones, inspiring four magazine features that speak to the reach of her Haring collaboration,

[112] "I'm Not Perfect" was one of MTV's top 20 most played videos of 1987.
[113] After the video's release, the track became Jones's last hit song to date.

noticeably in the American and British editions of *Vogue* magazine.[114] In the former publication, senior editor Lauren Valenti named Haring's mosaic body art one of the most iconic looks in the world, one that "broke the beauty mould" (Valenti 2022), while the latter magazine's fashion news writer, André-Naquian Wheeler, acknowledged Jones/Haring's sartorial tributes to the Paradise Garage as "rooted in campy, Queer-coded aesthetics from bygone Queer disco clubs" (Wheeler, 2022). Wheeler praises Jones as a "sharply political" beacon during the early years of the AIDS crisis. This chapter highlights the collaboration that Jones and Haring gave the world as an opportunity to further interrogate the process behind the work and the means and the repercussions of its existence in a Queer, Feminist and race studies framework. While my exploration of both artists and their collaborative relationship to each other and the public is by no means exhaustive, it opens up discussion about how Jones and Haring used their joint output in the pop music context to highlight and slay their own experiences of oppression and their oppressors through an integration of advocacy and artistry.

To conclude, Jones and her Queer collaborators pre- and post-"I'm Not Perfect" require a critical historiography to fully grasp how their joint works represent a slaying and a re-presenting of ideas surrounding Queerness, Blackness and Feminist thought. It is through their combined powers of creativity that the possibility of Queer and Black life was and can be re-imagined and re-embodied. In her memoir, Jones reiterates this embodiment by recalling her and Haring's "Perfect" moment as an artistically fertile career high: "I stood there in a 60-foot-wide skirt, painted by Keith Haring, who understood me, who knew that I belonged at all points in time, not only in Studio 54 or an MTV video" (Jones and Morley 41

[114] This was in British *Vogue*'s May 2022 edition and American *Vogue*'s July 2022 edition.

Chapter 2

"Desire, Despair, Desire, So Many Monsters":

Annie Lennox's Queer-Diva Collaboration in "No More 'I Love You's'"

(Sound Factory Mix)

On March 6, 1995, at the age of 40, singer-songwriter Annie Lennox released her second solo album. The collection of recordings consisted of 10 tracks that the Scottish-born musician did not write. Instead, Lennox selected songs to interpret—ones composed and previously made popular by cisgender heterosexual male artists.[115] Lennox titled her sophomore disc *Medusa,* after the much-maligned creature of Greek mythology to which Lennox felt akin.[116] The expectation of Lennox's music label, Arista records, was that *Medusa* would outsell her debut solo disc of 1992—a commercially successful album named *Diva*.[117] Upon release,[118] *Medusa*'s initial sales compared poorly to those of *Diva*[119] or any disc Lennox recorded with her former band, Eurythmics—the electro-pop duo she led with Dave Stewart from 1980 to 1989.[120] The majority of mainstream news sources condemned *Medusa*'s recordings, calling it "a limp collection of covers,"[121] "a strange side track of songs that wallow in mush,"[122] "a dislikable,

[115] As noted in the album's credits.
[116] As stated in interviews with *The Guardian*, *Flare*, *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times*.
[117] Unlike *Medusa*, *Diva* was a project Lennox wrote original songs for. In an interview with *Flare* magazine, Lennox defined *Diva* as both "ironic" and a "realistic" portrait of female singer-songwriters, outlining the tension of the title (which I discuss in my introduction).
[118] The average release cycle in the mid-1990s was three months. Over this period, labels would tally sales figures, paying close attention to sales during the disc's first week of release (TSort.Info)
[119] *Medusa* sold 1 million fewer than *Diva* (Tsort.Info)
[120] Eurythmics had a short-lived reunion in 1999 for an album and tour called *Peace.*
[121] From *Record Check*, December 3, 1995.
[122] The *Boston Globe*. CD Reviews. March 11, 1995

arrogant travesty,"[123] a "pedantic and anemic"[124] project that "remains wildly uneven,"[125] "makes no statement at all,"[126] "microwaves all melody and point of view"[127] and is akin to "a synthesized road-death on great tunes."[128] The majority of harsh reviews for *Medusa*[129] came directly from cisgender male rock critics who held powerful positions at dominant publications with the power to greatly influence the perception and sales of any given album release.

The post-Eurythmics Lennox backlash began upon *Diva's* launch in 1992[130] with a review in *Melody Maker* magazine by editor David Bennun, whose critique foreshadowed the sexism *Medusa* would face with its not-so-thinly veiled anti-Feminist commentary: "Keep trying, Annie. Give Dave a call. Spare us the obligatory I've-Had-A-Baby-Y'Know number and the musical pastiche—even if it does have a go at the notion that any woman who looks older than 19 should take up aerobics or die."[131] Much of *Medusa*'s reception in mainstream media echoed Bennun's misogynist tone because the criticism centered on Lennox's audacity in rerecording rock standards, rather than on her interpretive abilities as a performer. A common thread among these reviews stemmed from an acknowledgment that Lennox was a mother in her 40s who dared to blasphemously rerecord sacred hits. The majority of straight, white, male rock critics surveyed took issue with her age, sex and gender, and implicitly or explicitly conveyed the idea that *Medusa*'s track list should be left to the masters of the craft (meaning: male rock singers).

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[123] *The Sunday Times* weekend magazine, April 1995.
[124] Allmusic, Spring 1995
[125] *Rolling Stone* magazine, April 1995
[126] *The New York Times*, May 14, 1995
[127] *Entertainment Weekly* magazine, March 1995
[128] *Q* magazine, April 1995.
[129] The bulk of mainstream media (hetero-centric and male-centric in particular) reviews collected for this study were mainly negative or mixed. However, reviews from Feminist, women's lifestyle and LGBTQ+ news sources unanimously praised *Medusa*.
[130] Which is par for the course when someone leaves a band to pursue a solo career. John Lennon, Diana Ross, Beyoncé and Harry Styles are prime examples of this.
[131] *Melody Maker,* April 11, 1992

Queer music historian Lucy O'Brien's scholarship on Feminism in pop music looks at how projects like *Medusa* are examples of the ways female artists decentered reinforced male narratives in pop music (*Express* 9). *Medusa* was received by major media gatekeepers of the time as something that tested and countered what O'Brien has defined in her research as pop and rock music's dominant, heteronormative white male canon (*Express* 8).

To offset *Medusa*'s reviews, Lennox sought new ways to present her highly anticipated follow-up to *Diva* outside of the adult contemporary genre[132]—the format to which the disc was relegated by radio as well as her own record company marketing team.[133] Lennox was far from alone in this struggle for relevance on radio in the mid-1990s, as the work of a number of her contemporaries was increasingly marginalized by the adult contemporary format and moniker. Female pop and soul artists over the age of 30—from Madonna to Cyndi Lauper and Whitney Houston, as well as their predecessors such as Cher, Aretha Franklin and Dolly Parton—were all looking for ways to re-cast themselves outside of the limiting genres and radio platforms to which they were assigned and the resulting limited audiences they were marketed to.[134] In fact, the radio-influenced music category the majority of these women found themselves in—adult contemporary—was a camouflaged holding position for mid-career artists which, as the name suggests, specifically limited audiences through a system of institutionalized ageism within the music business. Adult contemporary became a bizarre catch-all for many female artists who had

[132] According to the *Dictionary of Media and Communications*: Popular music that appeals to an older audience; this genre includes music that was once aimed primarily at teenagers, such as the music of Frank Sinatra and the Beatles.
[133] According to a *Los Angeles Times* article dating back to November 30, 1987, chronicling the rise of Arista via its President, Clive Davis, who points to "good old fashioned songwriting" and A&R development as part of the label's mission statement.
[134] According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Madonna's *Bedtime Stories* album of 1994, Cyndi Lauper's *Sisters of Avalon* disc of 1996, Whitney Houston's *Waiting to Exhale* soundtrack contributions of 1995, Cher's *It's A Man's World* disc of 1995 and Dolly Parton's *Something Special* album of 1995 were all relegated to the adult contemporary genre, radio rotation positioning and music store designation. By the end of the 1990s, these albums were tallied to be the lowest-selling discs of each artist's career.

previously been categorized relative to or across many different music genres. The format collected artists typically over the age of 35, regardless of their content or style of music. Lennox's *Medusa,* for example, was relegated to being promoted to listeners aged 35-45+ (Norberg 75), while her past work with Eurythmics continued to be radio-programmed for listeners aged 16-35+. In short, the adult contemporary market of the mid-1990s was deprioritized by record labels because it was perceived as less desirable, less interesting and less lucrative than the coveted 16-34-year-old music purchaser, a demographic that was—and arguably still is—seen as the most sought-after target market.[135]

Due in part to *Medusa*'s limited reach, the album's initial sales figures were some of the lowest of Lennox's career. For *Medusa*'s first single, "No More 'I Love You's,'" Queer DJ/music producer Junior Vasquez was asked to take time out from his residency at The Sound Factory—New York City's largest and most well-attended Queer nightclub of the mid-1990s—to re-introduce the song and *Medusa* to Vasquez's then-growing LGBTQ+ metropolitan fanbase. The result was "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), an uptempo club remix which incorporated parts of a number of *Medusa*'s other songs. Lennox and Vasquez reimagined their Sound Factory Mix into a Tribal House arrangement, a not-yet-embraced-by-radio genre of dance music which employed polyrhythmic percussion inspired by world music. One distinguishing feature of the Vasquez-Lennox version of Tribal House for this song was its continuous interpolation of percussion sounds originally derived from Latin American and African music (SeventhQueen). Another feature, however, was its sampling from three other tracks on the *Medusa* album. The success of this collaboration brought Lennox a #1 position on the *Billboard* Dance/Club charts.

[135] According to AllAccess.com —the world's leading radio industry news source.

Looking beyond the commercial accomplishments of "No More 'I Love You's" (Sound Factory Mix), this chapter is divided into three parts to demonstrate how Lennox and Vasquez's co-production can be counted among the most significant works in these two artists' respective careers.

By interrogating the nuances of their creation and underlining Lennox and Vasquez's artistic practices for "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), this chapter will explore the socio-political implications of their co-creation. Just as Grace Jones and Keith Haring devised the video for "I'm Not Perfect" (But I'm Perfect For You)" to combat inequality via insignia, coding and a fusion of fashion, film and art, I argue that "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) is a collaboration that challenges anti-Feminist and anti-Queer detractors. In analyzing Lennox and Vasquez's co-production, I will demonstrate how the work builds upon the success of Grace Jones and DJ Tom Moulton's pioneering disco recordings of the mid-1970s and Jones and Haring's radical video imagery of the mid-1980s.

In identifying the specificities of Lennox's vocal performances in and outside of Vasquez's technological post-production processes[136] in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), this chapter links the remix to developments within the Feminist movement and the LGBTQ+ civil liberties movement of the mid-1990s. It evaluates Lennox and Vasquez's co-creation as a sonic weapon of sorts—one which endeavored to safeguard Lennox's and Vasquez's livelihoods and careers—and as a vehicle for broadcasting Queer and Feminist possibilities on a global scale. This work navigates the rich complexities of the duo's Sound Factory Mix in ways which expose its anti-racist and racist, pro-Queer and anti-Queer, pro-Feminist and anti-Feminist contradictions. It probes Vasquez and Lennox's re-composition as a

[136] Most of which is done on a Korg M1 digital synthesizer and music workstation.

method of defense against patriarchal and homophobic forces in the music industry, an inflection of the rise of gay white privilege occurring in the 1990s and a support system to the Feminist assertions in Lennox's sophomore album, *Medusa*. An exploration of this sonic retaliation will investigate how Vasquez and Lennox's use of emerging musical technology—which was mainly being used by DJs and dance music producers of the time—aided in responding to gender bias and sexual discrimination. Vasquez and Lennox used electronic music tools to stray from conventional compositional strategies and transform a typical mid-tempo pop ballad into a boundary-pushing club anthem. Through the duo's lyrical and sonic edits and production enhancements, The Sound Factory mix directly and indirectly reiterated the repercussions of a new representation of the development of Gay visibility and an articulation of the rise of second wave Feminism while also responding to the onslaught of hegemonic politics engulfing media and music industry of the mid 1990s. Through archival research, ethnomusicological analysis, literary theory and Feminist, Black and gender theory, this chapter evaluates how this particular form of Queer-Diva collaboration should be perceived as a retaliation against patriarchy and homophobia. To illustrate this, I will investigate how Lennox and Vasquez reconstructed a traditional musical recording to counter the ageist, misogynist and homophobic slings and arrows of the music industry[137] and the moral majority of the 1990s.[138]

While the previous chapter offers an assessment of the iconographic imagery Grace Jones and Keith Haring created together through a blend of visual art, costume design, storytelling and

[137] This includes the label's business development plan—the selling, marketing, promotion of *Medusa* and the reactions and results of such efforts (journalistic/critical review/awards submissions).
[138] MTV—and subsequently a vast number of US-based MTV-affiliate radio stations—banned Madonna's "Justify My Love" of 1990 as the video and song were deemed too "sexually explicit" for television and radio (Landman 2012). Sinead O'Connor's performance on the October 3, 1992 episode of the American sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live* prompted radio stations to ban her music after she tore up a photograph of Pope John Paul II on air to protest the number of Catholic Church-related child abuse cases. O'Connor was given a life-long ban from NBC (Landman).

film direction, this chapter identifies how, in contrast, Lennox and Vasquez's remix serves as an example of usurping misogynistic radio format categories via musical construction and reconstruction. However, like Jones and Haring's video work, Lennox and Vasquez's music reflects an amalgamation of two political agendas from two vastly different musical artists who sought to articulate an emancipatory co-creation. While "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) was made a decade after Jones and Haring's "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)" video, this chapter elucidates how Lennox and Vasquez's co-production acts as yet another link in a legacy of undertheorized Queer-Diva collaboration that disseminates, expands and challenges notions of Queerness and Diva-ness.

The ways in which Lennox and Vasquez disrupted the pop music landscape of the 1990s will be discussed relative to their historical contexts, with an explication of the origins and concepts of their individual, politically charged musical styles which merged in their co-production. The first section of this chapter gives a historical overview of Lennox's past intersections with the works of Queer vanguards that are arguably implicated in Lennox's pop within and without Eurythmics. This section will pay close attention to the transgressive work of Queer film director/activist Derek Jarman, the visual artist duo known as Gilbert & George, as well as crucial unidentified Queer collaborators who played an important part in shaping Lennox's iconography. The section will survey Lennox's back catalogue of music to show how she employs what I am calling vocal drag[139]—an offshoot of what has been established as sonic crossdressing by ethnomusicologists such as Gillian Rodger (Jarman-Ivens 4; Rodger 23). Here, I lean on studies from Feminist scholar Sheila Whiteley to assist in appraising a sociological understanding of Lennox's pre-*Medusa* releases in order to situate them as formative precursors

[139] An aural performance that mirrors that of a drag queen's exaggeration of gender identities by locating and inflating, coloring, caricaturing and disrupting gender-based signifiers.

to her collaboration with Junior Vasquez (121). A bridge between the scholarship of Rodger and Whiteley to Judith Butler's theory on the performance of gender (*Bodies* 124–5) is established and used as a framework to illustrate how Queerness and Feminism are both intertwined and expressed in Eurythmics' output, and how they were similarly rematerialized in Lennox's work as a solo artist. Historicizing these Queer-Feminist moments in Lennox's body of work from 1980-1992 determines the ways in which Lennox utilized her own powers of resistance against hegemony. It also identifies specific, galvanizing egalitarianist performance sites which were revisited in Lennox and Vasquez's collaboration of 1995.

The mid-section of this chapter turns its attention to the pivotal cultural significance of the dance remix format and how crucial it became to the development of house music during the mid-1990s. It focuses on how the remix musical form provides a critical link to the sexist and ageist discrimination Lennox experienced in the music industry and the homophobia Vasquez encountered while trying to work within the same patriarchal system. Exploring a deeper comprehension of the remix and its function in the Queer underground nightclub scene permits an understanding of the social and political implications it offers to LGBTQ communities and the mainstream. This will also draw attention to how the remix—as an emerging, changing model of dance music—reflects and projects the strides and struggles of the LGBTQ+ liberation movement. This section argues that the pro-Feminist and pro-Queer politics that helped fortify the dance remix—a developing musical form rooted in LGBTQ+ clubs that gained traction in the early 1980s and 1990s—shaped Lennox and Vasquez's co-creation of 1996.

For a deeper understanding of the function of a remix and the act of remixing, my work turns to digital arts theorist Eduardo Navas, Feminist theorist Alice Echols and the work of literary theorist Giancarlo Frosio. Their theories on the cultural activations at work in a remix

help to establish how Lennox and Vasquez's co-creation can be understood to defend against oppression *and* mirror oppression. To illustrate this, I provide an overview of Vasquez's tribe—a particular subset of the LGBTQ+ community for which he created and to whom he played. This allows for an examination of Vasquez's remixes as more than just by-products of his glory days (1991-1997). Locating *when* they were made and for *whom* they were made helps to show Vasquez's output was anthemic, and reflective of a certain faction of urban gay culture, largely white, that was coming to grips with a never-before-experienced sense of privilege and visibility. By locating Vasquez's work in LGBTQ+ history, this section establishes how his remixes became cross-cultural bridges (Frosio 24), aural reckonings (McArthur 178), for a post-Stonewall generation, and a vehicle for comebacks by important female pop artists.[140] This section concludes by delving into how Vasquez's music was kindled by and subsequently became an echo of those struggling to fight for LGBTQ+ civil freedoms (Westermoreland 206), reflecting communities intent on thriving despite the ongoing trauma associated with the HIV/AIDS crisis[141] ("AIDS Epidemic's Lasting Impact"). Interviews with DJ Junior Vasquez and artist Kevin Aviance from *IN Magazine* aid in setting the context in which "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) was made. Aviance, a multihyphenate Queer performer whom José Esteban Muñoz deems "a deity in the cosmology of gay nightlife," (*Cruising* 77) was the resident drag artist at The Sound Factory nightclub and influenced Vasquez's on-deck decisions as he co-owned and headlined at the New York City venue from 1989 to 1995.

[140] The term "legacy artist" is used to describe musicians who have been signed with a label for more than a decade (Yoo)—it is rife with ageist connotations and parallels the limiting and discriminatory marketing strategies when applying the words "adult contemporary" to an artist's work.
[141] According to the work of Dr. Dana Rosenfeld, the Director of the Keele Centre for Ageing Research and a Reader in Sociology at Keele University.

