

JOURNAL OF CRITICAL
GLOBALISATION STUDIES

Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies, Issue 1 (2009)

ISSN 2040-8498

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The *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* is supported by the Royal Holloway Faculty of History and Social Sciences fund for research activity 2009/10, in conjunction with the Politics and International Relations Departmental Research Committee. The journal is also supported by a fund from the New Political Communications Unit in the department. The journal is associated with the British International Studies Association working group: Global and Transnational Politics.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to our colleagues in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London. Without your support this journal could not have come to fruition. Thanks also to Costas Douzinas, Oscar Guardiola-Rivera and Stephen Hopgood for showing support for the journal. Our gratitude to David Broder for designing the journal's cover. And thanks to all our contributors for putting their faith – and scholarship – in the hands of this new, and uncertain, initiative.

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‘Fuck the Border’? Music, Gender and Globalisation

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, when globalisation first became an “all-purpose catchword in public and scholarly debate” (Lechner & Boli, 2000, p.1), globalisation studies in the academy has developed into an impressively wide, interdisciplinary arena. Indeed, although one of the greatest advantages of globalisation studies today is perhaps its ability to move us beyond such disciplinary distinctions, we can see equally thorough debates continuing about economic, political and cultural globalisation. And, as a musicologist, I’m encouraged to note that the study of music and globalisation—inaugurated nearly twenty years ago, and often complementing examinations of the cultural with those of the economic and the political—now boasts a large and exemplary sub-literature,² a staple place in university teaching, and inclusion in wider investigations of globalisation.³ Yet, as I will explain, studies of music and globalisation have tended toward a masculinist bias by which gender is left largely unmarked. This is despite an increasingly substantial scholarly literature, as well as a history of activism, concerning gender and globalisation in other contexts. I argue in this paper that the urgent discussions of gender and globalisation within postcolonial and transnational feminisms must inform all critiques of globalisation, especially those concerning music. Yet, the near-absence of gender from the analytical methodologies of studies of music and globalisation stands in marked contrast to the scholarship on Western ‘art music’ and Anglo-American popular repertoires, in which discussion of gender and sexuality are now indispensable. This paper, therefore, represents an attempt to bring together music, gender and globalisation—to inaugurate a ‘conversation,’ in other words, in which these three terms remain central categories for analysis.

Indeed, music unmistakably constitutes, as many scholars have argued, a significant aspect of globalisation (e.g. Taylor, 1997, 2007; Baltzis, 2005; Corona & Madrid, 2008). Moreover, it provides a unique artistic forum in which globalisation—the increasingly rapid, worldwide flows of, as Arjun Appadurai (1990) would remind us, persons, mediatized cultural products, information-technology, capital, and

ideologies—can be ‘read’ or critiqued. However, the ways in which music speaks to, and of, the profoundly gendered aspects of globalisation must be understood in order to account for the ways in which both music and globalisation produce and make legible certain gendered aspects of globalised violence and international migration. Yet such perspectives on globalisation would remain impossible without the theoretical insights of transnational feminisms. Developed out of the unique and powerful analyses of place, race and gender in postcolonial feminist theory and practice, transnational feminisms must inform all critiques of globalisation. Thus a predominant aim of this study is to bring transnational feminisms into conversation with Left critiques of globalisation, such as Hardt and Negri’s well-known *Empire* (2000), as well as the literature on music and globalisation, both of which tend to adopt a masculinist bias. Theoretical and activist discourses in postcolonial and transnational feminisms, in other words, must not remain the sole location of an intersectional analysis of race, gender and globalisation, but must be brought together with discussions of globalisation and music.

Insofar as such broad questions motivate this study, they find their articulation here within a detailed discussion of ‘Fuck the Border,’ a punk-rock song by the Canadian hardcore, all-male punk band Propagandhi. Released on the 2001 LP *Today’s Empires, Tomorrow’s Ashes* under G7 Welcoming Committee Records, the song forms part of Propagandhi’s large output of anti-war and anti-capitalist music since the mid 1990s, as well as partaking in a wider group of similar punk bands of the last ten or so years. Yet in its focus on a female, Mexican migrant, the song ‘Fuck the Border,’ I argue, provides in its own punk-rock way a crucial intervention into antiglobalisation theory and activism; unlike much of this discourse, it foregrounds issues of race, gender, and the violence incurred by both globally distributed, industrial production line and the related processes of transnational migration. Thus the song’s message recognises that the utopia of tomorrow’s borderless world arises precisely from the gendered and racialised dynamics of today’s globalised violence. I will draw on the work of transnational feminists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty in order to suggest how Propagandhi’s song ‘Fuck the Border’ resonates productively (and, perhaps, surprisingly) with this feminist critique. Specifically, I suggest, the politics of ‘Fuck the Border’—insofar as punk can advance a politics—should be understood as complementing Mohanty’s persuasive argument that ‘antiglobalization activists and theorists also need to be feminists’ (2003, p.249).

