



## ROCK & ROLL: A DISCOURSE OF “RETHINK” OF THE DUALISM OF THE CENTRE AND THE MARGIN

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### ABSTRACT



Within the politics of the systematic subversion of subordinate through the logic of domination within the ontological divide African American women artists' music emerges as a resistance mechanism at subverting the culture/nature Cartesian dualism initiating a discourse of “rethink” of the dualism of “the centre” and “the margin,” thwarting the myth of the “Otherness” in turn liberating the other, and implicitly all such “Other” groups through the celebration of the associative interconnectivity across these marginal groups.

The chapter covers the literary oeuvre of significant rock and roll African American women artists, right from its inception during the period of the blues i.e. the 1920s in the work of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, in the 1950s in the music of LaVern Baker and Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton, and in the 1960s in that of Odetta Holmes.

**Keywords:** *Rock & Roll, Ecofeminism, African American Women*

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As the civil rights movement staged bigger and bigger demonstrations and increased African American pride, the soul music phenomenon became more than party music for the young blacks. It became a rallying flag for the black nationalist movement. Characteristically soul music's ascent in the pop charts marked the most visible registration of successes of the civil rights movement, thanks to the generation of post-war musicians who turned gospel music into a secular art form. The key development parallel to all this was the emergence of the rock and roll, which was both, primarily for and about adolescents, for its lyrics articulated a broad spectrum of teenage issues ranging from cars to school to summer vacation to parent issues to young love to race to sexuality to generational conflicts to pop culture wars, using intricate instrumentation which for early rock and roll remained the staples: guitar, bass, piano, drums, and saxophone, eventually incorporating all the rich aspects of electrically amplified versions of instruments producing elements such as a heavy beat, self-absorbed lyrics, and raving delivery, all of which indicate a teenage defiance of adult values and authority, ushering in a fresh wave that defined a generation in music. Blues, and rhythm and blues, were too adult, sexual, angry, and solely identified with black culture, to be acceptable either emotionally or commercially without adaptation. Major record companies had for years been producing records for black audiences called "race records." The emergence of rock and roll signified a slight weakening in resistance to black culture. Glenn C. Altschuler elaborates in an insightful comment:

The emergence of rock 'n' roll as a cultural phenomenon coincided with great ferment in the movement to grant civil rights to African Americans. Enmeshed in the racial politics of the 1950s, rock 'n' roll was credited with and criticized for promoting integration and economic opportunity for blacks while bringing to "mainstream" culture black styles and values. In the South, rock 'n' roll became a lightning rod for die-hard segregationists who associated the music— and African

Americans—with depraved beliefs and behaviour....Subject to these pressures and counterpressures rock 'n' roll remained a highly visible and contested area for struggles over racial identity and cultural and economic empowerment in the United States. (35)

The recording and broadcasting professionals interpreted rock 'n' roll as big business subject to the dictates of the white mass market and in pursuit of profit they shunned controversy, exploited black performance, bleached the music, and promoted white rock 'n' rollers. The target audience of this music was the baby boomers of 1950, a rather young audience.

Rock and roll's approach to the prudent Victorian morality surrounding the issue of sexuality made the "adult" proponents of "culture," as symbolized in the authority figures of the clergymen, teachers, parents, politicians, and all sorts of professionals exceedingly anxious, as the availability of condoms and penicillin aided promiscuity through safety, for even states had now begun to drop prohibition laws against dissemination of contraceptive information or devices. But even though: "...rock 'n' roll was demonstrating the power of the libido, as the music pulsed, the guitarist fondled his instrument, and the singer undulated sensuously" it's overt "anti-inhibitor, provoking erotic vandalism" very "rarely endorsed sex outside of established relationships" of love and marriage, therefore conforming to the traditional roles assigned on the basis of sex (Altschuler 67).

Such a structured approach against sexual repression within rock and roll music meant a certain amount of freedom in sexual expression while the clutches of sexual control still persisted. The main worry for the authorities then was non-marital sex. These opposing forces of mindset, that of free expression and restraint created a serious vent in the minds of many during the time giving birth to rather dangerous double standards because of sexual confusion and guilt.

From the prism of ecofeminism this teenage expressive approach towards sexuality can be seen as liberating and natural, falling on the ontological



nature side of the dualism but a brief discussion on ecofeminist idea of contraceptives somewhat complicates the picture only to reveal a futuristic forward looking ecofeminist sensibility of the rock and roll music. Mary Mellor, in the essay "Ecofeminist Thought," as appears in her *Feminism and Ecology* (1997), enumerates French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist stand:

In "Le Feminisme on la mort," first published in 1974, d'Eaubonne argued that male control of production and of women's sexuality brings the twin crisis of environmental destruction through surplus production, and overpopulation through surplus births (her particular target here was Catholicism). (44)

Barbara T. Gates in her essay "A Root of Ecofeminism: Ecoféminine" further explains d'Eaubonne's position from her own readings of *Le Feminisme on la mort* and *Ecologie féminisme: Revolution on mutation?* (1978) Gates puts forth how according to d'Eaubonne women have been reduced to the status of a minority by a male-dominated society, although their importance in terms of numbers, and in terms of their role in reproduction, should have permitted them a dominant role but sadly women have not even been allowed to control births without hindrance from men, in particular male theologians and legislators. Men have consistently desired power over women's reproductive functions and to this the male scholars have colluded and provided testimony.

They have, for example, paid little attention to the conjuring rites ancient women evolved to stop conception and birth but have overemphasised ancient fertility rites. Now it is imperative to stop this fallacious thinking. Overpopulation is ruining both humanity and the earth, for the earth is treated with the same disregard as are women. Urbanized, technological society, which is male-driven, has reduced the earth's fertility, while overbreeding, also male-driven, has increased the population. Women must act to save themselves and the earth simultaneously. The two needs are intimately linked. (Gates 17)

The ecofeminist women scholarship understands this overpopulation to manifest because of the technologies that science has made tangible for the humans. They regard these technologies as falling more under the domain of "culture" in the ontological setup for even though these technological advances have made possible a certain degree of control for women over their own bodies in the wider perspective, within the political and social dynamics they are means for oppressive bodies to structurally control women and to associate with the satisfaction of engaging in creation.

