

Feminism across Generations: The Importance of Youth Culture Lyrics and Performances

by Jennifer Witt

In 1991, in "Sweet Smell of Success? New Ways of Being Young Women," Angela McRobbie suggested that young women and adolescent¹ girls have not embraced the passion and energy of the feminist movement (212). As cited by Rhonda Hammer, "Victims of rape are disproportionately children and adolescent girls- 60% of forcible rapes occur before the victim is 18 years old; 29% of victims are younger than 11 years old when raped" (4). Statistics like these show why girls need to be exposed to feminist concepts as early as possible. The problem is, most academic feminism is too difficult to be understood by most girls and adolescents. While unity across generational lines is certainly not automatic, in the 1990's feminism gained new energy as a result of feminist rock bands and semi-organized girl punk, hip-hop, and folk subcultures. Feminism must not be a movement only focused on adult women.

There is little doubt the significant part music plays in teaching adolescents their gender roles. According to McRobbie and Frith, "rock treats the problems of puberty, it draws on and articulates the psychological and physical tensions of adolescence, it accompanies the moment when boys and girls learn their repertoire of public sexual behavior" (137). Since this is the case, feminist youth culture² music has extreme potential to introduce girls to feminism, which may change their lives significantly.

While most feminist theory is certainly much too complex to be expressed in its entirety through rock and roll lyrics or performances, youth culture lyrics and performances may lead girls and adolescents to similar places of agency and may inspire further exploration of more complex feminist theory as well as participation in meaningful feminist activism. Adult feminists must strive to recognize the value and potential political power of feminist youth culture(s) and help young feminists face their sadness and rage and move beyond it in order to create real social and political change as adolescent girls become women in current and future generations.

Unfortunately, the influence of substantial feminist movements in youth culture may be declining in this decade. Mainstream culture, which is not created by girls, but is sold to girls often in order to socialize them into patriarchy, mimics patterns of colonization that cause girls to internalize the image of the weak and objectified woman. The question arises: can mass-produced works of art, such as youth culture lyrics and performances, be truly subversive? I feel that, increasingly, girls are imitating the mass-produced, mass-marketed, pseudo-feminist³ images of young pop artists and that the messages of authentic youth culture feminists are not having the significant impact they had in the 1990's.

There are, however, sites of resistance to mainstream pseudo-feminist culture and despite the difficulty of producing and marketing subversive lyrics within mass-produced culture, some recent youth culture feminists have been able to reach a select audience of young women. Despite this, feminist youth culture is in decline and the feminist movement may lose girls as a result of the lack of (acceptance of) feminist youth culture(s). Although youth culture feminists are not as popular and are not granted as much media attention as they were in the nineties, the decade of Lilith Fair⁴, Riot Grrrl⁵ and "Women in Rock," they do exist; and since they do exist, they will most likely influence future performers. It is more than likely that the popularity of feminist youth culture music will rise again.

Youth culture lyrics and performances have the potential to draw adolescents into the feminist movement. There is a need for the larger feminist community to support and nurture types of feminism that adolescents can embrace. I believe that because adolescents are often so strongly

drawn to music, youth culture feminist musicians have a unique and powerful potential to introduce adolescents to feminist concepts that might otherwise alienate them.

Where Have All the Young Feminists Gone?

The nineties was a decade with a rich feminist youth culture centered around music and zines. I feel very lucky to have been an adolescent at this time and I have no doubt that I owe much of my feminist consciousness to the Riot Grrrl Movement and various young feminist musicians and lyricists of the time. Many of the women involved in movements like Riot Grrrl have continued and evolved into adult feminists of a particular breed (Riot Women, perhaps?). Feminist musicians of the 90s, such as Ani DiFranco, Eryka Badu, Kathleen Hanna, and Sleater-Kinney, among others continue to produce subversive music that inspires a feminism that thrives in many in their late twenties and thirties. But to females in their teens, these performers are all but invisible.

Is there a significant youth culture movement for this decade? And furthermore, where have all the grrrls and young feminists gone? In the late nineties, the messages of subversive feminist youth cultures were diluted, in some cases retaining a feminist consciousness, which was more palatable if not as radical. In the 2000s, however, the shape of feminist youth culture has been distorted and contorted. In the hands of the patriarchal music industry, the power of feminist youth culture has been turned on its head and has begun to resemble masochism.