In the first part of this essay, I discuss the growing body of scholarship that seeks to understand how globalisation intersects with music and musical practices. Although this wide literature remains highly useful, I find that it too often relies upon models of the global that overlook the significance for these broad processes not only of categories of gender and sexuality, but also of (trans)nationalism and militarisation. Next, drawing on scholarship both from an earlier phase of cultural studies and in

recent studies of music and globalisation, I investigate punk-rock and the 'punk aesthetic' in order to make the case that, no less so during the global 'war on terror' than in cultural theorist Dick Hebdige's 1970s England, punk is political. In the final, largest part of this essay I return to 'Fuck the Border.' After providing an analysis of this short, heady song, I argue that, in calling attention to the racialised and gendered aspects of economic globalisation, transnational migration and militarised securitisation of national borders, 'Fuck the Border' can provide a rare and invaluable contribution to the antiglobalisation discourse. Key questions of this part of the essay include: To what extent does the brash, all-male punk-rock band Propagandhi provide the kind of feminist critique advocated by Mohanty? What is the utility—and, indeed, the possibility—of a punk-rock politics that contests the nefarious aspects of globalisation and militarisation? As noted, I hope in this essay to suggest the importance of continuing a discussion (only tentatively begun elsewhere) in which music, gender and globalisation remain central categories for analysis.

Music, gender, and globalisation: an overview

As noted earlier, 'Fuck the Border' narrates, albeit it with the ebullience typical of 'hardcore' punk rock, the story of a female migrant. She 'skipped out of Mexico,' so the lyrics tell us, in order to escape the exploitative labour practices of transnational corporations, and to find, perhaps illegally, a living wage in the U.S. The song thus provides a forum in which to call attention to inequities and oppressions produced by globalisation. Yet the ways in which composers, performers and audiences utilise music in order to advance readings or critiques of globalisation are rarely noted in the large, recent literature studies of music and globalisation. Perhaps this is because to do so might imply that music somehow lies 'outside' of globalisation, a misreading which the literature on music and globalisation has rightly been keen to refuse. Rather than "something that "happens to music" or has a certain impact on it", Baltzis reminds us (2005, p.140), most writers on music and globalisation find most helpful postmodern Marxist perspectives on the global economy. Thus music and music-making are understood as always already situated within the global omnipresence of commodity production (Jameson, 1991; Guilbault, 1996; Monson, 1999). Thus, very briefly, we understand that the production of difference inheres in capitalist globalisation, musical 'otherness' should not be heroised, the local should be understood as constitutive of the global, and we can begin to analyse globalisation by seeking to understand that with which we are familiar (Erlmann, 1993, 1996).⁴

But, by reaching for larger theoretical models of the global, much scholarship on music and globalisation has attempted to arbitrate between the cultural imperialism (or Westernization or Americanization) model and a model of

cultural hybridity, the latter understood as an endless series of unlikely collisions between 'First-World' and 'Third-World' musics. While both models can name certain inequalities between different parts of the world, they also rely upon monolithic conceptualisations of these geographic areas. As a result, much discourse on music and globalisation (including the marketing strategies of world music labels), even when not explicitly invoking either of these two models, considers differences between 'First-World' and 'Third-World' countries, but rarely either the connections and similarities between such areas or the differences within them. The literature rarely puts into practice, in other words, theories of the ubiquity, or 'shared field of relations,' of global capital. Thus the homogenisation and diversification models of music and globalisation construct 'First-World' and 'Third-World' locations as both bounded spaces and in distinct, unbalanced opposition to each other (Guilbault, 1996). This in turn works to naturalise such global divisions, and occludes our capacity to contest these modern-day products of colonialism.

Yet these models are usually invoked in order to perform the vital task of calling attention to the ways in which colonialism has resulted in relationships between poverty and global space. The problem is that, even while the 'First World/Third World' binarism renders visible certain global histories and differences, it ignores other, equally important categories for the analysis of global inequities (Mohanty, 2003, p.227). As Guilbault has argued, by taking for granted the primacy of the 'First World/Third World' binarism, most discourses on music and globalisation develop a 'sense of culture as homogenous and belonging to particular locales' and, moreover, a 'sense of race in terms of fixed biological and musical characteristics.' Furthermore, I would add, such models ignore gender and sexuality, the significance of which for analyses of globalisation I discuss further in the context of 'Fuck the Border.' To judge by the literature, it seems that, while many groundbreaking studies in the 1990s initiated an invaluable debate about music and globalisation, it is still one in which gender and sexuality remain largely unmarked.⁵

Outside of discussions of music, however, there now exists a large body of scholarship which focuses on the ways in which globalisation intersects with both gender and sexuality. While studies of sexuality and globalisation have for several years been declared (not only by their authors) the vanguard of queer studies,⁶ feminist critiques since the 1970s have demonstrated the significance of accounts of gender and globalisation. Global feminisms of the 1970s and '80s invoked a 'common world of women' in order to advocate on behalf of Third World women's need for aid and 'development.' Alongside this, an area studies approach, as well as Black feminism, sought to engage 'feminisms of the world' and intersectional analyses of race, and thereby relativise Western White feminism. Post-colonial feminisms in the 1980s and '90s sought both to analyze such global inequities in terms of the histories of colonialism and to highlight the contingency of much global feminism upon a