Michelle Stanworth in her "Reproductive Technologies: Tampering with Nature?" enumerates roughly four "groups" under which technologies intervene in the human reproduction process, stating, the first and most familiar group includes those concerned with fertility control—with preventing conception, frustrating implantation of an embryo, or terminating pregnancy, while the second group of reproductive technologies is concerned with the "management" of labour and childbirth, the third and one of the growth areas in reproductive technology is concerned with improving the health and the genetic characteristics of fetuses and of newborns—with the search for, as some have said, "the perfect child," finally according to Michelle Stanworth the fourth and perhaps most controversial group are the conceptive technologies, directed to the promotion of pregnancy through techniques for overcoming or bypassing infertility. Stanworth's categories establish a positive negative stance towards technologies. Her view can be seen as the bridge between the spiritual ecofeminism (Mary Daly) that outrightly rejects all technological tampering with the process of reproduction and the postmodern cyberfeminism (Donna Haraway) that celebrates technological development. But a deep examination of the four groups reveals the culture/nature dualism being somewhat blurred, emerging in accord with an inclusive forward looking outlook of ecofeminism. For let's face it even though there has been an ideological oppressive systemic politics at the back of reproduction, and hospitals may be slowly turning into commercial entities, Mary Daly goes a bit too far in her claims when she discusses the rituals of American gynecology in



relation to the pattern of Sado-Ritual Syndrome stating:

The obsession with purity is evident, and it is multileveled. There is, first of all, the obvious level of "cleanliness," or more precisely, asepsis (freedom from pathogenic microorganisms). Adrienne Rich has pointed out the stunning reversal which gynaecological historians have inflicted upon our minds by referring to the "filthy" midwives who were replaced by antiseptic ob/gyns: "The midwife, who attended only women in labor, carried fewer disease bacteria with her than the physician." Indeed. As Rich documents: "In the seventeenth century began a two centuries" plague of perpetual fever which was directly related to the increase in obstetric practice of men." The hands of physician or surgeon often came directly from cases of disease to cases of childbirth. Hospitals were horror shows. Not until the half of the nineteenth century, when doctors finally began to wash their hands, did the two hundred years of deadly blood-poisoning, euphemistically called puerperal or childbed fever, gradually came to an end.

The current fixations upon asepsis, as they are manifested in the gynaecological professions, are rooted in a much deeper level of obsession with purity. In the Gynecological Age, as in the past, women are identified as filthy and impure beings in the most radical sense. That is, we are stigmatized as ontologically impure and are therefore targets of hatred on this fundamental and all-pervasive level. Since this mythic mind-set controls the theories of doctors who "doctor" female flesh, these professional helpers continue to be carriers of iatrogenic disease. They still frequently bring the

same sort of "gifts" to their patients as their predecessors: infection, mutilation, and a slow, painful, degrading death. Thus, iatrogenic disease is the radical impurity endemic to the medical profession itself. (Daly 236-37)

But in the middle of all these ideas it must not be forgotten the degradation endured by the earth in the face of such capitalism and overpopulation due to technological advances cannot be justified by any means.

In the face of such antagonism against adult authority and its expectations, conformity to peer sanctioned norms, and an ephemeral-erratic-emotional intensity, as a form of defiance teenism reached its nadir and the music of this period manifested as the emblem of generational conflict, for even though the issue existed outside of rock and roll just as much music gave it the visibility and henceforth the urgency.

Rock and roll became the incubator for alienation and rebelliousness. Its insistent beat relaxed and released the body. Rock and roll sparked arguments in families about independence and deference, sex and abstinence, work and leisure.

Throughout the mass media and the marketplace, it seemed, teenagers separated themselves from the rest of the population...., Americans of all ages evaluated the relationship between the state of the family, the threat of juvenile delinquency, the purchasing power of boys and girls, and the immense popularity of rock 'n' roll. On both sides of the generational divide, they tended to reject authoritarian models for the family and choose accommodation rather than open warfare, with adults seeking not to obliterate but to modify teenage culture to approximate their own norms. (Altschuler 99-100)

Sadly as a way out some traditional Americans started advocating a return to hierarchical authoritarian family set up, as a means to fight back the teen barrage rather than choosing to cower. As a



counter discourse the sexist hierarchical oppressive solution the guardians of the “mainstream” came up with, urged traditionalists demand that moms subordinate themselves to the needs of their children, defer to their husbands, and stay at home. And to further prevent mothers from emasculating their sons, traditionalists pressed fathers to reassert themselves as disciplinarians and role models. But thankfully the traditionalists were in minority by 1950s. In the middle of all this literary voices such as that of J. D. Salinger in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Edgar Z. Friedenberg in *The Vanishing Adolescent* (1959) provided a rather sane examination of the emotions and actions of these adolescents. While *The Catcher in the Rye*'s Holden Caulfield in the post-war America found himself aimless through his struggles of developing a distinct substantive identity in the prevalent social forces of conformity, utter hypocrisy, and materialism, an atmosphere Salinger suggests would breed a rebel as Caulfield stares into the emptiness of his future. Salinger's novel therefore expressed and sanctioned the naturalness of adolescent idealism and defiance as correctives to the times. The second similar voice emerged in *The Vanishing Adolescent* which is a non-fiction. Describing teenage as a disturbed- disturbing period Friedenberg expressed how adolescence is the period of identity formation, a period when young observe and learn who they are and what they feel about things. They come out of their little closets discarding conventions and solitude taking on new peer group sanctioned social behaviour, hence adhering new conventions and rituals sometimes they yet don't understand themselves. They rigorously defend what they believe in and what they believe are their rights and prerogatives. To adults this may come as pugnacious-reckless-quarrelsome behaviour, but it is a dialectical process where the adult-adolescent conflict would result in a healthy society.