The chapter ends with a deconstruction of "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) to evaluate the technical and cultural implications at work within this collaboration. To do this, I engage the theoretical approaches of Kai Fikentscher, Muñoz and Freya Jarman-Ivens—theorists who help frame the outcomes of this Queer-Diva partnership. To further explore the composition of the remix through a technical and ethnomusicological lens, I use Logic Pro audio production software to assist in transcribing and translating "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) into sheet music. This software tool allows analysis through a tracking of the remix's instrumental, vocal and social demarcations. Through Logic Pro, sheet music is annotated for this study to compare the instrumentation and vocals of the original "No More 'I Love You's'" recording[142] with the radically re-arranged Sound Factory remix by Vasquez and Lennox. In this portion of the chapter, I build on the foundations of Sibylle Baumbach's theory of Medusamorphosis—the creation of a double work of art via the initiation of meta-reflection from two artists (226). I apply Baumbach's literary theory to this remix in order to pinpoint how the monstrous, powerful and beautiful characteristics of the mythical Gorgon are reconceived in Lennox and Vasquez's (re)creation process. To further explicate how "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) conveys what Baumbach regards as "double vision" and a doubling up of political and social agendas (Baumbach 227–8), my study looks to Muñoz, whose ideas around Queer worldmaking clarify the actions and reactions applied to overcoming hegemonic oppression (*Cruising* 97) in Lennox and Vasquez's co-production. This multi-pronged analysis will: 1) identify pivotal re-composition strategies which amplify the political ideologies of both Lennox and Vasquez; 2) trace how this song was altered from its "original" recording into a Tribal dance "version"; and 3) aid in clarifying the cultural implications of aurally replicating a

[142] Recorded by Lennox and produced by Stephen Lipson for *Medusa*.

proliferation of The Sound Factory's new tribe: an urban, upwardly mobile all-male, Gay assembly. Lastly, I will look at how specific compositional transformations in Lennox and Vasquez's remix correlate to the civil rights struggles in which both creators were entrenched. I end by expounding on how Lennox and Vasquez's "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) serves as a transgressive musical form that refuses sexist, homophobic and ageist rhetoric, gazing thereby toward a pro-Queer futurity.

I

Sweet Queens (Are Made of This): Annie Lennox's Queer-Diva Intersections in the Early 1980s and 1990s

Lennox's music career began with protest: in 1976 she dropped out of London's Royal Conservatory of Music a day before she was scheduled to complete her final exams. Despite attending classes regularly, Lennox felt that the Conservatory's traditional approaches to composition were stifling, medieval and tyrannical (Jasper 34), and she wished to make a statement in her final school year by refusing to be acknowledged as a product of what she deemed to be an antiquated education system.[143] Part of the disdain Lennox felt stemmed from the actual curriculum, in which musical instruction defined sounds, octaves and chords by gender, a way of reading and making music popularized by pioneers of song analysis such as A.J. Goodrich. Goodrich's *Modern Harmony in Practice* was a trusted and widely used educational text in the Royal Conservatory that influenced how compositions should be read and made for a century, emphasizing that certain sounds were tied to gender: "The first chord

[143] As stated in Lennox's biography of 1993: "It would have been hypocritical to take those exams, I didn't believe in them… it was positive action and I was determined to make an impact" (O'Brien, *Annie* 32).

ascertains the gender, that is whether it is masculine (major), or feminine (minor). These distinctions should be determined by the auricular sense, and also by the visual sense" (159).

Shortly after dropping out of the Royal Conservatory, Lennox met guitarist/producer/soon-to-be lover Dave Stewart and the pair joined two rock bands: The Catch (1976-1977) and The Tourists (1977-1980). The latter group had mild success with a hit cover of Dusty Springfield's "I Only Want To Be With You," featuring Lennox on lead vocals. The record company and the music media pushed Lennox to look and sound like a conventionally desirable feminine frontwoman in the late 1970s.[144] This ideal—defined by the male gaze—was something Lennox begrudgingly participated in via various photo shoots, album covers and tour posters for The Tourists (see Figures 1-3), although she never felt comfortable presenting herself in this way to the public (Ellis and Sutherland 114–5). To complicate things, Stewart and Lennox were engaged in a romantic relationship. By 1980, Stewart and Lennox had split from The Tourists and each other and, despite their interpersonal tensions, made the unorthodox decision to form a new wave duo together—which they named Eurythmics. The Eurythmics sound, which strayed from the disco of The Catch and the soft rock sound of The Tourists, was decidedly harder, much more soulful, yet largely electronic in instrumentation. Eurythmics eventually enjoyed several top ten *Billboard* hits, seven studio albums and four world tours from 1980 to 1989 (O'Brien, *Annie* 208-211), but their early days, while signed to RCA Records, entailed a number of challenges. When Eurythmics first started recording what would be their first disc, 1980's *In The Garden*, Lennox was dealing with depression and bouts of agoraphobia. She was regularly nursing Stewart, whose dependence on amphetamines cut into their recording time.[145]

[144] This is outlined throughout Tony Jasper's Eurythmics biography of 1985 in a chapter titled *Tourist Days* (Jasper 24-42).
[145] According to Stewart's memoir, *Sweet Dreams Are Made of This: A Life In Music* (Wertheimer).

She was also sorting through the residual trauma coming out of her tenure with The Tourists, a time she looked back on with a debilitating sense of humiliation. This was relayed in an in-depth feature in *The Face* magazine's October 1983 cover story, where Lennox detailed how manipulated she felt in The Tourists because chauvinistic record company executives and sexist Radio producers treated her like a "joke" and "the epitome of a prostitute" ("Masquerade" 44).

The strategy to rectify what Lennox considered her rather demoralizing false start in pop music included dramatically reworking her image, one which she vowed would distance her from the aesthetic she adopted while part of The Tourists. In fact, visually and vocally, Lennox began to reconsider everything she had done in her past bands and began to align with artists whose work she respected. According to Stewart, Lennox's newfound persona was constructed on a uniform that directly contrasted with the hot pants, short skirts, bustiers, corsets and tight-fitting clothes she wore while singing with The Tourists. After viewing the work of Italian-English performance duo Gilbert Prousch and George Passmore (known publicly as Gilbert & George) and following the video work of Grace Jones, Lennox decided to relocate her public personas into politically charged territories. "We copied Gilbert and George because we lived together and we'd read a lot about them and thought, 'This is very similar to the way we go on,'" Stewart said of his and Lennox's newly formed image with Eurythmics, which had the both of them wearing near-identical suits in videos such as "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)" and "Who's That Girl" (Ellis and Sutherland 115).

Art historian and Museum of Modern Art chief curator Christophe Cherix characterizes Stewart and Lennox as part of a generation who benefited from witnessing the Gilbert & George exhibitions because of the performance art duo's anti-establishment messages: "Gilbert &

George are one of the first artists to show their identity as a gay couple, very explicitly in their work" (*Gilbert and George*).

Eurythmics' early 1980s work—specifically in the videos for "Love Is a Stranger" and "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)"—emulates the 1969 performance art piece by Gilbert & George entitled *The Singing Sculpture*. During *The Singing Sculpture*, the performance art duo stand side to side, back to back and face each other in near-identical suits and metallic makeup, singing along to a recording of "Underneath the Arches" by music hall singing act Flanagan and Allen. Casually touching one another as they sing, the performance presents Gilbert & George as the epitome of homo-eccentricity, dislocating patriarchal views of gender roles from the 1950s and 1960s through a series of robot-like moves, turning "Underneath the Arches"—a traditional World War II anthem—on its head. The duo's singing to each other offers a taboo man-on-man romantic context to the song that was not previously intended. Their performance is further Queered by their juxtapositional aesthetic: two anti-corporate artists in matching, corporate-looking jacket-tie-trouser banker uniforms (see Figure 4 and 5). In *The Singing Sculpture*, both artists also take on the performing of what was considered to be feminine high octaves/chords and lower masculine low notes/chords. This amalgamation of gender through notes from both parts refuses a gender hierarchy and acutely recasts the idea that female reverberations should be considered weaker or less-than, thereby disrupting usual musical norms of eras past and present. In short, the live sculpture seeks to break musical rules within a patriarchal society—such as the guidelines established and reinforced by music education leaders like A.J. Goodrich. The nucleus of Eurythmics[146] and the band's first two videos off their second album, *Sweet Dreams (Are*

[146] In contrast to traditional/patriarchal musical theory created by educators such as Goodrich, Lennox and Stewart chose the name Eurythmics as it derives from what was considered to be a radical, modern method of music education from Swiss music professor Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. Dalcroze's "eurhythmics" classroom method connects body movements to instrumental rhythm (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

Made of This), aimed to do the same. From exploring the breaking of sexual and social taboos via their lyrics, sound production and video imagery—from lines off the title track, in which Lennox sings "some of them want to abuse you/some of them want to be abused" (0:31-0:38), to wearing clothes similar to Stewart's. Both Lennox and her bandmate came up with a parody of bankers in suits of the 1980s, declaring an anti-corporate message that permeated throughout the design of their albums.[147] Much like Gilbert & George, Lennox and Stewart not only echoed the corporate dress codes of their time, they critiqued this business aesthetic by dislocating the customary suit and tie from its accepted gender and occupational context, transferring it from male to female and from sites of commerce to sites of art.[148] Such performances and images recast Lennox apart from the outdated oeuvre for which The Tourists were known, specifically songs such as "So Good To Be Back Home Again" and "Save Me." In an interview with the *National Post* regarding her Victoria & Albert Museum exhibit of 2011, Lennox expressed how her early work was centered on many of the same themes and ideas that Gilbert & George navigated, making statements such as "I learned that I can be a canvas" and "what we wear—it's all a dialogue." Katherine Bourguignon's essay "Performing the Closet: Grids and Suits in the Early Art of Gilbert and George" echoes Lennox's sentiment. It outlines how Gilbert & George can be seen as godfathering the kernels of Eurythmics' early 1980s video concepts. Bourguignon's study of the performance art duo showcases the process in which they use clothing, makeup and props to distort heterosexist gender role practices while urging viewers that

[147] According to an online interview conducted in 2021 with the band's creative director, Laurence Stevens, Eurythmics had a very anti-corporate message that was embedded into their aesthetics. Stevens—with Lennox and Stewart—created a D&A logo stamped on every Eurythmics album and a few 12-inch records. The logo was made to critique corporate entities such as now-defunct London retailer C&A and English department store chain, M&S ("Examining Eurythmics Art and Design with Laurence Stevens LSD Studio").

[148] According to *GQ* magazine's fashion historian, Jake Woolf: "Dark suits, white shirts, dark ties, and white pocket squares didn't just dominate—they were practically a requirement in business."

"no identity is stable." To do this, Gilbert & George mimic and undercut stereotypical masculine and feminine uniforms of dress (23-6).

"I wanted to see if I could get rid of the woman completely and killed Annie of The Tourists stone dead," Lennox said in an interview with Lucy O'Brien in 1991 when asked about what prompted her to dress in a way that corresponded directly to Stewart (*She-Bop* 260). While her account implies a new aesthetic reckoning of sorts, it echoes Gilbert & George's *The Singing Sculpture*. Through repeated gestures throughout her early career with Eurythmics, Lennox aurally and visually de-genders and ungenders in the same way Gilbert & George's *The Singing Sculpture* does. Lennox and Stewart used the same mimicking strategy in many of Eurythmics' videos. This same-suit, equal-partnership look was something Eurythmics never really shook off as a musical duo—much like the performance art duo they were stimulated by—dressed in matching or near-matching outfits to present themselves in mock-uniform for countless public appearances from 1983 to 2023. Unlike contemporaries such as Madonna, Heart, Whitney Houston and Sade, Lennox refused to wear dresses, gowns or skirts in Eurythmics and habitually avoided major brands or fashion labels; much like her refusal to be associated with traditional institutions like the Royal Conservatory, she kept her distance from fashion industry houses in order to "keep autonomous."[149]

Lennox and Stewart suffered major career disadvantages by using the work of Gilbert & George as a point of departure. During the world premiere of the video for "Love Is a Stranger" on MTV in America, the visual signal was turned off mid-transmission and went down in history as the only time MTV censored a video during its broadcast. Instead, the world was presented

[149] As Lennox explained in an interview with *Flare* magazine in 2006 (Iannacci, "Legendary Lennox") . In 2011, she agreed to a runway performance for Dolce & Gabbana's Men's Spring/Summer 2011 collection but refused to be in the brand's campaigns.

with a blank screen to accompany the audio, and the duo was told the video was banned because programmers feared Lennox was "a youth-corrupting transvestite" (Ellis and Sutherland 146). This censorship derived from the fear that Eurythmics provided a slickly designed template for Queerness to occur in real time as "Love Is A Stranger" clearly depicts (see Figure 6). The network's choice to pull the video as it was playing points to what it was transmitting: "Love Is A Stranger" places a spotlight on the implications of gender transformation *as it happens*—Lennox is filmed in the process of transitioning from female to male. The scene which caused the channel to pull the plug frames Lennox in furs and a woman's long-haired wig, costumed as a high-class sex worker. It was not until one minute and eight seconds into the video, when Lennox rips off her wig to transform into a Gilbert & George-ian-style John, that MTV cut the broadcast. In the final moments of the video—which were not shown during its premiere—Lennox becomes a corporate-looking bloke-in-a-suit with shorn hair, mirroring her bandmate, the similarly suited Stewart. This modernized, celluloid take on Gilbert & George's *The Singing Sculpture* went beyond just the visuals. Lennox's vocals on "Love Is a Stranger" and, later, in "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)" are delivered using what musicologist Elizabeth Wood would define as "sonic cross-dressing." Wood describes the practice of combining "butch" baritone-like chest notes and "femme"[150] falsetto pitches as an integration of maleness and femaleness into multiple modes of delivery (32). I argue that, much like Gilbert & George, Lennox accentuates and conjoins these gendered registers in performance in such a way that the overtly gendered choral output amplifies and drags them into male/female extremes. This differentiation between "dressing" and "dragging" comes from Lennox's own history of

[150] Considering Doris Leibetseder's definition of femme as a "disruption of heterosexuality" and a label not rooted in biology. Instead, "the fem(me) body is an anti(identity) body, a queer body in feminine drag" (87-9).

affiliation with drag throughout her career—the utilization of it for creating sound and images both during her career with Eurythmics, a pattern she repeated later as a solo artist.

For example, Lennox went from merely being inspired by Queer art to incorporating Queer artists into her work with the video for "Who's That Girl," released in the summer of 1983 (see Figure 7). Featuring several uncredited impersonators[151] dressed up as Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor and Deborah Harry, the video also includes Marilyn (real name Peter Robinson), a well-known gender non-conforming singer, one who describes himself as a gay man out of drag and who often resembled a modern Marilyn Monroe in the 1980s. Each female impersonator in "Who's That Girl" appears in pivotal scenes but it is Marilyn who becomes the video's climactic focus. Lennox is depicted on a 50s-style cabaret stage performing in what she considered to be female drag, casting herself as a lounge singer. In the final minutes of the video, Lennox also appears in male drag as Earl, a working-class Elvis look-alike. With the help of special effects, Earl takes Lennox's chanteuse character home. The last frame has Chanteuse-Lennox kissing Earl-Lennox—but what happens before this gender-multifarious, self-love moment in the video is to be noted. Lennox witnesses several female impersonators sitting and flirting with her former lover—played by bandmate Dave Stewart (who, as previously mentioned, ended a real-life romantic relationship with Lennox months prior). Just before Lennox's crooning female character breaks down on stage, the camera cuts to the feminine-looking Marilyn, who is seated seductively with Stewart and proceeds to take off his sunglasses and wink at the camera directly (1:36-1:40). This revelation prompts Chanteuse-Lennox to seethe in the lens, and then throw a chair into the crowd in a violent outburst of emotion mid-performance (2:42-2:43). It is a soap opera-like scene that peaks at near-hysteria as Lennox

[151] Eurythmics or BMG/RCA has yet to release a complete cast list.

stares icily at her audience—an assorted group of women and female impersonators, save for Marilyn and Stewart.

In the 15-second window within the last verse of "Who's That Girl?" (2:43-2:58), Lennox uses a number of baroque vocal gestures which, in light of Freya Jarman-Ivens's musicological scholarship, can be identified as the purest form of musical camp.[152] Jarman-Ivens's musical categorization riffs on camp's history, evolution and function in Queer culture. Hers is a musical analysis that recognizes camp as a predominantly Queer way of seeing, reading and, most importantly, critiquing[153] the maudlin and misogynist heteronormative mainstream via parody, pastiche, theatricalization and exaggeration (Iannacci "Who's Camp"). Within the choruses and verses of "Who's That Girl?," Lennox delivers a number of high camp moments that feature a breathy vocal delivery (0:54-1:08), mimicking and mocking the high-pitched female orgasmic disco pitches of her own past.[154] In this particular lyrical pathway, Lennox's minor-chord cooing and passive, girlish breaths are juxtaposed against the song's main line—"who's that girl?"—which then leads to a ripping blend of minor and major chords through the repetition of the lyrics: "just one thing" (1:01-1:02, 2:50-2:54), "tell me" (1:15-1:16, 1:22-1:23, 1:30-1:31) and "really wanna know" (1:05-1:07)—all of which present as winks to what Jarman-

[152] Jarman-Ivens ties together past theories of camp for her work, denoting it as a Queer cultural critique which assesses heterosexual culture (Moe Meyer), a strategy of subversive replications (Judith Butler), a political tool which disorients the norm (Pamela Robertson), a system which values bad taste, and de-values what most consider to be good taste (Susan Sontag) and the theatricalization of gender codes (Andrew Ross), to help her define what constitutes musical camp: "extravagant gestures which listeners can identify in camp ways, or use to explain the presence of camp, and that even if these are not inherently camp, they may invite a camp interpretation of the text by a performer, or a camp reading by a listener" (Jarman-Ivens 212).

[153] As outlined by Christopher Isherwood in *The World in the Evening*: "High Camp is the whole emotional basis for ballet, for example, and of course of baroque art … High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it, you're making fun out of it… expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance" (110).

[154] Evident in the tracks made with The Catch in 1975-1976. Originally a disco band, The Catch was renamed The Tourists and turned to making rock and pop music instead of dance music.

Ivens refers to as femme (hyperbolically feminine) and butch (bombastically masculine) tones.[155] The melodramatic choral performance on "just one thing" is further emphasized with technology,[156] which deepens Lennox's pitch to a much lower key synth. This hyperbolic vocal performance—backed by lavish strings from the British Philharmonic Orchestra to augment the overt grandeur of the song—produces a soprano-to-baritone choral transmogrification.

Beyond the recording, high camp culminates in the video for "Who's That Girl" by way of a cross-pollination of drag strategies. Drag King (Lennox-as-man—dressed in a butch Elvis Presley ensemble) and Drag Queen (Lennox-as-chanteuse—dressed in a blonde wig and short dress) iterations speckle the video's cabaret setting, and sitting front and center, witnessing the duo-drag action unfold, is the then androgynous, as opposed to nonbinary, character of Marilyn, whose short appearance works as the crux of the video's storyline.

Musicologist and Cultural Studies scholar Gillian Rodger sees Lennox's intersection of drag in Eurythmics as something that challenged preconceptions of male and female power dynamics and allowed her to counter the media-made stereotypes that were commonly attached to female pop singers (17). Lennox's line of defense is summarized by Rodger in her study of Eurythmics' aesthetics from 1981 to 1987. She describes the band's visual expression as something that was seen as a red flag or a danger sign, stating that, "Lennox's gender ambiguity pose[d] a serious threat to gender constructions of the 1980s, and particularly those present in pop music" (19-20). Applying the roots of Rodger's analysis to this study, the video for "Who's That Girl?" offers a link to activist-oriented drag[157] and Lennox's Feminist approach to art

[155] According to Performance Study and Feminist theorist Kate Davy: winking is camp's way of "signaling through the flames in the tradition of fey Gay theater" and in a lesbian performance context, the camp fortifies the butch/masculine defiance which absorbs yet redirects patriarchal gender roles (145).
[156] Lennox's vocals were compressed by using a Bel noise reduction unit to create depth. She also recorded in a church cloak room, which gave her voice a hollow, thunderous echo ("Eurythmics: Touch Production Notes").
[157] Activism in drag has a longstanding history which bubbled in popularity in the 1970s when the San Francisco-based non-binary performance group known as The Cockettes would stage shows that satirized hetero-centric

making—mirroring, countering and rendering a new notion of homeovestism. As Rodgers suggests, reading Lennox's work as a deliberation on homeovestism—i.e., a way of masquerading as the quintessential, desirable, conventional feminine type (Gamman and Makinen 70)—allows the viewer to understand Lennox's own Feminist critique within her imagery. Queer scholar George Piggford likens Lennox's suit to both an expression of agency within Eurythmics and a hopeful future-forecasting of a new era for women in pop music. Piggford associates her suit with the "rising new technologies in music" of the 1980s and cites it alongside drum machines and synthesizers as Feminist symbols of advancement.[158] Piggford also cites 1970s disco and 1980s and 1990s dance music as a Queer- and female-driven antidote to the oppressive, traditional macho-guitar, cock rock models that radio preferred. Much of the most popular rock music, he notes, was mainly founded, made and heralded by heterosexual men throughout the 1960 and 1970s.[159] Piggford's analysis characterizes Lennox's uniform and choice of instrumentation as more than just trend-driven choices and likens them to major statements of autonomy pertaining to "business and female artistic control" (284–5).

