

“Bring it On Home”¹: Robert Plant, Janis Joplin, and the Myth of Origin

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In support of the release of their first album on January 12, 1969, the new band on the scene, Led Zeppelin, toured extensively in Europe and the United States beginning in late 1968 and continuing into the next decade. Of their concert at the University of Iowa Memorial Union on January 15, critic William Seavey writes, “Robert Plant is the Janis Joplin of the group, a blues belter par excellence.”² By summer (as the album went to number 10 on the Billboard Top 200 list), many more critics were making this comparison. According to one, “[Plant] comes across with the funky finesse of a male Janis Joplin.”³ Another avers “lead singer Robert Plant, 21, comes on strong like a male Janis Joplin.”⁴ A third tells us “[Robert Plant’s] voice sounds like the male counterpart of blues screamer Janis Joplin.”⁵ A fourth that “Robert Plant, the lead vocalist went into his Janis Joplin dancing and screaming act.”⁶ And a fifth describes, “Then the Zeppelin flew in, total theater of blues-rock, lead singer Robert Plant was the shrieking flight engineer, guiding the ship (imagine, if you will, a male Janis Joplin).”⁷ By 1971, after Zeppelin had released two more albums and were about to drop their fourth, a reviewer for the Oakland *Tribune* writes “It is well known that Led Zeppelin is a talented group. Jimmy Page is without a doubt one of the best guitarists in the musical world, John Bonham is a great drummer, bassist John Paul Jones is an above-average performer and Robert Plant, well, he has been called a male Janis Joplin.”⁸ In 1972 (and another multiplatinum album later), a reviewer is somewhat more withering, writing, “Plant, by the way, tries to sing a lot of his songs like Janis Joplin might, and even the mannerisms are the same.”⁹ The comparison still surfaces five years later, when P. Dewing writes of the 1977 20,000 Arena concert in St. Louis, Missouri: “Plant’s purgative, bleeding cries—so reminiscent of Janis Joplin—and the taunting, almost brutal exchange between his voice and the instruments brought the concert to its first of several climaxes.”¹⁰

The comparison disappears, however, as the band’s legacy as a seminal heavy rock band is chiseled into the discursive formations of normative rock. Joplin is rarely cited as an influence in Zeppelin or Plant

biographies, nor does Plant ever credit her as an influence. And hardly a Led Zeppelin or Robert Plant music magazine article or review would refer to Joplin again in the ensuing decades. Thus, while women like Viola Smith, Valaida Snow, or Nina Simone (described respectively as the “female Gene Krupa,”¹¹ the “female Louis Armstrong,”¹² and the “female Miles Davis,”¹³) continue to reap this designation in music history, Plant not only lost his “male Janis Joplin” designation, but became instead a “founding father” of a certain type of rock vocalizing associated “naturally” with white male rockers. And while the women above were associated with men simply because of the instruments they played (drums and trumpet) or the political and stage presence they projected (Simone), Plant was compared to Joplin for very specific stylistic reasons. Indeed, early reviewers continually fell back upon the comparison when trying to describe Plant’s sound and look to readers.

This article recovers this mostly forgotten connection between the artists, offering evidence that Joplin did indeed directly influence Plant’s vocal style and stage presentation. By examining this specific case of how a woman’s contribution drops out of the narrative that then constructs her unacknowledged protégé as the origin, I hope to offer a clear example of how history is not simply told, but constructed—in this case out of the race and gender narratives and categories that precede and direct its telling. That history is constructed is obviously not a new assertion, yet I feel compelled to offer the clearest possible example of how this process works in popular music history because it is routinely missed not only by undergraduates (understandable), but by those who continue to write popular music history.¹⁴ Here is the point I wish to underscore: white women or people of color are not necessarily “rare” participants in a given activity. They are not seen because of the ways gender and race narratives inflect stories told about that particular field. (And when they are not seen they cannot be role models for others to follow and the field does become dominated by the now “naturalized” white men.) Specifically, in the cultural imaginary of rock history (as in so many other fields) origin stories will find the white male body. I hope to clearly elucidate this gravitational process here. I begin by offering evidence of Joplin’s influence on Plant, starting with a general overview of the possibilities of influence based on record release dates, television appearances, touring schedules, and artists’ statements in interviews, before undertaking a detailed comparison of the artists’ vocal, musical, and physical style. I then trace how this influence was elided by most biographers and music critics. I conclude with an argument against

origin stories and categorical thinking. When we understand how Joplin provided a key model for new rock vocalizing but that the “origin” was then established after her, we can see that origin stories are not about “history,” but about power.

Janis Joplin’s career spanned from 1966 to her death in October of 1970. Moving from her hometown of Port Arthur, TX to join the early sixties San Francisco counterculture scene, she was surrounded by bands like Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Country Joe and the Fish that helped to establish the city as the center of psychedelic rock. She joined Big Brother and the Holding Company as their lead vocalist in 1966 and the band garnered national attention after her stunning performance of Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton’s “Ball and Chain” at the Monterey Pop Festival in June of 1967. Taken under the wing of manager Albert Grossman, Big Brother signed with Columbia and released their second album, *Cheap Thrills*, in August 1968, which went double platinum. Urged by Grossman, Joplin left Big Brother to become a solo artist, first with a large soul back-up band (The Kozmic Blues Band) which produced the platinum album *I Got Dem Ol’ Kozmic Blues Again, Mama* in 1969 and then with a smaller rock group, Full Tilt Boogie, from late 1969 through 1970. During her short career she toured extensively and like many musicians of the time, consumed alcohol and drugs to excess. She accidentally overdosed on heroin alone in her hotel room after a night in the studio recording what would become her posthumous album, *Pearl*, released in 1971. *Pearl* was both a popular and critical success, going multiplatinum and producing the hit singles, “Cry Baby,” “Get it While You Can,” “Mercedes Benz,” and “Me And Bobby McGee.” Thus, in a national career that lasted less than four years and produced only four studio albums, Joplin left a legacy of rock-n-roll vocalizing that, I argue, influenced the vocalists of what would soon become called “heavy rock.”

Led Zeppelin formed in 1968, during the thick of Joplin’s career. Founded by Jimmy Page on guitar, Led Zeppelin—with Robert Plant on vocals, John Paul Jones on bass, keyboards, and mandolin, and John Bonham on drums—became the quintessential heavy rock group of the 1970s. Between 1969 and 1980 the band produced nine multiplatinum studio albums and performed to stadium audiences in the many tens of thousands per night. While notoriously unspecific about their influences, their sound was forged from American blues, folk, Celtic music and psychedelic rock that produced an extraordinary sonic palette, from bone-crushingly heavy rock riffs to acoustic intricacy. They disbanded suddenly upon the death

of John Bonham from asphyxiation after a day of excessive drinking in September 1980. They have reunited for various reunion concerts, but have never reformed as a touring band in the manner of the Rolling Stones or Black Sabbath.¹⁵

When Led Zeppelin was just starting out across the pond in the late 1960s, they took in the music of the San Francisco psychedelic rock scene from afar. San Francisco bands like Big Brother and the Holding Company were taking African American blues and playing it through a "psychedelic lens," pushing the blues into territory that would soon be described as "acid rock." This encouraged British bands that were perhaps even more smitten with the blues than white American musicians and listeners.¹⁶ The revolutionary spirit of the Haight Ashbury also inspired British performers. Recalling the late sixties, Robert Plant told an interviewer, "I really just wanted to get to San Francisco and join up. I had so much empathy with the commentary in America at the time of Vietnam. I just wanted to be with Jack Casady [of Jefferson Airplane] and with Janis Joplin."¹⁷ Eventually they would make it to San Francisco on a tour that would begin their career as rock superstars.