Ecofeminism is sensitive to such a process for it understands the politics at work under the logic of domination in the systems of oppression:

...children—similar to women, racial and ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, the differently abled, and elements of nonhuman nature—

are subjected to social oppression. Increasingly we live in an adult-centred, age segregated world that better serves the political and economic interests of powerful adults than even the most basic survival needs of youth. Consequently, children are often denied appropriate care and attention, social participation, and respect. (KurthSchai 193-94)

Ecofeminist Ruthanne Kurth-Schai building on the ecofeminist philosophy of Karen J. Warren proposes inclusion of children's perspectives and their issues to the ecofeminist activism and dialogue. Kurth-Schai argues that:

Children often entrust adults with the faith that their thoughts and intuitions will be respected and responded to. Their trust is betrayed when we accept adult-centred conceptions of childhood and derive from them approaches to social and environmental reform inadequate to the task. Ecological feminism provides an opportunity to regain children's trust while engaging their cooperation by defining an ethical framework on the basis of which to address the challenges and the complexities of children's lives. (208)

As rock and roll became the national phenomenon, a pleasure-leisure-passtime it also became a powerhouse and the breeding ground of the pop culture wars. In its qualification as a pleasure-leisure-passtime rock and roll can be understood as close to the women leisure activities as recognized in ecofeminism. Karen M. Fox in the article “Leisure: Celebration and Resistance in the Ecofeminist Quilt” incorporated in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, edited by Warren and Erkal, explains beautifully:

Leisure plays a significant role in the lives of women and supports their connection with nature.[...]

The quality stitch is sewn with needles called “betweens.” So, leisure often occurs “between” activities, times, and experiences or within other



structures and life elements (e.g., leisure at work). Leisure accents the pattern or design of the quilt of a woman's life. By bringing into focus or increasing the tension at specific stitches, the "puffs" can become more noticeable, especially when leisure involves a connection with nature or joyful resistance. Ecological feminism must take seriously leisure for women because it is a vital component of the health and well-being of women. It provides a means of self-determination, a connection with the natural environment and others, an inspiration for creativity and self-expression, and a potential for a more respectful connection with the natural environment.

For many women, leisure is intimately connected with relationships of sharing, trust, communicating, caring, and common action. Leisure is who they are as well as how they feel....leisure is a quilting stitch that provides connection and accents patterns of community, development, self-affirmation, and respect of the natural environment. It is a way to be joyfully resistant and alive. (170-71)

A major reason behind rock and roll's acquired status was the technological advances of that time. These post World War II developments included the introduction of the LP, the 45, and production of the inexpensive phonograph, in other words, further enhanced systems of "culture" within music. Though the engineers had begun experimenting with the sounds of the guitar, amplifying them through electronics in 1920s. Rock and roll brought this development centre-stage, though it had been used to a certain degree by the blues bands, country bands, and rhythm and blues artists, therefore helping electric guitar receive the mainstream limelight leaving behind the somewhat shady-dubious reputation of being the stringed instrument of the devil (an idea having emerged in Europe), and also to a degree because it was by those

categorically marginalised, simultaneously gravitating the new acquired form of African American music to the mainstream. However, compared to the initial phase of rock music, that of rock and roll from late 1940s and early 1950s guitar dominated the second phase i.e. from the middle to the late 1950s even more, emerging as the most dominant instrument sound in music performances. Though often overlooked and relegated to the realms of oblivious, black women have had a great deal to contribute to the genre. Though often overlooked and relegated to the realms of oblivious, black women have had a great deal to contribute to the genre. Interestingly the peculiar elements of rock and roll can be traced back to the blues of the 1920s and the country records of 1930s. And in this context Sister Rosetta Nubin Tharpe (b. March 20, 1915-October 9, 1973) emerges, as also often acclaimed, as the godmother of the rock. For she pioneered the lead guitar playing style performing her signature blues licks during her gospel renditions. Her songs of praise emerged as a template for the generations of blues and rock guitarists. She helped sacred (gospel) music crossover to secular rhythmic songs laying a solid foundation on which rock and roll sprang through the blossoming of the talent such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Fats Domino. William Richard in the March 18, 2015 article "Sister Rosetta Tharpe: The Godmother of Rock 'n' Roll" for *The Guardian* remarked:

Nobody-not Chuck Berry, not Scotty Moore, not James Burton, not Keith Richards—played wilder or more primal rock 'n' roll guitar than this woman who gave her life to God and would have celebrated her 100th birthday on 20 March. With a Gibson GS in her hands, Sister Rosetta could raise the dead. And that was before she started to sing. ([www.theguardian.com/music/2015/mar/18/sisterrosetta-tharpegospel-singer-100th-birthday-tribute](http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/mar/18/sisterrosetta-tharpegospel-singer-100th-birthday-tribute))

She may have been forgotten by the mainstream culture as she lies in her unmarked grave since 1973 recent attempts to remember and honour her in endeavours such as the 2004 tribute album



*Shout, Sister, Shout!* by artists Osborne, Maria Muldaur, and Bonnie Rait, a biography by the same title by Gayle Wald, published in 2007, followed by the 2011 documentary *The Godmother of Rock & Roll: Sister Rosetta Tharpe* directed by Mike Csaky (a filmmaker) which was aired by PBS as part of the American Master series, comes as a welcome start. Her electric guitar solo that appeared in the French film *Amelie* (2001) remains a favourite among fans. Tharpe's official cross over from gospel to the rock and roll can be attributed with her landmark "Didn't it Rain" performance of the summer of 1964 at a disused railway station outside Manchester in her distinct style with the steel-electric guitar, the year she turned 49, captivating her audiences to the breath with her powerful voice and her phenomenal instrument skills. Though previously also sung in a remarkable ever impressionable rendition by Mahalia Jackson, Tharpe's seasoned artistic skill rendered it even more character with the strength of her tone, a professional command of expression variation, a rare flexibility of phrasing, and utter mastery of vibrato. Her wild ferocious guitar playing, in the Manchester drizzle, descending a horse-drawn carriage, with her iconic metal electric guitar strapped to her voluminous coat to sing the gospel classic established her as a diva as the image wedded the nature (own voice, horse, use of own hands to play) and the culture (guitar). Her biographer Gayle Wald in praise of Tharpe's guitar playing skills remarked:

...she owned it. Like a snake-charmer, she coaxed sounds out of the instruments, turning wood and metal into something alive yet completely under her control. Her contemporaries referred to this as making a guitar "talk." Sometimes...they said she played "like a man," as though a woman wasn't capable of projecting such command-or a woman-in-gospel conveying such palpable eroticism. (Wald 189)

Tharpe's ecofeminist sensibility is quite apparent in her oeuvre: in the coming together of the "wood" and the "metal," with the "nature" aspect of her vocals that she "owned" and had complete "control" over, as also being capable of "making her

guitar 'talk.'" Her ability to bridge the gap between the material-carnal, and the sacred further affirms her visionary understanding of the systems of domination at work that uses this dualism to function its oppressive politics. In her ever memorable "Didn't it Rain," she sings:

Oh didn't it rain, children?  
 Talk 'bout rain, oh, my Lord  
 Didn't it, didn't it, didn't it, oh, my Lord?  
 Didn't it rain?  
 It rained forty days, forty nights  
 without stopping  
 Noah was glad when the rain stopped  
 dropping  
 Knock at the window, a knock at the door  
 Crying, "Brother Noah, can't you take on more?"  
 Noah cried, "No, you're full of sin  
 God got the key and you can't get in"

Just listen how it's rainin'  
 Will you listen how it's rainin'?  
 Just listen how it's rainin'  
 All day, all night  
 All night, all day  
 Just listen how it's rainin'  
 .....