Using Eurythmics' videos as a platform, Lennox presented her commentary on misogyny and gender roles through camp and drag on a global scale. These declarations came at a price, however. The androgynous and/or drag-driven looks Lennox presented—specifically in videos

musicals and caricatured political events (Weissman et al.). For example, one of The Cockettes' most infamous productions was a theatrical re-enactment of the wedding of Richard Nixon's daughter Tricia that concluded with an LSD-fueled orgy (Villarreal). Lennox's background singers—The Croquettes—were named after The Cockettes (Rapport and Waller 92).

[158] A 1988 advert for the M1 Korg keyboard which was used for "No More 'I Loves You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) opens with the question "What happens when thousands of musicians, composers, and producers suddenly speak the same language?"—implying the major crossover functions between vocal and instrumental interplay happening in music tech at the time.

[159] Unlike disco, which was so reviled by 1979 that events such as Disco Demolition Night in Chicago brought forth hundreds of people to Comiskey Park to burn their disco records and start a riot. Deeply entrenched in anti-Black, anti-Queer and anti-Feminist sentiment, the popular Disco Sucks movement characterized the dance genre as a lower form of music—partially due to who made and liked it: Queer people and women (Meyers 2009).

such as “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This),” “Love Is a Stranger” and “Who’s That Girl”—made her a target of homophobia and queerphobia in the 1980s. For example, before Lennox could travel to America for the 1984 MTV Video Music Awards, the channel demanded she produce her birth certificate to confirm she was not a “decadent transvestite” (*Annie* 94). It was only after MTV cleared her gender status that the video for “Love Is a Stranger” was allowed to be played on the airwaves.[160] This reported ban was made by the network so they could “protect the morals of the mightiest nation on earth from what could be misread as a male transvestite” (Rapport and Waller 78). The limitations of reach—due to the banning of the video and the restrictions placed on its airtimes—caused the single to fare poorly in sales.

Lennox also battled against what she called “the ridiculous pandemonium” stemming from irate homophobic programmers and viewers as well as right wing religious institutions who publicly condemned Eurythmics albums and video imagery.[161] After the Eurythmics artists were deemed “safe” (read: Lennox was straight and not a transexual, transgender or a lesbian) to play, their second single, “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)” became a *Billboard* #1 hit for the band—and forced MTV’s hand to play the now-iconic video due to viewer demand. For the 1984 Grammy Awards, Lennox performed “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)” as Earl, the male character from the “Who’s That Girl” video (see Figures 8 and 9). Lennox’s drag king moment at the Grammys brought forth a plethora of complaints from middle-American viewers who saw the performance as perverted and immoral (Rapport and Waller 112-4). As reported by journalist-turned-musicologist Lucy O’Brien, who has written extensively on the event: “the

[160] As per the consensus on the Ultimate Eurythmics Facebook forum post, dated March 21, 2023, the video was played during the evening only.
[161] The culmination of this can be found in a Christian-funded documentary called *Hell’s Bells: The Dangers of Rock 'N' Roll* from the mid-1980s. The film—which was widely screened on VHS in schools across the Dufferin Peel Catholic School Board well before getting an official release in 1989—claimed Eurythmics videos were satanic and promoted sin and sexual deviancy.

celebrity crowd greeted her with a stony silence, her masculine edge interpreted as hostile chic" (*She Bop* 263). In interviews such as the one she gave to *Maclean's* magazine; Lennox saw her clothing choice at the 1984 Grammys as "armor to defend against being seen as just another sexual object" ("Risk"). This strategy aligns with what George Piggford has noted in his work on Eurythmics' output as a sign of revolt:

> [Performers like Lennox] do not simply dress as men, rather they are women, who dress, perform, write and appear as 'gendered' identities that are placed somewhere in the space between man and woman. These women use a camp sensibility, an appearance and behavior code that ironizes and mocks gender norms in order to undermine the gender assignment of their culture. (62)

Publicly Lennox has described the reasoning behind her donning of masculine workwear, her longstanding history with drag and her output's connections to modes of camp as elements of a debate Lennox was having with herself and society. Lennox's 1993 interview with *The Guardian* brings some clarity to the bigger purpose behind her aesthetic choices and androgynous performances when she states: "I don't want to change sexual labels, I want to sidestep them… and confound people with something less clichéd."

These sentiments were further reinforced three years after Eurythmics' controversial Grammy performance when the duo released *Savage*—a concept album which implicitly explored Feminist themes. Lennox bore the brunt of the song writing responsibilities on it, and also took the lead in building a team to create the album's imagery. She chose Sophie Muller, a Feminist filmmaker, to direct the majority of the disc's accompanying video album. Lennox and Muller cast an unknown, uncredited androgynous actor to serve as a central figure in "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)," *Savage*'s debut single. In the video, Lennox's unknown co-star appears in

a light blue sequined gown with makeup that is only partially done (the white powder puff base, light foundation and severe eye makeup are left unblended and present a rather caustic, drag-like effect for the viewer). This gender-ambiguous figure lurks behind Lennox—who is dressed in what appears to be housewife drag and occupies her time with manically cleaning a suburban family home in the U.K.. As Lennox's frenzied housekeeping mimics scenes from *The Stepford Wives* and *Mommy Dearest*, the gender-ambiguous figure watches ominously from a distance. In the compositional climax to "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)," heavy, operatic orchestration leads Lennox to retreat to her bedroom vanity. In these scenes, she looks in the mirror and sees the draggy specter from which she tried to escape. As the symphony climaxes, Lennox pulls off her housewife wig and transforms into a simulated, extremely vamped up version of the genderless form that was previously stalking her in her kitchen and living room (see Figures 14-19). The video finishes with Lennox taking to the streets, wearing her Queer stalker's dress with a few additions: high heels, a cartoonish Marilyn Monroe-like wig and thick maquillage. Returning to the critical revisiting of homeovestism employed in "Love Is a Stranger" and "Who's That Girl," Lennox's character in "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)" begins to parody two archetypes at once. The first is the saintly, dowdy housewife obsessed with purity and cleanliness and the second, the overtly sexual, drag-fueled, fallen harlot. By re-embodying both archetypes in such a pronounced, overstated way, we can re-apply Rodger's theory of homeovestism in Lennox's visuals as they secure her in what she calls a practice that undermines "contemporary constructions of femininity" (Rodger 26).

The finale to "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)" frames Lennox trotting down the streets of suburban London in drag-inflected garb. Dave Stewart described this as a "transition from housewife into a vampy Transsexual" (Stewart 1988). The image presents the mainstream public

with what Lennox thought it always wanted: a vulgar sex symbol. Yet Lennox's blown-up, over-stated version is presented within a hotbed of critique to showcase the labyrinthine sexuality and gender she incorporates into her videos. While instigated by the hypocrisy of double standards, Lennox's Queer collaboration in the video to "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)" aids in a series of pop remonstrations. This continues as the video for "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)" then segues into the video for "I Need a Man" from the *Savage* video album (see Figure 20). Between the videos, a converted, sexually free drag-queen Annie is framed walking away from her housewife prison and escaping a stifling suburban existence (5:01-5:26), finding refuge in a dimly lit nightclub in the city. In an interview in the January 28, 1988, issue of *Rolling Stone*, Lennox stated that this *Savage* persona was created out of a combination of misogynist critique and a connection to Queerness; she called the persona "a dream goddess/sex kitten gone wrong…a parody of what men have found attractive in women…a man in drag" (Rogers "Savage" 5).

Feminist musicologist Sheila Whiteley views Lennox's video imagery as a response to the stifling music industry standards the singer-songwriter had been measured against since entering the pop music arena with The Tourists. Whiteley's view of Lennox's work is informed by Luce Irigaray's discourse on the dismantling of conventional systems of gender in Western culture.[162] Whiteley suggests that the ways in which Lennox toys with conformist, old-fashioned notions of femininity are a strategy that aims to expose the misogynist nature of established female representations in pop (122). The over-embellished and inflated nature of Lennox's femininity and masculinity in studio, on stage and in videos leads Whiteley to conclude that

[162] Whiteley—who uses Irigaray to explore Lennox's work with Eurythmics—is particularly invested in Irigaray's identification of the "interconnectedness of sexuality with language and power, provide the intellectual axis to challenge patriarchal power" (Whiteley 121).

Lennox's delivery of severe theatrical versions of women and men is both contentious and combative (122-3). While Lennox's past and present political stances align with Whiteley's analysis, one must also ask, which weapons were employed to wage Lennox's wars? The video for "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)" and the imagery for "I Need a Man" point to drag and drag figures as tools that allow Lennox to respond to inequality by magnifying it. Intensely dramatic spoken word vocal techniques in "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To)"—a track which Lennox herself described as less of a song and more of a melodrama—applies camp and drag to allow for a space where emancipation from patriarchal rule is conceivable. While no documentation has been located regarding Lennox's non-binary co-star figure in "Beethoven" or what part he/she/they played in shaping the choreography, the video follows a similar narrative to "Who's That Girl" (in which Lennox as Earl intersects with the central figure of non-binary performer Marilyn—seen in Figure 13). These intersections between Lennox and her Queer co-stars allow us to read the storylines of these two videos as an alluring dramaturgical cross-section of Queerness and Feminism. Applying Erving Goffman's definition of dramaturgy—i.e., "the metaphor of theater to explain human behavior," which requires the cooperation of a collective or action group (52-3)—to Lennox's videos allows an unearthing of evidence from previously unmined Queer history. Simply put, this chapter excavates how the cultures and communities associated with Gay, Lesbian, Trans and Queer people can be seen as stimulating Lennox's pop creations with Eurythmics and her work as a solo artist. To dig deeper into the Queer-themed narratives—and the Queer collaborators who play central roles within Eurythmics videos—is to ask which lives are being co-opted and/or reflected in the pop duo's body of work. Another question arises to further complicate matters: how do cast members in these videos co-opt, echo, magnify, distort or magnify concepts surrounding women's femininity while on screen?

Lennox's past with The Tourists allows us to accept that her inclusion of drag performance goes beyond parody and entertainment; it serves the viewer with a taste of her own first-hand experiences in the music industry alongside an opinion of glamour as a double-edged sword (see Figures 11-12). Lennox's presentation of glamour on screen with her Queer collaborators reiterates similar artistic strategies that Grace Jones, Richard Bernstein and Keith Haring employed in the video to "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)." For example, "Beethoven (I Love To Listen To)" films Lennox in a sinister way as a dowdy housewife who is suffering at her bedroom makeup mirror in order to transform into something more feminine and yet more drag-like. The scene lifts the veil of drag processes as moments that incur an emotionally and physically torturous practice which somehow leads to a reflection of gender plurality, then gender extremity, and then a supposed pathway to liberation. In the video to "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You)," Jones goes through rigorous beautification and extreme costuming to achieve a club Diva status which allows for her final scenes of emancipation.

Lennox's own drag performances—regardless of her intentions—can be seen as a dramatization of what Judith Butler calls the performative nature of gender identities. Through repeating extremely gendered gestures—in Lennox's case, staging and re-staging them as these videos do—roles are challenged in a subversive reiteration of feminine attributes and expressions which represent "established lines of coherence" (*Gender*, 32–3). These acts create an illusion of newfound masculine and feminine formations and expose what Butler refers to as "the constructedness of gender and sexuality," questioning what we consider to be our "gender core"[163] and the "regular practice of identity" (*Gender* 33, 136). This process is part of what

[163] A term coined by psychiatrist Robert Stoller which explains how gender can be seen as an assimilation of what Butler names "culturally established lines of coherence" (*Gender*, 32).

Butler has labelled an "undoing of gender," which can be utilized to stop speculation of identity and is a factor that prevents us from becoming who we are (Zajdermann *Judith*).

Kurt Borg, a sociologist and critic of Butler, looks at how the process of unravelling gender exists as a form of remedy and healing. Borg argues that re-staging and repositioning gender trauma which stems from or is fueled by patriarchal oppression creates a form of agency through the process of self-narration (Borg 449). His work focuses on the benefits and problems of survivors re-telling trauma through art and refers to the work of a number of scholars whose studies help him identify self-narration as a method for survivors to make sense of their own post-traumatic existence and place in the world (Sarbin 3-21; Bruner 11-32; Polkinghorne 135-153; Borg 449). To enlist Borg's insights on the narrativization of gender and sex-related trauma when looking at Lennox's body of work with Eurythmics, specifically as it relates to the sexism she faced with The Tourists, is to acknowledge yet another layer of understanding on the ways in which she enlists Queer influence and contribution. Borg's work explores how trauma survivors "feel the need for narrative coherence in order to restore a viable sense of self and self-narrative" (Borg 454). To view the retelling of gender extremes in the works of Eurythmics allows us to recontextualize Lennox's Queer collaborations as restorative signposts through the use of drag, androgynous and Queer imagery as well as camp vocal techniques—all of which reposition her own past suffering.

However, in reinscribing the blurring of gender identity in her work, Lennox faced more than a decade of queerphobic and misogynistic media coverage with Eurythmics.[164] After the

[164] As witnessed in interviews on talk shows such as Germany's *Formel Eins*, where reporter Kai Boecking asked nothing of the making of Eurythmics' album, *Savage*—which focused on Feminist themes. Instead, Boecking proceeded to ask Lennox about "meeting Prince Charming" and how she planned to seduce George Michael and Michael Jackson (*Formal Eins*, March 26, 1988, 2:15-2:38). British tabloid *The Daily Mail* printed numerous stories

Eurythmics' 1989-1990 world tour was over, Lennox disappeared from the public eye in what she called a self-imposed exile. She resurfaced in 1991 in *Edward II*—an independent feature film by director and Queer activist Derek Jarman. This Queer adaptation of a play by Christopher Marlowe re-examined the personal, political and sexual history of King Edward II. Lennox worked on the film for a modest fee because of her "love for Jarman"[165] and appears in a momentous scene where the King's court threatens to de-throne the sovereign and kill his male lover if Edward does not banish his beloved. As Lennox sings, King Edward and his lover, Gaveston, share a final embrace (Jarman 29:00-32:45). Lennox's cameo lasts less than three minutes, but it proved to be a watershed moment for her. The track she sings in the film—a cover version of Cole Porter's "Evr'y Time We Say Goodbye"—is the first solo recording Lennox made and released. Her cover of "Evr'y Time We Say Goodbye" appears on *Red Hot + Blue* (1990), the first major benefit album devoted to raising funds for HIV/AIDS research, which Jarman helped launch (see Figures 21-24). The video for the song was to be directed by Jarman but due to HIV/AIDS complications the director was bed-ridden and could not complete the task. Instead, Lennox filmed the video in front of a projector that illuminated home movies of the Jarman family, highlighting footage of Jarman as a child onto Lennox's face while she sang. Shortly after the release of *Edward II*, Lennox, at the age of 37, proceeded to record and release 1992's *Diva*—her first solo album (see Figure 25). This disc is still considered to be her magnum opus.

One of the biggest hits off *Diva* was an upbeat electro-pop track titled "Little Bird." The video once again united a maelstrom of drag and high camp concepts with the aid of *Savage*'s

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which depicted Lennox as "Tragic Annie" after she gave birth to a stillborn son named Daniel in December of 1988. The paper followed up with defining Lennox as "Britain's most tortured rock star" and kept reporting on "the despair that has dogged every step of her life."

[165] As revealed in a BBC interview with the film's star, Steve Waddington ("Steven Waddington - Interview").

director, Sophie Muller. The lyrics to "Little Bird" spell out Lennox's break with Eurythmics, hint at a problematic past partnership with Stewart and echo some of the sentiments Grace Jones experienced in relation to her former lover/art director Jean Paul Goude.

Less subtle and more literal in expression than Jones's "I'm Not Perfect" video, Lennox's "Little Bird" verses serve as an over-the-top manifesto on her new role as an independent solo artist:

> They always said that you knew best
>
> But this little bird's fallen out of that nest now
>
> I've got a feeling that it might have been blessed
>
> So I've just got to put these wings to test (1:50-2:05)

Within the first few frames of the video for "Litte Bird," Lennox, who is on a stage, visibly pregnant and costumed as Sally Bowles from the musical *Cabaret,*[166] interacts with eight of her past and future Queer personas. A cast of eight dragged-up Lennox look-alikes enter and share the faux-*Cabaret* stage, singing and dancing in unison behind the real Lennox—who takes center stage as emcee and ringmaster. Eventually, some of the Lennox drag imposters/personas start to fight amongst themselves and attempt to steal the spotlight from the "real" Lennox (see Figures 26-29). In the last frame, the eight look-alikes are banished from the limelight and Lennox remains the last Diva standing (4:31-4:36).

[166] "Little Bird" picks up where "Sweet Dreams" and "Love Is a Stranger" (which both reference Gilbert & George's performance art) and "Beethoven" and "I Need a Man" (which reference *The Stepford Wives* and *Mommy Dearest*) left off by emulating *Cabaret*—a film starring gay icon Liza Minnelli (daughter of another gay icon, Judy Garland) and adapted from *Goodbye To Berlin*, a semi-autobiographical novel by Gay literary icon/godfather of high camp, Christopher Isherwood (V. Marsh).

The song itself makes full use of Lennox's three-octave range, capturing a vivid fluctuation of timbres, an upsurging of the singer's soul music influences (1:35-1:40), long bouts of affected feminine high-note-holding (3:43-3:48, 4:05-4:10) and histrionically masculine, low-toned intonations (2:40-2:42). This culmination of gender vocal extremes gives the song a maximum-vaudevillian effect, best heard in the track's chorus which exemplifies the high camp sensibility Freya Jarman-Ivens's work has outlined within her studies of camp music. For example, a swish of extreme low/high note intermingling in Lennox's vocal output throughout the chorus of "Little Bird" reflects what Jarman-Ivens describes as symptomatic characterizations of musical camp: flamboyance and extravagance; excess and exaggeration; artifice and specific parodic challenges to presumed norms of gender/sex relations (193).

This can be heard in the multi-choral, electro-gospel opening of the album version of "Little Bird" in which Lennox does all of the background vocals.[167] From the track's 0:00-0:10 mark—with the help of producer Stephen Lipson—Lennox's vocals are replicated in such a way that an accumulation of her various tones act as a one-woman choir. This is used in various parts of the song to reproduce Lennox's faux-spiritual grouping in layered, multi-octave notes. The first ten seconds of the song establish what I deem to be a vocal drag effect—an amplification of traditionally gendered notes and an ostentatious vocal praxis that permeates the rest of "Little Bird." Throughout the track, Lennox's notes are multi-layered and technologically altered in order to forge an out-of-bounds, preternatural baritone and soprano mélange that combines with Lennox's own biologically native contralto.[168] This produces what Jarman-Ivens has discerned as a hallmark of musical camp: tensions held on dominating, ascending/descending chords, a

[167] Recorded without background singers. This was, as stated in multiple interviews, an intentional move for Lennox.
[168] Contraltos are known to have androgynous and darker timbres and female contraltos are often miscategorized as men. Contralto ranges span beyond the lower register.

sprinkling of atypical pregnant pauses before the resolution of chorus ("Little Bird" 0:09, 4:16-17) and the buildup of verses (2:36-2:38, 2:44-2:58), in which instruments and/or vocals vault from flippant to furious to frivolous[169] (Jarman-Ivens 201).