While I cannot verify Led Zeppelin's actual listening and viewing of Big Brother and the Holding Company, Big Brother's popularity during the initial rise of Zeppelin makes it highly likely the British foursome were well aware them. Before Zeppelin began to rub elbows with Big Brother on the concert circuit, I can only assume from comments like Plant's above that the band listened to the albums, *Big Brother and the Holding Company* (1966) and *Cheap Thrills* (1968). Big Brother's performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in June 1967 (which was filmed by D.A. Pennebaker and released in December 1968) broke the band to a national audience. While the members of Led Zeppelin would not likely have seen footage of the concert before recording their first album, they would not have missed hearing about the event that made Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix overnight sensations. After Monterey, Big Brother signed to Columbia who reissued their first album in August of 1967, and followed with *Cheap Thrills* in August of 1968. Upon its reissue on Columbia *Big Brother and the Holding Company* reached number 60 on the Billboard 200. Like any studious musician trying to hit it big, I surmise that Zeppelin knew of Monterey and acquired the album. Further, Led Zeppelin probably viewed Big Brother performing in the British film "Petulia," released in 1968. There is not much footage of the band, but they perform several minutes of "Roadblock" in a party scene. In this early incarnation of Big Brother, Joplin had not developed her flamboyant sartorial

style nor the confident stage presence she would develop in just two years time. Nonetheless, the film helped to spread the word about Big Brother in the United Kingdom.

After the release of Zeppelin's first album in January 1969, the band would have many more opportunities to witness Joplin in action. Beginning in 1969 Joplin began to appear on nationally televised talk shows. She appeared on the Ed Sullivan show in March 18, 1969 performing "Maybe" with the Kozmic Blues Band and then on Dick Cavett on July 18, 1969 where they performed a cover of the Bee Gees' tune, "To Love Somebody."¹⁸ By this point Joplin was a fully developed artist. Unlike her nonflamboyant-to-the-point-of-drab look in *Petulia*, Joplin was beginning to wear the loose, shiny, "hippie" attire that would define her look. She had mastered not only the vocal techniques, but her stage presence was loosening up (and would be displayed in its full virtuosity soon after).¹⁹

Once Zeppelin hit the big time, Plant and Joplin toured on the same circuits between 1968 and 1970. In 2002, Plant described this time as when "[Led Zeppelin was] playing festivals with Janis Joplin and The Doors."²⁰ He recalls standing with his band on the stage of the Bath festival in June of 1970 about to perform: "I remember Jefferson Airplane and Janis Joplin were also on the bill . . . and I remember standing there and thinking: I've gone from West Bromwich to this! I've really got to eat this up. The whole thing seemed extraordinary to me. I was as astonished as the audiences some nights . . ." (qtd. in Wall 2008: 190). While Jefferson Airplane was in fact on this gig, however, Joplin was not. Indeed, there were only two Festivals where Joplin and Led Zeppelin both performed and for one of those they were on opposite nights with another gig to rush to or from and therefore likely did not hear each other. The one date where they both played the same night was July 5, 1969 at the Atlanta International Pop Festival.²¹ Zeppelin performed "I Can't Quit You Baby," "Dazed and Confused," "You Shook Me," "How Many More Times," and "Communication Breakdown." Joplin took the stage later, performing with the Kozmic Blues Band "Raise Your Hand," "Maybe," "Summertime," "As Good as You've Been to This World," "To Love Somebody," "I Can't Turn You Loose," and "Ball 'n' Chain." According to a review, "Led Zeppelin received several standing ovations and was called back to do more. Janis and her new band tore everybody's minds."²² At the Texas International Pop Festival in 1969 Joplin performed on August 30 and Zeppelin on the 31. Joplin had a gig on the 31 at the Louisiana International Speedway and Zeppelin performed on the 30 in New York. John Paul Jones, however, recalled that it was at this Festival

that Janis Joplin taught him and his wife "how to drink tequila with salt and lemon. There was just the three of us in her trailer—memories don't come much better than that" (Wall 2008: 162). Although memory is notoriously faulty, as demonstrated above with Plant, it is plausible the musicians were able to make contact in their brief overlap of time.

These fleeting references to Joplin only give a glimpse of how deep the influence might have been and how close the members of Zeppelin were to Joplin. Indeed, in a 1993 interview, Plant recalled that "When we got out to San Francisco I became good friends with Janice [sic] [Joplin]."²³ Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any other information about this friendship. Nonetheless, it reveals a closer relationship between the singers than is usually publicly acknowledged. No member has gone on record about specifically attending a live Joplin performance and describing the experience as far as I have found. And sadly, no interviewer has asked them about it, despite the early comparisons of Plant to Joplin.²⁴ In my view, Plant's summoning of Joplin on several occasions to describe this era of touring, despite the infrequency with which he was actually "playing festivals" with her, suggests the outsize influence she may have had on him.

In the very unlikely event that Plant did not watch Janis live, there were several more television appearances beginning in December of 1969. Joplin gives a stunning performance on Tom Jones on December 4, 1969. Only 18 months into her career, Jones introduces her with: "ladies and gentleman, the legendary Janis Joplin." Joplin also appeared on Dick Cavett two more times on June 25 and August 3, 1970, performing "Get it While You Can," "Move Over," "Half Moon," and "My Baby." Finally, several years after her death the documentary, *Janis: The Way She Was* (1974), was released. The film contains early footage of Joplin with Big Brother from 1967 all the way to her Festival Express shows between June 28 and July 4, 1970.²⁵ You can witness her progression both musically and physically. While in the beginning her screams were thin and shrill, by the end her vocal timbre was rich, complex, and controlled. She could take a scream through several dynamic levels (from *ppp* to *fff* and everything in between) at will, and turn from a clear, powerful tone to a rich, gravelly one on a dime.

Because Plant never spoke about Joplin's influence on him and because no interviewer ever followed up, despite not only the early comparisons but Plant's own name-dropping, I want to spend some time speaking specifically about the Joplin influences that I hear in Plant's vocal style, especially in Zeppelin's early albums (up to *Led Zeppelin IV*). If the influence cannot be confirmed through more detailed statements by Plant,

the proof is nonetheless in the pudding, as they say. While I will discuss Joplin's influences below, the vocal techniques I mention here were highly recognizable as specific and unique to Joplin's style.

The first is the technique of breaking the voice over a syllable as in Joplin's "whoooooooooo . . . whoa-ah, who-ah, who-ah-wa-ah," best heard on "Combination of the Two" on *Cheap Thrills* (but found in many incarnations and variations, for example in "Ball and Chain" and "Turtle Blues," as well as on "Coo Coo" from Big Brother's first album). As the opening track to *Cheap Thrills*, Joplin's "who-ahs" initially struck me as "Robert Plant-esque."²⁶ These "who-ahs" first come in at 1:28 in the song, then again at 2:34, and 4:58. The first "whoa" in the chain is strong, sometimes with a little vibrato (i.e., the first time), but often not. Joplin adds the complex timbre as the voice rocks over the break between "whoa" and "ah" and adds a quick vibrato at the end of the last "ah." The three different incarnations of this phrase demonstrate the type of control she has over timbre. The initial, powerful "whoa" becomes more grainy with each repetition. Robert Plant's example of this on Zeppelin's first album can best be heard at the end of "You Shook Me" on his extension of "all-oh-ah-all-oh-ah-all-oh- ah-all-ah-alllll night long."