Oh, God sent a raven to spread the news  
 To hoist his wings and away he flew  
 And to the north and to the south  
 And to the east and to the west  
 All day, all night, all night, all day  
 Just listen how it's rainin'... (00:00:31-00:02:03)

The song affirms a belief in the divine and its retribution operating through nature, in the process aligning the two beautifully while warning arrogant-anthropocentric-andropocentric humanity against wavering from the path of this alignment of Omega oneness and love towards each other, often in implied form in the racist, sexist, environmentally exploitative institutions of oppression. In a stroke the song seems to bridge the gap between the feminist,



environmentalist, and racist theories linking all these politically motivated movements against oppression. In doing so Tharpe comes close to Noel Sturgeon's understanding of ecofeminism's basic assumption as expressed in "The Nature of Race: Discourses of Radical Differences in Ecofeminism" as incorporated in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, edited by Warren and Erkal, that: "...the ideologies which authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies which sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment" (Sturgeon 260).

In another significant rendition namely "Rock Me," *Sing Sister Sing* (2003) for which the 1942 *Billboard* magazine columnist Maurice Orodeker categorically used the term "rock-and-roll spiritual singing," owing to the song's upbeat music Sister Rosetta Tharpe again affirms her deep ecofeminist sensibility:

Now won't you hear me swingin'  
In other words that I'm singin'  
Wash my soul with water from on high  
All the world of love is around me Evil  
thoughts do buy me  
But oh, if you leave me I will die

You just hide me in my bosom  
Till the storms of life is over  
In the cradle of our love  
Only feed me till I want no more  
Then you take me to your blessed  
home above

.....

Make me journey brighter  
You make my burning lighter  
Help me to do good wherever I can  
Oh, let thou praise and thrill me  
Thou loving kindness fill me  
Then you hold me  
Hold me in the hollow of the hand  
(00:00:00-00:02:32)

The lyrics to this music may have been in the gospel tradition, its up-tempo-bouncy arrangement brought it close to rock and roll, and the wider appeal of the song for love in all its manifestations, divine as well as mundane, finds a resonance with

ecofeminism. The 1950s rock and roll women stars were LaVern Baker and Big Mama Thornton who later inspired artists such as Janis Joplin and Joan Jett.

LaVern Baker (b. November 11, 1929-March 10, 1997) was born Delores Baker, in Chicago, Illinois, and was one of the pioneer of the rhythm and blues sounds in the 1950s and the "Empress of Rock and Roll" who made treading the path of both R&B and rock a little easier for black women artists who followed, as she sang in her bluesy vocals with a rocking-spectacular instrumentation.

Baker's hits from the latter half of the 1950s carry the distinctive rock and roll backbeat, and are infused with a subtle tinge of ecofeminism. These hits include the famous "Jim Dandy" (1956), its sequel "Jim Dandy Got Married" (1957), "Humpty Dumpty Heart" (1957), and "I Cried a Tear" (1958). All these songs are an expression of a longing for the sexist-romantic-love that the patriarchal social construct mythically conjures for its women citizens to fantasise as real. Clearly the almost sarcastically constructed romantic image of Jim Dandy as the rescuer of damsels in distress from "Jim Dandy," is busted in the sequel "Jim Dandy Got Married" where even though he was completely smitten, the relationship did not work. One can gauge the shallowness of the attraction from the following stanza: "Jim Dandy rescued May / Fell in love with her the very same day / Got engaged that afternoon / Left that night on his honeymoon" (00:00:1700:00:28). In another stanza of the song there is an attempt to depict the depth of Jim Dandy's love though the hyperbolic language renders the effort in vain: "Jim Dandy gave May a kiss / Fought a lion with his two damn fists / Swam the ocean in a suit of steel / With a sign saying, my love is real" (00:00:34-00:00:45). The failure of this romantic union is complete by the time the song reaches the second-last stanza: "Jim Dandy was summoned to court / May was suing for non support / Judge, she hollered / He would make you sob" (00:01:36-00:00:1:44). The sexist Western image of the love presented in this song is contrary to the idea of love and empowerment that womanists and black feminists endorse, understanding which makes the resistance rhetoric of the song apparent. Black women are cognizant that "every oppression



must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change" in order for oppression to sustain and perpetuate (Lorde 53). Such an understanding of oppression as a key culprit in: "...corrupting and distorting basic feelings human beings have for one another lies at the heart of multiple systems of oppression opens up new possibilities for transformation and change" (Collins 185). Patricia Collins building on ideas from June Jordan and Katie G. Cannon, discusses tellingly June Jordan's exploration of the connection between embracing feeling and human empowerment which poses the question, "where is the love?" to evaluate the potentiality, the life-supportive commitment/possibilities of anyone. Considering love, community, and justice are deeply intertwined in African American ethics, drawing from Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr. Cannon established that their ideas represent core values from which Black women drew strength, for Thurman, love is the basis of community, and community is the area for moral agency, only love of self, love between individuals, and love of God can shape, empower, and sustain social change, while Martin Luther King, Jr., gave greater significance in his ethics to the relationship of love and justice, suggesting that love is active, dynamic, and determined and generates the motive and drive for justice.

...love begins with self-love and self-respect, actions that propel African-American women toward the self-determination and political activism essential for social justice. By grappling with this simple yet profound question, "Where is the love?" Black women resist multiple types of oppression. This question encourages all groups embedded in systems of domination to move toward a place where, as Toni Morrison's Paul D expresses it, "You could love anything you chose— not to need permission for desire—well, now, that was freedom" (1987, 162). (Collins 186)

In the similar vein "Humpty Dumpty Heart" offers a peek into a woman's heart, filled with the emotion of longing for a beloved that would fill-up the shoes of a sexist-romantic-Western-male image, even though she is aware of the risk of heartbreak and the sexual politics involved.