In the late nineties, youth culture feminism was simultaneously popularized and watered down, most notably through Lilith Fair. Because many of the artists who participated in Lilith Fair were already commercially successful, the media took notice. "The tour earned more than \$16.4 million in the first year alone" (Baumgardner and Richards 63) and proved that a mostly female tour was financially viable. More importantly, Lilith reached young women that less commercial, underground movements like Riot Grrrl never could. Although Lilith provided a forum for some female musicians and a sense of community for their fans, many reviewers criticized Lilith for being too safe and for only expressing a soft, demure, and stereotypically feminine sound through lyrics and mostly acoustic guitars.

According to Theodore Gracyk "for all its economic and media success, Lilith Fair quickly came to stand for rock's safe, non-disruptive analogue of the *écriture féminine*⁶" (199). Others have pointed out that the idea of *écriture féminine* essentializes femininity because it implies that there is one "natural" feminine voice instead of multiple and various socially constructed and performed female voices.

More aggressive, loud, or angry feminist musicians such as Hole and Ani DiFranco were notably absent from the Lilith tour. In addition, overtly queer performers and non-white performers were few and far between. Whether overtly aggressive, radical, queer, and non-white performers were not invited or whether they refused to come, the Lilith tour ultimately sent the message that the most valued female voice was the white, heterosexual female voice. Ultimately, although Lilith succeeded in giving some women voice and expressing the power of a certain type of female performer, it also sent the message that women's music is soft and pretty, not loud, angry, and/or aggressive. Triumphant, Lilith Fair made feminism appealing to a mass audience of young men and women; at the same time it essentialized the female voice and the female experience. Despite the limitations of Lilith Fair though, it certainly proved that people want to hear the voices of certain types of women and girls. In the late nineties, it became very trendy to be a "woman in rock." Considering the male domination of the rock world, that was no small accomplishment.

One of the most popular and noticeable youth culture feminists of the mid and late nineties was Gwen Stefani, the front woman of the otherwise male group, No Doubt. Stefani became an idol

for girls quickly after the success of the song "Just a Girl," which clearly expressed the frustration felt by many preadolescent and adolescent girls. Stefani sings:

Take this pink ribbon off my eyes
 I'm exposed . . .
 This world is forcing me
 To hold your hand . . .
 Don't let me out of your sight . . .
 So don't let me have any rights . . .
 Guess I'm some kind of freak
 Cause they all sit and stare
 With their eyes . . .
 I'm just a girl in the world
 That's all that you'll let me be!

The lyrics are reminiscent of the words of Simone de Beauvoir who writes that the young girl feels that her body "becomes foreign to her; and at the same time she becomes for others a thing: on the street men follow her with their eyes and comment on her anatomy" (350). Similarly, because the men "stare with their eyes" Stefani's narrator feels like "some kind of freak." She is no longer comfortable in her own body because of the way that males react to it. Although the content of Stefani's song was not unique, the song was significant. The problems of girls, frustrated and trapped in the stereotype of prey and domesticated due to fear, had never been expressed so blatantly on mainstream radio before. Stefani was able to touch a young audience that Beauvoir and others, though concerned with, could not reach directly. The influence of the song is undeniable and its success signaled some degree of wide-spread cultural acceptance of the radical idea that girls actually matter and that they are hurt by a society that holds them captive and sees them as objects.

Despite the power of Stefani's message, it is hard to overlook her pandering to the male gaze. At times, she seems to be parodying womanhood, with an excess of make up, ultra-feminine attire and exaggerated female performance, almost as if she were a drag queen. Sometimes, she seems to be winking at her audience as if to say "isn't all this performance of hyper-femininity ridiculous?" Yet the wink is so subtle, female fans may wonder if they saw it only because they wanted to. Ultimately, she never steps over the line between feminine and horrifyingly feminine, as do other artists like Courtney Love and PJ Harvey. Thus her style, although exaggerated, is for the most part interpreted as serious. One wonders if Stefani's lyrics would be heard if she were not exceptionally pretty and did not perform in stereotypically feminine ways. A young listener may easily begin to wonder if a feminist is only allowed power if she is stereotypically beautiful and feminine.