The second, and most obvious, element is what can probably only be called "the scream." Joplin has many variations of this highly developed color in her sonic palette. There is the "basic scream" which is thrown in as punctuation between phrases. There is also the pointillistic use of the scream where, in the middle of a phrase, Joplin will leap into a high register, often seemingly "out of nowhere." This type of pointillistic, out-of-nowhere scream can be heard throughout her oeuvre, but examples from the first two albums can be heard especially in "Women Is Losers," "Turtle Blues," and "Ball and Chain," for example, when she shoots up to a screaming "Why?" in the lyric "Hon, tell me WHHHHHYYYYY love is like a ball and chain." Early examples of this in Plant can be heard in "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You," when Plant goes up to the screaming register for the last repetition of "I can hear it calling me back home!"²⁷ And when he launches into the screaming "When you hear me holler, baby" at 4:20 of "I Can't Quit You" it must be an example of what the critic above described as his "Janis Joplin dancing and screaming act." Another Joplin song that offers copious examples of her virtuosic screaming is "Catch me Daddy" performed at the Grande Ballroom, Detroit in 1968, and heard on the 1999 reissue of *Cheap Thrills*. "Catch me Daddy" sounds like the prototype of heavy metal vocals with insane falsetto gravel and screaming. In it we hear a scream that would

come to be defined with Plant at 1:25, 3:38, 4:12, and 5:05 in the song (at minimum, and if you are counting other Plantesque "ohs" at 4:25 and 4:46). For example the scream at 1:25 sounds just like Plant's scream in countless recordings, including 4:20 of "I Can't Quit You," 1:55 of "Communication Breakdown," and the end of "What Is and What Should Never Be" with his screaming "baby, baby, baby," and "no, no, no" to list just three instances.

A third vocal technique associated with Joplin is the rapid repetition of syllables and words. Examples of this can be found in "Summertime," with "baby baby baby" and "no no, no no na no na no na no, don't you cry"; "Piece of My Heart" with "now me now me now me now me"; and "Turtle Blues" with "no no no no." In "Magic of Love" on *Cheap Thrills* starting at 1:38 she does the quick staccato, stuttering articulation of words, singing, "Oh, now baby don't you hear me, won't-t-t-t-t-t you hear me, I got ta got ta got ta got ta got to tell you." This technique can be heard clearly in early Plant at 3:30 on "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" when he sings: "I know I never, never, never, never, never, goin' a leave you, babe," which he also takes up into the screaming tessitura. Further, his live performance of "Dazed and Confused" at Royal Albert Hall in 1970 begins with copious repetition of words a la Joplin.²⁸

Plant's use of a classic blues melodic contour that ends the phrase on a flat 7 of the dominant chord is also reminiscent of Joplin's phrasing. It can be heard clearly in "The Magic of Love" at :22 when Joplin sings "I told you daddy [or "that"] now," where the flat 7 of the IV chord appears on the last word "now" that sounds like "nah." The same melodic contour is repeated at :54 and 1:02.²⁹ While this was not on the original release of *Cheap Thrills*, another clear example of the common use of the flat 7 melody note on the dominant 7 chord can be heard in "Turtle Blues" at 3:09 where she hits the flat 7 of the IV chord on the "yeah" of "Who-ah. Whoa whoa oh-yeah." In Plant it is heard in the line "How Many More Times" with the "times" landing on the flat 7. It is a very common melodic phrasing for Plant and I recommend that the Led Zeppelin aficionado simply go to Joplin's "Turtle Blues" around 3:00 and listen to the similarities with Plant. Further, "Turtle Blues" slow glissando intimated at the end of phrases (for example, at :25), is reminiscent of Plant's long glissandi in "You Shook Me," for example, beginning at 1:41.

In general, the timbral quality of Joplin's voice—her use of "gravel" brought to virtuosic levels—can be recognized in Plant's voice. Her performance of "I Need a Man" on *Cheap Thrills* exemplifies this virtuosity.

In it she goes from soft whisper passages to screams and back again within beats. Her dynamic and timbral control are clearly the result of sustained practice.³⁰ In the first evocation of “can’t be now, can’t be now, can’t be now . . .” she sings in a clear, straight-forward voice reminiscent of Bessie Smith. As the music builds behind her she jumps to “this lone-li-ness—baby, surrounding me” in a cascade of pain-drenched gravel that is both unprecedented in its experimentalist psychedelia and deeply moving. In subsequent repetitions of this chorus the gravel on “can’t be now, etc.” intensifies incrementally, showing her mastery and conscious decision-making in the application of timbre to the best effect. Plant’s palette clearly takes timbral colors from Joplin. On “Dazed and Confused” his straight-forward singing moves up into a scream with the timbral complexity heard in Joplin. He belts out: “the soul of a woman was CREATED below” with “created” going into the high tessitura, scream quality.

But Joplin did not only influence Plant’s palette, she and her band inspired how Plant and the band interacted musically. The call and response between vocalist and band and the use of the vocal cadenza or break heard in Big Brother found very similar incarnations in Led Zeppelin. The best early example of vocalist-band responsiveness in Big Brother is heard in “Ball and Chain” in the ways the band and vocalist dynamically respond to each other.³¹ The dynamic contrasts of crazy guitar feedback cutting into quiet passages are a predecessor to what Jimmy Page would call Zeppelin’s compositional approach of “light and shade.”

Indeed, “Since I’ve Been Loving You” from *Led Zeppelin III* sounds as if it is built upon the template of “Ball and Chain.”³² Both are based on a slow blues form with a 12/8 feel; both begin with an instrumental introduction that suddenly down-shifts to a *p* dynamic level before the vocal entrance at 1:13 for Plant and 1:15 for Joplin; and both continue with a soft vocal that is punctuated with screams and howls that proceed along a trajectory of rising action to the song’s climax. While Big Brother’s version includes instrumental hits and several vocal breaks—for example, on “why does every single little tiny little everything hold on . . .” or the break with the classic scream that influenced Plant at 2:30—Led Zeppelin employs the vocal break only once, after the guitar solo when the band drops out and Plant screams in the silence: “said I been crying,” followed by a return to *soto voce* before the band kicks in with its rising action. Throughout, the listener can hear those elements that inspired Barney Hoskyns to describe the recording as “Plant’s greatest vocal performance—Janis Joplin reborn as a lovesick Black Country brickie” (Hoskyns 2003b): the whispering vibrato

that ends a phrase; the talking-singing; the sudden rise to the screaming tessitura; the stuttering repetition of words and phrases; the shotgun, rat-at-tat-tat delivery of a line; the conscientious application of gravel; the dynamic contrasts from *p* to *ff* and back within a phrase; and Plant's screaming vocal break at 4:51 followed by a quiet recitation of lyric. Plant incorporates the Joplinesque stuttering inability to get the words out at 2:45 when he tries to get out "did the best I could," and his "banshee" scream at 6:14 sounds like a variation of Joplin's "Catch Me Daddy" scream discussed above. In Zeppelin the rising action is undertaken primarily through the band, with substitute chord changes and alterations of the form. In Big Brother it is Joplin who carries the burden of increasing the song's intensity. While Led Zeppelin undoubtedly out-performs Big Brother, Plant's vocals do not approach the level of virtuosity achieved by Joplin.