II

Occupy the Dance Floor: Locating the Strategies and Synergies of Annie Lennox and Junior Vasquez

Establishing the genealogy of Lennox's intersections with LGBTQ+ artists does more than simply recuperate fragments of Queer history buried in her iconic pop catalogue. Lennox's gender-blurring melodies and camp-informed images of the past also motion to what sonically and stylistically propelled her work with Junior Vasquez on "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix). This is evident in one of the few long-form interviews Vasquez has granted in his career, for the December 2022 issue of *IN Magazine*,[170] in which he spoke of how Lennox's 1980s oeuvre propelled the music he would generate with her in 1995:

> I was hooked on her Eurythmics look and persona and sound during her whole *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* era. That time for her was fierce because it sounded like [Eurythmics] combined male and female vocals together and she did these amazing gestures with her voice that, to me, sounded really powerful. I wanted to bring back the

[169] I apply Jarman-Ivens's analysis of Liberace and Liza Minnelli to Lennox's "Little Bird" as she conveys how piano (Liberace) and voice (Minnelli) hopscotch from extremes and embody musical camp.
[170] A national Canadian-based magazine which exclusively covers LGBTQ2+ arts and culture.

> image I had of her that was so fierce—her with that orange hair and her suit on and the ballsy androgyny. (Iannacci, "Remixing History")

In this interview, Vasquez uses words like "fierce"— a word popularized in 1990s gay clubland—to describe what he considered to be Lennox's defiant presence in pop music. He pinpoints the self-sovereignty of her past work from 1983-1984 which he wished to prioritize in The Sound Factory Mix. His vision of the Scottish singer-songwriter as "ballsy" and "powerful" countered the patriarchal, ageist radio programming systems which directly and indirectly pigeonholed Lennox as a balladeer for housewives and a past-her-prime warbler of adult contemporary pop.[171] Vasquez regarded Lennox's *Medusa* as too desolate and lackluster compared to her earlier "fierce" output so his desire to create something with her wished to cite what he identified as *the most* empowering parts of her repertoire without simply repeating them. In Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter*, she discusses how a continued return to the resistance of sexual and gender norms offers temporary escape from patriarchal law and she describes how the practice of an outright disobedience to this law offers a sense of promise to would-be political mobilizers who wish to contest norms (*Bodies* 105-106). Butler's ideas surrounding the reiteration of such patriarchal disobedience applies to Vasquez's choice to reverberate Lennox's own gender rebellions in the duo's Sound Factory Mix. His aim to reiterate a new work which spells out and repositions Lennox's past empowerment in a modern context includes Lennox in a new aural discourse she was not invited to before, one which brought her into the present and future, and did not segregate her into a radio format which catered to existing fans or listeners

[171] A podcast series by film historian Karina Longworth named *Erotic '90s* discusses the media disdain for successful women in pop (who were 30 years and older in the 1990s) relegated to the adult contemporary music genre in the 1990s and how the media incorrectly dismissed their music as "housewife ballads" (1:21-1:24).

who viewed her as a retro act or part of the past.[172] If we apply Butler's theory on the reiteration—not the repetition—of power (Bodies 15) to the creation of "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), Vasquez's early objective in this collaboration is clear. His *IN magazine* interview indicates that The Sound Factory Mix wasn't an exercise in reigniting Lennox's former glory; it was devised to situate her past strengths in a newer foundation of music, one which connected her to the "now" and to the "forthcoming" rather than "then" and the "yesterday."[173] This is further evidenced by remarks Vasquez made regarding his musical aims and his goal of de-categorizing Lennox from institutional labels that misrepresented her music and confined her reach:

> I didn't see Annie Lennox as adult contemporary. I was looking for basslines from other songs of hers than the original song. I stole from her other tracks ['Take Me To The River' and 'Downtown Lights'] to take her sound for [the "No More 'I Love You's'" remix] to another level of drama. I used whippet drum sounds and snare fills because I wanted that bigger sound—she needed to sound strong and sensual and radical like 'Sweet Dreams' was, not dreary or soft, which was the sound that a lot of singers in the '90s were lumped in with. (Iannacci, "Remixing History")

Instead of agreeing with the music industry—which regularly employed and helped popularize his work—Vasquez refused to accept the record labels' and radio programmers' designation of Lennox as a legacy artist, a designation which exiled her from mainstream appeal and threatened

[172] For example, Lennox's early 1980s output is regarded primarily as new wave electronic pop music—which was seen as passé by 1990. Vasquez's dance music was emerging and connected to a new generation of listeners and did not cater to the tastes of an earlier generation and aesthetic.
[173] Adult contemporary demographics from the 1990s and 2010s point to programming that caters to 40-45-plus year-old women, 72% of which were identified as mothers (Burns).

to shorten her career.[174] Vasquez understood that segregating Lennox's work into the adult contemporary radio format was an act that was ageist, as it devalued her maturity and past successes. It also placed Lennox's work in a format that was considered to be "the butt of jokes" in the music industry in the 1990s and seen by major music media as a place for adult artists, mainly female pop artists, to be put out to an audio pasture of sorts (Leight). The relegating of Lennox's music to this format also sent a message to Lennox's fans and the rest of the world: her music should not be heard on major pop stations anymore because she was not fitting the demographic criteria of what was considered to be the preferred pop audience (listeners aged 18-35). To counter the misogynist system of adult contemporary programming to which Lennox was typically confined, Vasquez joined forces with her in an attempt to subvert the industry that tried to cast her off as a has-been or a relic. His self-proclaimed challenge was to counter the perception of Lennox's *Medusa*, perceived as a work for the adult contemporary format, a space which the mainstream media condemned.[175] One needs only to look at the distribution limitations of adult contemporary music to recognize Vasquez's concern: positioned singularly for adults, Lennox was deemed to be unappealing to youth markets before young people could even access her music. By not allowing Lennox's latest body of work to be played in the major lanes of mainstream broadcast, adult contemporary programming format segregated Lennox's work simply because of age- and gender-based assumptions about what 16-34-year-old listeners (or over-35 listeners) wanted to hear. To attempt to reposition Lennox away from her adult contemporary radio existence through a remix in a lengthy, ostentatious form which was not part

[174] The majority of pop music radio channels have an audience more than triple the size (in numbers of listeners) of the adult contemporary radio audiences (Leight).
[175] For example, a *New York Times* review of Lennox's *Medusa*-promoting performance in Central Park where fellow adult contemporary-categorized artist Sarah McLachlan was booked as opener, described the performances as having "a veneer of elegant indifference" and songs as "anthems for doormats" (Pareles).

of any accepted radio format in the 1990s, conveys the duo's awareness of the music industry and how it repeatedly commodified and disposed of women's voices—specifically those who were identified as being over 30-year-old—through format and genre segregation. Grace Jones and Keith Haring's "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Perfect For You") shares this raison d'être insomuch that Jones and Haring—who both had to work with 1980s music industry and mainstream media—were cognizant of how much both systems treated women's bodies as disposable through constant evaluation. Appraisals coming from the media and the music industry in the 1980s and 1990s claimed women's bodies and voices were expendable and must strive to achieve a nebulous idea of perfection. Jones and Haring's video as well as Lennox and Vasquez's remix can be seen as Feminist, anti-ageist retaliations which reject systems which forced women to commodify themselves, therefore breaking cycles of victimization.

When Lennox and Vasquez's remix was released in 1995, Queer bars and clubs were still feeling the effects of the first wave of the HIV/AIDS epidemic due to the large loss of dance music creators and customers.[176] This was the same year that a new drug treatment known as the "AIDS cocktail" presented a glimmer of hope to a community that had been ravaged by HIV/AIDS-related deaths since 1981.[177] Slight-yet-notable signs of optimism came in the form of President Bill Clinton's assembly of PACHA (Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS) and high-profile names like Olympic athlete Greg Louganis, who became a public example of how a positive diagnosis did not equate to a death sentence.[178] That same year, 500,000 cases of HIV/AIDS were reported in the USA and, as noted by government records, "one gay man in nine had been diagnosed with AIDS, one in fifteen had died, and 10% of the 1,600,000 men aged 25-

[176] As discussed on WNYC's *All of It*, where music historian/critic Craig Seymour notes that four out of the five original members of the Warehouse in Chicago (one of the birthplaces of house music) had died.
[177] hiv.gov.com
[178] hiv.gov.com

44 who identified as gay had died. This brought forth a decimation of generations of gay men born from 1951-1970" (HIV.gov).

Government and media messaging had shifted away from the narrative that having HIV/AIDS meant becoming a pariah or facing an unwinnable battle. This semi-celebratory thinking ignited a return to the Gay community's hedonistic roots—as typified by Grace Jones's sexually charged repertoire—changing the ways in which LGBTQ+ clubland sounded and operated.[179] Rather than lying low and allowing HIV/AIDS to limit the ways in which Gay men met, clubs in urban centers like New York City upped the ante on what a club experience could be.[180]

A prime example of this transformation of Queer nightlife came directly from the Sound Factory and Vasquez, whose events rejected the idea that the party was over. In many ways, Vasquez's work, with Lennox and Diva vocalists before and after her, is a reverberation of Queer history, echoing what DJ/record producer Tom Moulton did two decades earlier in collaboration with Grace Jones.[181] Moulton took to elongating Jones's songs in the 1970s in an effort to satiate Queer audience members who sought refuge on the dance floor.[182] Vasquez's work at The Sound Factory replicated this idea of elongating this sense of freedom. In the hundreds of remixes he produced with Diva artists and played on the dance floor, he extended

[179] As discussed on WNYC's *All of It*, where music historian Craig Seymour outlines how disco surfaced during Richard Nixon's censor-heavy rule and while the religious right began to organize itself in key areas of America. Seymour argues that house music was an answer to overt homophobia, Reaganomics and the AIDS crisis (0:19-0:37).

[180] The Sound Factory was proof of this. When its main space closed in 1995 in its 532 West 27th Street locale (ending a seven-year run), it kept a second location operating (as Sound Factory Bar) at 12 West 21st Street. Sound Factory Bar closed and reopened as Cheetah in 1997 until finally closing in 1999 (Fikentscher 72, Weinstein).

[181] See Moulton's 12-inch remixes of Jones's "La Vie En Rose," "Do or Die" and "I Need a Man." Vasquez's longstanding club residencies began in 1990 and ended in 1999 as he moved from The Sound Factory to clubs such as Twilo, The Tunnel, Arena and Earth. Each club integrated the idea of a party *and* an afterparty into lengthy time frames which went from 24 hours to 72 hours or more.

[182] As mentioned previously, Alice Echols's work on disco reveals that the NYPD spent more than two decades monitoring Queer dance floors in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, closing bars and arresting dancers between songs—which persuaded Moulton to lengthen dance tracks (182).

and theatricalized vocals and instrumentation. Taking the torch from the likes of Moulton, Vasquez expanded the remix's capabilities and capacities—specifically with time—by way of stretching out the length of the song's remix and dramatically increasing its speed (as measured in beats per minute, or BPM). A typical pop artist or music label-commissioned remix would end at 6-7 minutes, in what was known as a club version (these longer, dance-focused cuts would commonly be edited again to create a radio-friendly version in the 3-5 minute range). In comparison, Vasquez's single-song remixes in a club could play for more than 30 minutes.[183] Lennox and Vasquez's "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) clocks in at 11 minutes and 40 seconds. Vasquez's history with The Sound Factory nightclub, where he worked from 1989 to 1995, is reflected in a number of his re-compositions.[184] Like his remixes, Vasquez's sets in The Sound Factory's DJ booth gained a reputation for being epically long. Under Vasquez's reign, The Sound Factory became famous for hosting some of the longest club nights in New York City history, spanning 20-36 hours rather than the usual 8-12 hour window.[185] Vasquez's and The Sound Factory's desire to keep the party alive for as long as possible was all the more transgressive because this was a period in which New York City's Queer nightlife was once again under fire. The closing of many Queer spaces can be linked to Rudy Giuliani, who became mayor in 1994. Giuliani's conservative campaign messages supported a return to traditional family values with an agenda to "improve the quality of life" of New York City's citizens. Unfortunately, this meant using Queer bars and clubs as a scapegoat.[186] Cultural critics such as

[183] As reported in the *Miami Herald* on May 26, 1996: during his many NYC-based club residencies from 1989 to 1996, Vasquez—who would have opening DJ acts playing 3-8 hours before him—would often play 12-hour sets.
[184] See Deborah Cox's "Who Do You Love" which totals an 11:31 track time and Whitney Houston's "Step By Step (Junior's Arena Anthem Mix)" which totals an 11:52 track time. These are two of hundreds of Vasquez's lengthy Diva mixes.
[185] *Miami Herald* on May 26, 1996.
[186] According to Musto's article in *Vice* magazine on Giuliani's anti-gay modus operandi in the 1990s: "Giuliani-ordered quality-of-life club raids, conducted by police officers who formed what she calls 'task forces of morality agents.' These task forces went around from club to club looking for infringements."

Michael Musto and Penny Arcade, two figures in the LGBTQ community who covered and contributed to the city's Queer social scene, identified Giuliani's clean-up plan as blatant homophobia (Musto).

Despite Giuliani, a handful of Queer venues still thrived and stimulated an evolution in house music. House's sonic and cultural roots can be traced to its slower sister, disco. A number of Queer Underground Dance Music innovators modernized disco's patterns of syncopation which became the foundation upon which Vasquez and the late 1980s and 1990s New York club scene was built. Vasquez's first prominent job was in 1987, when Keith Haring asked him to DJ an event at the Carmine Street public pool: Vasquez's task was to supply music sets while Haring finished a mural at the outdoor athletic center. Haring later loaned Vasquez the money to produce events for The Sound Factory. Haring's generosity and sense of spontaneity influenced Vasquez greatly,[187] as did the dance music pioneers of that era: African American DJs Larry Levan of Paradise Garage and Frankie Knuckles of Chicago's Warehouse, and a trio of New York City-based Italian-American sonic avant-gardists piloting The Loft (DJ David Mancuso), Studio 54 (DJ Nicky Siano) and The Sanctuary (DJ Francis Grasso).[188] The Sound Factory's early morning performances[189]—a staple in the club—were invigorated by an African American and Latin vogue and ballroom scene that came down from Harlem to the center of the Sound Factory dance floor. During these performances, Vasquez would spin tunes that were "runway worthy," with a beat that a Vogue dancer could walk to—much the same way supermodels of the 1990s did—in order to showcase their fierceness. Many of the tracks played during these sets

[187] See Vasquez's interview with *Icon* magazine in 1997 (Iannacci, "Proud Mary").
[188] As Bill Brewster indicates in his book on dance music history, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*, Grasso created "the first totally uninhibited gay discothèque in America" (Brewster 281).
[189] Which I have roughly located could occur between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. as per Vasquez profiles in *Electronic Musician* magazine in 2007 and DJmag.com in 2012.

had Vasquez highlighting drag and gender-ambiguous performers and voguers with a flashlight beaming onto the dance floor from his DJ booth. A patron-less pathway through the crowd was cleared by Kevin Aviance, who would lead and host various runway contests and perform lip-synch to Vasquez's roster of "Bitch tracks."

This site-within-a-site at The Sound Factory created space that was not just more diverse. It also re-read dominant imagery from popular culture, and re-dressed the fashion catwalks of Europe through Vogue, drag and Queer interpretation. Vasquez was instrumental in bringing the Vogue scene to the center of the city—and the world—by creating and remixing tracks that reflected Ballroom culture in ways that challenged the tragic depiction of Vogue houses in Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning* documentary of 1990.[190] Vasquez had a personal and professional relationship with Madonna—who frequented the Sound Factory in 1989 and chose her "Vogue" video dancers from its dance floor. Indeed, he introduced the Italian-American singer to the culture of Vogue and is an uncredited engineer on one of her biggest hits—"Vogue."[191]

Aside from playing a part in introducing "Vogue" to a wider audience, Vasquez and The Sound Factory created a shift in the ways in which a growing segment of Queer people socialized. The Sound Factory's success popularized the idea of a "big room" in clubbing, wherein large numbers of white, Black and Latin Gay men would fill larger venues.[192] This

[190] See Vasquez's track "X"—which features Danny Xtravaganza from Vogue house, The House of Xtravaganza, powerfully announcing the word "extravaganza." The House was so pleased with the recording, they made Vasquez an honorary member. He later introduced Xtravaganza members to Madonna and urged her to collaborate with them.

[191] Vasquez is thanked in the credits for Madonna's *Billboard* chart-topping "Vogue" song, having mentored under its producer, pioneering Queer DJ Shep Pettibone. However, according to an article published in 2007 in *Electronic Musician* magazine, Madonna hired Vasquez to add production to the finished track and remains uncredited for his work.

[192] The Sound Factory nightclub's dance floor could hold more than 1,000 attendees at a time throughout Vasquez's residency.

model eclipsed the small, communal, intimate parties of the past. Vasquez's prominence coincided with the increasing visibility of white Gay men, who found themselves experiencing a new sense of social mobility and privilege—a result of the growing LGBTQ+ acceptance in American government legislation and the media.[193] The Sound Factory's structural and geographic reality was a symbol of this newfound LGBTQ+ awareness and tolerance: the club's location was in the heart of the city and the size of the space was bigger than many straight dance venues of the time. Vasquez's knack for drawing large numbers was a statement in and of itself, as was the money he brought into the city: Queer nightlife was not confined to Queer neighborhoods anymore, and Queer culture was not hiding out in warehouses, clandestine bars and small loft spaces as in the 1970s and 1980s. Vasquez's sense of high production created a powerful image of success and opulence, accomplishment and progress. This was reflected in the changing Gay social circle Vasquez began to attract. His rising superstardom coincided with a shift in numbers and crowds at The Sound Factory. In the early 1990s, the club became known as a safe space for Black, Latino and white Gays. By the mid-90s, The Sound Factory crowd shifted and, due to media awareness, the club became a fashionable spot where celebrities such as Madonna and Cyndi Lauper would go for inspiration. With this influx of star-names heading to The Sound Factory dance floor, a growing number of heterosexuals soon followed in order to keep their finger on the pulse of the next big thing.[194]

[193] Examples of this include U.S. President Bill Clinton signing Executive Order 12968, which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation (*New York Times* 1995), San Francisco outlawing gender discrimination (*The Advocate* 1995), Florida's Broward County passing a gay rights bill protecting employment, housing and public accommodation (*The Advocate* 1995), Tennessee overturning its outdated sodomy laws (*The Advocate* 1995), Sweden legalizing same-sex partnerships (*The Advocate* 1994) and British Columbia allowing gays and lesbians to adopt (*The Advocate* 1995).

[194] By 1991, as The Sound Factory's crowds got larger and his residency more famous, Vasquez's DJ booth was redesigned by Italian fashion design duo Dolce & Gabanna and said to be bigger than most one-bedroom apartments in Manhattan. From 1989 to 1995, Vasquez had a barrage of celebrities visit his club, a list including soon-to-be collaborators such as Whitney Houston, Debbie Gibson and Deborah Cox.