Western, colonial worldview. Thus postcolonial feminist critique was instrumental in highlighting the grave imbalances of power among different 'world' or race-based feminisms. Most recently, transnational feminisms of the last ten to fifteen years expand on post-colonial feminism in order to call attention to contemporary rearticulations of the nation-state, as well as to expand upon post-colonial feminist theorisations of global connections and flows of power.⁷ In other words, while some globalisation literature (including studies of music and globalisation in the 1990s) prophesies, or even reports, the demise of the nation-state, transnational feminisms see global processes of connection, such as transnational corporatism and international migration, occurring through militarisation and neoimperialism. Indeed, one of the most significant theories of the global developed by transnational feminisms is that thinking globally and internationally 'does not mean focusing on the foreign, the strange, or exotic... distant places' (Grewal & Kaplan, 2002, p.xviii). Rather, many transnational feminists argue, we need to attend to the continuities and discontinuities, the connections and divisions, between lives, cultures and, I would add in this context, musics of the world, including those that happen to be most familiar to us.

Unlike the ways in which feminist or queer inquiry has recently developed theories of globalisation, the literature on music and globalisation, even when attempting to contest globalised oppression, still employs the same conceptualisations of the global that many scholars have persuasively characterised as 'masculinised' (Hooper, 2000; Freeman, 2001). However, this widespread inattention to gender throughout the literature on music and globalisation contrasts markedly with the extensive body of studies that focus on gender in the contexts of Western 'art music' and Anglo-American popular music,⁸ even though such literature tends to disregard the histories of (post)colonialism, globalisation and transnationalism that inform the production, distribution and reception of such musics. Especially since Susan McClary's and Philip Brett's feminist and queer interventions into the field of musicology in the 1990s, such perspectives have now become indispensable in the toolbox of so-called 'new musicology.'⁹ Additionally, scholars outside music have included eloquent discussions of music in more general feminist and queer theory,¹⁰ although, as Peraino observes (2007), such an inclusion has rarely been central to such scholarship. Analyses in which music, gender and globalisation remain central, therefore, can build upon the wealth of scholarship in each of the three pairings of two of these terms—that is, music and gender, gender and globalisation, and globalisation and music—while making significant contributions to all three 'fields.'¹¹

Insofar as thinking music, gender and globalisation together has a broad scope, the following discussion of Propagandhi's song 'Fuck the Border' surely represents only one approach to this conversation. This section of the paper in no

way attempts to undertake an ethnography of punk reception; still less does it try to quantify the successes of punk scenes in effecting global, political change. Instead, I examine, in light of the influential cultural theory of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Studies in the 1970s, the dictate of the punk aesthetic to 'rip it up and start again.' What unique insights can the punk aesthetic provide? I survey the emergence since the mid 1990s of a wider group of Left-wing, North American punk bands, including Green Day, NOFX and Anti-Flag. I use Propagandhi's studied ambivalence about the politics of such bands to discuss the limits and possibilities of recent, North American, Left-wing punk politics. I suggest finally that, by combining through music issues of gender and globalisation, 'Fuck the Border' avoids some of the shortfalls of such punk music in order to advance a biting critique of U.S. militarization and globalised exploitation, while at the same time demonstrating the difficulty of mapping punk music and performance onto wider, political ideologies.

Punk and (geo)politics

While often just as staunchly refusing to capitulate to mainstream political camps, certain punk scenes of the last three decades have been concerned with taking an uncompromising stand on current social and political issues. For example, Propagandhi have been known since the early 1990s for their support for international human rights causes, indigenous peoples' land rights, anti-war and anti-globalisation activism, and environmental concerns, as well as the provocation and anger typical of 'hardcore' punk performance. But, although Propagandhi's politics are particularly uncompromising for a punk band, punk has seemed inseparable from the political since the genre's inception in the 1970s. Throughout this history, punk's politics can be located on both ends of the political spectrum (including the far Right),¹² as well as, in the case of the 'Straight Edge' punk movement, firmly in the middle (O'Hara, 1999; Haenfler, 2006). Punk's predominant, non-conformist condemnation of 'selling out,' however, has frequently encouraged its politics to align with anticapitalist causes. For example, formed in 1997, G7 Welcoming Committee Records, to which Propagandhi and about two-dozen other punk-rock bands are signed, names itself ironically after one of the international organizations so strongly protested against by antiglobalisation activists in the late 1990s.¹³ Through independent recording labels such as G7 Welcoming Committee, punk rock has provided the soundtrack for the antiglobalisation movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Starr, 2001; Davies, 2005).