Despite the fact that many of the "women in rock" of the nineties were a certain type of feminist (stereotypically pretty and sexy) they still seemed to speak some of their own truth through their words. They undoubtedly sent the message to girls that young women can and do speak and are sometimes heard. Significantly, under the surface lurked a more radical feminism of Riot Grrrl Bands like Bikini Kill and Queer bands like Tribe 8. But as the nineties came to a close, fewer female songwriters were given media attention. Instead, teen pop-stars such as Jessica Simpson and Britney Spears, singing lyrics written by males while wearing very little clothing, took over the spotlight. Gwendolyn Pough notes a similar shift in the world of hip hop. She writes that, "young women growing up today are not privy to the same kind of pro-woman rap that I listened to via Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah, Yo-Yo, and MC Lyte" (92).

In this decade, hip-hop, rock, and pop alike, it is clear that the most popular female performers of the day are often doing little more than selling their bodies by dancing stripper-style on stage and

on MTV with only the bare minimum of clothing and often the bare minimum of years. Their words seldom seek to subvert the passive female stereotype or male domination. Although feminist voices and performances do exist in this decade, they are difficult to hear and see. They are nearly completely eclipsed by pseudo-feminist performances. The mass production of pseudo-feminism, partially because it is not taken seriously, may indeed be one of the most serious threats to the continuation of feminism across generations.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin raises the question of whether the mass-produced work of art can ever have a subversive effect. He points out the paradox that occurs when a product of capitalism seeks to disrupt capitalism. Many artists of Benjamin's day and of today seek to inspire political change within society. However, while doing so, they often take advantage of and work within structures of domination and oppression that create the society they denounce. In other words, they bite the hand that feeds them, but continue to be fed to various degrees. Yet, they can hardly be blamed for this, since it seems next to impossible to reach the amount of people required to create social change without taking advantage of mass production.

Images of women are commodities, mass-marketed and sold daily. Yet like Benjamin many youth culture feminists of the nineties thought there could be the possibility to use the mass produced work of art, in this case the pop song and performance, to speak out against society. I am not convinced that they were entirely wrong in thinking so; after all Riot Grrrl was partially responsible for the awakening of my feminist consciousness. Although Riot Grrrl was an underground movement in the beginning, it was ultimately distributed, to some degree, through mass production, which allowed the message to reach a somewhat larger audience. However, the mass production of the youth culture feminist message did not come without a price.

According to McRobbie "subcultural activity ...almost immediately spills out of its youth cultural 'home,' becoming part of a wider popular culture which is continually looking to the innovative elements in youth culture in order to claim a dynamism for itself" (66). And when this spilling of subcultural activity occurs, often the style remains while much of the subversive content is washed away. This is exactly what happened in the Riot Grrrl movement. Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald predicted "like it or not, the Girl-Style Revolution is bound to be televised" (251). And televised it was. It seems that in the case of Riot Grrrl the master's tools, although they were used sparingly, were not able to dismantle the master's house. Still, if Riot Grrrl failed in completely tearing down the house (or castle) of patriarchy, it did cause some serious vandalism and inspire change in the lives of many individual women and girls.

By as early as 1992 the mainstream media had begun to distort Riot Grrrl, by mocking, belittling, and over (hetero)sexualizing the Riot Grrrl image; many Riot Grrrl bands responded by calling for a media blackout. However, this boycott did not hinder the media's distortion of the movement; if anything, it had the result of making invisible any authentic representations of the movement. As many critics have noted, the most obvious distortion of Riot Grrrl came in the form of the British pop group The Spice Girls, who not only took on some elements of Riot Grrrl fashion, but also brought into the mainstream the slogan "girl power" which was originally used by Riot Grrrl, Kathleen Hanna. According to Driscoll:

The Spice Girls sell feminism as compatible with many traditional roles for girls. Many feminists see . . . [them] as reducing feminism to a collection of empty slogans and the bad girl end of conventional images of girl sexuality. (281)

In addition, The Spice Girls were also blatantly heterosexual and therefore less threatening than the Riot Grrrls whose performance of sexual preference were varied and complex. Yet, others argue that The Spice Girls were still feminists and helped make feminism fun (Douglas 29).