The reviewers early in Plant's career compared not only his voice, but also his general look and behavior to Joplin. This was noticed as far back as 1969 in Plant's Joplinesque "dancing and screaming," but it was in 1972 when a music critic noted how "even the mannerisms are the same" between the, by then, late Joplin and Plant. Mick Wall has written that it was in the early seventies when the band started to dress more flamboyantly and "androgynously." Indeed, in their 1973 Madison Square Garden concert Plant looks androgynous to the point of feminine. His long, curly hair; sky blue, frilly blouse opened to expose his torso; feminine twirling of his fingers as he pushes his waist forward and his shoulders back; and "banshee" screaming as seen in the concert footage indeed are reminiscent of Joplin in that he looks like a powerful blues woman belting out her song.³³ This "androgyny" was read at the time as a type of hyperomni-sexuality that, as Susan Fast has shown, was tantamount to the band performing an incarnation of sex on stage.³⁴ It was a largely unacknowledged homo-eroticism that gave the sense of sex everywhere: sex was so present it could erupt anywhere, anytime. But this omni-sexual homoeroticism had already been performed by Joplin, who, when singing "Summertime," would embellish the lyrics "and your mama's good-looking" with a suggestive, "oh yeah, she's lookin' good now" that gave the distinct impression the vocalist was ogling your mother. In interviews, Joplin would often compare music-making to sex in what Alice Echols views as Joplin's particular skill at marketing herself and enticing an interviewer.³⁵ Joplin's omni-sexuality can be traced back to Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith and could be summed up at the time with the common phrase, "if it moves, fondle it."³⁶ Thus, the hypersexuality of so-called "cock rock" that finds its origin in Zeppelin can be traced back at

least in part through three women's uninhibited sexual expressivity in music as inspiration.

I have tried to be specific about the various Joplin influences found in Plant both to fill out the passing mention that is made as if a foregone conclusion and to fill in her absence. I am not, however, claiming that Joplin is the only influence on Plant. Clearly, both artists incorporate a variety of influences. Plant begins "I Can't Quit You Babe" with something that sounds like a field holler.³⁷ The strong, straight-forward vocals in "You Shook Me" sound as much like Bessie Smith, as Janis Joplin influenced by Bessie Smith. Likewise, when Joplin reaches the high tessitura on "Who?" in "I Need a Man" around 4:30 listeners might hear the influence of Aretha Franklin. She can sound like Cass Elliot on The Mamas and The Papas-inspired "Blindman" from BBHC, or like Grace Slick on the Jefferson Airplanesque "Magic of Love." Indeed, when she performs "Half Moon" on the Dick Cavett show in August of 1970 her vocal break on the words "deep down" sounds like Plant's "who-ah whoa-ah whoa-ah" on "You Shook Me." Did Plant get this from Joplin or did Joplin, a matter of months after the release of Zeppelin's first album, get it from Plant? It is conceivable that Plant also influenced her. And so what? Any artist is always listening and being influenced. This is not the problem. The problem is in the creation of the origin story. For both Plant and Joplin, there are a multitude of influences. And these influences come predominantly from African American blues.

Therefore, I am decidedly *not* establishing an origin story around Joplin. Joplin was a serious student of music and was deeply influenced by many artists. Indeed, she followed the typical approach attributed to jazz musicians in the mid-century—she studied the masters and through that developed her own style. She listened to the records of Otis Redding, Lead Belly, Memphis Minnie, Odetta, and Bessie Smith and drove with her high school friends to Louisiana to listen to live performances of Cajun, Zydeco, and the Blues. She honed her chops by performing songs like Bessie Smith's "Black Mountain Blues" and her own Smith-inspired blues, "What Good Can Drinkin' Do?" at blues clubs in Austin.³⁸ She attended live performances and made efforts to get the best seats.³⁹ She practiced her phrasing over and over and over, trying to get the sound she wanted. She praised idols like Billie Holiday and Aretha Franklin, describing how they could convey emotion with just "two notes" and how she was hoping to get to that level through continued practice.⁴⁰ Her influences are heard in the songs she chose to cover and she would acknowledge these influences by crediting those artists during her performances, mentioning them in TV

interviews, and inviting them to open for her.⁴¹ Black artists, especially black women vocalists, appreciated Joplin's acknowledgement of the music and musicians who influenced her. "Big Mama" Thornton, Odetta, Etta James, Tina Turner, and Nina Simone all praised and admired Joplin.⁴²

Led Zeppelin, on the other hand, were notorious for concealing their influences—to the point of outright stealing without credit. The band was famously sued by Willie Dixon for royalties to "Whole Lotta Love," which Dixon successfully argued was based on his "You Need Love."⁴³ Music journalist Denny Somach has demonstrated that every song except one on *Led Zeppelin I* was a partially or nearly fully uncredited "cover" by finding and playing the originals in side-by-side comparisons.⁴⁴ As Somach mentions, while these and similarly "borrowed" songs on subsequent albums were initially credited to Led Zeppelin, in reissues they have been increasingly correctly credited. Certainly, more general musical influence is different from actually plagiarizing compositions, but the idea of taking influence from "whatever I listen to that I like," as Plant has said, is also a way of borrowing without giving credit. This approach certainly differs from the specificity of Joplin's acknowledgements. Plant has said of his vocal style that he was "trying to make something extraordinary out of a very obvious, clichéd vocalist approach."⁴⁵ He usually resists citing specific influences, but when pressed he will refer to male vocalists. In a documentary interview Plant says, "My vocal performance comes from everywhere, whatever I listen to that I like. Ray Charles's howl on 'Drown in My Own Tears,' or Wynonie Harris or Louis Jordan, there's loads and loads of stuff. All that stuff, you throw all of that in a blender and throw the switch and you've got me."⁴⁶ He has never mentioned Joplin as an ingredient in that blender, however.

The Myth of Origin: To Whose Home Are We Bringing It?

"'Robert always wanted to be Janis,' a beaming Jimmy Page told *Rolling Stone* backstage. 'To hear her singing his words—well, he'd be in heaven.'" So wrote Terri Sutton in her imaginative tribute to Janis Joplin in the *Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock*. Sutton was envisioning Joplin taking Plant's place in Zeppelin after the male artist "choked on a live swordfish at the Edgewater Inn, Seattle, Washington—malice suspected but not proven."⁴⁷ Sutton here takes what she must assume are obvious similarities between the singers and imagines a scenario where not Joplin, but Plant was lost too young. Other women writers have similarly asserted or assumed Joplin's influence on Plant and other hard rock vocalists. Maureen

Mahon writes that Joplin's vocal approach, "helped set the template for metal, punk, and grunge vocals in the seventies, eighties, and nineties".¹³ Ann Powers writes that Joplin's "influence surfaces unexpectedly: most often in this decade (1990s), it's found among male singers like Axl Rose and the Black Crowes' Chris Robinson" (Powers 1993). In her monograph on Led Zeppelin, Susan Fast argues that, although he has never acknowledged it, "one of Plant's strongest influences as a singer must have been . . . Janis Joplin since they share a similar emotional plane in their singing and since Plant draws on Joplin's specific licks and technical vocabulary".⁴⁵ Fast does not offer further specifics, but states that Plant's vocal characteristics exemplify the influence.⁴⁸ In her biography of Joplin, Alice Echols argues that Joplin has been an uncredited influence on male rock vocalists. She writes that "Janis disappeared from the airwaves soon after her death. But while she was curiously absent, her style was absorbed, without credit and in a way that obscured her influence." Echols cites Blondie vocalist, Debbie Harry, who observes that "people do [Janis] even when they don't know they're doing her," especially male vocalists of heavy metal. Echols considers Plant the vocalist most responsible for bringing Joplin's style into heavy metal, though she, like Fast, notes that he has never cited Joplin's influence (Echols: xvi).⁴⁹

