The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, 1970-1973

written by Naomi Weisstein | July 2, 2014

In Chicagoland, in 1970, almost every teenage girl listened to rock. They considered it *their* music—hormonal, quasi-outlaw, with screaming guitars and a heavy, driving beat. But it was sooo misogynist! This wasn't the Beatles' playful woman-affectionate songs. These were vicious boy bands: the guitarists stood with their legs spread wide, pretending to fuck their guitars, while they sang about how stupid and weak-minded girls were, and how they were good for nothing but sex—often, rape.

All our lives, we girls had been taught that male abuse was sexy, but this stuff was a cultural carpet-bombing of girls, based on the amplified idea that male abuse—*brutal = sexy wow! shiver*—was all that we girls wanted to live for.

How could a feminist combat this? The magnificent (although folkie oriented) Michigan Womyn's Music Festivals didn't begin until 1976; and the Riot Grrrls-inspired feminist rock bands were at least twenty-five years away. (For example, Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney—not to mention Pussy Riot, which was still forty-five years away.)

As an ardent member of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU), I decided to form my own women's liberation rock band. My day job was as a professor of psychology/neuroscience at Loyola University in Chicago; but I had a background in classical music and jazz, and in comedy, that seemed well suited to the bust-out, bad-ass feminist rock band that I was contemplating. My mother was a composer and concert pianist who sat me at the piano when I was five, teaching me the first movement of Mozart's A-major sonata, then packed me off to school, directing me to "play it for your 'little friends.'" I was thereafter classically trained until I broke away at thirteen and took three years of jazz piano with Johnny Mehegan instead. As for comedy, in Chicago I came *this close* to running off with Second City, with the encouragement of the fine, generous comedian David Steinberg. Comedy was in the Chicago air in those days. Many cultural innovations flowed eastward, only achieving legitimacy after their late arrival in New York City.

My rock band would have women playing instruments, and women singing about how smart, strong, funny, and hip we were, and how we would have sex only on our own terms, thank you. And we would get so good that soon we would saturate the air waves, inundating teenage girls—inundating all women—with a new kind of pop musical culture—hilarious, joyful, playful, and *taking no shit from no one*.

At the founding meeting in my Rogers Park living room of what we later called "The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band," there were six instrumentalists: three guitarists, one banjo player, a drummer, and myself on piano and, occasionally, bass. Surprise, boys! "Chicks" *could and did* play musical instruments. And we weren't even Phil Spitalny's All-Girl Orchestra, featuring Evelyn and her Magic Violin. However, there were, among those mentioned, eleven vocalists, so that my living room took on the chaotic look of a hippy version of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. (Three of them played instruments as well. The other relatively tuneless eight did not.) This many vocalists was no

surprise because the boy bands tolerated “chick singers” fronting for them, so singing is what females gravitated towards. But what would we do with all of them? At first we just accepted them. In those early days, no woman’s liberationist ever criticized another one. And our movement had proclaimed in its utopian early days (1965-68) that “any woman could do anything.” If so, the monotone eight could easily learn to sing like Janis Joplin.

Four months later, on International Women’s Day we played our first gig, in the bandshell at Chicago’s Grant Park. The space was huge (you can see us, almost lost in the bandshell in the picture at the right (from www.feministezine.com/feminist/music/CWLRB-Cultural-Transformation.html), and we didn’t yet know how to deal with the muffling effect of behemoth outdoor areas. So the piano couldn’t hear the guitarists; the guitarists couldn’t hear each other. The drummer kept losing the beat. The eight beatnik vocalists were flat and out of tune with each other.

It was a disaster.

We regrouped and retooled. First, we invited the tuneless hippy singers either to leave the band, or to take voice lessons. “You can’t fire us,” they protested. “We’re women!”

The protest revealed a deep division in the goals of different players, which persisted for the life of the band and ultimately was a factor in destroying it, despite the addition of new and more skillful musicians from time to time. The division was between those who wanted to play liberatory feminist rock to the widest possible audience, which meant getting good enough to record and broadcast; and those who just wanted to play with their sisters no matter how they sounded (“militant amateurism” was what Jesse Lemisch came to call it). These distinctions were to thunder through the Women’s Liberation Movement, where in our utopian way we never solved the problem of differential abilities and talents.