This crossover of hetero interest in Queer culture was quite new, and was connected to white, upwardly mobile, urban Gay men having a larger presence in mainstream and independent media. Through the production of publications that were once considered marginal—highly profitable glossy magazines such as *Out, Icon, Next, Genre* and *HX*—a mainstreaming of Gay aesthetics and a creation of accepted norms within the Gay community began to form.[195] A new model of Gay men's media helped reshape lifestyle ideals and goals in much the same way that magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* did in the 1970s for young women (Streitmatter 325). These publications created their own star system, in which Junior Vasquez was given A-List status. The majority of North American Gay magazines in the mid-1990s began to glamorize the notion of top-tier clubbing—what was later named "the circuit"—as an aspirational, elite and exclusive activity. The Sound Factory—and the music coming out of the club—can be likened to its own comparative study of 1990s Gay nightlife.

The Sound Factory began by pledging to offer intimate yet seemingly inclusive spaces for talented, marginalized and white groups of Gay men and Queer people who helped create the house music scene. The Sound Factory then transformed by way of boasting its large, big-room capacity which, as its popularity grew, began to draw in a growing mainly White Gay crowd. While The Sound Factory dance floor is typically remembered as a multicultural space, its growth brought with it those who could afford the ever-changing membership prices which came with it. Vasquez's trajectory shares a few parallels with The Sound Factory's complicated rise. In an effort to reinvent himself, Vasquez, whose birth name is Donald Mattern (his parents are of German and Italian descent) created his DJ stage alias inspired by the New York City-based

[195] Rodger Streitmatter's book *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* includes a chapter called "Marching Into Mainstream" which identifies this new *Vanity Fair*-style model (in all of its exclusiveness) embraced by the gay glossy magazines I have identified. Spreads on hunks and features on going to the gym were par for the course in magazines such as *Genre*, *Out*, *Icon*, *HX*, *Attitude* and *The Gay Times*.

Latino neighborhood he lived in. There are obvious parallels to be drawn between Vasquez's faux Latin moniker and what some would consider his appropriation of music from Latino and Black music with The Sound Factory's succession from the underground into the *Billboard* charts.

It was toward the tail end of 1995 that Vasquez's crowds started to shift from a mix of African American, Latin-American and Italian-American Gay men and gender non-conforming people from every social and economic stratum to a mainly middle-class and upper-class Anglo Saxon pool of Gay men. This new audience correlated with what was highlighted in leading Gay men's media of the time, via ads, fashion shoots and features: athletic, body-conscious heteronormative jocks, rather than the overtly kinky and/or campy uber stylish urban aesthetics gay men cultivated in the 1970s and 1980s. With all of this momentum—which was sound-tracked and influenced by Vasquez and clubs like The Sound Factory—"sexual exceptionalism," as Jasbir Puar refers to it, began to assert itself widely across dance floors and in the pages of established gay media outlets; there was a newfound centering and idealization of the white Gay man through the emergence of "homonationalism" (54-55). As Puar argues, Homonationalism refers to neo-liberal and middle-to-upper class white western Gay culture in which a majority of White Gay men consciously or unconsciously participated in sexual exceptionalism which had the effect of segregating out Gay men who were not generally fit, white, upwardly mobile and cisgender (58-59). During the later years of Vasquez's residency at The Sound Factory, Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, authors of *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*, observed the transformation of Vasquez's clientele from house music's mainly Queer crowd toward what were mainly white gay crowds and then straight crowds under Vasquez's booth:

> Between 1990 and 2000 the make-up of U.S. dance floors had changed beyond recognition. In contrast to the original American club scenes, the market was homogenously young, white and suburban… New York's leading DJ at the time, Junior Vasquez, saw his crowd change from being almost exclusively black and gay to being overwhelmingly white, far younger and much straighter. (399)

This change of guard—and Vasquez's rising fame—can be seen in the posters from The Sound Factory advertising Vasquez's residency throughout the years, which shifted from a DIY, underground aesthetic images which were ethnically and/or racially ambiguous, to images which reflected the homogeneous white, body-conscious Gay ideal constructed by gay media (see Figures 32 and 33 and Figures 34-35 and Figures 36-39 and Figures 40-41.)

The ideal itself was a response to how the heterosexual mainstream media portrayed gay men in the late 1980s and 1990s, using any publicly known Queer male who was HIV-positive, such as the much maligned fashion designer, Halston, and the once-celebrated Olympic diver, Greg Louganis, as cautionary tales (see Figures 30 and 31). The posters that The Sound Factory used—much like Vasquez's remixes—were a direct response to the changing crowd at the club and how the heteronormative press classified notable gay men as pariahs.[196]

While public strides in legislation and culture inspired a sense of burgeoning opportunity for a number of LGBTQ+ communities, there was, as gay music historian Craig Seymour remarks, a "disconnect between gay visibility and conservative politics" (Seymour). The rebuttal from government representatives who wished to keep this supposed pro-gay agenda at arm's

[196] From 1990-1995, art work featuring body-builder-like models on Sound Factory club posters went against the stereotypical images that gender studies scholar Michael S. Kimmel refers to as socially-accepted images of gay men of the era. Instead, the Sound Factory club posters depict men with chiseled bodies and strong musculature. Kimmel's study stipulates that stereotypes of the time heavily depicted gay men as effeminate, passive and week (and thus, "not real men") in an article called "Issues for Gay Men in the 1990s," which was published in the *University of Miami Law Review*. (681)

length was queerphobic policies such as The Defense of Marriage Act, which was conceived in 1995 and signed by U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1996 (United States, Congress). Organizations such as the newly formed Christian Coalition were also more overt in their communication of anti-gay messages toward rural and urban Queers.[197] Voter outreach by the Christian Coalition compounded Gay trauma by targeting Gay communities that had already suffered not one but two epidemics: the HIV/AIDS crisis and the rise of crystal methamphetamine abuse among urban gay men in North America in the 1990s.[198] Both epidemics shared key traits that transferred onto the dance floor. HIV/AIDS offered unhealthy, PTSD-related connections to sexual health (Rosenfeld 2018) and crystal meth, as noted in a study by a team led by methamphetamine expert, scientist Shirley J. Semple, "induces the release of neurotransmitters that produce sensations of pleasure and enhance at-risk sexual behavior" (Semple et all 2002). While HIV-AIDS could be linked to the fear of sex, Semple's work suggests that crystal meth can be seen as being used as a psychic tonic which helped to alleviate that fear. A study on crystal meth use in Manhattan spearheaded by sociologist Adam Isaiah Green reports that the major benefits of taking the drug had to do with endurance—both social and sexual. For example, Green's study notes how meth alleviated anxiety and "prolonged pleasure" in what was considered to be high-stress and highly sexual environments like Gay nightclubs (Isaiah Green 2016).

The pressures of working 12-15 hour sets every weekend in such environments led Vasquez—who was also nurturing two careers at once (as a resident Sound Factory DJ and an in-

[197] Through the organization's successful campaigns such as "Contract with the American Family" which aimed to "purify" the United States of LGBTQ+ behaviors and citizens. By 1995, the Christian Coalition claimed 1.6 million members and a budget of over $25 million (Encyclopedia.com).
[198] See the 2011 US government report, *Dynamics of Methamphetamine Markets in New York City: Final Technical Report to the National Institute of Justice.*

demand remix producer)—to his own battles with meth addiction. He also felt the pressure to maintain what was considered a toned and muscular body, one that emulated the athletic crowds he spun for. Then there was also a constant counting of crowds, since keeping open a successful nightclub in the mid 1990s—LGBTQ+ and otherwise—had a lot to do with the number of people coming to the party. All of these factored into the defending of Vasquez's top-of-the-heap DJ status[199] and these anxieties can be traced to why Vasquez began to abuse crystal methamphetamine, a drug which his audience was increasingly embracing.[200] As mid-1990s reports of meth usage in America suggest, this turn to "Tina"[201] was seen as a way to boost sexual confidence, diminish inhibitions and dissolve anxieties around sex.[202] With HIV/AIDS causing immeasurable psychological damage to generations of Gay men, Tina—which was commonly purchased and consumed at nightclubs like The Sound Factory—was seen as a tonic to bolster egos and lessen angst[203] about the risks associated with anal sex practices.[204] According to a 2022 National Library of Medicine report, Tina's effects prolong the amount of time users spend on a dance floor because it helps users stay up all night while maintaining the energy needed to get through marathon weekends of partying (Kelly 3-7).

As the last section of this chapter will demonstrate, Vasquez's brand of house music was the soundtrack to the ecstatic and tragic extremes that were spun on and off of the Sound

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[199] As rival DJ Danny Tenaglia confirmed in a 2015 interview with *The Standard*, Vasquez was highly competitive and wanted to remain the "Madonna of DJs."

[200]According to PBS.com, the DEA reported that within an 18-month period in 1994, 170 tons of ephedrine were smuggled into the United States—an amount which equates to nearly 2 billion hits of meth.

[201] "Tina" was the street name used by urban Gay men to describe crystal meth—largely believed among the Gay community to be inspired by another Diva, Tina Turner.

[202] According to The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

[203] These sources of angst are directly connected to the perceived dangers of anal sex, all of which is extensively discussed in *Sex, or The Unbearable* (Berlant and Edelman 8)

[204] A common thread for a generation of Gay men who lived during and after HIV/AIDS was first reported. As Judith Butler writes, "the male homosexual is figured time and again as one whose desire is somehow structured by death, either as the desire to die, or as one whose desire is inherently punishable by death" (Butler, "Sexual Inversions" 82).

Factory's decks. Lennox and Vasquez embedded their politics in their remix, leaving their mark on distinct epochs of Feminist and Queer history.

III

Lennox and Queer-Diva Reconnaissance: "Changes are shifting outside the words."

A sea change occurred in Vasquez's discography in the mid-1990s, one which was in contrast with his earlier output.[205] Vasquez's catalogue of releases from 1989 to 1995 was inspired by the soulful, syncopated works of DJs Larry Levan and Frankie Knuckles and the innovative mixes and beat matches of DJ David Mancuso and DJ Francis Grasso. In mid 1990s, however, Vasquez's music began to break from the legacy of the Queer DJs who came before him. An expanded set of influences took over Vasquez's sets and remixes and created an identifiable shift in his sound. A key production change happening in Vasquez's recordings and sets in this period was his preoccupation with synthesizing and replicating percussion sounds from African and Latin American music in his work (a trend championed by fellow DJs/producers such as The House Ground Movement collective, Afrolectic and DeeMan, all of which defined their dance music as "Tribal"). This, paired with Vasquez's deepening interest in the marketing genre labelled *world music*, guided him towards a soundscape that was bigger, richer and more ambitious in scope.

[205] As stated in *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*: "Junior's Sound Factory [began] as a conscious copy of the Garage and at its best came close to the same feelings of community" (Brewster and Broughton 577). His recordings such as "Work This Pussy," "Just Like a Queen," "My Loleatta," "It's Scratched" and "Took My Love Away"—released under the pseudonym Ellis D and widely circulated in clubs from 1987 to 1990—reflected the inspiration he took from the aforementioned group of Queer DJs.

The composition of "No More 'I Love You's' (Sound Factory mix)" is a textbook example of his stylistic trajectory. The title of the remix references the New York City Queer club he co-ran—thus promoting the visibility of Vasquez and his patrons—yet the name does not properly describe the contents of the music. Lennox and Vasquez both ignored what the music industry or the club-going public would consider to be the main assignment: remixing the first and main single off *Medusa.*[206] As was customary in the mid-1990s, the commercial release of a remix—was to support an album's singles.[207] This means the remix or dance version of the first single was expected by the record company and the buying public to include most of the choruses and verses of the original song. Although samples of other songs could be brought in, the accepted convention of an artist and record company authorized, commercially released remix was that the original song would be given priority and not have to share or compete with chorus or verse time with other songs. With "No More 'I Love You's' (Sound Factory mix)," the pair balked at convention and created a completely new work by sampling from Lennox's cover version of The Blue Nile's "Downtown Lights" and Al Green's "Take Me To The River," and weaving in uncredited vocal samples from Lennox's interpretation of "Thin Line Between Love and Hate" by The Persuaders. Applying Frosio's literary theory of remixing written text to the pair's musical co-production, this multi-song sampling was something like what Frosio describes as "re-narrativization," in which the main message and theme may undergo a complete makeover through the inclusion of lyrics that are not from what is considered the primary source material (23–4). In Lennox and Vasquez's case, the inclusion of other songs outside of the main source

[206] In the mid-1990s as well as today, this clear-cut standard was/is what is expected when releasing a first single. It is established that a lead single's remix should typically stick to sampling/re-dressing one song off the album—the first one chosen to present to the public to promote the album.
[207] This is explored in Sheena Dawn Hyndman's 2012 study on the effects of the remix patterns of music production and consumption. (ii)

material (pop song "No More 'I Love You's'"), creates a new sonic manuscript from pulling scenes out of other tracks.[208] The *Medusa* recording of "No More 'I Love You's'"—performed by Lennox and produced by Stephen Lipson—presents as a sad, lovelorn and bittersweet mid-tempo ballad through vocal delivery and through its homogeneous text and song structure. It clocks in at 90 beats per minute. In Lennox and Vasquez's remix, the sampling of a cross-section of specific moods and lyrics from three other songs from *Medusa* reinscribes the storyline of the original chorus and verse and re-dresses the main attributes of the original as the additions change the forsaken song narrator's tenor completely. By including other songs of *Medusa* in the remix, the new Vasquez-driven version remoulds Lennox's attitude towards the former flame she sings to in the original and the new organization of the song recasts the song-narrator from victim to vindicator.

As Eduardo Navas indicates in his scholarship on remix culture, the act of selection is dictated by an artist's background, socio-political schema, sense of empathy and inter-developing self-efficacies (203). He suggests that remixers utilize cultural codes to motivate intended audiences in an effort to project themselves through the original work and include the lives of listeners into what will ultimately be a new artwork. Navas argues that by interpreting, intertwining, amending, rearranging and re-enacting existing sounds via technology, both audience and creators are able to assert their concerns and join forces to face a shared adversary (144). This suggests that the remix is more than just an amalgamation; it is a conduit to what Navas defines as an artist's desired agency (203–4).

Concerning the work of Lennox and Vasquez, the act of appropriating, cutting/pasting, superimposing/reducing—and, inevitably implementing/re-implementing—constitutes what

[208] Frosio refers to Douglas Kelly's study of early literary remixing practices as a practice of montaging or collaging (Frosio 24, Kelly 214).

Navas would categorize as "an inherently political act" (193). With Navas's framework, Vasquez can be seen as more than just a gatherer or curator when in the throes of remixing and Lennox is accepted as more than just a performer or a provider of vocals.[209] Through Navas's lens, Lennox and Vasquez are co-creators whose social locations steer co-production This means the biases to which they were subjected based on sex, gender, age, race and sexuality, guided their sounds and structure; their pasts provided an existing foundation of song creation that prioritized or de-prioritized distinct moods and messages. It is specifically in their re-enactment point of creation where Navas can be applied to interpret the import of intertextuality in any given remix. He stipulates that beyond the selection process and within the execution of re-composition, a main goal will emerge, one that centers on legitimization (196). Navas's discussion of legitimacy through remixing considers how rejecting what he names "the established art paradigm" by way of recontextualizing chosen sources in a remix creates a renegotiation of what those original sources intended. He suggests that the parties who are involved in a remix are remediating their politics, cultural backgrounds, viewpoints, their own heritage and the heritages of the original material they are using in an effort to recreate from existing creations (196). This idea can be applied to Vasquez and Lennox's array of textual and sonic choices for "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) in which the fight for legitimacy can be both within the new lyrical content of the remix as well as within the technological enhancements, the remix's background beats and rhythms.

[209] As was the case in so many house music projects, where vocalists would not be featured in the main credits of the vinyl, cd or cassette. It was common for star vocalists to not receive proper credit or compensation. An example of this is Martha Wash, who took legal action against C+C Music Factory and Black Box (Patrin).

For example, lyrics in "No More 'I Love You's'" project a wistful, passive and painful memory for the song narrator, [210] eschewing sentiments which are deleted in the remix suggesting that, in the remix, the narrator's heartache is getting its retribution through song edits.[211] This method is used to expunge what Vasquez deemed "dreary" or too delicate for his vision of Lennox and The Sound Factory mix of her first single. For example, Lennox and Vasquez substitute previously mentioned passive lyrical groupings found in "No More 'I Love You's'" with sharp expressions coming from other songs off *Medusa*. To eclipse the original song's agony and distress, The Sound Factory mix contains Lennox's cutting delivery of the lyrics "I don't know why I love you like I do" (sampled from "Take Me To The River," 3:43-3:45) and a tech-enhanced projection of her already-demanding tenor on the lines "Drop Me In The River/Dip Me In The Water" (sampled from "Take Me To The River," 4:17-4:42). These deletions and inclusions transmitted a new energy and attitude into the "No More 'I Love You's'," projecting an aural attack against the hegemonic, heterosexually driven romantic designs of past pop music, a place where the countless female lead vocals are used to retell the sad tale of a former lover in what Vasquez would define as a dreary way. This retelling of the heartbroken ballad into a commanding anthem was something Vasquez injected into many remixes he worked on with other female pop artists in the mid-1990s and beyond.[212] Many of his

[210] For example, the deletion of the entire second verse and pre-chorus which contains lines such as "I used to have demons in my room at night" and "whistling buttonhole tunes to make me cry." Lennox's aching vocal intonation is deleted from the remix.

[211] Specifically, lyrics such as "The language is leaving me in silence" and "I used to have demons in my room at night Desire, despair, desire, so many monsters/ Oh, but now (I don't find myself bouncing around)" and an intermezzo in which Lennox performs infantile speech (all of which speaks to the narrator's vulnerability). These lines have been omitted from the remix and substituted with lyrics and/or utterances/instrumentals which sound extremely aggressive in comparison. They refute the lovelorn sentiment of the original pop song.