A serious rendition of Baker from these years "I Cried a Tear" is another song where LaVern vents her womanly woes being outsmarted by a man she loves. She is hurt because her "dream," as in the case of many women, whose psyches have been socially constructed by the systems of oppression foster a sense of incompleteness when not validated in a relationship; and being oblivious of their own self-worth, and self-reliance wrongly pursue their happiness outside themselves. Hence she goes on to sing:

I felt a tear fall in my heart  
You fooled me, so I wasn't smart  
I can't believe that we must part  
Come back to stay, let's make a new start

I cried a tear because of you I cried a  
tear because we're through  
Please make my dream of you come  
true  
Don't make me cry a tear for you  
(00:00:38-00:02:17)

The "values of caring, openness, nurturing, and non-defensiveness" can help in evading such oppressive politics" and in the establishing of harmony within societies (Birkeland 54). But in a scenario where, to put it in Barbara Walker's words:

Men do not voluntarily relinquish their  
ego trips, war toys and money games.  
Like spoiled children, many men push  
selfish behaviour as far as they can,  
perhaps secretly trying to reach the  
point where Mother will clamp down  
and say "No more," and mean it....  
(175)

One can nothing but agree with Barbara Walker that what is required is that "many women together say no and mean it" for this way "the whole structure can collapse" once for all (176). For truly,



the “price of patriarchy is eternal vigilance” but ecofeminism “is its own reward” (Birkeland 13).

A blues legend known for powerful voice and sexually explicit lyrics, Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton (December 11, 1926-July 25, 1984) was born in Montgomery, Alabama. She was discovered by Sammy Green who helped her join his Atlanta-based Hot Harlem Revue. Moving to Houston, Texas, in 1948 Thornton managed to secure a contract with the label Peacock in 1951. She recorded her most successful single “Hound Dog” on August 13, 1952 in Los Angeles, its success can be gauged from the fact that it was listed as one of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s “500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll” and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in February 2013, though is the only hit Thornton was to give in her entire career. Written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller on being asked by Johnny Otis, the song is in the twelve-bar blues format. Thornton made the song what it was, not only through her vocal skills but also as an inspiration for the writers. Stoller remarked: “She was a wonderful blues singer, with a great moaning style. But it was as much her appearance as her blues style that influenced the writing of “Hound Dog” and the idea that we wanted her to growl it” ([www.rollingstone.com/music/news/leiber-stoller-rolling-stones-1990-interview-with-the-songwriting-legends-20110822](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/leiber-stoller-rolling-stones-1990-interview-with-the-songwriting-legends-20110822)).

Leiber went on to further add: “We saw Big Mama and she knocked me cold. She looked like the biggest, baddest, saltiest chick you would ever see. And she was mean, a “lady bear,” as they used to call’em. She must have been 350 pounds, and she had all these scars all over her face” ([www.rollingstone.com/music/news/leiber-stoller-rolling-stones-1990-interview-with-the-songwriting-legends-20110822](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/leiber-stoller-rolling-stones-1990-interview-with-the-songwriting-legends-20110822)).

Here Thornton’s vocals are being likened to the “growl” sounds and she herself to a “lady bear.” Such references show the tendency of men (here both the song-writers and the audiences by extension whose demands they cater) to see black women akin animal-non-human nature. The song is a lament telling a tale of a woman ridding herself and her house of a male escort, a gigolo she has to constantly support. She sings in an indignant tone:

You ain’t nothing but a hound dog  
Been snooping ‘round my door  
You ain’t nothing but a hound dog

Been snoopin’ ‘round my door  
You can wag your tail  
But I ain’t gonna feed you no more

You told me you was high classed  
But I can see through that  
Yes, you told me you were high classed  
But I can see through that  
And daddy I know  
You ain’t no real cool cat (00:00:00-00:00:42)

She continues to chide and attempt to chastise this man:

You made me feel so blue  
You made me weep and moan  
You made me feel so blue  
Baby, you made me weep and moan  
‘Cause you ain’t looking for a woman  
All you looking is for a home (00:02:00-00:02:21)

The song is the embodiment of Thornton’s persona. She was a comedienne before she entered the music scene and therefore could very well associate with the puns, extended metaphors, and sexual entendres. Her rendition of the song in the typical African-American music style using sounds such as: graveling, spoken and almost howled interpolations, finished with the embellishment of dog sounds from the band at the end, the flexible phrasing that used of micro-inflections and syncopation over a steady flowing backbeat, made it a marked precursor of the next transition in music. While she begins with a long upbeat the song slowly graduates towards a downbeat once it reaches the point where she sings “you told me you were high classed.” The song differs from most of the rhythm and blues records of the era owing to its spare arrangement, the honking saxophones solos or pounding piano flourishes that marked the R&B sound are categorically missing. The resonant vocals dominate the foreground. The guitar, bass, and the drums offer support. The vocals emote her relief at being through with a trifling man. From a feminist prism Thornton brings the “blues tradition of outspoken women into the R&B context and helping to set the style for rock and roll by putting sexuality and play with gender expectations in foreground” ([rockhall.com/story-of-rock/features/all-featured/7734\\_willie-mae-](http://rockhall.com/story-of-rock/features/all-featured/7734_willie-mae-)



bigmama-thornton-story-hound-dog/). From an ecofeminist perspective the song touches some complex issues.

The categories “women” and “animal” serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society. Their construction as dominated, submissive “other” in theoretical discourse (whether explicitly so stated or implied) has sustained human male dominance. The role of women and animals in post-industrial society is to serve/be served up; women and animals are the used....By examining this connection and the way it sustains the constructed reality of patriarchal society, those struggling for the liberation of women and animals may be better able to reconstruct thought and action in a more balanced, less destructive way. (Gruen 61)

Judging from the above comment of ecofeminist Lori Gruen, the song places black man in the same dynamics of oppression through the analogy of a “hound dog.” However the black man’s image that the song conjures is precisely expressive of his political status. While mimicking the Western-ma-image, devoid “manhood” at multiple levels, economic, social, so on and so forth, because of his colonised status black man in America could only assert his authority over the doubly colonised black women. And since he did not enjoy a stable economic status was often left dependent on these black women as emulated in the song, provoking him to inflict all sorts of violence on them, in the present song the man hurts the woman emotionally. Thornton was the first to record this hit in 1952, however she was followed by Elvis Presley whose rendition became even more popular. Another significant pioneering rendition by Thornton was the “Ball and Chain” that was later given a re-rendition by Janis Joplin which became a massive hit in the late-1960s. The lyrics of the song were written and recorded by Thornton herself. The use of pet love or the cat analogy per se to express the feeling of love for a loved one is indicative of the respect and equality with which she eyed all life, human and non-human, in turn revealing an ecofeminist sensibility.

