



# The Awakening

The student journal of the Women's Studies Program

Volume 24, Issue 1

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## Women, Gender, and Art

### A Note from the Editor

Art and identity are inextricably linked, and as far as most are concerned they always have been. We see artists as drawing on their own experiences and emotions to provide them with inspiration. We use art as a way to convey certain concepts that social groups see as salient in the formation of their individual selves. We also rely on art to be able to unify social factions and heal open wounds.

Because art can be viewed as tied so strongly to identity, it only follows that women's art is often viewed in the context of their gender identities. Women have long used art as a method to express their frustrations with society or those close to them, to provide insight into the life of a woman in their culture, or to recover from painful experiences. Even when women are creating art that is not inspired by gender, the act of being a woman is often read into their art when analyzed or discussed. Feminist activism has long centered around art—from feminist writing, paintings, bands, and films, feminists have relied on art as a way to reach the masses with their political message.

As much as women have relied on art, however, the history of art is one that (like so many other histories) often excludes them. Groups like the Guerilla Girls seek to promote awareness of women's invisibility in art, buying billboards and making flyers to post statistics such as "Women artists earn only 1/3 of what men do" or "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art section are women, but 85% of the nudes are female."

This issue of *The Awakening* seeks

to get people talking about how women can work within the many fields of art while taking into consideration the ways in which they are shut out, as well as the challenges of being overshadowed as autonomous people by the impact of gender. On page two, Natalie Lombardi shares with us one of her own pieces, and discusses the fact that, when creating art, she does not see her gender as a necessary part of the process. On page three Molly Roth discusses the sexism and suspicion she has faced in the male-dominated worlds of guitar shops and high school jam sessions. I analyze the inherent classism in certain methods of feminist art as activism on page six. For those who are looking for something beyond the pages of the *Awakening*, students from WS FUN and contributors of this issue have compiled a Women's Studies Mixtape of their favorite songs regarding gender.

With this issue, we hope that people can begin to examine the implications of art in all ways. Often art is overlooked as just being something pretty or a fun pastime, but in actuality art can have a much greater impact than many think. By viewing art in the context of gender and identity, we can begin to see how gender affects both the artist and the audience. By understanding the ways in which we're limited by the constrictions surrounding art, we can look for different ways to reduce those limitations and allow ourselves a degree of autonomy in methods and motivations.

Thanks for reading,  
Allie Nordman, editor



**Don't Flatter Yourself... You Were Only A Flesh Wound** ~ sharpie marker, acrylic paint, newspaper, duct tape, über pretentious mix tape.

Natalie Lombardi

I don't make artwork for any specific audience. I don't make artwork to express that I do indeed have a vagina. Pretty much, I make artwork when something, or someone, upsets me. Call it cathartic, or a form of self expression, or crap, I don't really care, I am not doing it for you. This piece was inspired by a brief and torrid affair I had with someone who I thought was manipulative and a liar, but turned out just not to know which way was up. I knew that no matter how much I wanted to confront him or cut off his dingy hair, that wouldn't change the parts of him that made me angry and hurt me in the first place. That being said, I still

needed to do something to help me get over it. So, armed with a mix tape from him that I never wanted to listen to again, I went to work. With this piece, I wanted to remind myself that nothing about this man child was really worth any intimate part of me. This piece isn't about cutting, it's not about destructive behavior, but rather about bucking up and moving on. I don't like waiting around for people to change so I feel better; it's much more satisfying to make change to make myself feel better.

*Natalie is a Junior at Ohio University majoring in Microbiology. She likes coffee, cheese, and burritos.*

### A publication of the Women's Studies Program

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# The Politics of Rockin' Out

## On Being a Girl with a Guitar

Molly Roth

Whenever I'm around a guy and mention that I play guitar it is usually met with a look of suspicion. Even an enlightened, sensitive, musical type won't quite believe me. I must mean I play guitar in the "girl" way, meaning I strum a 1-4-5 and sing about the earth or my relationship with my mother. I couldn't possibly play guitar in the "guy" way, the "real" way, where I know the differences between modes and scales, and can find a relative minor.

A funny story to illustrate my point: A male classmate of mine had just begun taking lessons from the same teacher I was studying with at the time, so I asked him what songs he was working on. He filled me in on what was a Nirvana song or something of the ilk. Then he asked what I was working on. When I told him Paganini's Excerpt From Perpetual Motion he turned and looked at me with that now familiar mix of confusion and suspicion: "Oh, I didn't know you played like that," he said. "Well, what did you think I played?" I asked. He replied, "I don't know, chords and stuff."