[212] Particularly with Vasquez's anthem-izing of ballad or ballad-like pop songs such as Dolly Parton's "Peace Train" and Kristine W's "Feel What You Want." However, Vasquez's knack for invigorating lovelorn pop songs such as Lisa Stansfield's "All Around The World," Whitney Houston's "I Learned From The Best" and Björk's "I Miss You" into empowering, bass-heavy dance floor re-configurations ushered these artists into global clubs and *Billboard*'s Dance charts.

club hits of the time were designated by the Queer community as "Bitch tracks"—or songs that were once slow-to-mid tempo containing lyrical content that revolved around themes of emancipation from destructive relationships or liberation and self-vindication from inequality and disrespect. Arguably, the Bitch track is analogous to a politics of Queer emancipation. According to Kevin Aviance, who is a drag performance artist who helped popularized this sub-genre of house music and worked with Junior Vasquez at The Sound Factory, as well as other clubs for over a decade,

> A bitch track is a personal testimony of how you really feel at that moment in time. All the rage and the self-confidence, you know? You have to understand that so many were shaming us for being queer. The bitch track was dangerous to the shamers, it plays with gender. Guys were supposed to be masculine and shaking their dicks around, and bitch tracks celebrated being effeminate, Black, femme, gay and holding up that feminine power… it's not negative at all; it's the opposite. It's an anointment—it is saying no one can stop me, I'm feeling beautiful, fierce, powerful and I need to be celebrated. (Iannacci, "Year of the Aviance")

Lennox and Vasquez's transformation of a mid-tempo pop ballad into a beat-driven Bitch track dance anthem—clocking in at 125-128 BPM—speaks to these themes as the ones that were prized and reprised in urban Queer clubs in the mid-1990s. While Queer audiences were struggling to relate to figures in popular culture, works from pop Diva figures, as Diva historian Scott Wells argues, gave the Queer community a common repository of heroes who countered normative society[213] and expressed modes of self-validation and tactics to supersede the

[213] Wells's work on Diva audiences touches on the connections we can see in both the Jones/Haring and Lennox/Vasquez collaborations analyzed in this thesis. Wells points out that the long history of feminine/Queer oppression and the Queer support of the Diva's work and life may be perceived as "a feminist epiphenomena of a new order" (12).

prejudices of the outside world (8-9). Endeavoring to revise the word "Bitch" in Gay and Queer underground dance culture by using it to describe Gay male or gender non-conforming people as formidable and defiant beings foreshadowed what the mainstream music media hailed as the return of the phrase's links to female empowerment in popular music.[214] An example of this is Meredith Brooks's hit song "Bitch" of 1997—which tried to redefine the word. It was embraced as an anthem in the popular touring music festival known as Lilith Fair, one of the few venues in the 1990s where female artists of all ages were embraced on stage.[215] As previously mentioned, Queer clubs embraced and nurtured the re-emergence and re-casting of female "legacy artists"—treasuring and cherishing female singer-songwriters-performers who were commonly mislabeled by the mainstream media as "wash-ups" or "has-beens," and who were mistreated by record companies who ranked them as lower or less significant than their younger counterparts.[216] The Queer siding with the Diva in LGBTQ+ politics reflects the fact that many Queer activists looked to both the women's movement and Black liberation as templates for advancement.[217] Just as singers such as Meredith Brooks used "Bitch" as a sexist term to critique sexism, Queer club performers like Vasquez and Aviance spun "Bitch" tracks to combat opposition.

[214] A profile of Meredith Brooks in *Billboard* magazine's June 7, 1997 issue states the following: "Bitch" is Brooks' attempt at reclaiming the 'B' word and cleansing it of its exclusively pejorative nature" (Bambarger).
[215] One of the most popular tracks of the Lilith Fair tours was Meredith Brooks's top ten hit, "Bitch." As musicologist Kalene Westermoreland writes: "'Bitch' draws on feminism, music, and anger; as an anthem for the commodified commemoration of women through Lilith Fair, the song reclaims femininity by celebrating traditional feminine qualities and tenets" (205).
[216] Yet in this recasting, came another sense of Othering. Literary scholar Wayne Koestenbaum helped define the kind of proclamations that a generation of devoted Diva fans ascribed to their preferred sopranos, tenors or counter tenors of choice, calling a Diva's labor "the martyrdom of performance" (127). Koestenbaum's ideas on the notion of worshipping and deifying opera Divas may also be applied to female singer/songwriter/musicians who live outside of the classical music arena.
[217] The most commonly referenced example of this can be found in a well-cited article in *Time* magazine's June 28, 1969, coverage of Stonewall which begins to explore how Judy Garland's death and Stonewall are both linked. It does this by including notes on how the Gay community's identified with the singer's own traumas and failures (Cloud).

Giancarlo Frosio's work on the history of remixing text and art in the 14th and 15th centuries permits a view of the remix as a way of "adding prologues and summaries" to existing works (14). Frosio looks to the romantic literature of *dérimeurs*—French writers who remixed the *chanson de geste*, epic tales of heroes from songs and poems that were reshuffled into prose so that, as Frosio states, a "new, emerging audience" could embrace them (24–5). The modernity of these tales was found, as he argues, in the revisions. In revising or combining existing stories for a new age, Frosio saw how older story versions were critiqued by way of the retelling and remade into what he defines as textual bricolage (28). He argues that textual bricolage brings forth a new, revolutionary language and a form of political speech which is not found in older texts yet is inspired by their content (28). Frosio's literary-based remix theory regards remixing as a process that empowers creators and audiences through the creation of new meanings that pay tribute to and/or contest popular/dominant cultures (28–30). To revise past work for a specific new audience is what a musical remixer does naturally as he/she/they must modernize the sound—and in Vasquez's case, the lyrical content—in order for his audience to engage.

Applying Navas's and Frosio's theories to Lennox and Vasquez's co-creation facilitates a tracing of the re-compositional pathways taken in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix). If, as Navas, Frosio and Aviance suggest, a remix may be viewed as a testimonial and/or a dispatch that aims to obtain legitimacy, then the incubation period for the work in question offers evidence of the kind of agency that Lennox and Vasquez were trying to initiate, and the edits in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) point to the modernizations made of the original material in order to reach emerging Feminist and Gay audiences.

By tracking the remix's socio-political and cultural connections to the Gay and Queer crowds and sounds of The Sound Factory nightclub during Vasquez's residency, we can compare

the transferences of the original song to the remix; moreover, we can hear how the track was revised from "dreary" to "fierce" (Vasquez 2022), from adult contemporary to dance, and how these changes allowed it to go from being overlooked by younger, urban crowds to achieving #1 status on the *Billboard* Dance Club Songs chart.

The revision began through a division of messages via multi-tracks—a process where Lennox and Vasquez significantly re-oriented the expectations of the industry, the artist and the listener, and also re-oriented the remix's similarities to the original track.[218] Applying Frosio's theory of "textual bricolage" (24) to the making of Lennox and Vasquez's co-production, we can locate and define their feral restructuring of the original song's sonic elements (vocals/composition) and texts (lyrics): pinpointing the modernizations in The Sound Factory Mix by focussing on *how* the composition, tempo and vocals are modified from the original pop song, and what lyrical edits were made for Vasquez and Lennox's remix.

Rather than solely pull lines from choruses and verses in "No More 'I Love You's'" to repurpose them in the remix, which was customary in pop remixes of the 1990s, Lennox and Vasquez integrated lines from three additional songs off *Medusa*. Instead of creating a mélange of songs, the recomposing and mashing up of four original tracks constitutes a bricolage because it reconstructed a thorough critique of the original song's themes through sound and vocal modification as well as the deletion and/or inclusion of lyrics from the original pop songs Lennox covered on *Medusa*.

[218] The latter being important to a major commercial remix release. Record labels wanted listeners to have an easy-to-discern, clear way to identify the original track through a dance mix in the hope that the song would drive dance audiences to purchase the full pop album. Lennox and Vasquez had other plans.

In this thesis, an application called LOGIC PRO[219] was used to convert the audio file, "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix)[220] into sheet music to analyze the re-composition of the song. Below is a visual example of the instruments and sounds which were highlighted for the sake of this analysis (see Figure 42). In the first 12 seconds of the original song, there is a simple, easy-to-understand, ascending synth, piano and vocal pattern; this is absent from the Lennox and Vasquez remix. Instead, The Sound Factory version begins with an eerie sci-fi, laser-like synth of timbres which confound the listener because there is no conventional sound guide—there is no discernible ascension or descension of vocals. While the first few seconds in the original song set the listener's ear up with a sense of expectation for a pop formula and pop song structure (treading faster/additional instrumentation to all of the original songs sampled), the remix snubs these rules of radio-friendly composition, leaning instead on Vasquez's penchant for building into 125 beats per minute. The remix offers moments of deceleration and sparse instrumentation which change the listener's expectations and create a structure that has no beginning, middle, or end. This stratagem counters everything that normatively occurs in the majority of pop songs—and the majority of dance remixes—charting in the mid-1990s. Lennox's first couple of soft notes in "No More 'I Love You's'" "Do-be-do-be-do-do-do (oh)" in the original (0:07-0:09) is engineered with a clean and pronounced volume level and pitch. Those same vocalizations in the remix—when they appear at the 14 second mark—are dressed in synth bass and distorted fuzz, layered under the instrumentation with an ominous low tone. This, again, breaks with the usual rules of audible comprehension for listeners and creates tension. What this variation—paired with a blend of melancholic vocals and

[219] This particular application was used because no score of the remix exists, so it was necessary to create one. Unlike other music programs, LOGIC PRO has a deeper understanding of technologies and instrumentation used in the 1990s. It is seen as the industry leader in Electronic Dance Music creation and analysis.

menacing backing tracks—expresses straight away is that in this remix something is intriguingly "off" for the listener. Below is a comparison between the two compositions—Figure 43 is the first official page of sheet music from the pop song and Figure 44 is a transcription of the remix created for this thesis.

The intro foreshadows the remix's radical reworking of vocals. The extension of Lennox's voice in the remix—particularly in the repetitive lyric "changes are shifting outside the words"—pushes the boundaries of what is perceived as the norm in human vocal delivery and was extreme within pop or dance music of the time. This recalibration of the original vocal into a supernatural, artificial, heightened version of itself—which was already a dramatic and camp performance on the original recording—pushes the limits of Vasquez's and Lennox's own sensibilities. To clarify what is happening in certain sections in the Sound Factory Mix, I am calling portions of the remix *camplifications*—in which Lennox's vocal performance is amplified through camp via Vasquez's mixing.

As homosexuality was seen by conservatives and the religious right as "not a natural mode of sensibility" and as camp is the mode of expression which loves exaggeration and sees it as "a badge of identity among small urban cliques" (*Notes* 191), Lennox's lavishly embellished and unnatural note-holds in the remix reiterate an excessive vocalization as a counter to the intention behind the original pop song. These edits and elongations alter the meaning of Lennox's original cover song by way of eradicating much of the pop song's weepy, distressed intonations. Instead, a substitution of weaker tones is made with pronounced severe moments created outside of or found within the existing vocals and instrumentals off *Medusa* (see Figure 45). This song expansion facilitates the drama of the Queer dance floor of the 1990s, a place

where Vasquez was creating the illusion of an endless freedom, fortified by sounds being drawn out, giving the club-goer a simulation of longstanding liberation, a sensation further stimulated by ecstasy and crystal meth use as two of the most popular street drugs of the era.

Through the use of digital multi-effects on a Korg M1 synthesizer/workstation and the extension of edited vocals, an emphasis on self-dominion by way of repeated the augmentation of Lennox's voice occurs. This is where Lennox's voice becomes sharper, much more aggressive and much more authoritative than in her pop music cover and this transformation occurs in the remix via Vasquez's technological re-placing of her vocals. Through a selection of lyrics and tones, the new composition galvanizes the song narrator and flips Lennox's original psychic script through the editing and reassembling of multiple lyric sheets which emphasize a newfound fierceness from commanding vocal performance moments taken from four songs.

The recasting-by-remix falls within the temporal and emotional parameters of what Kevin Aviance and Junior Vasquez refer to as a Bitch track. When probed to describe further the intricacies of a Bitch track in an interview with *IN magazine*, Vasquez stated "There's a certain tempo that made its way into my music. It's like stabbing with the sound because you're essentially stabbing your opponent" (Iannacci, "Remixing History"). Lennox and Vasquez's Sound Factory mix echoes this musical combat and, through this attitude and confidence, announce a new perspective of Feminist and Queer possibilities. In this way, the remix can be heard as a sonic rendering of what Muñoz refers to as the ideality and effect of Queer art—aka "the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality." (*Cruising* 1)

Aside from the staccato nature of the beats applied to Lennox's original, the remix uses tonal shading and camp production to recolour, strengthen or weaken the tones in her vocal performance. This augmenting of the vocal provides an effect that magnifies both lyric and

voice. This is evident in a number of Vasquez's past Bitch track remixes,[221] which are commonly within a 120-125 BPM. His past remixes dissolve and rebuild the singer's original vocal in an effort to stack and re-stack what can be designated as severe declaration points within the remixed songs—declarations which the original songs did not emphasize. In "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) the declarations can be heard in the inclusion and augmentation of the lyrics "how do I know you feel it?/how do I know it's true?" (5:16-5:45) plucked from Lennox's the cover of "Downtown Lights," originally sung by The Blue Nile. Here Lennox and Vasquez repeat and lengthen these lyrical phrases to create dramatic meanings which counter the original source material's delivery and emotional tenor. In those aforementioned moments in the remix, Lennox as narrator is doubting the love she had, which counters the pop narrative to "No More 'I Love You's'" as these newly inputted lyrics question if love ever existed in a cool, understated, robotic vocal delivery which is emphasized via Vasquez's re-composition and supporting synth. What can be considered a sonic younger sister to "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) is Deborah Cox's "It's Over Now (Junior Vasquez Anthem Mix)," which was released in 1999. For Deborah Cox's "It's Over Now (Junior Vasquez Anthem Mix)," Vasquez builds up a great deal of repeated bass and beats under Cox's lyrical performance of the lyric "just forget it/you'll regret it" (5:55-5:58) and then emphasizes Cox's soulful expression at the end of the song's verse in the lines "just turn around and watch me walk/I'm gone!" (6:01 to 6:15) for nearly 14 seconds. Much like No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), "It's Over Now (Junior Vasquez Anthem Mix)," doubles up on the vocal aggression from the original R&B song performed by Cox by way of overlapping her vocals so her voice sounds like it is

[221] Most prominently in Siouxsie and the Banshees' "Fear of The Unknown (Vertigo Mix)," which has a 20-second filtered stretched vocal (3:50 to 4:10) and "Madonna's Secret (The Sound Factory Mix)" which lags and repeats for 16 seconds (2:50-3:06).

mimicking the pounding drum beats which builds into the crescendo of the remix. This moment can be heard from 7:16-7:25 (the 30 times restated —"messing' round/lyin' down"— lyrics indicate how the narrator's lover has repeated cheated on her. This tension is further intensified by a single use of a dramatic string which then leads the track into a hysterical vocal peak where recurring stabs of high notes (Cox is singing "I" more than 20 times) bring the remix to a point where the narrator sounds like she is now sonically rebuking and attacking her lover. When comparing the two versions, the ear can pick up on how the original R&B version of "It's Over Now" sounds like a mere romantic dispute. In contrast, the ways in which Vasquez re-vises "It's Over Now," through tech and vocal reorganization and re-timing, repositions the song's narrative entirely and it is amended to some something which sounds akin to a violent hostile brawl.

As literary theorist Kevin McNeilly argues, thematic variations occur when texts are reinscribed with dramatic amendments for the purposes of making new work. McNeilly says that the process of using what has been previously written in poetry for forms such as a *glosa* often leads to displacement of the original text's tone and, thus, meaning (97). McNeilly cites Canadian poet P.K. Page's "Poor Bird" glosa—which reuses lines from Elizabeth Bishop's poem "The Sandpiper" to create new meaning—as a prime example of this tonal swing. Applying this idea of tonal swinging to the Sound Factory Mix, Vasquez can be interpreted as an active participant who guides the way in which the mood swings through the vocal selections used in the remix. Original vocals from "No More 'I Love You's'" and three other songs off of Lennox's *Medusa*—have particular vocal hues which are highlighted to overturn the emotional tenor of the pop song in the Sound Factory Mix. These particular mood-altering vocal augmentations are just one step in changing the overall thematic mood of the song from sorrowful and defeatist (original) to spirited and resistant (remix).

In these declarative cruxes in the remix, Vasquez's remixed Bitch track takes on characteristics that convey a newfound emboldened conviction. Another example of this tonal swing can be heard during a 20-second hold on the lyric "make me cry" (1:15-1:35) and in two instances where the notes are held at the end of the lyric "Changes are shifting outside the words" (2:25-2:31, 3:13-3:31). In these three phrases, the once-forlorn narrator—sung by Lennox and extended by Vasquez—changes roles completely and becomes vindictive rather than victimized. Here, Vasquez and Lennox completely refashion the original song's identity by elongating and emphasizing specific syllables and lyrics for the remix. They also alter Lennox's vocal performance to indicates a sense of newfound command and confidence, one which translates to how the song functions on the dance floor. This proposes a new, reclamatory sensibility to the song, which reveals itself in the remix but is not heard in the original track, it flips the subjected nature of the song narrator into one that is empowered. In moving the pop song into this Bitch track dance anthem territory, the remix's lyrical edits and technological camplifications[222] allow Lennox and Vasquez's collaboration to depart from the original's defeatist premise (see Figure 45). Instead, through precise amendments and elongations, the main sentiment of the song switches to a newfound retaliatory assertion. This is heard in the overt power conveyed in the manipulated vocal deliveries in the remix[223] and its punctured cut-ups and highly energized production which project a number of affirming reclamations which clash against standard industry convention for commercially released remixes.[224] These

[222] For example, the remix uses organ to intensify certain ascending moments. Again, this would be from the M1 Korg Organ feature.

[223] The record for holding a note for 39 seconds belongs to Tee Green ("Longest-held Vocal Note in a Song (Studio Recording)").

[224] The inclusion of lyrics such as "it's alright" and 27 repetitions of the lyrics "no more" without the rest of the pop song's lyrics directly tells the listener that the narrator is declaring a new future ("it's alright") by acknowledging and declaring a full stop to the treatment she received from her former romantic relationship (through habitual chants of "no more").

assertions are also reiterated through a swelling of notes across longer-than-conventionally-acceptable durations, many of them becoming campy as they bloat the narrator's emotional distress and overstate her retribution. To hear and follow this contextual and sonic shift, press the following NMILYSFVOCALSTACKANALYSIS link and/or review the composition bars below. A transcription of the following can be found on Figure 46.

The remix does more than engineer a reversal of power dynamics and reflect Vasquez's epic sets and audience. It also produces a mocking sonic soap opera of sorts. As with Lennox's prior intersections with Queer art—discussed earlier in this chapter—the remix provides a platform for the blurring of gender through drag, androgyny and what Judith Butler and José Esteban Muñoz refer to as disidentification. The inner reproductions of "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) are direct descendants of Lennox's performances in the tracks and videos for "Love Is a Stranger," "Who's That Girl?" and "Little Bird" and follow a pattern of Queer-Diva collaboration that jumps from on-the-record to on-screen.

In the music video for "No More 'I Love You's'"—the first and last video Annie Lennox directed herself[225]—the singer-songwriter shares the spotlight on a stage once again with drag artists.[226] This time, the drag artists—again uncredited and unknown—are ballet dancers who are the spitting image of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo (see Figure 48).[227]

Lennox explained the reasons behind her video's chosen co-stars in a 1995 interview with the BBC:

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[226] As is the case in the "Who's That Girl" video of 1983, "Beethoven (I Love to Listen To) video of 1987 and her "Little Bird" video of 1992.

[227] Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo is an all-male drag ballet troupe founed in New York City in the early 1970s. The productions have had deep roots in LGBTQ+ activism and typically parody gender, as well as highlighting the absurdity of heterosexual tropes in romantic and classical ballet (*Rebels on Pointe*).