However, punk's Left-wing critiques over the last decade have spoken more widely than just to these small, if vocal, groups of activists. Since the first Gulf War, many sections of the anti-war movement in the U.S. have cohered around punk music. For example, the title-track of Anti-Flag's ironically named debut album *Die for*

the Government (1996) likens Gulf War veterans to 'Guinea pigs for Western corporations,' making a crucial link, however crudely, between militarization and globalisation.¹⁴ More recently, NOFX's 2003 album *The War on Errorism* takes aim with gleeful abandon at George Bush and the 'war on terror.' The album's cover features a clownish caricature of the former president, while the song 'American Errorist' utilizes punk's vigorous rebellion to demand, in its memorable lyric, that we 'humiliate American errorists' through a politics of 'hate' and 'war' of our own.

Partly due to the band's huge popularity since the mid 1990s, Green Day's less heated contribution to North American anti-war punk on their 2004 album *American Idiot* has found by far the widest audience among all the groups mentioned so far. The song 'Holiday' compares George Bush to Hitler, and calls attention to this outlandish analogy by, uniquely for a Green Day record, changing to spoken word for this short section. The more introspective ballad 'Wake Me Up When September Ends' from the same album owes some of its wide appeal to its high-budget video (incidentally starring actor Jamie Bell). This depicts the painful upheaval felt by families of American servicemen and women deployed in conflict-zones in the Arab Middle East. Green Day, NOFX and Anti-Flag all participated in a political movement aimed at derailing George W. Bush's re-election as U.S. president in 2004. Organized by NOFX lead-singer Mike 'Fat Mike' Burkett, the 'Rock Against Bush' project entailed a U.S. national tour by over a dozen punk bands, two compilation albums and the popular website punkvoter.com. Explicitly linking punk and politics, the website stated, "We plan to use this election as a way to get our fans engaged in politics and evolve our movement into becoming involved locally to effect real change nationally" (quoted in Dunn, 2008, p.208). In short, the rhetoric of the 2004 'Rock Against Bush' project suggested that punk bands were channelling and consolidating their separate, damning criticisms of the U.S. 'war on terror' in order to speak out more persuasively.¹⁵

Lisa Foster, in the only full-length study of contemporary, North American Left-wing popular music, is correct to suggest that music such as Green Day's *American Idiot* "creates political identification that allows for the emergence of anti-war counterpublics to occupy space within the dominant public sphere" (2006, vii).¹⁶ Yet it is the limited scale—or rather, specific location—of these 'counterpublics' that leads me to question the efficacy of this music's politics. Anti-Flag, NOFX and Green Day, circumscribe their Left-wing, anti-war sentiment within the boundaries of the American nation-state, thus reinforcing some of the very nationalist distinctions between America and the rest of the world that the U.S. administration used in its justification for the Iraq war. The NOFX song 'American Errorist,' for example, seeks to differentiate the American government, which has 'erred,' from the American people, who have been betrayed. Shampa Biswas (2006), in an invaluable

transnational critique of contemporary U.S. anti-war movements, finds this tactic highly problematic. As she argues, it not only furthers certain foundational myths about America's exemplary past, but also participates in producing precisely the ethical distinction between America and other countries used to justify U.S. military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, although no doubt an attempt to 'humanise' the Iraqi 'other,' the Green Day video represents Middle Eastern women according to a specious, nationalist binarism. Widely accepted by many if severely criticised by some (especially transnational feminists), this discursive strategy works to contrast the passive, female victims of oppressive, Middle Eastern regimes with their liberated, Western female counterparts (Mohanty, 1984).¹⁷ In short, the video reinscribes another point given by the U.S. administration to justify the Middle Eastern wars. 'Holiday,' another song by Green Day, is often introduced at live concerts with the disclaimer that the song is 'anti-war, not anti-American.' As postcolonial historians would remind us, by erasing histories of American militarised imperialism, this works to reinstall a faulty notion of U.S. foreign interventions as benign (Biswas, p.86).

Of course, Left-wing or anti-war movements seek, perhaps strategically, a wide reception by attempting to reclaim from the Right powerful emotions of patriotism. And Green Day's ambitious musical lyricism has undoubtedly also helped to find such sentiment an unexpectedly wide audience. However, retaining nationalist ideology circumscribes the terms on which such politics can offer opposition. For example, the 'Rock against Bush' movement, in its advocacy of 'national change,' clearly maintains the U.S. nation-state as the boundary of its vindicatory appeal, while using racialised and gendered ideologies of global difference (such as the implied contrast of Middle Eastern and Western women) to reinscribe that boundary. By allying political protest to the U.S. nation-state, the politics of Green Day, NOFX and Anti-Flag shore up the same nationalist ideology as that mobilized by the U.S. 'military-industrial complex.' As Jessica Chapin writes of the ways in which contemporary U.S. nationalism entails producing ideologies of difference across national borders, "the nation and its boundaries, both topographical and phantasmic, are secured not by nature but by an ongoing exercise of power" (1998, p.406). In other words, even at the level of representation, national borders must be continually re-secured in order to produce the kinds of distinctions, so crucial to providing the ethical and political justifications for war, between citizens and 'others.'¹⁸