The capacity to feel deep emotions and be moved enough to weep and also go about doing something to help humanity is worthy of respect. African American women have suffered through racial prejudice, at the altar of sexism, and other such interconnected struggles and strifes while still maintaining a healthy attitude towards community and non-human nature. Their “racial uplift” or “lift as you climb” motto is reflected in the lyrics, for in the song the woman only seems to be complaining and warning out of love. This attitude of “lift” comes close to the altruistic attitude that ecofeminism endorses. Joanna Macy quotes Arne Naess, in “Awakening to the Ecological Self”:

Altruism implies that ego sacrifices its interests in favour of the other, the alter...The motivation is primarily that of duty...It is unfortunately very limited what people are capable to love from mere duty or more generally from moral exhortation....The requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of nature is felt and perceived as protection of ourselves. (Macy 209)

One can nothing but agree with Janis Birkeland in the claim that:

Altruism is a difficult concept for the Manstream to deal with because altruism cannot be squeezed into the “masculine” model of Man. Patriarchal ideology sees altruism in terms of a negation of self-interested Man, just as it defines women’s feelings and experiences as the absence of real thought and knowledge. “Altruism” is therefore denied or redefined in Mainstream theory as self-interest that benefits others, a concept that denies the existence of a “feminine principle.” But there is altruism in the work of women (the majority of the human race) who put their own interests behind those of their families, children, and the environment. That energy and good will should be affirmed and



nurtured, not exploited and coopted.  
(Birkeland 49)

The 1960s in rock and roll saw Tina Turner greatly change the face of rock music. Her sensual-sexy-energetic persona added an emphatic impressionable quality to her unrestrained music and a raw singing style, rendering the coy and demure out of favour for the in vogue aggressiveness she epitomised without any extra effort. Her stardom was a shout-out of the arrival of a new kind of black female artists in music. Odetta Holmes, a folk artist who was called "Queen of American Folk Music" by Martin Luther King, Jr., and had been recording since late-1950s, also influenced the 1960s scene of rock and roll with her March on Washington performance, influencing in turn artists like Harry Belafonte and Bob Dylan among others. Tina Turner, born as Anna Mae Bullock began her music career performing with musician Ike Turner as the Ike and Tina Turner Revue in the 1950s, however when in 1960 a singer did not show up for Kings of Rhythm recording session so she got the opportunity to sing "A Fool in Love" (1960) and with this commenced her career takeoff to the charts. Even though the song was not meant for Tina Turner the story of domestic abuse and emotional violence told was to come close to her real life after her marriage to Ike Turner in 1962, whom she finally divorced in 1978.

You're just a fool, you know you're in  
love

You've got to face it to let it explode  
You take the good along with the bad  
Sometimes you're happy and  
sometimes you're sad

You know you love him, you can't  
understand

Why he treats you like he do, when  
he's such a good man?

And listen, he's got me smiling when I  
should be ashamed

Got me laughin' when my heart is in  
pain

Oh now, I must be a fool

'Cause I'll do anything he wants me to  
(00:00:17-00:00:53)

"A Fool in Love" beautifully embosses the politics of the "manstream" that instils its women's minds with the dreams of sexist relationships where she internalises the state of being nurturing and in love even with her oppressor. The song takes this scenario to its limit where the woman declares that: "He's got my nose open and that's no lie / And I, I'm gonna keep him satisfied" (00:01:24-00:01:31).

Another massive rock and roll hit by Tina Turner from this period was "River Deep, Mountain High" (1966) that establishes her ecofeminist sensibility even further, for her declaration of love is clearly in metaphors borrowed from the most splendid aspects of nature, "river deep" and "mountain high," "like a flower loves his pet," she goes on: "And do I love you my oh my / Yeh river deep mountain high," then again in "Well I'm gonna be as faithful as that puppy / No I'll never let you down," in "it grows stronger, like a river flows," and "I love you baby like a flower loves the spring," and "And I love you baby, river deep mountain high" (00:01:22-00:04:31). Contrary to "A Fool in Love" the song offers a healthy picture of the emotions of love but a subtle commentary on the socially constructed masochistic tendency among women manages to reveal itself. Also significant in the lyrics is the reference to herself and how she loves to sing. Singing is an act of claiming back of the voice for women. Its established position on the ontological nature side makes the reference especially relevant.

Birmingham, Alabama born Odetta Holmes' (December 31, 1930-December 2, 2008) music has been referred to as the "Soundtrack of the Civil Rights Movement." She was awarded the National Medal for Arts by President Bill Clinton in 1999. Hugely acclaimed for her folk work, especially her debut solo album *Odetta Sings Ballads*, the 1960s proved her most prolific years, the period she sang "I'm On My Way," *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues* (1956) from the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. Her notable albums from the period are *Odetta and the Blues* (1962 Riverside RLP9417), *One Grain of Sand* (Vanguard VSD2153), *It's a Mighty World* (1964 RCA LSP2792), and *Odetta Sings Dylan* (1965 RCA LSP3324). The albums cover a lot of traditional folk spirituals. Odetta's use of spirituals as "liberation songs" was aimed at teaching, preaching, and



propaganda. Since most of her song renditions are classic folk spirituals, they have already been covered as anticipating ecofeminism in the initial chapter on spirituals, and therefore, shall not be reconsidered, for though the rendition differs the lyrics more or less remain the same.

The album *Odetta and the Blues* used a jazz band on the record with the personnel consisting of, vocals by Odetta, trumpet by Buck Clayton, Vic Dukeinson on trombone, Herb Hall on clarinet, Dick Wellstood on the piano, Ahmed AbdulMalik on bass, and Benisford "Shep" Shephard's drums. The album tracks exude a deep sense of ecofeminist sensibility. In the track "Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor" Odetta sings her heart out realising the existential truth of life, she urges the man to make her his pallet, an artefact carved out of wood, just as she has been robbed out of her fortunes and left to fend through domestic work drudgery and improper sexual liaisons, with all her "good time friends" gone. She sings:

If you make me a pallet on your floor  
I swear your woman'll never know  
.....