After a stormy and tearful session, the monotone singers quit. But there were many more changes we had to make. We had been performing the popular rock songs of the day and substituting feminist lyrics. We had to start writing our own music as well, because otherwise our sound paled in comparison with the lavish studio-polished recordings that we were copying.

Also, along with our setting to music our moving, feminist poetry, I insisted that we add boffo comedy throughout. I wanted to overturn the Grand Poobah grim macho of the boy bands, and get everybody to sing, and laugh, and clap, and dance along with us. What better way to do this than with comedy?

I wrote a humorous introductory spoken rap. We added playful songs, like Amy Kesselman’s “VD Blues”:

I went to the doctor

I said, “Doctor can you help me please?”

Flames came out of his ears

He roared, “you’ve got a social disease.”

We segued into “Love,” a soft, ballad that started:

Love is beautiful,

Love is peace…

The lyrics got more and more bizarre as they went along:

Love cures acne,

Love cuts the grease

Until we startled the audience with the final line, which we shouted at the top of our lungs:

Don’t FUCK AROUND with love!!!!!

Then, on cue, the drummer (later, two drummers) fell over, face first on their drums, then on the floor.[1]

As I mentioned, we also had our serious songs. Guitarist-vocalist Pat Miller (née Matthews), bass guitarist-vocalist Susan Abod, and I set to music a 1904 poem by Japanese feminist Yosano Akiko that went:

The mountain moving day is coming I say so yet others doubt it.

Only a while the mountain sleeps. In the past, all mountains moved in fire.

Yet you may not believe it.

O man, this alone believe

All sleeping women now awake and move.

Finally, the utopianism and egalitarianism of our movement led us to ask our audiences to participate actively and intensively in our performance. Describing the desire of the recently formed Chicago and New Haven Women’s Liberation Rock Bands to generate a participatory feminist culture, I wrote, together with Virginia Blaisdell, “Feminist Rock: No More Balls and Chains” (*Ms.*, Dec. 1972):

We have to involve our audiences as equals, include rather than insult them, respect rather than degrade them, play for them rather than at them … to violate the code that … says you can’t explain what you are doing…. “If the audience doesn’t get it, tough.” So we rap a lot to our audiences …, and we do theatre and comedy for them, and we distribute tambourines and lyrics so that audiences can play and sing with us, and we even tell the audience what’s hard for us and what’s easy for us and why, and we jump up and down and hug each other and the audience when we sound good, and laugh and play and celebrate…. [S]exism says you gotta be cool, and never acknowledge when you’re doing something better than you expected, because people might catch on that you’re not great all the time.

Two months after our Grant Park debacle, our reconstructed band, boasting a brand-new playlist, and vocalists who could really sing, did our second gig at “Alice’s Restaurant,” the New Left coffee house in Chicago’s near north side. The mixed-gender audience exploded with joy. They clapped and shouted. They picked up the words to some of our choruses, and sang and danced. After we finished, they mobbed the stage, hugging us and crying.

For the next three years, we traveled far and wide, making tours of the northeast and as far west as Colorado, playing to ecstatic audiences. I recall flying into Toronto with a joint in my pocket and totally unable to recall the name on the youth-fare card in my wallet. Who, I wondered, was this "Susan" that the Mountie was interrogating? I nearly spent the next ten years in a Canadian jail.

We were never that good musically, but our comedy, enthusiasm, and Marx-Brothers-style wrecking of the male-rock high priesthood triggered a massive collective participation—singing and dancing and shouting and clapping—and a massive euphoria as well.

Sometimes, the audience's wild response to us was astonishing. After we were done at the University of Pittsburgh, the crowd mobbed the stage, like at Alice's, hugging not only us, but our instruments and amplifiers too. Pat Matthews found a note later in her guitar case: "I never knew women could play guitar. I'm going to sign up for lessons on Monday. Thank you so much!!"

At a "Y" camp in Michigan for inner-city pre-teen girls, they repeated the lyrics to "VD Blues" and, singing and bopping, they made us play it six times over before they let us move on.

At Cornell, where we played with our sister New Haven band, women stripped to the waist, held hands, and danced in a huge circle, even though they had heard that a fraternity had threatened to destroy the event. New Haven's vocalist sang out, "Put your shirts on, sisters. We're in grave danger." "No!" they shouted back, "We won't! We're FREE." This happened again and again, in different forms, in the three years that we performed.