It is not, then, that Green Day, NOFX and Anti-Flag are simply 'not radical enough,' but rather that, in their compliance with U.S. nationalism, they fail to expose the 'ongoing exercise of power' needed to produce the boundaries of the nation-state. If commentators such as Dunn (2008) are correct to suggest that the 'Rock Against Bush' project advanced a 'pronounced' critique of 'conservative American culture' (p.208), it is one which simultaneously failed to contradict the same

“American exceptionalism”—binary differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’—that underscored U.S. military action in the Middle East by reinscribing ‘American exceptionalism.’¹⁹ As Biswas asks, “[w]hat then would it mean to develop an oppositional ethic that does not rely on such distinctions?” (2006, p.91). Her response, along with that of many other transnational feminists, is to advocate on behalf of intersectional critiques of global oppression. For example, we must begin to understand the role that neoliberal globalisation plays in U.S. imperial militarisation (Mohanty, 2006; Biswas, 2006), and the ways in which both globalisation and militarisation rely upon categories of race, gender, sexuality and nationality (Chapin, 1998; Bacchetta et al, 2001; Luibhéid, 2002; Mohanty, 2003; Eisenstein, 2004, 2007; Das Gupta, 2006). The more we strengthen our critiques of globalisation with analyses of multiple axes of oppression, these writers seem to suggest, the greater will be our ability to avoid reproducing the problems we wish instead to dislodge.²⁰ Biswas concludes by advocating on behalf of anti-war movements “predicated on a global ethic” (p.91) and combined with antiglobalisation movements.

It is perhaps a measure of Propagandhi’s cognizance of some of these issues that the band refused the invitation of NOFX lead-singer Fat Mike to take part in the 2004 ‘Rock against Bush’ project. Indeed, by this time, ‘Fuck the Border’ had become iconic of the band’s output and a staple of their live sets. Propagandhi utilize the punk aesthetic of ‘rip[ping] it up and start[ing] again’ in order to advance a particularly powerful intersectional critique of globalisation—one which attends, in other words, the global flows of capitalist accumulation, the increasing militarisation of the borders of the nation-state, and the globalised production of gendered and racialised hierarchies. But the question of punk’s political utility remains open. Since the Sex Pistols’ 1977 lyric ‘fuck this and fuck that,’ punk’s exhortations to ‘fuck the government,’ ‘fuck the kids,’ ‘fuck the world’ and ‘fuck the Sex Pistols’ exemplify punk rock’s rich history of ‘fucking’ things. Yet, insofar as fucking something implies the monstrously absurd conjunction of both that object’s explosive annihilation and its violent retention in a highly masculinised act of rape, how productive a politics, if any, can the song propose?

As briefly discussed earlier, ‘Fuck the Border’ recounts one woman’s northward, covert migration across the increasingly militarised U.S.-Mexico border. After a long, bleak instrumental introduction of starkly spaced, if ominously disorientating, interjections of bare guitar distortions and cymbal crashes, together with an increasingly furious tom-tom pummelling, the vocal line of ‘Fuck the Border’ forcefully introduces the female migrant subject of the song. This woman, about whom the song provides very few other details, finds herself left with no option but to seek work, legally or illegally, in the United States. Yet the first lyrics of the song, feverously declaimed by singer Chris Hannah, make it clear that we are to learn about

this anonymous woman through the voice, rhetoric and driving energy of Propagandhi's brand of a genre known tellingly as 'Absolute Punk.' Rapidly declared in only about five seconds, the following lines begin the song: "A friend of mine dropped me a line, it said, "man, I gotta run to the USA. I got no money, got no job." She skipped out of Mexico to stay alive."

Using lyrics in prose form, typical for 'hardcore punk,' makes the communication of political message all the more direct. Nevertheless, the liner notes for the *Today's Empire's, Tomorrow's Ashes* LP further expound the dependency of transnational flows of goods and capital upon maintaining the many barriers prohibiting the poorest people from crossing international borders.²¹ Hence the overt message of 'Fuck the Border' connects globalised exploitation of Mexican women workers in the *maquiladoras* with the militarised securitisation of the U.S. nation-state; thus the song continues: "No fences, no borders. Free movement for all. Fuck the border," the last line repeated three more times to form a brief, raucous chorus, itself repeated at the end of the song. To remove fortified international borders such as the U.S.-Mexico border, the lyrics of the song and the liner notes boldly assert, would greatly lessen exploitative transnational corporations' purchase upon the terrain of the 'Third World' and the gendered and racialised bodies of its inhabitants.²² In 'Fuck the Border,' the ways in which Propagandhi 'rip it up and start again' have the effect of providing a crucial and rare intersectional critique of globalisation. In other words, the band uses the timeworn punk aesthetic of borrowing from different sections of a wider culture in order to piece together, or form a *bricolage* (Hebdige, 1979), a new, innovative, political construction. By forcing into collision the detritus of social organizing on many political fronts, 'Fuck the Border' critiques issues of racialised gender alongside globalisation. Thus the band provides an intervention similar to Mohanty's claim that "antiglobalisation activists and theorists also need to be feminists."