The debate over different versions of feminism in youth culture music mimics a similar debate among adult feminists. In Antifeminism and Family Terrorism, Rhonda Hammer describes how pseudo-feminists and feminist impersonators, such as Camille Puglia and Katie Roiphe, have undercut the feminist agenda by calling themselves feminists while espousing capitalist ideologies that are vacuous at best and promote violence toward women and children at worst. This new kind of feminism has been called by various names including post-feminism, power feminism, and shopping and fucking feminism. As Hammer explains, it is a feminism that promotes individual material happiness over communal sisterhood. The male, conservative media has latched on to the divergent messages of the pseudo-feminists in order to portray feminists as participants in "cat fights."

Within the dominant culture, then, "power feminism" has been privileged as the "new" feminism because it shores up competitive individualism, meritocracy, consumerism, and catfighting, its motto being "Work, buy, and/or claw your way to the top." (Drake 184)

The media, and much of the public, loves cat fights between youth culture pseudo feminists as well. Representations of female on female violence are not difficult to find and purchase in the age of pseudo-feminism; they may be even more prevalent than representations of male on female violence. In a 2003 Christina Aguilera video, the young pop star was scantily clad in a boxing ring, fighting another woman. This is especially troublesome since it came at a time when Aguilera took on an edgier Riot Grrrlsque style and seemed to be trying to portray herself as a strong woman by calling herself a fighter and pointing out that sexually aggressive women are considered sluts while sexually aggressive men are not.

In some respects, the feminist impersonation performed by Aguilera is just as problematic as the blatant lack of feminism displayed by her main competitor, Britney Spears, who played Lolita in a school girl uniform, sang, "I'm a slave for your love," stripped to nearly nothing on stage, and danced around with a giant snake wrapped around her. Spears can be discounted as the stereotypical sex symbol, while Aguilera became, for some, a distorted image of the new young feminist.

It is interesting to note that both Spears and Aguilera performed innocent all-American girlhood on the Mickey Mouse Club. As Disney property, they were pure and sweet, but in their mid to late teens, both girls became property of MTV and shed most of their clothes. Both adolescents went from performing as "virgin" to performing as "whore," or at least stripper, in less than a year. This is certainly a disturbing progression when one considers the millions of female fans who have been raised to idolize these girls. The rapid change in the appearances and performances of young artists like Spears and Aguilera is at best confusing to young girls. At worst, it teaches them that the way to grow up, to become a woman, is to perform as a sexual object for men.

As Aguilera and Spears have grown out of adolescence, similar teen performers, such as Hillary Duff and Lindsay Lohan, who were Disney girls like Spears and Aguilera, have taken the spotlight and have been more famous for their wild behavior and "cat fights" over boys than for their music. Also teen rocker Ashlee Simpson, has become highly visible. Simpson, much like Aguilera, has adopted the punk look of a Riot Grrrl (died black hair, studded belts and jewelry), but sings lyrics that are anything but feminist. In the hit song "LaLa" she crones, in Riot Grrrl style an anti-feminist message:

You can dress me up in diamonds
 You can dress me up in dirt
 You can throw me like a lineman
 I like it better when it hurts . . .
 I'll be a French maid when I meet you at the door
 I'm like an alley cat.
 Drink the milk up I want more . . .

Clearly, Simpson is using Riot Grrrl style in a way it was never intended: to help colonize adolescent girls into the role of the willingly abused.

In the first half of the decade, while pseudo-feminist youth culture performers were valorized and on the radio and MTV nearly nonstop, feminist performers with radical messages that could reach youth were being censored. In 2001, poet/activist Sarah Jones put her lyrics, which critique the misogyny of both hip-hop and rock music, into a rap song entitled "Your Revolution." In the form of rap, the radical lyrics had a chance of reaching a wide youth culture audience until the FCC declared them indecent and imposed a 7,000 fine on any radio station that would play the song (Lee 20-26). The "obscene" lyrics are also overtly feminist and critical of the misogyny of the male dominated hip hop industry.

In *When The Chicken Heads Come Home to Roost*, Joan Morgan explains the difficulty black women and girls have in criticizing the sexism of black men because it is seen as an almost racist move. Yet, Jones clearly tells black men that it is not acceptable to degrade the image of the black woman by portraying her as a "ho" or whore while the black man is portrayed as a pimp. For Jones, the "real revolution" is one that values all humans regardless of color or gender. A revolution that claims to fight racial inequality and that empowers black men by exploiting the bodies of black women is no revolution at all.