Another difficult thing to get past most men is that I've been playing the instrument for six years. Maybe they could wrap their heads around the notion of feminine hands scaling a fret board if it was "just a phase," some kind of crazy notion of female musicianship brought on by a trip to Lillith Fair and a newly bought Daisy Rock guitar. But this is obviously not a phase; for me this is a seemingly inexcusable commitment and passion.

On the subject of Daisy Rock guitars, I think they are one of the biggest insults towards female musicians out there. The whole idea that girls will be encouraged to pick up a guitar just because they can add their own daisy decals to make it look prettier is not only demeaning, but implies that the only thing between women



and solo-guitaristdom is merely a question of aesthetics. Aesthetics, however, is not the only reason Daisy Rock claims to be "girl-friendly." The necks of their guitars are actually scaled down to "fit smaller hands". Ever seen B.B. King's hands? They're probably smaller than most women's, and his fingers are about the size and shape of baby carrots. Obviously this hasn't stopped him any. The idea of "small hands, big guitars" is nothing more than a myth used to sell "girl friendly" instruments. Perhaps the biggest problem with Daisy Rock guitars though is that they play horribly. The minute you pick one up you can feel the lack of quality, and after plugging it in your feelings are confirmed. Also, if Daisy Rock guitars are for girls, doesn't that imply that all other guitars are intended for men? Since when do women need another divisive cultural assumption like that?

I realize that there are many other more "serious" fields in which women face discrimination and oppression, such as law, medicine, and politics. When considering these fields, many people may not consider sexism in guitar shops to be a very serious problem. However, I also believe that the degree of oppression in these "higher" fields is mirrored in the realms of the more "inconsequential" arenas, such as mechanics, art, or rocking out.

*Molly is a Sophomore at Ohio University majoring in International Studies*



Allie Nordman

The Ettes are the type of band most people would love to hate. They sound good, look good, and seem to have come out of nowhere to win over the favor of almost anyone who listens to them. Both aesthetically and musically they have the perfect dynamic for success in the “band to watch” category. First, there’s Coco, the pretty, soft spoken guitar player and vocalist from Orlando, Florida. Next, there’s Poni, the energetic and sometimes goofy drummer with the sultry gaze from New York. Finally, there’s Jem from New Jersey, the token curly-haired, tight-pants-wearing bass player. But while they may seem like a lucky formula assembled in some hip neighborhood by a few savvy kids, one listen to their new album “Shake the Dust” proves they’re anything but formulaic.

The Ettes originally comprised Coco, Poni, and a female bass player. Cleverly named after the tradition of female “-ettes” bands, they name stuck even after they swapped out the original bassist for Jem. In 2004 they moved from New York to Los Angeles where they quickly gained a reputation for their high-energy shows and their garage rock sound. As word about them continued to circulate, they began booking shows at all the most important venues with bigger and better known bands. The more they played the more people talked, and the rest seems to have to fall into place from there.

They signed with Sympathy for the Record Industry and released “Shake the Dust” in September to a din of critical acclaim. The album displays their range

of abilities, starting out with the smoothly angular sounding “Reputation,” with Coco’s vocals melting over Jem’s bass and backed by Poni’s aggressive drumming. The high-energy “No More Surprises” is sandwiched as a mid-album pick-me-up, with all three playing fast and forcefully. The second-to-last song “Beggars” is slower and heart-felt, displaying the band’s love-sick side. “Dead and Gone” has the band playing in solid staccato rhythms, with Coco’s vocals mimicking those of Karen O on early Yeah Yeah Yeahs songs.

While it’s not necessarily an extraordinary or groundbreaking album at any given moment, overall “Shake the Dust” is a solid album, lacking low points in favor of moments which are simply more subdued. While The Ettes may take some time to warm up to, after a couple listens the album becomes addicting in its energy and consistency. Since its release they have been compared to The Stooges, Nancy Sinatra, and The Sonics, among many others. After listening it is easy to see where all the acclaim hails from. While many think of garage rock as a genre characterized by its gritty sound and careless demeanor, the Ettes have managed to nail all the bases and take it in a different direction. Their songs are simultaneously sparse, sugary, and polished, and certainly done in a way that doesn’t come around very often.