Alongside Mohanty's work a growing body of feminist scholarship and activism calls attention to the dependency of transnational corporations upon a large, female workforce in the Third World/South. Such work contributes greatly to our understanding of the importance for global capital of maintaining, often by military means, a relative disparity between national economies, and hence the relatively cheap price of labour in poorer countries. Perhaps more significantly, since the late 1990s scholars have extended the discussion of women's exploitation in the Third World by perceiving gender as a 'fundamental axis' not only of employment, but also of transnational migration (Mahler, 2003, p.290). As Mohanty reiterates, women and girls are the majority of the world's migrants. She describes the ways in which global capital situates workers at the intersection of gendered, racialised and transnational vectors. She writes, "Women workers of particular caste/class, race, and economic status are necessary to the operation of the capitalist global economy. Women are not

only the preferred candidates for particular jobs, but particular kinds of women—poor, Third and Two-Thirds World, working-class, and immigrant/migrant women—are the preferred workers in these global, ‘flexible’ temporary job markets” (2003, p.246).

In other words, globalisation must now be thought alongside today’s widespread transnational migration, the violence that nevertheless often marks the boundaries of the nation-state, and the ways in which global capitalism utilizes, exacerbates and produces ideologies of race and gender.

It is perhaps at and around the increasingly militarised U.S.-Mexico border that issues of globalisation, transnational migration, and racialised gender come together most poignantly and violently (Luibhéid, 2002). This is surely why Propagandhi’s focus on this site makes such a crucial political statement. Gloria Anzaldúa, one of the most influential thinkers of the U.S.-Mexico border region (especially for later feminist work in the area), has written famously of the borderlands as “*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (1987, p.3). The often treacherous lives and seemingly routine deaths of legal and illegal migrants in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, as well as Mexican workers’ exploitation (both in Mexico and the U.S.), have become well-publicised issues, if contested with only limited success. Here, too, we find similar, gendered patterns of migration to the general, global trends identified by Mohanty. Most authorised migration today from Mexico to the U.S. is by women, while estimates suggest that at least a third of unauthorized migrations are by women (Segura & Zavella, 2007, p.6–7). Both figures have been rising steadily over recent decades in terms that suggest to some scholars a “feminisation of migration from Mexico [to the U.S.]” (Kanaiaupuni, 2000). And this is despite the ways in which, as Segura and Zavella explain, U.S. immigration law has long favoured men, and, furthermore, how continuing state-sanctioned, structural violence (including feminicide) takes place against women along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. To many scholars, this suggests the need to “make gender and gender oppression central to ... studies of globalisation” (Segura & Zavella, 2007, p.18).

Including gender as a central category in analyses of globalisation, therefore, addresses not only the fact that, as Mohanty puts it, migrant women workers are “necessary to the operation of the capitalist global economy,” but also the ways in which such migration takes place despite the sexism of immigration laws and the violence often incurred by illegal migration. Thus Mohanty argues that the task of analysing race, gender and globalisation together in specific contexts is one that can undo many naturalised conceptions about what in a globalised scenario constitutes the work of, for example, women, migrants, and people of ‘underdeveloped’ countries. In other words, globalisation can be contested where it can be claimed that globalised

exploitation depends upon categories of race, gender, and migrant status rather than on only a purely immanent, unfathomably diffuse form of global power (such as that proposed by Hardt & Negri, 2000). Indeed, the new, apparently ubiquitous power of global capital does not work to erase older ideologies of, for example, race and gender, but rather produces, utilizes and exacerbates them. Propagandhi contribute a significant foregrounding of gender to an otherwise ‘masculinised’ discourse of antiglobalisation activism (Mohanty, 2003).

However, music, including the harsh timbres of punk rock, usually eludes such tight interpretation. In this song, the singer Chris Hannah’s brutal, sustained repetition of ‘fuck the border’ eventually obscures the rapidly ejected lyrics of the two verses concerning the migrant woman. Indeed, the only easily audible lyrics in ‘Fuck the Border’ are those of the emblematic title-phrase itself. As the song progresses, the eight-fold repetition of ‘fuck the border’—and the contradiction of rape and annihilation it implies—gives way to a feeling of absurdity. The joy of rhetorically ripping up the exploitative, violent structures of today perhaps stalls the song’s ability to start again, to imagine a borderless tomorrow. The need to ‘fuck the border,’ it seems, has ironically never before appeared, or sounded, more urgent or, indeed, more farcical.