While these writers credit Joplin in a way that almost assumes her influence (since to them, it sounds so obvious), Joplin is absent in monographs on Zeppelin, where, with rare exceptions, she is never mentioned as an influence and often is not mentioned at all. In *Led Zeppelin: Dazed and Confused: The Stories Behind Every Song* (2005), *Whole Lotta Led Zeppelin* (2008) and *Hammer of the Gods: The Led Zeppelin Saga* (2008), there is no mention of Joplin. A few others mention her once or twice in passing, for example, attending a party, or two that provide one sentence comparing the Scottish blues-rock singer Maggie Bell to Joplin (Clayson 2006: 248; Cole 2002: 287). Several do cite the influence Joplin may have had on Plant, but do so only in passing without follow-up or analysis. In his 2005 book *Led Zeppelin: 1968–1980* Keith Shadwick writes, "Plant's vocal . . . suggests close listening to Janis Joplin's approach, if not her style."⁵⁰ In his 2008 biography, Mick Wall writes that Plant's vocals in "Since I Been Loving You" from *Led Zeppelin III* (discussed above) "display[ed] his new Van Morrison and Janis Joplin influences" (Wall 2008: 192). Critic Barney Hoskyns makes two references to Joplin when reviewing Led Zeppelin re-issues. In his 2003 review of the *Led Zeppelin III* reissue he writes (also quoted above): "It is surely Plant's greatest vocal performance—Janis Joplin reborn as a lovesick Black Country brickie"

(Hoskyns 2003ab).⁵¹ And in 2006 he wrote of the *Led Zeppelin IV* reissue, "The sound of Plant's voice alone—like Janis Joplin with testosterone—was formidable" (Hoskyns 2006:14).⁵²

Indeed, Plant has been taken as the origin of heavy metal vocals in popular and academic rock history. In MTV's *History of Heavy Metal* Kurt Loder narrates, "The rising tide of heavy metal bands happily emulated Robert Plant's lead shriek and Jimmy Page's thick, murderous riffs as best they could." The program cuts to Robert Plant stating that every shrieking "ahh" could be heard all over the new genre followed by a quick montage through a series of metal vocalists screaming with the assumption that it all goes back to Plant.⁵³ Andrew Cope takes as the starting point for his book on heavy metal the "strong consensus amongst academics and established journalists that heavy metal and hard rock emerged during the late 1960s/early 1970s in the industrial Midlands of England" (Cope 2010:7). He goes on to say that "the vocal dexterity of Robert Plant provided the launching pad and inspiration for front line vocalists such as Rob Halford (Judas Priest) and Bruce Dickinson (Iron Maiden). These vocalists took Plant's dexterous but mild theatrics as the starting point to engineer a new level of performer status where the singer becomes the central figure in the band" (Cope 2010: 68). With a "launching pad" and "starting point" in Plant, Cope's book never mentions Janis Joplin. Nor Bessie Smith, Ray Charles, Otis Redding, Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin or Wynonie Harris.⁵⁴

In his analysis of North American rock criticism, Kembrew McLeod cites the characteristics that rock critics developed in order to designate "who is worthy of attention." In examining 583 rock reviews and compiling the results in a database, McLeod found that along with authenticity and its correlates (like "sincerity" and connection with the audience), "originality" is a key factor in deciding whether music is worthy. Originality is an attribute "valorized by rock critics that can be heard repeated numerous times using a variety of adjectives such as 'daring, 'imaginative' or 'singular'".⁵⁴ Conversely, those bands that are critically dismissed will be hailed as unoriginal or derivative: "Perhaps the most repeated condemnation by rock critics is based on an artist's perceived unoriginality (these artists are negatively described as following formulas, or being derivative or generic".⁵⁵ Kembrew concludes that rock criticism "valorizes serious, masculine, 'authentic' rock and dismisses trivial, feminine, 'prefabricated' pop music".⁴⁷ As such, (white) male rockers are more often perceived

as authentic (“raw” or “brutal” simplicity) and female acts as inauthentic (“vapid” or “saccharine” simplicity).⁵⁵ Men’s work is also more likely to be understood as original, whereas women artists are more quickly categorized as unoriginal or interpretative.⁵⁶

Thus, it is a bitter irony that the band that has been recently revealed as one of the most secretly derivative bands, Led Zeppelin, is continually noted for its *originality* and that Robert Plant is cited as the original heavy metal vocalist. As Plant is popularly lauded as authentic and worthy because of his *originality*, his derivations are studiously ignored. Further, after white women and black women and men are written out of the story (see note 54), the critical hand-wringing of various rock critics can begin, wondering out loud: “Why don’t women rock? Why don’t blacks rock?” as a way to further gaze at the now naturalized creativity and potency of white men.⁵⁷ Led Zeppelin could be the poster band for this phenomenon. Decades after their ascendance, the truth of the various origins of their songs has come to light. The band used the “borrowing” practice of the blues to excuse themselves from theft, assuming and expecting what did initially happen and continues to happen (even with emerging evidence to the contrary): *originality* settles around them.⁵⁸

I am not arguing there are no moments of “paradigm change.” There are instances when an innovation occurs that has not been heard in quite that incarnation before and that innovation becomes a template that other artists choose to follow. Certainly the heavy rocking of Led Zeppelin, propelled as much by John Bonham’s drumming as Page’s “murderous riffs,” was a new sound when it appeared in 1969. But upon listening to the heavy metal rock *vocal* sound—is not it more apt that Joplin was the shift? If anyone, it was Joplin who combined the gravelly timbre and overextension of the voice of the blues shouters with a “rock” energy that established the template for so many vocalists to follow. Despite rock origin stories that state otherwise, one cannot trace the innovative heavy metal rock vocals to Plant because *he sounds like Joplin*. Joplin does not quite have a predecessor in the same way. There is no one before Joplin who brings together that extreme level of continuous scream/gravel vocal timbre and over-the-top performance that came to define heavy metal singing. She pushed her vocals to extremes that, as the style was adopted by men, became associated with “heavy metal.”

It should be possible to talk about influence without having to find an origin. History is murky and the chain of influences is written in simplified form out of the murk. We see this murkiness in the way Plant associates his early time touring with Joplin, despite the fact that they performed only one

night together. Joplin looms larger in his memory than the logistical facts evidence and one gets the sense she was around in his mind much more than she was around in physical presence. Page has a similar misremembering regarding Joplin's early influence on the band. When the young Zeppelin opened with Country Joe and the Fish for Taj Mahal at the Fillmore West in San Francisco in January 1969, the shows contained songs from their new (first) album, interspersed with covers that did not make it on the recording. One such cover was "As Long As I Have You," which Page described as "a Garnett Mimms number we had done with the Yardbirds which Janis Joplin had recorded."⁵⁹ Interestingly, not only did Joplin never record this song, there is no record of her ever singing it live. She did, however, quite famously perform and record another song that went to number four for Mimms in 1963 and became an international hit for her: "Cry, Baby." Probably, it was "Cry, Baby" that influenced the thinking and style of Plant and Page. Performing "Cry, Baby" on the *Festival Express* tour through Canada in 1970 and recording it on her final, posthumously released album, *Pearl*, Joplin's rendition certainly brings the song to the over-the-top heights attained by those heavy metal rockers that followed her. But Joplin's phrasing and timbre were clearly inspired by Garnett Mimms' version.⁶⁰ Listening to Mimms jump to the high tessitura and shout, "Cry, Cry, Baby" one could think, "wow, he sounds just like Janis Joplin." Yet, of course, this version came out six years previous. And so while I want to stress Joplin's contribution to undo the specious origin placed around Plant, the fact is that influences can always be traced back to earlier influences.⁶¹