It is clear that youth culture feminism has numerous battles to fight when it comes to getting feminist lyrics heard. While feminist lyrics like Jones's were censored, songs such as "Pimp Like Me" by D12 and "Back Up Ho" by Snoop Doggy Dogg were available to a wide audience. Not only are pimp/ho songs prevalent, lyrical violence against women also gets mainstream air play. Consider for example, the lyrics of the Eminem song "Superman," in which the popular white rapper, as famous for his misogyny and homophobia as for his talent, asks the implied listener to "put some anthrax on a tampax." This lyric is nothing short of hate speech put to a beat; this album was sold to and practically worshipped by millions of adolescents, both male and female.

As Hammer notes, in our culture, girls and women are colonized. The colonization of women within patriarchy is similar to the colonization of people of pre-industrialized societies by capitalism. Through institutions of patriarchy, from the time they are young girls, females are taught to accept and sometimes participate in their own oppression. Many male performers are perpetuating the binary of victim/predator, ho/pimp, (sexual) master/(sexual) slave and they are doing so through visually appealing videos and extremely catchy beats. Many of these songs are so catchy and good to dance to that some adolescents may not notice the hate speech until the message is ingrained in their worldview. Men and boys call each other pimps with pride. Perhaps even more disturbingly, many young female performers and listeners alike have come to participate in their own oppression and colonization by financially supporting misogynist male performers and performing femininities defined by misogynistic male desires.

Is There Hope? Looking Towards the Future

Since the subversive female performers of the nineties have now entered adulthood and a new generation of pseudo-feminist teens has flooded the collective adolescent consciousness, the

question arises: is there a substantial feminist youth culture movement for this decade percolating beneath the mainstream? If there is, it is not obvious from looking at and listening to mainstream media. The Riot Grrrl movement has fragmented, women in rock no longer grace the cover of Rolling Stone, Lilith Fair has vanished, and teen pop stars who pander to male fantasies of female submission are everywhere. Perhaps most troubling is the fact that feminist artists like Sarah Jones are censored while misogynistic lyrics, which refer to women as ho's, bitches, and gold-diggers are so prevalent they barely raise an eyebrow. Despite all of these negative signs, I do not believe all hope is lost.

Sites of resistant feminist youth culture in this decade are few and far between, but they do exist. For me, one of the bravest and most overtly feminist young performers of this decade is Brody Dalle (Brody Armstrong before her divorce) of The Distillers. The 2002 album, Sing Sing Death House, includes an overt tribute to feminist leaders of the past. The song entitled "Seneca Falls" includes the lyrics:

Oh, it's set in 1848, in the crush of New York State
 And the thing about destiny, is it never ever makes mistakes
 Susan B. Anthony
 Forever haunting me
 Owned, raped, sold, thrown
 A woman was never her own . . .
 They cried, freedom rise up for me
 I want, I want, I want freedom . . .
 Elizabeth Cady
 Forever reminding me
 I don't steal the air I breathe . . .

With this song, Dalle locates herself in history as a follower of early feminists. Not only this, she also gives her implied young audience a brief education on the history of women, which may lead them to research deeper into the subject. The song may not convey details of the women's suffrage movement; however, just the mention of the Seneca Falls convention, as well as the names of Stanton and Anthony, give young woman a place to start when learning about the history of women's rights.

Although the nineteenth amendment was not passed until 1920, Stanton's address at the Seneca Falls convention was a major push, causing a chain reaction of events that eventually let to women's right to vote. It is significant that Dalle sings "Susan B. Anthony forever haunting me" because it indicates that Dalle feels obligated to continue the struggle for the rights of women that so many before her fought for. Though most adolescent girls may have heard of Susan B. Anthony and may know that she fought for women's rights, they may not feel connected to such distant history. However, in her song, Dalle indicates that she is, in many ways, fighting the same fight. Furthermore, the way Dalle screams "freedom rise up for me" conveys the desperation that led these women to risk their lives and puts that feeling into a context, a rebellious rock performance that a younger audience can relate to.