And yet what at first glance seems like an abnegation of transformational politics may in fact be the song’s most powerful insight. As the song’s demand for a removal of national boundaries sounds more and more absurd, ‘Fuck the Border’ finally stages the impossibility of a world without borders. It proposes the type of utopia of global citizenship advanced by Hardt and Negri, but it does so only in order to reveal this vision of a fully stateless globe to be not only impossible, but also unimaginable. Obsessively returning to the violently declared lyric of the chorus, the song gives voice to the immense frustration of the fact that the world after the end of the nation-state is not a world to which we have access. In other words, the song offers a transnational critique of globalisation, which registers the continuing significance of the nation-state, as well as categories of race and gender. Exposing the global citizenship scenario as defunct, it angrily registers this proposal’s simultaneous appeal, especially for subjects marked by race and gender. Thus Propagandhi’s rejection of the utopia of global citizenship coincides with a new awareness of the types of agency globalisation makes available. ‘Fuck the Border’ suggest that, insofar as global capital and militarised national borders produce and exploit subjects according to categories of race, gender and migrant status, ‘marked’ subjects, such as the female migrant of ‘Fuck the Border,’ seem only to be legible in accounts of globalisation as anonymous. The point is not, in other words, that the male-dominated scene of Left-wing punk rock somehow appropriates or erases the female Mexican migrant in ‘Fuck the Border,’ but that the song in fact renders visible the type of agency that emerges in response to the constraints of the gendered and racialised aspects of contemporary

globalisation.

Conclusion

What would a further discussion of music, gender and globalisation look like? If it is to struggle seriously with issues of global inequalities, it will have to take account of the ways in which the only strategies of resistance that globalisation may offer to the exploited 'global majority' are those that include claiming anonymity: living on and across, rather than on one side, national borders, categories of migrant status, and legibility in international legal frameworks.²³ In doing so, I hope it could retain the sensitivity to specific musical 'texts' aptly demonstrated by the literature on music and gender (where such 'texts' include written compositions, sound recordings, films and live performances). This might encourage us to avoid uncritically employing theories of the global which have elsewhere been identified as 'masculinised.' Instead, we should take advantage of conceptualizations of globalisation in which gender and sexuality, the postcolonial, the neo-imperial and the transnational remain available, and, potentially rethink such concepts in light of music and musical practices (Corona & Madrid, 2008). Moreover, we should be alert to the nuanced ways in which musical texts can propose artistic responses to, or critiques of, globalisation, without suggesting that such texts somehow lie 'outside' global capitalism. Indeed, from the literature on music and globalisation, as well as post-modern Marxism more generally, we should remember that music, its producers and its audiences can better be understood not as inflected by, but as participants in, the workings of the modern, capitalist world-system.

Notes

¹ I first began working on this topic during Amy Villarejo's film studies seminar 'Liveness' in Fall '08. I presented a version of this paper at the Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, U.S. Branch in San Diego, May 30-31, 2009. I wish to thank Rachel Lewis, Judith Peraino, Nicholas Salvato and Amy Villarejo for their valuable comments on various versions of this paper.

² The most significant examples include the 1993 special issue of *The World of Music* (inc. esp. Erlmann, 1993; Garofalo, 1993; Guilbault, 1993); Slobin, 1993; Lipsitz, 1994; Feld, 1994a, 1994b; Taylor, 1997. Such studies are as much indebted as they are critical of an approach which might be called the study of 'musics of the world.' Such studies (e.g. Manuel, 1988), are essentially additive, in that they seek to pile up

- apparently separate cultures. For more on the relationship between 'additive' area studies and globalisation studies, see Shohat, 2002 (esp. p.68).
- ³ For example, how less persuasive would Arjun Appadurai's highly influential theories of cultural globalisation (collected in Appadurai, 1996) be without frequent discussion of music? See also the inclusion of work by ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor in compilations of readings on globalisation such as Lechner and Boli's *The Globalization Reader* (2000).
- ⁴ For an invaluable discussion of commodification of 'difference' in the global economy, see Ahmed, 2000 (esp. pp. 114–118). Also see Kassabian, 2004.
- ⁵ I can only here undertake a cursory survey of exceptions to this characterization; they include Gopinath (1995, 2005) and Ntarangwi (2003).
- ⁶ See, for instance, Povinelli & Chauncey (1999); Grewal & Kaplan (2001), the queer special issues of the *Journal of Homosexuality* 45/2-3 (2003); *Social Text* 84-85. Vol. 23 (2005); and *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106/3 (2007); Manalansan, 2003; and Gopinath, 2005.
- ⁷ Key in the inauguration of transnational feminist critique is Grewal & Kaplan, 1994. This approach to the gendered aspects of transnationalism build upon an earlier literature on the gendered of nationalism. This earlier literature (which includes Peterson, 1999; Ranchod-Nilsson & Tétreault, 2000; Rowe, 2004) sought itself to build upon Benedict Anderson's highly influential theories of nationalism via 'imagined communities' (1991).
- ⁸ For more on the relationship between the disciplinary divisions between historical musicology, popular music studies and ethnomusicology, see Lewis, forthcoming.
- ⁹ For a poignant history of the discipline's long-held disavowal of the feminine, see Cusick (1999).
- ¹⁰ See, for example, Flinn (1986); Silverman (1988); Butler (1991); Koestenbaum (1993); Halberstam (2005); Freccero (2006).
- ¹¹ Any such conversation must owe a debt the pioneering studies of gender in ethnomusicology such as the collections edited by Koskoff (1987) and Moisola and Diamond (2000). Many of the authors of this diverse body of scholarship were rightly keen to stress that feminist and gender theory developed in the West should not be applied uncritically to non-Western contexts. Instead, such studies sought to 'recogniz[e] the need to understand the gendered perspectives of non-Western people in their own words and to acknowledge individual variation' (Herdon, 2000, p.350). The assumption that gender, music and musical culture is 'vastly different' around the world underlies this scholarship (Moisola and Diamond, 2000, p.1). Thus this scholarship produced admirably thorough analyses of specific musics,