Abetting the obsession with an "origin" is the tendency toward "categorical thinking" that suffuses rock discourse. Categorical thinking separates black from white, men from women, instruments from vocals, and sacred from secular in parsing out "rock history."⁶² As such, white men can take influences from white women and people of color and may in turn influence them, but genre and gender categories serve to naturalize white men as the norm in a given area. For example, as whites began to play black music in the 1950s it garnered the term "rock and roll," while blacks performing the same music were called R & B. Bo Diddley called the moniker R & B: "ripoff and bullshit. It was to keep me from getting my hands on any money So rock and roll was for the Caucasians and R & B was for the black cats" (Qtd. in Loder 1987).⁶³ Thus, black musicians were kept in their category even as whites copied their style and promoted an ostensibly "new music." To return to MTV's *History of Heavy Metal*, The Kinks and The Who are cited as prehistory to heavy metal, but none of the black blues artists that influenced the genre.⁶⁴ Of course, Jimi Hendrix is cited

as an important influence on the guitar, but Hendrix is always considered a crossover artist—a “black man who rocked”—rather than understood as the natural extension of the blues that he was (for example, in pushing its complex timbre to further extremes).⁶⁵ Joplin has also been kept in her category, that of “female rocker.” Popular narratives consider her protégées to be women only. Websites like Wikipedia and About.com credit Joplin’s influence on Stevie Nicks, Nancy Wilson and Ann Wilson (Heart), Chrissie Hynde, Joan Jett, Pink, Stevie Nicks, and Florence Welch, but not on the white men who were influenced by her and then heralded as the natural embodiments of heavy metal. Her central contribution according to this narrative is to break the “girl singer” mold, not to set the paradigm for heavy rock vocals.⁶⁶ Such narratives instantiate “rockers” as white men with separate categories for “women-in-rock” and “blacks-in-rock.” Thus, even as Joplin and Hendrix were clear paradigm-shifters they manage to be understood as anomalies in genres that they served to establish.

When we understand the power behind the desire for the origin story and the related practice of categorical thinking, we do not need to wonder about why this or that woman is absent or how women contribute to a style in a way that obscures their influence. It is obscured by the story that wants to be told: the mainstream cultural desire for an origin myth centered around a white male body.⁶⁷ The questions then are not “Why don’t women do this? Why don’t people of color do that?” They *do* do it. The questions need to be, “what happened before the ostensible origin?” and “how and why was the origin established *here*?” Further, we need to *do* history in a way that resists finding an origin (because an origin is always specious) and that resists categorical thinking (because artists do not concern themselves with categories).

But even as “authoritative” popular websites reproduce race and gender hierarchies, categorical thinking, and tried-and-true origin myths, the crowd-sourcing style perusal of all eras of music on the internet allows for some of what was “obvious” to rise again. Against the authorial voices of Zeppelin biographers, music critics, journalists, academics, and the zealous policing of enthusiastic Wikipedia editors, one online contributor described watching concert footage of Joplin’s last tour on the *Festival Express* just months before her death:

Y’know, after watching *Festival Express* and those two incredible Joplin performances, I started thinking that not only was Plant influenced by her, but that the entire template for the sexy, swaggering

cock-rocking blues-rock lead vocalist of the '70s was based on her, which is a wonderful irony (if it's true). I mean, these singers are suppose to be testosterone-fueled, big dick, groupie-banging hard rockers, but their model, their origin is a super bad ass woman. I don't know . . . may be.⁶⁸

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Alice Echols, Mary Hunter, Bernard Gendron and the three anonymous readers for their insightful feedback, which greatly improved this essay. I also thank my West Coast writing partner, Nina Eidsheim, for her steadfast support and inspiration.

Notes

1. Led Zeppelin recorded "Bring it On Home" in 1969 for the ir second album, *Led Zeppelin II*, crediting Page and Plant as songwriters. The song, however, was written by Willie Dixon in the early 1960s and recorded by Sonny Boy Williamson in 1963. Arc Music filed a lawsuit against the band for copyright infringement that was settled out of court. On Dixon's own lawsuit against Led Zeppelin over "Whole Lotta Love," see Inaba 2011:197.

2. <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/january-15-1969> (accessed on July 8, 2013). "Dusk to Dawn—Concert at a Glance: The Led Zeppelin."

3. Jane Scott <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/july-20-1969>.

4. *The Plain Dealer*, July 21, 1969 <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/july-20-1969>.

5. "Review: Led Zeppelin Flies Directly to the Nerve Ends" (J. Hesse/Vancouver Sun/July 1969) <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/july-26-1969>.

6. "Led Zeppelin Makes Magic At the Arena" S.D. Union/Aug. 11, 1969 <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/august-10-1969>.

7. (Aug. 1969 | N.COBB, Globe Staff) <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/august-21-1969>.

8. "Led Zeppelin Bows in with a Roar" *Oakland Tribune*. <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/september-13-1971>.

9. (B. Mann, Gazette, June 1972) <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/june-7-1972>.

10. (MM/P. Dewing, April 1977) <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/april-15-1977> (notes 2–10: accessed on July 8, 2013).

11. Viola Smith.

12. Valaida Snow.

13. David Hajdu <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/music/magazine/92758/nina-simone#>, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=21694&pg=6> (accessed on July 8, 2013).

14. For example, even in her outstanding book on the black rock coalition, Maureen Mahon describes women in rock as “rare.” “Throughout rock-n-roll history . . . [women performers] are relatively rare” (206). This way of stating the issue creates the impression that women are not taking up this activity. But I believe the matter is not that women are not doing it: they have been and are. As Sherrie Tucker has written of “women-in-jazz,” despite uncovering all of the women who could “really play” jazz in jazz history and the fact that these women generally saw themselves as a part of jazz history and not marginal, the stereotype that “women can’t and don’t play jazz” persisted and persists (see especially Tucker 2000). This can be also seen in rock where Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Memphis Minnie, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, “Big Mama” Thornton, Janis Joplin, Tina Turner, Fanny, Heart, L7, Shelley Doty, Courtney Love, Avril Lavigne, and so many more than I could list here have all been described as anomalies, often purportedly “breaking the stereotype” that women do not rock. Thus, the story is not that women do not “rock.” They do, did, and will do. The story is the way that gender and race narratives write out their contribution. Mahon, indeed, stresses this in her article on Thornton discussed below.

15. Indeed, their 2007 reunion concert was recorded live and released as “Celebration Day,” winning a Grammy for the best rock album this year (2014).

16. British artists influenced by the blues would often express surprise that the blues could only be found “across the tracks” in the United States. See for example, interviews in the film documentary, *Dancing in the Street: A Rock and Roll History* (episode 5).

17. Qtd. in Hoskyns (2003a). This is one of several examples of Plant mentioning Joplin in passing but not saying anything more and of the interviewer not asking any follow-up questions about their connection.

18. The Joplin website dates the Sullivan show March 18. The Ed Sullivan DVD dates it March 16. “To Love Somebody” was written by the Bee Gees.

19. Early footage of Big Brother performing in San Francisco in 1967 shows an inexperienced Joplin belting out “Ball and Chain” (seen in the documentary *Janis: The Way She Was*). While Joplin’s enormous potential is already evident,

both her stage presence and her vocal technique had a strained, reaching quality that evidenced an artist still mastering her craft.

20. Mat Snow, *MOJO*, July 2002. Plant also describes touring with "Janis and the Doors and the Airplane" in Wall (2008): 281.

21. Joplin set list for July 5: <http://www.setlist.fm/setlist/janis-joplin/1969/atlanta-international-raceway-hampton-ga-7bdd9a00.html>. Info from Zeppelin website: <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/july-5-1969>.

22. *From C.Zarco, July 11, 1969*. <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/july-5-1969> (accessed on July 22, 2013).