[Naomi Weisstein playing bass in Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, 1972]

Rock, with its transformatory power and energy, our lyrics with their visionary call, and the passionate participation of our audience transported the crowd into a realm of utopian desire. There were no vicious males outside, waiting to do violence. There were no longer constraints on bodies. There were no hierarchical distinctions. There were just sisters, all sisters, and the music and the dancing. It was the nearest I had come to utopia in my life.

The participatory culture that our band was generating intensified insurrectionary emotions. Music is said to be what feelings sound like. I would add that dance is what feelings look like. And with collective singing and dancing you see and hear your buddies palpably feeling the same things you're feeling. Participatory culture tightens solidarity, it amps up motivation, and best of all, it

gives you courage you never thought you had.

In our time we have seen the amazing powers of participatory culture: huge crowds in South Africa, chanting and executing intricate steps, in support of the jailed Nelson Mandela. Many of us sang and marched for civil rights, drawing enormous courage from the collective outpouring of emotion, even in the face of billy clubs, dogs, or jail. Similarly, the band's audiences were morphing into revolutionary feminists.

Of course, there were a few mishaps. For instance, at an early feminist conference at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, a celebrity feminist, who eventually became known for her public divisiveness ("all men are dogs"), gave the keynote speech the night before. She kept insulting and antagonizing the men in the audience. A group of fraternity boys threatened to—quote destroy us unquote—if we dared to play the next night. On top of which, half the band was in Columbus, Ohio, having taken the wrong plane. And there's nothing worse for bad vibes than a rock audience having to wait.

I hastily improvised—gulp, tremble—a much more propitiating intro. Then lead guitarist Sherry Jenkins and I noodled what now would be called "New Age Jazz composition while waiting for the rest of your stoner band to show up!" By the time our stragglers got there, the frat boys had gotten tired and bored, and gone home. We ran through a much-truncated playlist, as the audience continued to shrink. When we were finished, only the conference organizers were left. They clapped politely.

A truly comical misadventure occurred at the Second Annual Third World Drag Queen Ball in Chicago in 1971. Out of the blue, a male voice identifying himself as "Ortiz, Third World Revolutionary," phoned me to invite us to play there.

"Of course we will," I said, thrilled (as if the actual Third World was then into drag queens). We got there and swiftly realized that we were going to be out-bezazzed. Tall, gorgeous black men in glittering red ball gowns and Diana Ross wigs were lip-synching to her recordings, which were being played at top volume.

When we got on the stage, with our politically-correct scruffiness (see the jacket photo on our CD, "Papa Don't Lay that Shit on me," from Rounder Records, we resembled, by comparison with the drag queens, supplicants at a Salvation Army catfish breakfast for the homeless. We played two songs and then quit. Nobody was listening. They had no idea why we were there. A disappointed Ortiz and his partner, wearing identical one-piece pink wool bathing suits, clapped politely. We fled the stage, just like at Bucknell.

We thrived as a chapter under the CWLU tent. Though we often toured, we also played all over Chicago whenever we were needed by CWLU, at conferences, dances, and Chicago street demonstrations. We stayed and played.

Recently, I saw for the first time an old photo of the band playing outside the Chicago Civic Center, in the Loop next to the Picasso sculpture. I noticed a row of CWLU women standing in back of us, some with their arms crossed, like Elijah Muhammed's "Fruit of Islam" bodyguards. What were they doing there? Answer: they were acting as our bodyguards because it was an unruly crowd. I teared up. They were protecting the band, although we never asked them to, and we were performing because they needed us to add festive vibes to their demo: *solidarity and sisterhood!*

Epilogue

We need a renaissance of the spirit and mission of the early Women's Liberation Movement of the

1960s and 1970s. Not the “lean-in” faux feminism of today that reduces feminism to crashing through glass ceilings in those little suits, while leaving behind those who, in earlier times, we thought of as sisters. Not the domesticated and depoliticized thing that often passes for feminism these days and whose arrival we unintentionally fueled. No, thanks. We wanted, and still want, a movement that is visionary, egalitarian, non-hierarchical, democratic, pluralist, non-sectarian, and aiming for a just and generous world.