Dalle is similarly concerned with a young female audience in the song "Sick Of It All," as she speaks through the voice of a girl somewhat younger than herself and perhaps her former self. In the first person, she addresses the damage a teenage girl may do to her body. She speaks for girls who feel alienated from their bodies and who can not live up to the expectations of how society tells them they should look, girls who, because of this, deny themselves food. It is perhaps the only way they feel they can be in control of their bodies. She also speaks for many girls who turn to self-mutilation in order to distract their minds from emotional pain by imposing

physical pain upon themselves. Thus, girls inscribe pain upon their bodies. These girls scream for help and more often than not adults look the other way. Even worse, the media valorizes young girls who look like they are raised in concentration camps. Dalle certainly does not look away, nor does she valorize anorexia. Instead, through this song, she looks the teenage girl directly in the eye by holding up a mirror.

The influence of Riot Grrrl is apparent in Dalle's work. In addition, queer bands like The Gossip and The Butchies have grown from the roots of Riot Grrrl. But like the Riot Grrrls before them, these bands are too strange and/or disturbing to reach a wide audience. Still, for the subcultural teenager, they can be a doorway into the wider world of feminism and queer theory because through their performances and lyrics they break gender norms and introduce the idea that many people are neither purely male, nor purely female, but possess attributes of both genders and express both genders.

Somewhat more accessible are artists like Missy Elliott and Alicia Keys who express the power of women in less threatening and somewhat more traditional ways. The accessibility of these artists is due, in part, to their performances of heterosexuality, and their lack of overt anger. These artists maintain standards of femininity for the most part, but at times subtly point out injustices that women face by proclaiming that they must be treated with respect. In addition, these artists maintain control within their own lives and their art. Similarly, mainstream artists, Beyoncé Knowles and Amy Lee of Evanescence, in their songs "Irreplaceable" and "Call Me When your Sober" portray independent narrators who banish hurtful men from their lives. Because these artists are so popular, their particular performances of feminine strength are reaching millions of girls. Although their messages are not radical, through their strong and independent words and images they inspire confidence in young women and girls, who do not necessarily identify with edgier art, but who nevertheless hold feminist values of self-empowerment and agency.

An artist who is more overtly critical of misogyny and male domination is hip-hop feminist, Mystic. In the 2001 song, "Girlfriend, Sistasgirl," she encourages young black females to value themselves and to be skeptical of certain black males. She sings:

You were just a young girl when you got turned out . . .
 Babygirl you picked the wrong baller
 He was raised by macs and pimps motto let 'em follow . . .
 Girlfriend sistagirl
 You a precious queen in a twisted world
 Lookin' for love in all the wrong places
 You givin' up things that can't be replaced
 But girlfriend sistagirl
 You are the mother of the world . . .

Thus, while praising the strengths of the young black female, Mystic also speaks out against the media glamorized gangsta/pimp lifestyle.

Another artist, Pink, speaks out against the lack of feminism in youth culture in her song "Stupid Girl." She sings:

What happened to the dream of a girl president?
 She's dancing in the video next to 50 Cent
 They travel in packs of two and three
 With their it'sy bitsy doggies, and their teen-weeny tees
 Where, oh where, have the smart people gone?
 Oh where, oh where could they be?

The lyrics of performers like Mystic, Dalle, and Pink show that youth culture feminism in music did not die when the media looked away. It may take time, but I believe a resurgence of the power of feminist youth culture music will occur. When young girls hear feminist performers, they sometimes become feminist performers themselves, thus creating a chain of influence. According to Virginia Woolf, "a woman writing thinks back through her mothers" (26). In their exposure to the lyrics of feminist youth culture musicians, adolescent girls may themselves become writers and/or performers as Woolf suggests. For example, Brody Dalle was influenced by Riot Grrrl Kathleen Hanna who was influenced by The Slits. The Slits were an English all-girl punk band that formed when fourteen year old Ari Upp proposed the idea of an all girl punk band to her friend Palmolive at a Patti Smith show. Patti Smith is a poet turned rock star from the U.S. who was important in the forming of the punk movement and who influenced the androgynous female image of many performers who followed. Certainly, Dalle and the Distillers will inspire others.

According to Gottlieb and Wald, "girls often form bands explicitly based upon the examples of other performers, or testify to the ways in which the experience of seeing women occupy otherwise "phallic" positions (such as lead guitarist) can indeed be transformative" (263). It seems that once this ball begins rolling it is unlikely that it will stop. This is perhaps one of the most important benefits of the mechanically reproduced work of art. Once multiple copies of subversive works are released into the public, they are not likely to disappear, and are likely to influence and inspire future subversive works.