23. Qtd. in Cliff 1993. Joplin biographer Alice Echols acknowledged to me that, "I would be very surprised if they were good friends. He just never comes up in any interviews" (personal communication, August 23, 2013).

24. There were opportunities when members of Led Zeppelin may have gone to hear Joplin. For example, April 14 Joplin performed in Paris France. Zeppelin had gigs on the 13th in Southsea Hampshire and the 15th in Stoke on Trent in the United Kingdom. While it was harder to travel to France from Britain at that time it is not inconceivable that they could have hopped a plane. But I do not know if any member attended this concert.

25. A documentary of the *Festival Express* was released in 2003.

26. That I thought this was, of course, annoying to me. Noticing how I had replaced the precursor with the follower formed part of the incentive to write this article. I wanted to understand better this gravitational pull.

27. Led Zeppelin biographer Keith Shadwick writes that "Janis Joplin's fever-pitched vocals [and the] interludes of screaming guitars, pounding drums, and contrasting whisper-quiet passages" heard in *Cheap Thrills* were a direct inspiration for the Zeppelin "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" on *Led Zeppelin I* (2005: 48).

28. Thanks to Mary Hunter for drawing my attention to this example.

29. The particular note is the b3 of the basic blues scale of the given song. So, for example, when it occurs over the I7 chord it is the #9 of that chord.

30. The difference between early film recordings of Big Brother—for example, at Monterey Pop and on the local California station from 1967—and *Cheap Thrills*, show how her screams developed from strained to full-bodied.

31. More sexual vocalist-band communication, which builds to a climax with vocal pushing and coming, can be heard in “Try Harder,” especially seen and heard on the *Festival Express* documentary concert footage and included on the 1999 reissue of *Cheap Thrills*.

32. Mick Wall also connects the song’s form (and certainly its lyrics) to Moby Grape’s “Never,” (Wall 2008: 192). While many of the lyrics are poached from “Never” (as Somach also notes), formally, “Since I’ve Been Loving You” is not very similar to “Never.” “Never” is not a 12-bar blues form like “Since” and “Ball and Chain,” but indeed, has a 9-bar structure, quite different from a standard blues or pop song. It does not follow blues harmonic changes but has an almost modal sound. And it does not start with an introduction that stops suddenly with the arrival of the lyrics, but has a simple 4-bar instrumental intro, which returns as an interlude. While I would agree that Zeppelin may have taken musical inspiration from “Never” in Zeppelin’s move away from blues changes in the last four measures of “Since” (creating a harmonic movement that points outward like “Never,” but that actually stays within the 12-bar blues form), there is not an obvious “template-type” relationship between the songs like there is between “Since” and “Ball and Chain.”

33. The term “Banshee” is common to describe male rock vocalists, but to give a specific instance, see Kurt Loder’s narration in the video documentary *The History of Heavy Metal* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHnVCHgE6r8>). That a banshee is a female spirit known for her wailing demonstrates how that which is hidden is often hidden in plain sight.

34. Fast (2001), especially chapter five.

35. For example in the documentary, *Janis: The Way She Was*. Echols also attributes Joplin’s hypersexuality to a type of masking of queer desire by over-emphasizing her heterosexual or “hippie chick” sexual appetite (Echols: 250–52).

36. For a detailed discussion of Janis Joplin and Bessie Smith in terms of bisexuality, race, and the blues see Braziel 2004. Listen also to Ma Rainey’s “Prove It On Me Blues” for an example of centralizing lesbian desire in early popular culture. Echols reads Joplin’s overdiscussion of sex in interviews as a kind of “cover” for her bisexuality, although I do not get that impression.

37. A variation on Willie Dixon’s opening, less obviously “field,” holler.

38. For example, at Threadgills see Echols:55.

39. For example, Joplin's attendance at an Otis Redding concert (Echols:136).

40. 1:15 *Janis: The Way She Was*. Further, "[according to Linda Gravenites, Joplin] studied Leadbelly, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith. On Sundays we'd go to various black churches and sit in the back and do gospel." The idea that Janis emerged from nowhere "is nuts," says Linda. "I mean, she *worked*" (ital. in original. qtd. in Echols: 75). See also Echols: 48.

41. Joplin always cited Bessie Smith as an early influence. When she started out she said of her work, "I sang blues—Bessie Smith kind of blues" (qtd. in Echols: 133). "Bessie showed me the air and how to fill it." She showed her appreciation by helping to purchase a proper headstone for Smith's gravesite. Similarly, she would introduce her first break-out hit, "Ball and Chain" as "performed by [Willie Mae] 'Big Mama' Thornton" and invited Thornton to open for her (see Mahon). In a 1969 interview, Dick Cavett asks Joplin whom she admires as a vocalist. Joplin answers, "Tina Turner. . . . She's the best chick ever. Fantastic singer, great dancer, fantastic show She sings with the Ike and Tina Turner review. Ike is her husband and bandleader [Joplin here registers a certain distaste for Ike in her expression] and Tina is the show."

42. Regarding B. B. King, Little Richard, Odetta, Thornton, and Etta James, see Echols: 237. Simone expressed her admiration for Joplin in her 1976 concert in Montreux.

43. It was resolved out of court and Dixon now appears as a cowriter on the song.

44. See <http://www.hark.com/clips/qmqjfdsztg-howard-stern-exposes-led-zeppelin-as-a-farce>. In an egregious recent example, in 2010 Led Zeppelin was sued by folk singer Jake Holmes over "Dazed and Confused," which Holmes recorded and released in 1967 but which Led Zeppelin has claimed as an original since its release on their debut album in 1969. And, on May 31, 2014, as this article was going to print, the band Spirit filed a lawsuit against Led Zeppelin for stealing their song, "Taurus," and turning it into none other than, "A Stairway to Heaven." See <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/03/showbiz/music/led-zeppelin-stairway-to-heaven-suit/>

45. See *Dancing in the Street* (Episode Five) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl3QlrpIG6A>) beginning at 52:05.

46. See *The History of Rock and Roll: The 1970s* beginning at 6:35 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mVNrjKc-E4>.

47. Sutton begins her piece: “I hear your voice all the time these days, Janis. Those boys who clapped for you, they wear your voice now.”

48. These characteristics include: “the high range, phrasing that stays away from the beat and was regularly changed in performance, the disjunction of the melodic line . . . , the intensity and volume, [and] the distortion that allows us to hear and feel his body” (Fast: 42).

49. Aerosmith lead singer Steven Tyler is the rare heavy metal vocalist who does make known his admiration for Joplin. In his memoir he writes, “Everybody used to think Mick [Jagger] was my real hero, but I’ll confess now (‘cause that’s what a memoir is for, right?), *it was Janis*. The scarves on the mic, the howl . . . inspired and perspired by pure 180-proof Joplin. She’s bone deep and still makes me weep” (Tyler 2011: 66. Italics and ellipsis in the original). Also, Tyler: 38–39 and Echols: 328, note to p. xvi.

50. In *The Rough Guide to Led Zeppelin* (2007) Nigel Williamson concurs with Shadwick, writing “This has the ring of truth, for there are also obvious similarities between Janis Joplin’s bravura vocal on the Big Brother track and Plant’s performance, right down to the ‘baby, baby, baby’ mannerisms.”

51. <http://www.rocksbackpages.com.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/Library/Article/been-a-long-time-led-zeppelin>.

52. Admittedly, I am confused about what exactly the testosterone is that is added. Indeed, Joplin’s voice is more powerful than Plant’s. I surmise it is simply the more rock-appropriate white male body.

53. Film documentary, *History of Heavy Metal I* (~10:00) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9v5g_81Ny7I.