In feminist Chelsea Dreher’s words, “we mourn the movement, like a lover who walked out on us and never told us why.” But in fact we have a pretty good idea of why Women’s Liberation “walked out on us.” As one compelling narrative puts it: at a certain period in our history almost everyone in the movement was savaged in one way or another. Brilliant, dedicated leaders, as well as bad ones, were—to use the language of the times—trashed. Women who didn’t fit in, either socially or politically, were purged. Activists oriented towards empirical reality were discouraged in favor of endlessly bloviating “theoreticians.” And we accepted the defoliation wrought by wave upon wave of left-wing female fronts for male-headed sects. New women’s organizations were reduced to what Shakespeare might have called “Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.”

What about the CWLU and its Rock Band? How did they fare? CWLU, founded in 1969 according to principles first articulated by that savvy and humane organizer, Vivian Rothstein—activist orientation, pluralism, aversion to sectarian politics—seemed like a hardy evergreen. Those were the days, my friends; we thought they’d never end. And indeed they did last a full ten years, a lifetime as against the shorter spans of most feminist organizations in those days. At the end, many had good reason to conclude that it was the onslaught of left-wing sectarians who had soured the whole enterprise for everyone else.

Even as far back as 1972, in the eighth of my nine years in Chicago, the left sectarian invasion had begun. A woman who I’ll call “Crouching Lion” (not her real name) would whip out her copy of Mao’s little Red Book and, *in mitten drinen,* would begin reading aloud some random passage on the duty of the people to the Party. (Or was it the duty of the Party to the people?) At the time, most of us just laughed. But, as it turned out, it was no joke (and still isn’t, with female emissaries of unseen male gods).

The Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band lasted only three years. That isn’t bad as a life history of constantly schismatising rock bands. But we need to know what went wrong, and what can be done to achieve greater longevity for feminist institutions in the future. Blaming left sectarianism for sinking so many of the early Women’s Liberation groups has finally the flavor of apologetics, like blaming the collapse of the Communist Party on the FBI. Although there is much truth to such narratives, by attributing failures to external causes they turn us away from necessary scrutiny of where we went wrong, how we might have done better, and how we might do better the next time.

[Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band cover photo (1972) for the remastered album "Papa, Don't Lay that Shit on Me," Rounder Records 2005]

So, what happened to our lovely Rock Band? To explain the collapse of the band, let me say a relevant word about what I was doing with the rest of my life in those years. As I struggled for feminist revolution, I was also struggling to help make what has since come to be known as the Cognitive Revolution—the rapidly expanding fields of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. As a graduate student at Harvard, I had abandoned my earlier trajectory towards clinical psychology, which I found at the time both remote from empirical reality and woman-hating, with its bearded patriarchs handing down *pronunciamentos* on what women want. I moved instead into hard science, at just the time when the work of a few brilliant dissenters, like psychologist Karl Lashley and linguist Noam Chomsky, were breaking the behaviorist lock that had impeded understanding of the workings of the human mind. (Each week for a semester, I schlepped myself over to MIT to hear Chomsky's lectures.) I chose to do my dissertation research on parallel (as well as serial) processing, and thus was part of a new wave of understanding how the brain works. But hard science was a minefield for women. Harvard eminences would not let a woman use their equipment "because they break it." (In fact, there was no way to break their tachistoscope unless you ran at it with a jackhammer.) Receiving the PhD in three years at the head of my class, I could not find a job: "How can a little girl like you teach a great big class of men?" said one chairman. After a few months as a Lecturer at the very Home of Misogyny, the University of Chicago, I was fortunate to find a job at Loyola University of Chicago, and Jesse and I moved out of Hyde Park up to Rogers Park, where I could joyfully walk to work in the new Science Building, whistling my way down Sheridan Road. The Jesuits knew this small Jewish woman as "Dr. Weisstein." Finally—yay!—I had my own Scientific Prototype Six-Field Tachistoscope, on which my passionately motivated graduate students ran subjects well into the night.

Within its limits, Loyola (and enlightened Psych chair Ron Walker) treated me well, and the remarkable *esprit* of a totally egalitarian lab sustained me. My experiments in visual perception began to filter out onto the world stage, and I even figured out that neurons in the brain fired in order to fill out recognition of objects that were in fact partially blocked from view ("Neural Symbolic Activity").