musical cultures and gendered formulations around the world. However, as Lewis (2009) points out, this type of ethnomusicological study of gender parallels a now widely problematised approach to studies of gender within the wider ethnographic and anthropological fields; as Mohanty argues, it fails to acknowledge that “globalisation is an economic, political and ideological phenomenon that actively brings the world and its various communities under connected and interdependent discursive and material regimes” (2003, p.241). Instead, we must seek an understanding of globalisation that foregrounds the links and relationships between the local and the global.

¹² See, for example, the German Neo-Nazi punk band Böhse Onkelz or the American band Stormtroopers of Death, whose song ‘Fuck the Middle East’ on the album *Speak English or Die* (1985) could provide an interesting comparison with ‘Fuck the Border.’

¹³ Key events in this wider activist antiglobalisation movement include the famous riots at the 1999 World Trade Organization conference in Seattle, as well as in 2001 the first annual meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil of the World Social Forum. For more on this movement’s (very) recent appropriation by neoliberalism, see Žižek (2008).

¹⁴ The vast literature on this topic includes Eisenstein (2004, 2007), Mohanty (2006) and Enloe (2007).

¹⁵ Of course, ‘Rock Against Bush’ references the earlier ‘Rock Against Racism’ and ‘Rock Against Reagan’ movements.

¹⁶ For more on contemporary, North American anti-war popular music, see Cloonan (2004) Garofalo (2006).

¹⁷ This piece probably represents the earliest example of transnational feminism. Similar issues have since been raised by numerous others (e.g. Eisenstein, 2004, 2007). For a recent analysis of the discursive location ‘elsewhere’ of gender inequality, see Gupta (2006); and Feldman (2007).

¹⁸ In a final twist, U.S. nationalist discourse has explicitly co-opted the notion of the border to define ‘us’ from ‘them.’ In a speech on September 27th 2001, Bush described terrorists as those ‘who know no borders,’ while simultaneously interpellating the ‘American people’ into a discourse of fear and patriotic duty. Since Chapin’s analyses, Mabee (2007) has observed a post-9/11 ‘reinscription of borders as barriers’ in the U.S. context (p.393).

¹⁹ And if such an analysis as that of Shampa Biswas seems stark, she would argue that it is only typical of Anglo-American foreign policy to rely on such “colonialist imagery of self and other” (Biswas, 2006, p.90).

²⁰ For a useful theorisation of resistance in the context of (not) reproducing

hegemony, see Jakobsen (1998).

- ²¹ The note reads, “Some people have to stay and fight for survival in the country they live in while others have to leave to survive. Corporations cross international borders all the time in search of people to exploit for profit and no one stops them. They call it globalisation. On the other hand, the victims of corporate domination are told that they can’t cross borders in search of better lives.” Much contemporary punk replies on ‘extra-musical’ supplements such as printed liner notes, fanzines and books (especially from AK Press), pdf documents in CD-ROM format, and online sources of information in order to develop its meaning and politics; Propagandhi is no exception, and the description of the Mexican female migrant in “Fuck the Border” is succinctly made through the lyrics and following exegesis; both of which are printed in the album booklet and available on the band’s website.
- ²² It is patterns of transnational migration, especially those effected by globalisation, that leads Mohanty (2003) to use the term ‘One-Third/Two-Thirds World’ alongside ‘Western/Third World.’ ‘One-Third/Two-Thirds World’ draws attention to the processes of globalisation that render race, gender and migrant status useful indices of subjugation for people across the world, including in ‘First World’ and ‘Third World’ countries. On the other hand, the latter, equally useful pair of terms can incorporate a history of colonialism. Finally, Mohanty argues, we should have recourse to a number of terms in order accurately to refer to the “continuities as well as the discontinuities between the haves and the have-nots within and between nations and indigenous communities” (p.246).
- ²³ What is the nature of the gap between such existing legal frameworks of (inter)national law and universal or inalienable human rights? The paradox, whereby universal human rights can only become legible via structures of nationalism and citizenship, is one dating back at least to the Enlightenment. In recent decades, it has been astutely highlighted and discussed by Arendt (1951), Derrida (2001) and Agamben (1998, 2000). Propagandhi’s assertion in the liner notes to *Today’s Empire, Tomorrow’s Ashes* that “capitalism and human rights don’t mix” perhaps registers the disparity between global discourses, such as globalised capital, and ‘universal’ human rights discourses, which frequently rely upon citizenship in order to uphold such rights. Human rights for the stateless (*les apatrides*), therefore, emerges, crushingly for modern times in which the exceptional state of statelessness has become a permanent fixture, as all but impossible.

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