Make it soft, make it easy, make it very  
low  
.....

I'm gonna get up in the morning  
Make you a red-hot meal  
Just to show really that I appreciate  
what you've have done for me  
That you made me a pallet on your  
floor (00:00:41-00:02:59)

The album *One Grain of Sand* follows suit. With Odetta on vocals and a guitar, joined by Bill Lee on bass, the album tracks don't fail to register a subtle ecofeminist character in one's mind. The track "Cotton Fields" for instance proves a great specimen for a litmus test:

When I was a little baby  
My mama would rock me in the cradle,  
In them old cotton fields back home;  
Oh, when them cotton balls get rotten  
You can't pick very much cotton,  
In them old cotton fields back home

It was down in Louisiana,  
Just about a mile from Texarkana,  
In them old cotton fields back home.  
It may sound a little funny  
But you didn't make a very much  
money  
In them old cotton fields at home.  
(00:00:00-00:01:17)

The lyrics to this song reveal a deep sense of connection with American nature, the proximity that African Americans shared with its landscape is something even the whites have been quite removed from. The image of a mother nurturing her child in "the cradle" and the "cotton fields," on this mother earth in the immediate case out of slavery invokes the image of manifest interconnectedness of oppression of the "Other" groups as claimed in ecofeminism. It's a Mighty World affirms the claim further. The personnel on the album consisted of Odetta's vocals and guitar, accompanied by Bruce Langhorne's guitar, and Les Grinage (aka Raphael Grinage) on bass. Odetta's rendition of "Love Proved False" especially stands out among others:

The river is wide, I can't get o'er  
Nor do I have like wings to fly  
Give me a boat that can carry two,  
And both shall cross my love and I

Oh waly, waly, up the bank  
And waly, waly down the brass,  
And waly, waly by you burnside  
Where me and my love was won't to go

I leaned my back against an oak  
Thinking it was a trusty tree,  
But first it bent and then it broke,  
And so did my love prove false to me

I put my hand in some soft bush  
Thinking the sweetest flower to find  
I picked my finger to the bone  
And left the sweetest flower behind

Oh, love is handsome, love is kind  
Gay as a jewel when first it's new  
And love grows old and waxes cold,



And fades away like morning dew  
(00:18:52-00:22:77)

In this song the woman is projecting the infidelity of her partner onto the lesser aspects of nature, while situating the feelings of love and its accompanying expectations onto its beautiful and magnanimous aspects. Clearly she is betrayed at the hands of an "oak" that broke off from a little weight, wrongly thinking of it as a "trustworthy tree," getting her "finger" pricked "to the bone" she is left without the "sweetest flower" of love that has now grown "old" and "cold," as a "river" so "wide" she is unable to cross without "like wings."

*Odetta Sings Dylan* is an album dedicated to Bob Dylan where Odetta sings covers of his songs that were predominantly concerned with his protest phase songs like "Blowin' in the Wind" to "The Times They Are A-Changing," and anti-war songs such "With God on Our Side" and "Masters of War," it also included his love and some obscure songs. Dylan's protest songs cover renditions by Odetta categorically exude the ecofeminist idea that: "...individuals have a right to safe jobs, housing, and environments...civil rights cannot be separated from environmental rights and environmental justice" (Taylor 56). Truly one can nothing but agree that waste dumps, incinerators, and toxic production facilities right in their backyards. They are made to take hazardous jobs. Such an arrangement is clearly discriminatory and violates people's civil rights. The fight against toxic exposures must be linked to the fight for increased opportunities for safer jobs, improved health, and safer communities. The lyrics to "Blowin' in the Wind" prove the argument:

How many roads must a man walk  
down  
Before you call him a man?  
How many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?  
Yes, and how many times must the  
cannon balls fly  
Before they're forever banned?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the  
wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Yes, and how many years can a  
mountain exist  
Before it's washed to the sea?  
Yes, and how many years can some  
people exist  
Before they're allowed to be free?  
Yes, and how many times can a man  
turn his head  
And pretend that he just doesn't see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the  
wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Yes, and how many times must a man  
look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
Yes, and how many ears must on eman  
have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
Yes, and how many deaths will it take  
'till he knows  
That too many people have died?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the  
wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
(00:00:00-00:03:37)

The politics that functions behind oppression, the systems of oppression with their logic of domination, and the interconnected dialectical nature of this oppression are intangible things that are in the air even though understood, just as the answer to the racism and its entailed prejudices and wrongs at the time were "blowin' in the wind" for Dylan and Odetta. In a comment accompanying the song's publication in *Sing Out!* in June 1962, Dylan's statement can be seen in both lights:

There ain't too much I can say about  
this song except that the answer is  
blowing in the wind. It ain't in no book  
or movie or TV show or discussion  
group. Man, it's in the wind—and it's  
blowing in the wind. Too many of these  
hip people are telling me where the  
answer is but oh I won't believe that. I  
still say it's in the wind and just like a  
restless piece of paper it's got to come



down some...But the only trouble is that no one picks it up the answer when it comes down so not too many people get to see and know...and then it flies away. I still say that some of the biggest criminals are those that turn their heads away when they see wrong and know it's wrong. I'm only 21 years old and I know that there's been so many...You people over 21, you're older and smarter. (Bieri 148-49)

Credited as the anthem of the civil rights movement, the song Dylan himself claimed was an adaptation of a spiritual "No More Auction Block."

The inclusive nature of Dylan's civil rights movement propaganda and by extension Odetta's, makes itself apparent in "The Times Are A-Changing" where she, as an extending call from Dylan sings for "writers and critics who prophesize" with their pen, "senators, congressmen" who often "stand in the doorway" and "block up the hall," "mothers and fathers throughout the land," and "sons" and "daughters" to come together and lend a hand in bringing about a better just society for she sings "the times they are a-changin'."