But, as I've said, hard science was a minefield for women. If I graphed a perceptual process as producing a U-shaped function, a barbaric and literally gun-toting Biggy, who ran not one but three journals, said, "She must have leaned over the data." Men's focus slides at the beginnings of their talks featured nude women. The editor of a leading journal in the field announced his intention to publish my research under his own name—a brazen theft to which women were subject. Writing grant requests to keep my lab going was a night-and-day job, especially with my ideas going against the grain of those of the boys' clubs that reviewed for the various funding agencies.

And then there was the band, my sisters. But in common with much of the New Left at the time, they had no notion of science as other than careerism, no notion of the glorious possibility that women might be able to look upon beauty bare. As far as they were concerned, my struggles to help make a cognitive revolution simply constituted unexcused absences. They literally sat on the stairs of my apartment house, sulking, sullenly awaiting my return. (The Catholic students in my lab were more supportive than my feminist sisters.) I had not only to show remorse for my inexplicable disappearances into the professional world. I had also to be Mother. Being Mother to the band taught me of the injustices of my earlier treatment of my own mother, who I had always seen as responsible for everything and to be blamed for everything. In the band, I had to monitor and resolve quarrels, and there was resultant festering resentment against me. Rehearsals turned into nightmares, with some band members abandoning sororal sweetness for trashing.

So I had two jobs at once. I would come back from a weekend playing New York, or Toronto, or Denver, or Boston, and rush to my lab to make sense of the newly generated data. Only then could I begin to recover from my travels: I would fall into a dead sleep.

In May of 1972, at the annual meeting of the Center for Visual Science at Rochester, Charlie Harris, a brilliant perceptual psychologist, invited me to spend a semester at Bell Labs in New Jersey to collaborate on some unorthodox research that I had previously suggested to him. Charlie had always seen the larger meanings of my research. Bell Labs Murray Hill! Wow! This no-longer existent Elysium was historically a place where scientific pioneers did basic research far in advance of the rest of the field. In addition, it was tech heaven: I could complete experiments there in half the time it would take with my aging equipment in my lab at Loyola. Plus I could burnish my thinking in that Acropolis. And the invitation was only for a semester, so I felt that I could take a leave of absence from the band without serious discontinuity.

In January of 1973 some sections of Interstate 80 had just opened up, and its gazillion-lane width was practically empty. It was a warm, sunny day. The radio in our new Toyota Corolla alternated rock with the sounds of Nixon being sworn in. Frolicking and singing, Jesse and I drove at excessive, celebratory speed, weaving like drunks across the Interstate's width, heading eastward toward New Jersey, just an hour from Manhattan!

Not too long after I left Chicago, the band broke up. Nobody told me. I found out by reading the next issue of the CWLU newsletter, which got to me in New Jersey. In the mystico-spiritual language of the day (perhaps anticipating the Age of Oprah), they put it out that the band had moved on to some Higher Stage of Existence. My name was signed to it, along with the other band members. A few days later, the members called me in New Jersey. They were all there, but they had designated Sherry, with her calm persona, as spokesperson. In the middle of the call, however she lost her calm:

“Why did you abandon us?” she shouted.

“I’m coming back, I promise!” I said.

Silence.

Then more shouting.

“You know we can’t function without you!”

There were many features that led to the band’s collapse. Resentment against leadership, no matter how egalitarian, was one. The simmering-and-then-boiling conflicts about unequal skills was another. About this last, one final telling incident.

Feeling that the band needed a sharper beat and fearing that we might fail to go platinum, one day I had suggested to one of our drummers that she take some lessons. She replied somewhat disdainfully, “I’m good enough for this band.” The telling thing about this exchange was that nobody followed up. The myth about equality in skills was so strong that not one of us had the temerity to say, “but you undermine our sound. You make us worse! Please, puhlease, puh-leaze take lessons!”

She never did.

Even so, when the band was good—when Sherry did her lovely, imaginative guitar solos, when the piano harmonized with them, when the drums tattooed a strong, steady beat and the singers were also harmonizing with each other, we were transformative, moving, transcendent.