It is vitally important for adult feminists to recognize and support new types of youth culture feminism. According to Drake, "in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, popular music has proven to be the most important cultural form for expressing and disseminating third-wave feminist perspectives" (187). Considering the extreme influence that youth culture music has on young people, it is no longer possible to dismiss it as "pop" and therefore unworthy of serious academic study. As Kristina Gray points out, academic feminists have sometimes dismissed younger versions of feminism. Gray describes the frustration she felt when she, as a student, offered the word "Riot Grrrl" as an alternative to the word "bitch," to indicate an aggressive female in more positive way. Her professor told her that "no one really uses that word." Gray responds, "I wanted to use it and hear other young women use it too" (264). Adult feminists must reach out to young feminists as they create and spread new feminisms. Because feminism needs girls to keep the movement growing and because girls need a type of feminism that they can embrace as they become adults, adult feminist must not dismiss youth culture feminism as unimportant.

In fact, youth culture music may function as an important pedagogical tool. According to Drake, "it is important for feminist teachers to familiarize ourselves with the ways contemporary Girl Culture signifies *on* feminist issues and *for* young women and men" (187). Critical examination of lyrics can help an older generation understand a younger one. According to Morgan "hip-hop is not only the domain of the young, black, and male, it is also the world in which young black women live and survive" (76). In other words, by understanding the music that girls listen to, adult feminists may better understand how to reach them and help them develop critical thinking, which may lead to feminist consciousness.

When young (pre)feminists show interest in the movement, adult feminists must be prepared to meet them half way and to understand their culture(s) and language(s). If they do not, young women may become frustrated and may give up on a feminism that does not seem to accept and respect them. In "Bloodlove" Christine Doza expresses the frustration she feels when dealing with academic feminists. She writes:

No matter how many women's studies classes I take in college, and no matter how many papers I write for those classes, I'll never be able to write what I want

to write in the way I want to write it – by screaming it out. I'll never get past the elitism of the academic club. (45)

Emergent feminists do need serious theoretical feminism, but they also need a place to scream. The music of youth culture feminism offers them this place and it may help adult feminists remember what it was like to live at an age when one was surrounded by rage that she was not yet fully capable of articulating.

A good deal of feminist youth culture is centered on the rage that comes from being young and female. Because this energy is often systematically suppressed and mutated through mass media, it must be understood and embraced by adult feminists. Adult feminists must strive to recognize feminist youth culture and help young feminists face their rage and move beyond it in order to pick up the pieces that are left once the riot is over. Feminists must reach out and connect across generations.

Notes

1. Definitions of adolescence vary among theorists. For my purposes here, I will define adolescence broadly as the transitional time between childhood and adulthood or approximately between the ages of 11 and 21. Since there is no exact definition of childhood or adulthood, this transitional age may be extended on either side and may vary among individuals.
2. According to Catherine Driscoll, youth culture “mostly means culture directed, about, and for youth rather than cultural production by youth. The exceptional field in this regard is popular music” (214). In my analysis of feminist youth cultures related to music, I will consider performances and lyrics, sometimes created by youth for youth and sometimes created by adults for youth.
3. The term “pseudo-feminist” is used by Rhonda Hammer in Antifeminism and Family Terrorism, to describe a woman who claims to be a feminist, but is mostly only concerned with her own sexual freedom and material wealth as opposed to the goal of improving the agency of all women.
4. Lilith Fair was a festival of mostly female, mostly mainstream performers, which was started in the late nineties by Canadian singer/songwriter, Sarah McLaughlin.
5. Riot Grrrl is a grass roots movement, which thrived in the 1990s and arose out of a fusion of feminist and punk cultures. The movement has been well documented by writers such as Renee T. Coulombe, Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald, and Lynn Vallone, as well as in anthologies such as Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation and Angry Women In Rock, Vol. 1. See works cited.
6. The term *écriture féminine* was coined by Hélène Cixous and expresses the idea that there is a feminine style of writing that has been overshadowed by the masculine voice. According to Cixous, in male dominated culture, woman becomes alienated from her natural voice.

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