*Allie is a Senior at Ohio University majoring in Women's Studies and Sociology.*

# Ani DiFranco Exposes Self with *Reprieve*

EricA Boehnlein

Vulnerable, reflective, hypnotizing is feminist folk-rocker Ani DiFranco's newest release, *Reprieve*. The 13-track album is a mixture of introspective melodies and political anthems. With a powerful yet vulnerable voice, DiFranco strays away from the growling, in-your-face aura of her earlier albums and presents a more mature and perhaps more inspired album. Slightly more produced than her last album, *Knuckledown*, this album relies primarily on DiFranco's captivating guitar riffs and bassist Todd Sickafoose's strong beats, while also incorporating DiFranco's typical array of random sound effects including birds, dogs, synthesizers and what sounds like video game noises.

The album starts off with "Hypnotized," which features a bass solo at the beginning, leading into what may be DiFranco's most reflective song to date. She exposes herself with a sense of vulnerability that is not always apparent in her music. She sings, "And I was no picnic/ I was no prize." The three songs that follow "Hypnotized" follow in a similar fashion with slow beats and heartfelt lyrics. Then comes "Decree," the most political song on the album. DiFranco sings, "The stars are going out/ and the stripes are getting bent." Without skipping a beat, DiFranco's next three songs are the most Ani-esque of the album. With catchy beats and witty lyrics, "78% H2O" and "Millennium Theater" scream DiFranco's political agenda with "Trickle down Israel, Patriarchies realign /The ice caps melt and New Orleans bides her time."

What follows is perhaps the best song on the album. "Half-Assed" overtakes listeners and places them directly into DiFranco's life. With its heavy beats and intertwining guitar riffs, the song alone seems to be representative of where DiFranco stands in her



musical career. She sings, "I just wanna tune out all the billboards, weld myself a mental shield / I just wanna put down all the pressures and feel how I really feel." The song is mesmerizing and rivals the likes of "Little Plastic Castle" and "Evolve" for DiFranco's best song.

DiFranco ends the album with the title track "Reprieve," a political poem and three other songs that seem to be overshadowed by the intensity of the rest of the album. Though the end of the album leaves something to be desired, DiFranco has definitely succeeded in blending powerful vocals, vulnerable lyrics and passionate music to create an enticing album. *Reprieve* offers an introspective look into DiFranco's mind and strengthens the bond between the folk-rocker and her long-time fans.

*EricA is a Junior at OU majoring in Magazine Journalism and Women's Studies. She enjoys jamming with her folk-rock band EricA and the Littlebeans.*



# Activism or Classism?

## The problems posed by feminist art

Allie Nordman



Any feminist or Women's Studies student will agree that feminism has always had to work against the accusation that it is a movement propelled by middle-class white women's ideas of gender. Third Wave in particular has attempted to dispel this idea, but the fact remains that many women claim to feel isolated from a movement they suggest often overlooks their experiences and makes inaccurate blanket statements about gender roles.

Art has always been a popular means of feminist activism. It also serves as an approach to assist women in the formation of their own personal identities, and remains an admired way for women to find healing in response to their own negative experiences. At the same time, the communities of art, music, film, and literature are those of loaded genres, thought of as being surrounded by highbrow ideologies and even higher financial membership standards. What does this say, then, for the analysis of feminism as a middle-class white women's movement? While women examining femininity in their art are lauded for their political message, few analyze the bourgeois implications of their art. It requires money up front to create art, time to dedicate to creation, and connections with people at galleries in which the art may be displayed. This is not even to mention the fact that ideas of femininity are drastically different for a middle-class suburban girl with the resources to create art than an working-class urban girl without them.

Third Wave briefly attempted to rectify this dynamic in the riot grrrl movement. Riot grrrl spoke out against almost every "-ism" imaginable, often through the use of 'zines (homemade, independently distributed feminist publications). Unfortunately, most of these 'zines were produced by white, suburban teenage girls who had little exposure to issues of race and class, and therefore produced cursory displays of insight in their writings. Again, taking into consideration the time necessary for production, financial burdens of duplication, and time required to take on extraneous intellectual efforts, it is no wonder this situation developed.

While there is art that does focus solely on class, it is usually from an outsider perspective. This presents its own problem. While it is not usually the artist's intent, there is typically an underlying theme of condescension in the art. It's the idea of artists swooping in to represent those "less fortunate" than themselves, entering into a lifestyle they come to understand only through the lens of a camera or passing interviews and thrown-together statistics. It's that these well-intended, yet still ill-formed judgments are edited together, peppered with flowery language and dramatic interpretations and sold back to us as accurate portrayals. It's allowing marginalized women to exist in the much-discussed gaze that women themselves fight so hard to overcome in a patriarchal media. And it's that most of us don't step up to question it.