> These male dancers looked so beautiful and strong with their classical ballet costumes and draggy makeup… I requested they dance on pointe which is really hard and not known for men to do that, it's much more a woman's thing to bear the pain. I wanted scenes set in a late 19th-century French bordello, where strange individuals are playing out some kinds of bizarre fantasies. We all seem to be wearing certain kinds of masks which cover up a whole bunch of other hidden agendas and existences, especially with regard to sexuality versus romantic love. (Lennox 1995, 0:03-2:55)

Parallels between Lennox's drag-populated bordello scenes and The Sound Factory can be drawn when thinking of the remix's origins or the extension of Lennox's vocal and video text. Music theorist Stan Hawkins—who has analyzed Lennox's earlier work with Eurythmics—argues that the building and breaking of harmony makes new cultural references and meanings possible (*Pop Palimpsest* 252). His work focuses on how a song's melodic pitch content may have significant cultural ramifications through the tensions that emerge from relaying or renouncing harmonic formulae (*Settling the Pop Score* 108-109). From pinpointing how the minor (female) and major (masculine) chords overlap and repeat themselves in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), an understanding emerges of how Vasquez and Lennox have created a work that splits from the conventions of musical creation and gender roles at the same time. The relationship between the vocals and the production techniques—such as overpronouncing and disintegrating melodies in the remix—characterizes Hawkin's idea of Lennox's long-game strategy of parading gender via voice and video, subverting the lines between drag queen, butch, drag king, femme, transgender, woman and man (*Pop Palimpsest* 253). This is best heard via the ways in which Vasquez and Lennox adapt "No More 'I Love You's'" into a dance remix by

amalgamating and stressing and accentuating the contrasts occurring between each of the three songs off *Medusa* which are amalgamated into No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix). This include deep low notes taken from songs such as "Thin Line Between Love and Hate" (A Minor), "Take Me To The River" (B Minor) and "Downtown Lights" (C# Minor) and a selection of high trills which are emphasised in the original "No More 'I Love You's'" introduction—" Do-be-do-be-do-do-do (oh)" (E♭ Major).

A distortion of harmony also occurs throughout the Sound Factory Mix as the majority of its chords are redressed relative to the original song. The remix's major (masculine) chords are masquerading into minor chords (feminine) via Vasquez's production, creating an illusion that contradicts the shimmering, sugary pop choruses and verse of Lennox's original.[228] Instead, an ominous soundscape—procured by low synth and piano—in the remix reinforces what Hawkins describes as countering the formulae of traditional music composition and traditional gender roles[229]—both of which Lennox had been fighting against since dropping out of the Royal Conservatory and quitting The Tourists.

This is also achieved by offering the listener a tonal antithesis to the original pop song, whose instrumentation has a normative, palatable, smooth, warm, benignly and mostly happy mood to it (specifically from 0:01 to 0:45)[230]. In contrast, the Sound Factory remix enlists two chords to build a thumping progression, one which was so long it could only hold 2 tracks on one side of vinyl (see Figure 47). This two-chord progression twists the sound into a moodier, progressively darker composition that is similar to the sounds used in a horror or dramatic film

[228] At the 2:34-2:40, an echoed sample of the line 'no more I love you') an E*b* major chord alternates with an E chord. This semi-tone interval separates the two chords and produces the dissonant effect, making it sound 'minor.'
[229] This is in reference to the chapter's earlier discussions on the inequality of the music industry of the 1990s, the standard formats/limitation of what is known as radio-friendly pop and the musical curriculum which genders a harmonic grouping of pitches (chords).
[230] Which contrasts the woeful vocal delivery.

soundtrack; the repetitive use of synth and choleric piano and rapid snare drum tension help build a sonic intensity which is not heard on the original. This process challenges the harmony of the original, breaking with standard remix expectations.[231] At the 8:23-8:25 mark in the track, the clear-cut beat match and soothing rhythm comedown commonly used in club remixes of the time[232] is completely forsaken, and instead, yet another build up occurs. The remix progresses into a rather menacing musical iteration of Lennox's request for her male drag ballerinas to "bear the pain" on pointe in her video (Lennox 1995). Listeners are expected to bear the pain of a composition which, stripped of several of its original chords, gradually sounds more and more ominous. The fact that the build-up does not end within a conventional time frame, but, instead, keeps progressing when it should be, by commercial remix standards, winding down, creates unresolved tension for the listener, who is waiting for the buildup to come down. This sense of musical release is not always offered in Vasquez's re-composition and, often, one build-up follows another, creating chaotic, high-energy moments on the dancefloor and on-record. Vasquez and Lennox's remix offers an illusion of limitless euphoria paired with never-ending drama. This sonic consequence can also be interpreted as a reflection of the effects of ecstasy and crystal meth usage, which, when taken, complement the listener's sensation of lingering in the emotional and the ecstatic for long periods of time. In Isaiah Green's report of crystal meth usage in New York City, a great deal of qualitative research was done on Gay club-goers who took the drug in places like The Sound Factory as a means of therapy. According to the report, the drug created an environment which encouraged an activation of oxytocin hormones through

[231] The main thematic focus of the rest of 1995's #1 *Billboard* club remixes of the time were feel-good, uplifting tracks such as Donna Summer's "Melody of Love," Barbara Tucker's "I Get Lifted," Crystal Waters's "Relax," Diana Ross's "Take Me Higher" and Mary J. Blige's "You Bring Me Joy" (*Billboard* 1995).
[232] Which were typically popularized and heralded for beat matching and sticking as close to the original as possible. An example of this is Everything But The Girl's "Missing" (Todd Terry Remix), which remained on the charts for 55 weeks, with its close-to-the-original chord-adjacent re-composition and formulaic harmonies.

touch. Green's research found that many of the subjects profiled used the drug to assist in alleviating negative emotions associated with internalized homophobia. The study also discusses how a "crystal high" on the dance floor jumpstarts what can be described as simulations of love and with that, come false assurances around sexual endurance (318–20).[233]

It is precisely in Vasquez's peak moments[234] within his marathon remixes—specifically in the extended vocal, string and drum build ups—that a link to his music complemented the effects of crystal meth, a drug which has been reported to produce a simulation of long-lasting sexual confidence. Vasquez—who was himself a crystal meth user—began to form a grouping of what is now known as his signature production traits, a long-lasting ascension and descension of beat/bass/vocal stretches over 8-12 minutes of recomposed music. These stretches are part of the core musical makeup of "No More 'I Love You's'" (The Sound Factory Mix). In the same way Lennox can be viewed as working through her trauma via androgynous, drag-fueled videos and vocals, Vasquez's musical production of the mid-1990s can also be seen as a method by way he was working through his own anxieties, insecurities and self-hate[235].

On Figure 51, the piano instrumentation on the sixth staff from bar 265 illuminates the menacing chords which build up towards the end of The Sound Factory Mix, creating sonic rapture by way of elongated tension in the bass, vocals and various instruments from the original

[233] One particular subject in Green's study describes crystal meth's ability to create "otherwise impersonal sexual encounters with new partners into highly pleasurable, long-lasting, 'personal' erotic experiences" (Green 323).
[234] As mentioned previously, dance music/club vernacular, "peak" refers to songs which induce the most hype and energy on the dancefloor by way of musical build-ups. Vasquez's sets in the mid-90s popularized those pinnacle "peak" moments where a slew of dramatic tracks would reach sonic heights via speedier tempos, elongated vocals, pounding beats, orchestral instrumentation and sampling. Toronto's TRIBE magazine—which ran from 1993-2005 and catered to clubgoers—began favoring and covering DJs who played "peak tunes" in their late 90s coverage, well after Vasquez's popularity started to wane. Vasquez's successors—from DJ Danny Tenaglia to DJ Honey Dijon—all interpreted this Vasquez-ian style of epic build-ups to create their own "peak" moments.
[235] As per his interview with *The Houston Chronicle*'s April 27, 2006, edition.

tracks and from Vasquez's array of newly sourced sounds. To hear and follow this dramatic chord shift, press the following NMILYSF MIX CHORD ANALYSIS link.

By sampling and re-arranging other songs from *Medusa* in the Sound Factory Mix, Lennox and Vasquez are able to utilize, defy and refashion the subtexts of these other tracks. Lennox's cover of Al Green's "Take Me To The River" from *Medusa* is one example of this. As music critic Ian McCann notes in his article about the song, the lyrics feature a baptismal dunking metaphor derived from the New Testament and a male narrator complaining that his 16-year-old female lover has stolen from him and refuses to satisfy his sexual needs. McCann connects the water to sexual euphemisms and ascertains that the lyrical content mixes carnal desires with the idea of a sexual and spiritual cleanse. The Sound Factory remix Queers both ideas by building up beats from repeating the lyrics "washing me down," by changing the meaning of the lyric entirely by placing it in this new Sound Factory context.[236] According to José Esteban Muñoz, through repetition in remixing, disidentification transforms mainstream heteroperpetual work with patriarchal roots into Queer and pro-Feminist art that can exact a critical distance from patriarchy (*Disidentifications* 31). Muñoz defines disidentification as a process that recycles, and rethinks encoded meaning. His work looks at how cultural texts can be scrambled to recircuit their workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications (*Disidentifications* 31).

The Sound Factory remix demonstrates Muñoz's idea of scrambling and recircuiting in the way it rigorously increases the volume of Lennox's backup vocals and breathing patterns—and magnifies them. It offers the listener direct examples of extremely gendered and gender

[236] This emphasis on water imagery in the remix (more than 60 references) may not be intentional, but it certainly does link to the use of ecstasy and crystal meth, both of which provoke thirst; this effect is so powerful that it can lead to death from excessive water consumption (Jenkins).a

ambiguous sonic micro-spectacles.[237] The breathing patterns in particular sound like a combination of chokeholds and S&M breath-play, broadening the sensuality of dance and pop songs altogether as they go beyond the border of panting or breathiness, entering the realm of gasping and susurrating. The incessant repetition and apexes of these breathy sounds reflect what dance music historian Vita Miezitis observes as the culmination of the "peak"—a term taken from disco. The "peak hour" indicates a time in the club when the DJ's music is at its most galvanizing, the dance floor is at its fullest and the flow of the kinetic and sonic rhythm of the audience flows in such a way that it resembles a simulated ongoing cycle of sexual climaxes (41).

To hear and follow this amplification of breath and vocal elongation in the following NMILYSF REMIX VOCAL EXT ANALYSIS link and/or Figure 52.

Lennox's relentless utterances are transformed to resemble percussion, a direct substitution for traditional African, Latin American and Indigenous percussive instrumentation, which you can hear in the following link at the 1:50 and 10:10 marks: NMILY REMIX DRUM ANALYSIS

This adaption and reiteration of Lennox's voice—which can best be heard in 9:43-10:03—further accentuates the nuances of her vocal drag performance via guttural exclamations plucked from "Take Me To The River." The sexuality of Lennox's vocals (masculine, dominating, icy) is front and center, and directly opposes the light moans and soulful shrills of Al Green's recording of the song.[238] At the 9:43-9:30 and from 10:11 until the end of the track, Lennox's voice (via "uh huhs," "dum di duh dums"), is technologically melded into deeper

[237] Heard in the remix's beginning from 0:32-0:42—where Lennox vocals are underscored by a laser sounds and the gong of a bell, which pronounces her high (feminine) pitches—and its end from 9:47-9:54 where Vasquez amplifies Lennox's deep husky/masculine low utterances and deeper breaths which punctuate the bass and dance beat.
[238] Lennox's cover also changes the words of Green's song. All references to "she" in Green's version become "you" in Lennox's version and remix—de-gendering and refocusing the narrator's subject to the audience. Also, all references to the narrator's "soul cleansing" are deleted.

androgynous sounds—further transforming Lennox's already Queer-sounding vocals into an androgynous human drum effect. Her rolling throat-drum then acts as an instigator to fire up a sonic replication of The Sound Factory's mainly male crowd. The inclusion of this large group of male-identified voices rejoicing in unison—as they would in The Sound Factory—allows us to assume for whom this mix is intended—a powerful new tribe of gay men who are part of what Vasquez called The Juniorverse.[239]

By including his Tribe in the remix and by stretching the parameters of Tribal House music in its composition, Vasquez was making a statement about the possibilities of the burgeoning genre of Tribal House.[240] In converting "No More 'I Love You's'" from a dejected pop song into an uplifted-yet-"fierce" Tribal House Bitch track and broadcasting a sonic representation of the people dancing under his booth, Vasquez—with Lennox's vital vocal performances—is creating the soundtrack for what Muñoz would refer to as "a utopian blueprint for a possible future while, at the same time, staging a new political formation in the present" (*Cruising* 200). In the same vein as Jones and Haring's radical-for-MTV video, Vasquez's compositional shifts—which extend Lennox's contralto choral prowess and radically de-categorize her outside conventional radio genres and chart play—further disidentify her from heterosexual vocal norms. The ways in which Lennox's multi-track vocals are pushed by production effects both identify and disidentify her gender plurality. Vasquez drags Lennox's samples into arenas of exaggeration, (re)producing uber-butchy expressions (in the amplification

[239] A name which, until 2011, referred to a series of circuit parties which Vasquez played at—notably marketed towards upwardly mobile Gay men. This link — https://youtu.be/eQigw-h5mm0 — drives to the full remix on Youtube, where the replication of club patrons cheering on Vasquez's sets at the 4:10 mark. At the 10:11 mark, until the remix's final fade out, a further pronunciation of Lennox's drum-vocals can be heard.

[240] Which, as Lennox and Vasquez showcased on this remix, could be considered one of the most versatile dance music genres of the time. Eliciting a wide range of emotions on the dance floor, a typical Tribal House set could build throughout the night: bouncing from elevating and jovial sounds and then, segueing into atmospherically heavier/"hard-hitting mixes" (DJ Brother C). This remix interchanges and cycles back and forth, placing build-ups in the re-composition in a sporadic way.

of "take me"), (re)expressing her contralto notes into a petrified opera femme (in the elocution of "woebegone" 0:48-0:50) and following it up with deep guttural embossments ("uh huh" 9:47-9:50), all of which repeat throughout the remix.

The disidentification through repetition can also be heard in the reprising of the lyrics, "how do I know you feel it?"— lifted from *Medusa*'s "Downtown Lights" and "Thin Line Between Love and Hate."[241] These lyrical repetitions can be seen as setting a utopian stage which mirrors what ethnomusicologist Christopher Small calls "musicking." This term refers to the act of taking part in a musical performance, including "all [persons] involved in any way" (Fikentscher 57) and sees the dancer as a music collaborator. In including and repeating "how do I know you feel it?", Lennox and Vasquez are requesting an emotional and physical response from a potential dancer's body. This question comes with the hope or intention of a corporeal response. The work of ethnomusicologist Kai Fikentscher sees a dance floor summoning—via set list or song choice—by a Queer DJ to his Queer audience as a call to action to make space for Queerness so that sexuality is permitted (61). Vasquez's aural and physical environment in The Sound Factory also encouraged sexual expression[242] and, as Vasquez implied in an interview in 1997, was created to give sexual agency to his patrons. As the remix's title suggests, this track is site-specific and adopts the Sound Factory patron as the targeted listener. Fikentscher argues that the listener and dancer are one and the same and argues that he/she/they become social instruments whose bodies are summoned to create agency by engaging with the music while

[241] A song whose lyrics Lennox also changes in her cover version (and Vasquez and Lennox then amplify those changes in the remix). The lead vocal of the original song is sung by Douglas "Smokey" Scott of The Persuaders. He sings lyrics which cast him as a philandering husband coming home early in the morning to his seemingly docile wife, and then waking up in the hospital "bandaged from foot to head" (2:23-227) after being physically assaulted by his wife. Lennox's cover has her singing as the assaulter, the "sweetest woman in the world /the meanest woman in the world" (1:57-2:03) who exacts revenge.

[242] On any given night at The Sound Factory, more than 30 men were lined up underneath Vasquez's DJ booth, dancing with nothing but towels covering their genitalia. This inclusion of near-naked dancers pushed the city's emerging codes of conduct to their limits.

listening to it (61). To view the remix as an invitation to engage, as Fikentscher does, we must then ask in what the Queer dance floor is engaging? With Underground Dance Music's roots firmly planted in the struggle against the repressive, dominant forces that live predominantly outside of the club—and the aforementioned emphasis on the length and elongation of club play—we can assume the invitation comes with the implication that engaging does not merely mean taking up space, but also cultivating it and keeping it safe.

Much like Lennox, Vasquez's political proclivities stem from his own battle with society and the music industry. While Lennox's age and gender dictated the way in which she was treated by radio programmers and perceived by her label and the mainstream press in the 1990s, Vasquez's sexuality came with its own barriers. In an interview with *IN* magazine, Vasquez remarked on the amount of homophobia he confronted at the time. Here, he speaks of his approach to his work and how it was ignored or destroyed because of the anti-Queer reception it faced by the music industry, record companies who mainly employed straight, white men whose primary goal was making money—not music.

> I wasn't really accepted. So many of these songs or remixes—I don't know where they are or who has them. It took a lot for me to make friends in the business, like Anthony Pinto and Clive Davis. Others would criticize my work or say it was too gay. The problem was always that these companies would give you the track and say, 'Do whatever you want' and then you would do your thing and your version would disappear because they'd want something else…even though I ended up having a lot of number ones on *Billboard* dance charts. When someone like Madonna or Whitney is singing, I hear it a different way and that's why I change it. A lot of conservative people would knock the way I see it and mix as being too gay or too queer, but it got to a point where I

> would say 'fuck it—I like the way it is' and stand up for my work. It was like standing up for my vision.

So much of Vasquez's vision in "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) is interlaced with his own perceptions of Lennox. As noted earlier, he viewed her in much the same way as her club audience did, as a "fierce Diva,"—a perception which was informed by her past Queer intersections and the Feminist elements of her work with Eurythmics. As Fikentscher observes in his work on New York club culture, Diva performances in the 1980s and 1990s were often seen as reiterations of the bond between female singer-songwriters and Gay men:

> Both the Divas… as females and their audiences, whether Caucasian, Latino, or African American gay men, are in more than one way "others" in a society based on Western Judeo-Christian values and standards that have historically reinforced the marginalization of its minorities of Latinos, African Americans, gays and lesbians. (65)

Vasquez was not simply aware of this sentiment; he echoed it in his own public relations during the 1990s. In a cover story for *Icon*, Canada's leading Gay men's glossy publication of the time (see Figure 50), he attempts to explain the Gay/Diva connection, stating:

> If you look at history, it's been gay men and Liza Minnelli, gay men and Barbra Streisand and Madonna, and now it's just me and Dolly Parton. Their collaborations are successful through camp. The women we [Gay men] are attracted to have such high camp value… it takes animation. When they are as animated as Cher, Cyndi Lauper, Madonna and Dolly Parton, they become very strong visually…I just reel in all the drama from that. (42–3)

Vasquez's use and interpretation of Lennox's Queer-toned vocals, politicized covers and camplified performances for their collaboration links to Sibylle Baumbach's theory on Medusean tensions found in literature and art. Baumbach's scholarship looks at the tale of Medusa as a

preexisting text which ignites a "double artwork" effect as the monstrous figure is received and reconceived by way of extreme points of perception (225). Baumbach defines Medusean tensions in art as locating "the beautiful and the terrible" paradoxes that derive from Medusa's origin story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (229). [243] Baumbach examines how artworks can be subjected to a Medusamorphosis, an effect which demands an inversion of the subject and the subjected, in the same way that the Sound Factory remix does. Her criteria for the Medusamorphosis to take place requires mutual iteration, an interaction with and a reflection of the subject and the subjected (240). The cover image of Lennox's *Medusa* album—taken by Bettina Rheims (see Figure 53), a woman who spent the majority of her career photographing lesbian erotica—is used as an example of Medusamorphosis; Baumbach analyzes it as "a remake, retransformation, and retrieval of the Medusa as an image of female, erotic power—and of consumption…" (239). Baumbach heralds the image's ability to lure and repel by way of Medusa's powers of "fascination and revulsion" (241) as the ancient creature was proclaimed both a monster and a mesmerizing being whose gaze was to be feared by all the male soldiers who tried to hunt her down for personal gain or glory[244].