Some years back, I was looking at a video tape of a CWLRB performance that took place after I left Chicago. On the tape, I hear Susie Abod announcing to the audience that this is the band’s “last concert.” The tape is fragmentary, black and white. It makes me nostalgic, bringing back both the conflicts and the euphoria of the period. Through the poor tape, we nonetheless see Susie (a natural performer) working like mad to keep a lively tempo for “Papa Don’t Lay that Shit on Me.” Sherry’s deadpan voice shouts out, “keep on truckin, everybody….” And Pat’s slide whistles and banjo-rhythmed guitar makes an old-time honky-tonk festival out of the song. The audience is delirious, cheering like crazy.

Why is the audience cheering so hard? Many of the other songs are done quite poorly, revealing—at least to someone familiar with the band’s previous performances—the extent to which the band has disintegrated. The demoralization that even the expert band members are feeling is palpable as the drummer loses the beat and the singers can’t stay in tune.

And yet, in the grainy shadows of that last tape, the audience is ecstatic, because beyond the CWLRB’s flaws, beyond the disintegration of the last performance, the band still shouts out the news,

I’m on my way, and I won’t turn back,

I’m on my way, and I won’t turn back…

Footnotes

1. I wrote “Love” with Virginia Blaisdell, one of the organizers, horn players, and later drummers of our sister New Haven Women’s Liberation Rock Band. I got the idea from a song we used to sing at the Bronx High School of Science; Virginia arranged the music with a witty Doo Wop chorus, and added most of the lyrics.

For more on the CWLRB and related topics, see:
CWLRB’s CD, with New Haven Women’s Liberation Rock Band, “Papa Don’t Lay that Shit on Me” (2005) Rounder Records # 82161-4001-2.
CWLRB with New Haven WLRB, “Mountain Moving Day,” (1972) Rounder Records # 4001.
Hillary Reser, “‘One By One You’re Gonna Know Our Power’: The Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band and the Politics of Cultural Transformation,” (2004).
Naomi Weisstein, “Days of Celebration and Resistance: The Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band, 1970-1973,” in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, eds., Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation (Three Rivers Press, 1998).
Naomi Weisstein, “Mutineers in Mainstream Music: Heralds of a New Feminist Wave?” 1999.
Naomi Weisstein and Virginia Blaisdell, “Feminist Rock: No More Balls and Chains, Ms., Dec. 1972.
Naomi Weisstein, “‘How Can a Little Girl Like You Teach a Great Big Class of Men?’ The Chairman Said, and Other Adventures of a Woman in Science,” in Sarah Ruddick and Pamela Daniels, eds., Working it Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work (New York, 1977).
Naomi Weisstein, “Neural Symbolic Activity: A Psychophysical Measure,” Science, Vol. 168, no. 3938 (June 1970): 1489-1491.
Naomi Weisstein and Charles S. Harris, “Visual Detection of Line Segments: An Object-Superiority Effect,” Science, vol. 186, no. 4165 (Nov. 22, 1974): 752-755.
Naomi Weisstein, “Theft,” in Robert Sternberg and Susan T. Fiske, eds., Professional Ethics in Science (Cambridge University Press, in press 2014).

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Amy Kesselman. Since I am ill and bedridden, my paper was presented—with “enormous gusto” and “spirit” (as described by admiring women who were there)—by my long-time friend, Heather Booth, who, like me, traces her feminist history to the Chicago West Side Group (1967-1969) and the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union (1969-1979); to Virginia Blaisdell for sharply editing a shorter version of this paper; to Jesse Lemisch for astute editing, and for suggesting at least half the jokes; to Ken Irwin of Rounder Records for pressing the original “Mountain Moving Day” vinyl record in 1973 and then remastering the record on CD in 2005 with the addition of more CWLRB songs, a standup comic monologue by me, and two contributions by Le Tigre; to Suzanne Levy and Stacey Lewis; and finally to the members of the Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band, Sherry Jenkins, Pat Miller née Matthews, Susan Abod, Kathy Rowley, Fanya Montalvo, and Suzanne Prescott, with all of whom I still sing, shout, dance, and laugh in my head. A shorter version of the present paper was presented at the Boston University Conference and published on the New Politics Blog as “The Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band 1970-1973: A Slapstick Demolition of Male Supremacy” (April 8, 2014).