This is, of course, not to say that all artists are irresponsible, exploitative, or completely off base in their methods and intentions. It is to say that we need to begin to provide access to creative resources for those who are justly capable of portraying their own positions in our society. While the images of disadvantaged women provided by those with the financial means to represent them is better than their invisibility in art overall, ultimately they must be able to provide those images themselves in order for art as a form of activism to be legitimate and not condescending or exploitative in some sense. There are several existing programs to give women and girls access to the means necessary to create. They're few and far between, though, difficult to find information on, and often last only a week or two. While these programs can teach girls to make films about their struggles with racial identity or body image, they can't give girls cameras to allow these thoughts to continue to develop or mature through their art.

This problem is one the Third Wave can easily tackle. We're not far off, but we do have a way to go. It takes the same sense of inquisition we inject into everything else; now we've just got one more avenue into which we can channel it.

## Women's Studies



## Mixtape

### Erica Boehnlein

#### Not a Pretty Girl ~ Ani DiFranco

"And imagine you're a girl/Just trying to finally come clean/Knowing full well they'd prefer you were dirty and smiling"

This song is an anthem for any woman who has felt like she doesn't fit into the "pretty girl" image. She sings about not needing to be rescued and not being allowed to show anger or have an opinion. The song really rings true with me, as I'm sure it does with others.

#### Bad Reputation ~ Joan Jett

"A girl can do what she wants to do/And that's what I'm going to do/And I don't give a damn about my bad reputation"

What can I say? This song just rocks. It's all about doing whatever you want and not caring what everyone else thinks. And let's face it, even at close to 50 years old, Joan Jett still rocks harder than every rocker guy around.

### Natalie Lombardi

#### Neko Case ~ Tightly

"When I'm walkin' under trees/I'm free to covet all I please/New moons in the alley/ And its madness calls to me"

#### Laura Veirs ~ Magnetized

"Slain/By your zirconium smile/I was slain/  
By your olivine eyes/Slain/I was lying in piles/Hoping shovels would cast me"

### Molly Roth

#### Peggy Seeger ~ I'm Gonna be an Engineer

"When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy/I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys/Everybody said I only did it to annoy/But I was gonna be an engineer"

The lyrics are laugh out loud funny and succinct as well, but the slight desperation in her voice when she sings it really pulls the song together into the story of female frustration and pain during various stages of life.

Grab blank tape and take down some notes as students from OU's Women's Studies Feminist Undergraduate Network and this issue's contributors share their favorite Women's Studies themed songs.

### Sherri Oliver

#### Be Yr Mama ~ Sleater-Kinney

"Hold on to it you hold onto me/Fix it for you I fixed it for you/But I don't wanna/Be yr mama"

Though the lyrics are very simple, this song is appealing because it highlights the fact that in relationships men often rely on women as secondary mother figures and caregivers more so than as an independent being who has her own problems to deal with.

#### I Wanna Know What Love Is ~ Julie Ruin

"So I'll stay awake almost every night/A pen in my hand and in the other a knife/Because I'd rather be scared and fight back/Than be some dick's maid, babe or wife"

The message of this song is relatively straightforward. Kathleen Hanna is vocalizing her feelings that fear—of violence and sexual assault, to name a few—cannot be the overriding factor in a woman's goals of becoming independent.

#### What's Yr Take On Cassavetes ~ Le Tigre

"What's Yr Take on Cassavetes?/Genius? Misogynist?/Messiah? Alcoholic?"

This song is interesting because as feminists, Le Tigre struggle with the fact that film maker John Cassavettes is considered a genius by many and a misogynist by few. The issue of misogyny in art is evident in many more modern contexts as well.

### Allie Nordman

#### Lois ~ Stumpet

"I read bad books/ I make a scene/Read about my scene in a magazine/I swear a lot/Wear polka dots/I might be a social disease/But I won't be caught."

This song combines Lois's soft style with lyrics about rebellion and self-sufficiency. In this song, she conveys her social carelessness with a pride and a smirking sense of humor.

#### Thurston Hearts the Who ~ Bikini Kill

"If Thurston Moore/Thinks that its cool/Does that mean/ Everything to you?/Thurston hearts The Who/Do you heart the who too?"