Vasquez and Lennox's collaboration is also an example of Medusamorphosis, rearing its ugly and pretty heads in a musical context: moments of repulsion and attraction are implanted throughout the track. The distorted basslines heard prominently at 1:58-2:10, 2:39-2:50 and 7:40-8:00 give the listener a feeling of agitation because the dissonance creates aural anxiety for the ear, which expects a resolution or a fix in the measure to occur at any moment. This is uniquely contrasted by the delicate, filtered and ethereal insertion of the lyrics "Downtown Lights" (from

[243] Medusa is depicted as an attractive young woman who is transformed into a powerful, feared and hunted man-defeating monster after being raped by Neptune (*Metamorphoses* IV: 967–79).
[244] As poeticized in "Perseus' Battles" in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (V: 121–133)

the recording of the same name). This short musical segment is a straightforward stream that lulls and pacifies the listener with quiet background vocals found from 5:50-6:10. Standing alone in the remix, this section acts as a musical soliloquy in what can otherwise be likened to a hectic dramedy. These 20 seconds are where Lennox and Vasquez give the listener a whiff of the conventional softness of the original mid-tempo songs on the *Medusa* album in their radio-friendlier splendor. This is contradicted seconds later when an onslaught of Lennox's sharp vocals take over (at 6:49) and reject the idea that this mix will follow normal patterns of a commercial, homogeneous pop and dance remix. This deceptive incongruence occurs again at the 6:19-6:24 mark with the re-introduction of an instrumental sample from the pop recording of "Downtown Lights," a passage which resembles the soundtrack of a flashback sequence in a narrative film[245]. This brief interlude is disrupted at the 6:25 mark, when another ambush of snare drums, organ and piano ascend and descend. In these caustic pinches of music, Lennox's voice is illuminated by juxtapositions that we can assume, from Vasquez's own comments, are guided by both his fascination with and disgust with Lennox's 1980s and 1990s repertoire. As per Vasquez's interview with *IN Magazine*, his attraction and repulsion of Lennox's work is front and center; he explains how he sought to overturn what he identified as the 1990s music industry's adult contemporary strategy of dimming down Diva voices he and his Gay audiences cherished, particularly those of Annie Lennox, Cher and Madonna:

> I noticed a lot of [Divas] started getting produced to sound quiet and dreary—even though they had complex voices. I turned the volume up and focused on their powerful sides. I did it like this because I was always experimenting with what sounded the best

[245] The slicing of muted and non-muted strings occurs here, instrumental blends famously used by composer Bernard Hermann in the score to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. As analyzed by music critic Aaron Gilmartin, the soundtrack was filled with strings which were "imitating high-pitched shrieks to match the emotions of the victim being stabbed onscreen" (Gilmartin).

> out of the speakers on the dance floor so I was giving them a boost. A club version of a song needs to be bigger than the single – it needs to hit harder and sometimes be *more* than the original. That's why I had these long remixes where I can stretch notes or the chorus or add filters or sounds (Vasquez 2022).

The above statements around Vasquez's usage of technology to "boost" and focus on the "powerful sides" of the experienced female vocalists he worked with indicate that he was doing more than simply appealing to the nostalgia of his core Gay Sound Factory crowd. Instead, this interview specifically signals how Vasquez was intentionally looking to usurp what he deemed to be the insufficient and careless 1990s pop music production which, he insists, mollified the voices of a full generation of Divas, thus reducing their legacy and limiting their connection to the rising music genres like dance and EDM. From his quotes—and his remix catalogue from 1990-1998—we can determine that his intention to enhance and/or re-ignite the careers of the female vocalists he worked with by way of linking them to what was perceived as underground, riskier spheres music rather than taking the safer production routes of 1990s contemporary pop came from a place which saw the iconic women as part of the future of music and Queer culture. His implicit sonic assessments of Lennox's "fierce" (4:07-4:10) and "dreary" (0:29-0:32), "hard" (2:29-2:31) and "soft" (5:30-5:31), "butch" (4:15-4:20), "femme" (0:36-0:40) and "androgynous" (6:54-6:58) performances are accentuated in epic moments within his and Lennox's "No More 'I Love You's'" Sound Factory remix and they each represent an underscoring of both artist's politics and/or social attitudes. This collaboration turns up the volume on Lennox's vocal ferocity, reinforces the Feminist iterations baked within *Medusa* and uses New York City's growing Tribal House sound to defend and re-draft both Vasquez's and Lennox's position in music.

Chapter Conclusion

To survey and analyze Lennox's intersection with Vasquez is to begin the daunting task of shedding light on a long-standing closeted history of Queer-Diva collaboration in popular culture. As discussed, this co-production speaks to watershed moments in Queer liberation and a distinct time in the mid-1990s where both Lennox and Vasquez were facing powerful oppressors.[246] This work speaks to the ways in which they armed themselves against an anti-Feminist and anti-Queer music industry through their co-production. Lennox's repertoire—fueled by Feminism and a drive to disidentify with the patriarchal systems and gender norms which tried to confine her work—synergized with Vasquez's own resilient trajectory in the music industry. In collaboration, through the remix format, Lennox and Vasquez did more than just reformulate these norms on the dance floor; they socially and political challenged and rerouted them. They utilized the remix as an aural shield to protect their livelihoods and reinvent themselves in response to the labels of "too old," "too Queer" and "too Feminist."

How Lennox and Vasquez came together to challenge the sexist, homophobic and ageist norms of the music industry through club music have not received much attention in academia or in music criticism despite their impactful partnership, albeit it relatively short. In unearthing "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix), an arsenal of technical and performance modes are revealed as disseminators of feminism and gender plurality as well as trace the history of LGBTQ+ communities in the throes of remixing themselves. While questions remain surrounding Lennox and Vasquez's collaboration, its complex execution positions this work as a disrupting opus that uplifts its creators and its core audience through a re-narration of Queer and Feminist resistance and futurity.

[246] This includes the strides made with Executive Order 12968, which banned discrimination based on sexual orientation (*New York Times* 1995) and San Francisco's gender discrimination laws (*The Advocate* 1995).

Conclusion

On June 24, 2023, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England opened an exhibit entitled *Diva* which, as reported by the *New York Times*,[247] was staged in order to make "the argument for a diva as a glamorous, modern star" (West-Knights). The cover of the exhibit's catalogue features Grace Jones suited in a creation by one of her go-to Queer collaborators, Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani. The introduction of the exhibit states the purpose of having such an extensive grouping of Diva-centric costumes, paraphernalia and photos on display, claiming the exhibition is a curatorial reaction to the "negative attitudes and endemic misogyny" aimed at leading female figures in the arts (Bailey et al. 40–2). The exhibit showcases work by pivotal collaborators such as Bob Mackie—the recently honored gay fashion costumer who created iconic workwear for Tina Turner, Cher and Barbra Streisand.[248] A prominent section of the exhibition features a gown Annie Lennox wore in her video for the song "Little Bird" (off her 1992 solo disc, *Diva*). The Lennox display is accompanied by photographs of Lennox in the "Little Bird" video with a cast of unknown, uncredited drag queens. These anonymous cast members—whose performances take up more screen time than Lennox—are not identified in the museum's placards, catalogue footnotes or in the exhibit's official book. As discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, the members of Lennox's Queer cast in the video for "Little Bird" assisted in shaping the messages and storyline of the video yet none are included on any of the video's production digital call sheets.

[247] As seen in the newspaper's 30 June 2023 edition.

[248] Although Bob Mackie is responsible for co-creating the most impactful iconography for the artists mentioned, The Council of Fashion Designers of America reportedly shunned his work until 2019. After 58 years in costuming, his achievements were recognized. He has yet to win an Oscar despite being nominated several times.

The exhibit, and its eponymous scholarly compendium (a book of essays published by the V&A), centers on female artists who have received the crown title of Diva—presenting them as lone geniuses whose creative gifts demonstrate their status as autodidactics. Save for several costume credits in small print within the exhibition, the Diva is predominantly classified as ruthlessly autonomous. But to conceal vital artistic partnerships in an exhibition which claims to explore the evolution of such celebrated pop icons further perpetuates the historical inaccuracies in Diva legacies. The fact that the evidence of the practice of Queer-Diva collaboration is either erased from pivotal moments in this exhibit—career-thrusting discographies and videographies indebted to LGBTQ lives—or lazily left unexamined within the first major exhibition on the Diva's art form signals the pressing need for the further recovery of Queer history in pop culture.

This thesis instigates a Queer-Diva examination as a way of remapping music history. It argues that to re-map the cultural and musicological landscape of the Diva is to look beyond decades-old stereotypes which depict iconic female singers as sheltered artists whose creations are made in a vacuum. It revisited two Divas' works through modes of interdisciplinarity, while steering clear of inaccurate assumptions which assess Diva careers as a series of self-made inventions. Instead, this research begins to illuminate what has been obscured for so long and identifies what has been misidentified for both the Diva and her Queer collaborators. The interdisciplinary framework of this thesis has allowed for a multi-lensed examination to occur in pop music—looking at how gender, sex, race and power play a role in the creation of musical iconography. It does away with the years-long practice of examining Divas as mere musical personalities who detach themselves from their audiences and fellow artists.[249] Instead, this work

[249] Examples range from Diana Ross and the ongoing claims that Ross designed the full wardrobe to the movie, *Mahogany* when the film recruited a four-person costume team led by Gay designer Jay Hurley (Randolph) to recent analysis by Jennifer DeClue on the absence of gender-nonconforming music artist Big Freedia in Beyoncé's music video "Formation" (who co-wrote and is featured on the song but not the video).

has brought to light groundbreaking collaborations which are significant because of how they broadcast pro-Queer, pro-Feminist and pro-Black views of gender, sexuality and race. It examines Diva output for its political potency and social activism and recognizes pop creations by female artists and Queer people as vital artistic projects which encompass much more scope and nuance than the damaging-yet-popular tropes coming out of a half-century of the Diva's media coverage.[250]

This work underlines the advantages of exploring the Diva's work in an interdisciplinary approach that both integrates and sidesteps traditional musicological examination. It analyzes and chronicles three decades of Queer-Diva collaborations to establish *which* countercultures and subcultures her oeuvre inspires and is inspired by. Going beyond preservation and archiving, this thesis intentionally assembles itself around legitimizing the lives of the invisible Queer-Diva republics and regimes in pop. As relayed in these two chapters, the works of Divas are fueled by LGBTQ people whose traumas, desires and lived experiences helped co-create career-defining iconography.[251]

The two case studies probing Queer-Diva co-production emphasize the importance of locating a female pop artist's avenues of impact and influence. This concentration on integral moments of pop creation, driven by both Divas and Queer people, unveils what revolutions are hiding within iconographic and chart-topping works of film and music. To excavate these works through various disciplines is to also understand the breadth and scope of the Diva's collaborative skills. As a result, this work acknowledges both her own struggles in society and the music business as well as the struggles of her fellow artists. It re-discovers Queer-Diva

[250] According to research done for the Diva exhibit at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which examines the growth of "negative attitudes and endemic misogyny" aimed at leading female figures. For decades, Divas were characterized as difficult, extremely temperamental individuals in the press (Bailey et al.)
[251] Examples of this are found in the final sections of the first and final chapters.

collaborative works as disavowals of the common sexist assignations connected to past Diva assumptions. It explores her allegiances to the Queer fringes and the ways in which counterculture is created within sects of the LGBTQ underground.

This investigation looks forward as much as it looks back, as it aligns the Diva's nomenclature with operatic roots. As Hillary Poriss and Rachel Cowgill have explained, the term Diva was once used to define female performers who embodied a divine presence via artistic performances which transcended stock characters and archetypes. Inaccurate portraits of the Diva in the 20th and 21st centuries—built from mainstream media and record company marketing strategies—have perpetuated the Diva's work as an impossible apex of individuality and attitude.[252] Many self-made, insular Diva origin stories came from noble intentions, as they attempted to abolish prior narratives which proclaimed that female singers who fit into the Diva category existed and succeeded within a patriarchal Svengali system.[253] As this study stipulates in two chapters which focus on the dynamism of Queer-Diva collaboration, co-produced work which incorporates and intersects pop music from Diva performers and LGBTQ lives can be recognized as aural and visual shields: protection against homophobia and age-old, sexist rhetoric which dictates that behind-every-woman-there's-a-great-man. This thesis exposes how the work of Grace Jones and Keith Haring and that of Annie Lennox and Junior Vasquez created zeitgeist-challenging iconography and music which countered anti-Feminist and anti-Queer ideals from the 1970s through the 1990s.

In addition, the analysis of these two case studies demonstrated how the perception of Diva creation as a singular practice in specific Queer-fueled iconography eradicates LGBTQ

[252] As this work reiterates, the Diva is seen as an artist with remarkable vocal and technical capacity as well as someone who emits a magisterial presence. This work does not adhere to the caricature of the Diva as being a difficult, selfish creature whose body of work is self-involved and self-designed.
[253] As discussed in Chapter 1, where Jean-Paul Goude claimed to have authored Grace Jones's persona.

choreographers, stage and studio producers, co-writers, stylists and artists from their own co-creations and thus, deletes or dims their place in music history. This work argues instead that Queer-Diva collaboration is a process where Queer counterculture reorders and transforms mainstream popular culture to oppose and expose sexist, racist and homophobic discourses.

Performance scholar Scott Wells's view of the Diva's output assisted in motivating the inquiries of this thesis. Wells's work looks at how global Queer communities see Diva outputs as support systems which aid in the finding of oneself through gender-varying performances and modes of expression.[254] Wells's view of the Diva's work explicates the potency of her discography in Queer life, stating, "Her allegory is a tool for learning and a source of inspiration and motivation to overcome the seemingly impossible with and through art" (15).

For the Queer collaborators who worked with Jones in the 1970s and 1980s and those who partnered with Lennox in the 1980s and the 1990s, the term "seemingly impossible" effectively described their situation in society. As this thesis demonstrates, Queer record producer Tom Moulton, art director Richard Bernstein, illustrator Antonio Lopez, graffiti artist Keith Haring, film director Derek Jarman, DJ Junior Vasquez and a number of yet-to-be-credited gender fluid performers and choreographers were part of three generations of LGBTQ people whose civil rights were given and taken away via government legislation. These are talents who faced the constant trauma of societal ostracism, the psychic repercussions of HIV/AIDS, and persecution from a rising moral majority, all while their works were being commodified and segregated by corporate and governmental institutions. This analysis demonstrates that via collaboration, specifically through the video platform and the remix format, Jones and Haring as well as Lennox and Vasquez did more than just reformulate norms on film and on the dance

[254] As well as sexuality, self-confidence and HIV/AIDS.

floor—they rerouted them socially and politically. It establishes how they employed pop to respond to the labels of "too old," "too Queer," "too Feminist" or "too Black." This research outlines how the Queer-Diva collaboration and the resulting pop iconography of these partnerships echoes these struggles.

While many of Jones's and Lennox's collaborators identify/identified as Gay[255] or Lesbian, their work expands a "Queer" designation—one which is used as shorthand for the LGBTQ community in this study and represents multifarious expressions of gender and sexuality.[256] These work such also serve as a crystal ball, foreseeing the next stages of LGBTQ music, art and community coming out of the mid 1980s and the late 1990s as Queer people were trying to re-envision and remix their socio-political identifications.[257] This thesis begins the cartography of many of the forthcoming empires of Queer-Diva collaborations of the 2000s, 2010s and 2020s. It allows for further discovery of what can be considered overt or covert connections to the work of Jones and Haring and Lennox and Vasquez in modern pop music. It opens up questions on the creation of pop music and the types of alliances, tensions and contestations stimulating present-day and future Queer-Diva co-productions. Interdisciplinary examinations of Queer-Diva collaboration offers insights on the implications of new digital advancements in musical production and new forms of music delivery. Further examination of

[255] Save for Antonio Lopez, who identified as bisexual.
[256] As this work conveys, the word *Queer* shifts in meaning when discussing decades of LGBTQ visibility. The umbrella term challenges binary systems and requires a constant negotiation with gender and sexual identity. When utilizing both of these terms, a number of inadequacies, complexities, inaccuracies and contestations appear in the midst of analysis.
[257] As incarnations of Haring designs within the Jones/Haring co-directed video to "I'm Not Perfect" would make their way into his work with ACT UP and series which depicted scenes of political strife and emancipation. Jones's image in the video also predates and emulates the fourth-wave Feminist movement which prizes intersectionality and highlights the effects of sexual and racial discrimination as intricate and paradoxical (Munro). Lennox/Vasquez's co-production forecasts what can be defined as the foundations of today's dance music (EDM) with its tech prowess and vocal processes. What is now known as the "circuit" sound—which caters to and is marketing to white, upwardly mobile gay men—derives from Vasquez's Sound Factory-influenced music and an interpretation of Lennox's sonic expressions of liberation and resilience.

Queer activist sites within Diva-led pop music opens up queries on the repercussions of expressing and/or obscuring LGBTQ, Feminist and Black messaging in Diva output in the 21st century.

Considering Jones and Lennox and their Queer collaborators pre- and post-"I'm Not Perfect" and "No More 'I Love You's'" (Sound Factory Mix) through a critical historiography allows for their works to be re-seen or re-heard as moments of retribution. It sanctions new comprehensions of particular representations of Queerness, Blackness and Feminist thought. It is through this analysis that an avenue of exploration can be opened up to further examine the impact of each co-production in the future, specifically within the three decades of pop Diva output that follows Jones and Lennox's releases. For example, in Lady Gaga's body of work from 2008 to 2022, creative teams consisting of LGBTQ people (known as the Haus of Gaga) informed, fueled and co-devised Gaga's iconography with her. When evaluated alongside the case studies in this thesis, Gaga's Queer-Diva co-productions are permitted to be seen, analysed and reclaimed as LGBTQ activist spectacles which connect to the political and social environments in which they were made.

This study has begun the process of recuperating aspects of Queer and Feminist history whilst taking the torch from a number of interdisciplinary scholars, revolutionary thinkers and listeners such as Steven Moon, Freya Jarman-Ivens and Daphne Brooks. This trio's interrogation of Pop Music Studies, Queer Studies, Feminist Studies and Black Cultural Studies has started a re-orientation in the field of musicology and ethnomusicology simply by including identity, race and gender in discussions about sonic creation. This thesis builds on these foundations in ethnomusicological analysis yet creates a new pathway which turns the proverbial spotlight to Queer-Diva pop music creation rather than Queer-Diva audience and fan relations. It examines

how, in popular music, Diva output is indeed propelled by the identity, persona, performance and perception of the female singer-songwriter and expands the typical academic analysis of iconographic bodies of work[258] by locating and theorizing the Queer co-producers who have been an integral part of the creative process.

As witnessed through an analysis of two co-productions, these Queer-Diva collaborations re-write the storyline of Queer, Black and Feminist resistance and futurity. What requires further investigation is how they are a part of a largely undertheorized legacy of Queer-Diva collaboration. This includes a formidable list of artistic partnerships which challenged the status-quo in extraordinary ways, collaborations which span Maria Callas' co-creations with Franco Zeffirelli and Pier Paolo Pasolini in the 1950s and 1960s through to present-day Grammy award-winning works from Beyoncé Knowles and Transgender DJ Honey Dijon and genderqueer producer/performer Big Freedia on projects such as Knowles's *Renaissance* album of 2022 and her subsequent *Renaissance World Tour* of 2023. The continuation of this study of the Diva's work and how her Queer relationships are a part of this work allow for a deeper, much more nuanced understanding of female artists and their LGBTQ collaborators as forecasters, activists, innovators and possibilities.

[258] Wherein the focus is typically on how pop music is perceived and received by Queer audiences, or how Queerness is performed in pop, rather than how and why the work is made with Queer collaborators. Such is the case with theorists such as J. Halberstam (*Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*), Wayne Koestenbaum (*The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*) and Rosheeka Parahoo ("Exploring Being Queer and Performing Queerness in Popular Music").

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