"Master of War" however draws a striking image in one's mind, deeply impressed by the drawings of Suze Rotolo, Dylan's girlfriend, which accompanied the son's publication in *Broadside* magazine in February 1963. Her deeply andropocentric depiction of a man carving the world with a folk and a knife for a waiting hungry forlorn family, consolidates Odetta's rendition giving the listener a powerful peek into the ecofeminist issue through the creativity of three celebrated artists, though inadvertently. The song thwarts the western "manstream" that fosters all sorts of oppression and violence to subjugate the "Others," and can serve as ecofeminism's anthem:

Come you masters of war  
You that build the big guns  
You that build the death planes  
You that build the big bombs  
You that hide behind walls  
You that hide behind desks  
Just want you to know  
That I can see through your masks

You that never done nothin'  
But build to destroy  
You play with my world  
Like it's your little toy  
Put a gun in my head  
And you hide from my eyes  
And turn and run farther  
When the fast bullets fly (00:00:00-00:01:52)

But this oppressive manipulation is something the singer exposes in a true ecofeminist manner:

Like the Judas of old  
You lie, you deceive  
World War can be won  
You want me to believe  
But I see through your eyes  
And I see through your brain  
Like I see through the water  
That run down my drain

You fasten the triggers  
For the others to fire  
And sit back and watch  
When the death count gets higher  
You hide in your mansion  
As the young people's blood  
Flows out of their bodies  
And buried in the mud (00:01:56-00:03:32)

The following stanza however beautifully captures the biggest fear and disgust the marginalized woman has to deal with:

Well that's the worst fear  
That can never be hurled  
Fear to bring children  
Into the world  
Threatening my baby  
Unborn and unnamed  
You ain't worth the blood  
That runs in your veins (00:03:35-00:04:23)

Stating that she goes on to further condemn the profit greedy capitalist streak of manstream in the stanza while simultaneously expressing a belief in the transitions and development of the soul that such greed would clearly thwart:



Let me ask you one question  
Is your money that good?  
Will it buy you forgiveness  
Do you think that it could?  
I think you will find  
When your death takes its toll  
All the money you made  
Will never buy back your soul  
(00:05:13-00:05:59)

Finally the song ends taking a radical stance: "And I hope that you die / And your death'll come soon / I will follow your casket / By the pale afternoon / And I'll watch while you're lowered / Down to your deathbed / And I'll stand o'er your grave / 'Til I'm sure that you're dead."

It all began with the European Renaissance, Maria Mies, and Vandana Shiva have claimed recognising the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism or imperialism, and ecocide.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, the tentacles of European colonialism began to spread, with the great voyages of discovery, appropriation of the New World's lands, near extermination of the "savages," and finally, commercial expansion. At the same time in Europe, the witch hunt was unfolding. Accusing them of Satanism, the Catholic Church persecuted and executed women either for being too liberated or having medical knowledge. It was on these massacres that European white man built their scientific and industrial revolutions, which attained a peak in the eighteenth century, the much celebrated Age of Enlightenment. The notions of rationalism and progress are the philosophical underpinnings of these revolutions, themselves the productivist foundation of both capitalism and industrial socialism.

European white men, already convinced that the Earth was theirs by divine right, could now, armed with science and technology, control it and transcend the baser necessities of

nature. "Nature" basically encompassed the Earth, plants and animals, women, irrationality, emotional expression, the body, food, reproduction and the "savages," in other words, the colonized peoples. In this patriarchal, imperialistic and racist framework, everything in the category of "nature" is an object to be appropriated, exploited, transformed, used and sold, to serve the white male's superior aspiration of "progress" imposed by violence. (Beaulieu 37+)

In the following Mary Daly's discussion from "Sparking: The Fire of Female Friendship" as finds place in her *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) she delves deep into the issue, for 1954-75 Vietnam War also coloured the black music artists' psyches. She writes:

The primordial, universal object of attack in all phallogocentric wars is the Self in every woman. Nietzsche stated the ideal of this state of affairs in language that is more revealing/re-veiling than he and most of his readers could have understood:

"Man should be trained for war and women for the recreation of the warrior." Indeed, the War State requires women for the re-creation of its warriors. This is true not only in the obvious sense that mothers produce sons who will be soldiers. It is true also on a deep psychic level: the psychic sapping of women in patriarchy functions continually to re-create its warriors. [...]

Amazons/Hags know such "gross dichotomizing" is characteristic of patriarchal times, that it is traceable to the Great War against the Female Self, which long predates World War I (a mere episode in the War State's chronic dis-ease). The archetypal "mere collective entity, "consisting of "grotesque" beings whose "appurtenances" are "bizarre," is the



dreaded Amazon Reality. For Female Selves are so terrifying to the patriarchal male that he must reverse/reduce them. This anti-returning reel of the Real War. [...]

Crone-ologists know the trench predicament all too well. We have read /heard/recorded endless comparisons of our Selves to “the vilest animals.” [...]

In order to understand the misogynistic roots of androcratic aggression, we must comprehend that the perpetual War is waged primarily on a psychic and spiritual plane. This is not to minimize physical invasion/occupation/destruction, but to grasp the total horror. The most noxious forms of aggression are not reducible to the biological level alone, but involve also the fabrication of “symbolic universes in thought, language, and behaviour.” These universes are all present in each concrete violent act of aggression. (Daly 355-57)

The dynamics operates across all forms of oppressive violence inflicted upon the “Other” groups who are in a continuous struggle of surviving through the brunt of it all.

The later part of the 1960s, that is, the years 1958 to 1963, mark the time of the faltering of the rock and roll music, though this lull was followed by the revival of the genre with the advent of the “British Invasion.” Multiple reasons brought about this period of silence though it was a recognised fact that rock and roll’s decline was only producer induced, and its consumer market still thrived, evidently registered through the sale and the power to influence the audiences. Among these reasons were ASCAP-led assault, the payola probes which left no airtime for rock ‘n’ roll, radio stations switching to mellow, melodic music, large record companies promoting polka, calypso, folk music, ballads, novelty songs, and a softer, lushly orchestrated fare, some independents merging with a major, and the depletion of hard-line rock and roll performers. While

some of these singers exited voluntarily or by accident, others were pushed offstage, all of them, directly or indirectly, were casualties.

In spite of this rocky phase that rock and roll hit towards the end of the decade, 1960s proved an important time for the genre—for it developed into its more evolved form—rock, which was more diverse and idiosyncratic in character. The arrival of new bunch of artists to the market facilitated this evolution. This explosion of new—rockabilly, and rhythm and blues British music—into the American market is marked as the British Invasion, when the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and several others cut their musical teeth on Berry, Holly, Presley, Lewis, and Little Richard and conquered America with her very own music—early rock ‘n’ roll, hand-driving R&B, and the blues.

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