This song is brilliant. Kathleen Hanna reads aloud a review labeling Bikini Kill as "man haters" and "desperately confused." Tobi Vail repeats the above lyrics—a critique of the music scene's treatment of friends in Sonic Youth—until the song breaks down into all three members of the band screaming wildly and beating on their instruments. The complete chaos and disorder they created in this song was groundbreaking then, and is classic now.

# Winter Quarter Course Listing

## Women's Studies Courses:

### WS 100 Introduction to Women's Studies

07118 | TTh | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Ellis 214 | Little  
 07119 | TTh | 1:10-3:00 pm | Bentley 120 | Little  
 07120 | MW | 1:10-3:00 pm | Clippinger 135 | Krouse  
 07121 | TTh | 9:10-11:00 am | RTEC 214 | Nickels  
 07122 | MW | 3:10-5:00 pm | Clippinger 135 | Hall  
 07162 | MW | 9:10-11:00 am | RTEC 215 | Stokes  
 07270 | TTh | 12:10-2:00 pm | RTEC 301 | Friday  
 55060 | Arranged | Arranged | WWW | Grant

### WS 200 Issues in Feminism

07123 | MW | 2:10-4:00 pm | Ellis 103 | Reynolds  
 07269 | MW | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | RTEC 315 | Friday

### WS 320 Sexual Revolutions

07124 | TTh | 11:00 am- 1:00 pm | Ellis 014 | Grant

### WS 410/510 Global Feminisms

07125/ 07128 | TTh | 2:10-4:00 pm | Lindley 050 | Whitson

### WS 480 Capstone in Women's Studies

07126 | MW | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Morton 322 | Little

### WS 589 New Feminist Scholarship

07129 | F | 9:10 am-1:00 pm | Ellis 015 | White

## Cross-Listed Courses:

### COMS 420 Gender and Communication

01808 | WF | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | TBA | Ahmed

### COMS 422 Communication in the Family

01809 | TTh | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Central 310 | Chawla

### ENG 153A Writing and Reading: Gender

03154 | MTWTHF | 8:10-9:00 am | Ellis 031 | TBA

*Updated course listings and course descriptions can be found on the Women's Studies Program's Web site: <http://www.ohiou.edu/womenstudies/>*

### ENG 306J Women and Writing

03186 | MTTHF | 8:10-9:00 am | Ellis 110 | TBA  
 03187 | MTWTh | 9:10-10:00 am | Ellis 020 | TBA  
 03188 | MTWTh | 1:10-2:00 pm | Ellis 020 | TBA  
 03189 | TTh | 1:10-3:00 pm | Ellis 019 | Gradin  
 03190 | MW | 3:10- 5:00 pm | Ellis 020 | Worthy  
 03191 | TTh | 3:10-5:00 pm | Ellis 112 | Holm  
 03192 | TuTh | 3:10-5:00 pm | Ellis 112 | Holm  
 03193 | MTWTh | 5:10-6:00 pm | Ellis 106 | TBA  
 03194 | MW | 5:10-7:00 pm | Ellis 019 | Worthy

### ENG 460 Special Topics: Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Circle

03252 | MW | 10:10am-12:00 pm | Ellis 120 | Reynolds

### HIST 320A Women in American History Before 1877

03924 | MTWTh | 2:10-3:00 pm | Bentley 129 | Jellison

### HIST 360B Women in Modern Europe

03938 | MW | 4:10-6:00 pm | Bentley 021 | Blessing

### HLTH 210 Health of Women

04033 | WF | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Grover Center W123 | Basta

### LING 390 Language of Women and Men

04706 | MW | 3:10-5:00 pm | Gordy 305 | Marchenkova

### POLS 319/519 Gay and Lesbian Politics

05820 | MW | 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Bentley 023 | Hunt

### POLS 421/521 The Politics of Law and Sexuality

05828 | TTh | 1:10-3:00 pm | Bentley 220 | Burgess

### PSY 378 Psychology of Gender

05970 | MW | 3:10-5:00 pm | Porter 107 | Demyan

### SOC 220 Introduction to the Family

06478 | MW 10:10 am-12:00 pm | Bentley 136 | Hall

### SOC 470 Sociology of Gender

07226 | MW | 1:10-3:00 pm | Bentley 132 | Mattley

### UP451S Vampires: Myth and History

07045 | MW | 7:10-9:00 pm | Bentley 307 | Blessing

*The Awakening* would love to hear from you!

Please send all submissions, letters, etc. to [an168103@ohio.edu](mailto:an168103@ohio.edu) or bring to the Women's Studies Office in Lindley.