54. While in popular discourse the white male origins of rock have been completely naturalized, popular music scholars have demonstrated how rock has been discursively constructed as white and male. For early work on the construction of rock discourse, including the “ideology of rock” with its rock critic “gatekeepers” cultivating a “knowing community,” see Frith (1981), (1998). On rock “experts” like record collectors sharing and guarding “specialized knowledge,” see Straw (1997). For the ways in which women become the “other” to rock’s authenticity in rock discourse, see especially Coates (1997) and (2003). On gender, sexuality and heavy metal/rock, see Walser (1993); Weinstein (1991); Frith and McRobbie (1990); Fast (2001). For work that addresses the absence of women in rock history generally, with a focus on the normative traditions of rock criticism, see O’Dair (1999); Brooks 2008; Rhodes 2005; McLeod 2001; McDonnell and Powers 1995. The raced and gendered narrative of authentic/inauthentic preceded rock criticism in jazz writing. See, for example, the discussion of hot jazz vs. commercial “sweet bands” in

Erenberg 1998. Kristin A. McGee traces how female jazz instrumentalists were elided from early jazz history because their production was viewed as inauthentic "mass culture" (McGee 2009). For pointed analyses of just how rock discourse has written out the contributions of black women, see: Mahon 2011 on how privileging the guitar in rock elides vocalist "Big Mama" Thornton's contribution; Wald 2004 on how privileging secular music writes out gospel musician Sister Rosetta Tharpe; and Warwick 2007 on how the myth of the singular, "independent" artist, misses the contributions of collaborative projects like 1960s "girls groups."

55. In addition (and related) to McLeod's findings I would include Warwick's specific insight that the purported "self-contained" artist is privileged over collaborative projects.

56. In 1969 Robert Christgau wrote in the *New York Times*: "[f]or the last five years any rock performer worth his pretensions has written his own songs," and that "[s]ong interpretation has been relegated by both performers and audiences to that phony adult world of nightclub theatricality which rock has been striving to destroy for 15 years" (qtd. and discussed in Coates 2003:66). Christgau goes on to assert that this bias made it easier for women (including, Janis Joplin) to continue the practice of song interpretation.

57. The way in which these questions are constructed can also leave out the participation of black women, who are marginalized in discussions of "women" that privilege white women and discussions of the "black community" that privilege black men. This is particularly egregious considering black women's key role in the formation of the rock (see Mahon 2011; Wald 2004; and Warwick 2007). Additionally, Norma Coates writes that rock becomes "naturalized" as male "in the 1960s and, as a result, women became marginal and/or subservient to men in rock culture and its discursive formations" (67). Coates cites rock critic Richard Fannan's essay at length, which is basically wondering why women (like Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, Cass Elliot, and Tina Turner) aren't rocking it like Morrison and Jagger. Fannan's analysis is fraught with complication that Coates brings out, but I reference it as a particular example of how rock critics must wring their hands over women's inability to rock ex post facto—after the discourse has been effectively naturalized as male. As Coates puts it, "rock masculinity is discursively constructed as to bolster as well as reiterate itself; at the same time, rock masculinity requires the existence, illusory or real, of a subordinate femininity to support it and give it the appearance of 'truth'" (79).

58. In speaking of "Pea Vine Blues," and the Delta Blues style generally, Robert Palmer writes, "If the song is broken down into individual phrases it becomes evident that most and quite possibly all these phrases were unoriginal. They were floating formulas, some of which came from older ballads and spirituals while others were folk sayings or everyday figures of speech . . . Originality in the blues,

then, is not a question of sitting down and making up songs out of thin air. Yet a blues singer whose songs consist entirely or almost entirely of borrowed phrases, lines, and verses will claim these songs as his own, and he will be right" (68–69). One can imagine Robert Plant reading such a definition and feeling justified in his musical borrowing. The statement does not account for how this Delta blues process, as it enters the mainstream, lends great financial and social advantage to the white men who borrow from black blues artists.

59. Page quoted in Schulps 1977. Set list of show can be found on Led Zeppelin's website: <http://www.ledzeppelin.com/show/january-10-1969>.

60. Similarly, for example, in her famous song, "Piece of My Heart," Joplin follows much of the phrasing Erma Franklin employs in her 1967 version. Joplin introduces the song at a live performance, saying "it was recorded by Erma Franklin. It's called "Piece of My Heart" (released as *Live at Winterland '68* in 1998). Joplin also credited Otis Redding as an influence and listeners can hear it in his gravelly timbre, shouts, and phrasing from the mid-sixties.

61. In a cultural tradition based on the individual, private property, and ownership, the question of who owns what is always central. In traditions that do not stress the individual and private property, musical form develops and transforms without the need to locate an originator who ostensibly made the change. Western culture has been obsessed with delineation and boundaries since at least the 19th century and the need to locate and separate, establish authorship, and generally control phenomena comes from a general fear of overrun boundaries, unlocatability, and the unknown. Locating and delineating an origin in the white male body is part of a very long tradition of establishing Reason (ostensibly embodied by white men) as the anchor against the chaos of the unbounded and out-of-control (associated with white women and people of color). For an example of a different relationship to musical style and authorship see Chernoff 1979: 61–65 on the tradition of West African Takai drumming. On the 19th century concern with delineation and boundaries, see McClintock 1995.

62. See Mahon 2011 about guitar in relation to Thornton; Wald 2004 about sacred/secular in relation to Tharpe. Mahon critiques the lens that privileges the guitar (over the voice or anything else) in rock. This is a necessary critique. I believe the problem is not only that there is a focus on the masculinized guitar, however, but also the problem of staying within categories. Listening to Page's guitar along with his frequent references to Joplin suggest her voice influenced his playing (just as guitar may have influenced Joplin). Delta blues musicians used the voice as guitar and the guitar as voice. Therefore, I think it is a mistake to assume that only vocalists influence vocalists and guitarists influence guitarists.

63. I originally found this quote in Echols. These racial separations widened still further by the late 1960s, as "rock and roll" was recodified as the rock played in arenas by bands like Led Zeppelin. See Mahon 2004, especially Chapter Six, for the ways that the category of "rock" became associated with white musical production.

64. Begins around 7:00 in documentary.

65. For more on Hendrix in the context of rock, see Mahon 2004, chapter 9.

66. Joplin's wikipedia page and <http://classicrock.about.com/od/newreleases/tp/Top-20-Most-Influential-Women-Of-Classic-Rock.htm> (accessed on July 13, 2013).

67. And I find Wikipedia the signal case study for the desire for this origin story. For example, on Led Zeppelin's Wikipedia page a contributor finds it important to note that "Steve Waksman has suggested that *Led Zeppelin II* was 'the musical starting point for heavy metal.'" But if you go to that reference you find Waksman's writing much more nuanced. He writes, "For those concerned with origins, Led Zeppelin's second album . . . has often been considered the musical starting point for heavy metal" (Waksman 1999:263). Waksman goes on to trace how *Rolling Stone* "canonized" the album in this vein. Thus, while Waksman is conveying how the history is written—not writing that this *is* the origin, but giving information for those of us *concerned* with origins and how they are *considered*, sites like Wikipedia miss this point entirely and simply establish moments of origin as if they are fact. That is, when they (Wikipedia editors, that is, "we") see the correct origin. As in, for example, the creation of the "American Novelists" page that listed only men, with a separate "American Women Novelists" page (See: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/apr/25/wikipedia-women-american-novelists>).

68. QuantumNoise (Justin Farrar), Friday, 24 February 2006 22:04 <http://www.ilxor.com/ILX/ThreadSelectedControllerServlet?boardid=41&threadid=36134> (accessed on July 10, 2013).

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