RICHARD T. RODRÍGUEZ

A Kiss ACROSS THE Ocean

Transatlantic Intimacies of

BRITISH POST-PUNK & US LATINIDAD

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Cover art: Siouxsie Sioux, London, 1979.
Photo by Sheila Rock.

No one seems to touch me in the way you do.

Eurythmics, "Right by Your Side" (1983)

So what translates in touch? I ask this not merely of the translation of different social forms of touch, in the manner of styles, but also of the physical link established by the touch.

Alfred Arteaga, *The House with the Blue Bed* (1997)

We would do well to listen more carefully to these sonic solicitations, just beyond the threshold of our acculturated sonic filters.

Dominic Pettman, *Sonic Intimacies: Voice, Species, Technics (Or, How to Listen to the World)* (2017)

The way you look at me, it speaks of intimacy.

Pet Shop Boys, "Thursday" (2013)

Contents

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A Kiss across the Ocean is dedicated to my niece, Natalie Rodríguez Merino. Nat always teaches me new things about popular culture, and she never fails to elegantly explain why it matters.

A KISS ACROSS THE OCEAN

An Introduction

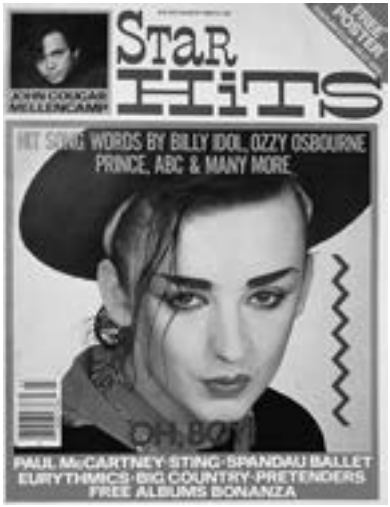
February 1984, one Saturday morning in Santa Ana, California. I was twelve years old, one month shy of entering my teenage years, and already feeling alienated from many of my peers because of the widening divide between us around our respective awakening identities. I also found myself enduring the constant warring of parents who had fallen out of love years ago, but frequently—and desperately—attempted to stay together for their children's sake. My mother was working long hours at the cosmetics counter at the Broadway department store, struggling to make ends meet to support my sister and me after my father decided to once again flee our frequently contentious household. Not wanting to leave us home alone, she always dropped us off at my aunt Irene's apartment on weekends, where we would arrive with an arsenal of library books and art supplies to keep us busy until retrieved hours later. Yet on this particular morning, we walked into Irene's apartment precisely as Culture Club's "Karma Chameleon," a melodically buoyant yet lyrically lovelorn song that I had recently become obsessed with, given its repeated plays on the radio, arose from the single speaker of a modest television set atop a stereo system.

> It's love in stereo.
> **Culture Club, "I'll Tumble 4 Ya"**

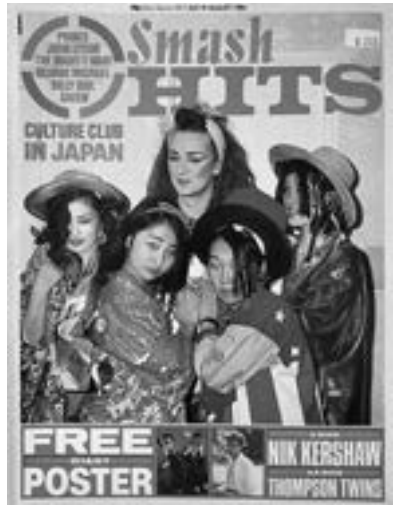
The song seemed to greet our arrival, and what appeared on the screen further lodged the song at the center of my heart. The band's singer—a glamorous, self-assured, and gender-ambiguous figure I would soon come

to know as Boy George—captured and held my gaze for the duration of the music video, profoundly moving me and immediately influencing my lifelong attachment to popular music. Like the transformative televisual moments for Alice, the teenage protagonist of Keith English's 2018 film *The More You Ignore Me* who sits transfixed by Morrissey and the Smiths performing "This Charming Man" on *Top of the Pops* in 1983, and for gay Black British choreographer Les Child who, in the 2020 documentary *Beyond "There's Always a Black Issue, Dear,"* comes to know himself when first witnessing ballet on the small screen, I suddenly began to see the world anew. This newfound perspective manifested not only from a multicolored prism consisting of "red, gold, and green" (as discerned from Culture Club's song lyrics and music video alike), but also through a kaleidoscope of class, gender, race, sexuality, and desire.[1] "Karma Chameleon," however, was only the first in a long line of British pop songs and music videos that would touch me in affective and thought-provoking ways.[2] Be it the doubly somber and dramatic synth masterpiece "Here Comes the Rain Again" by the Eurythmics, which also seemed to play recurrently on the radio alongside "Karma Chameleon," or Soft Cell's "Tainted Love," an angst-induced self-diagnosis of a spurned lover set to an electronically enveloping sinister beat, this music shook the very foundations of my existence and brilliantly soundtracked an otherwise ordinary life.[3]

Announcing a second British Invasion, the first occurring twenty years earlier with the stateside arrival of the Beatles, the November 10, 1983, issue of American rock magazine *Rolling Stone* featured Boy George on the cover and sounded the clarion call of music artists from across the pond on the verge of taking the US by storm.[4] Featuring a host of bands symbolizing "that strange animal variously called 'New Wave' and 'new music'" (Puterbaugh 1983, 31) (or what I choose to call post-punk, as will be explained later), this special issue also spotlights the glossy magazines of the era that showcased these artists to a growing stateside fan base. While my introduction and dedication to the post-punk era were certainly facilitated by a host of media—radio stations like KROQ and the Mighty 690, an assortment of Southern California–based music video programs like *Video One* and *Request Video* and, of course, the US cable channel MTV—it was unquestionably print media that provided the information on who these fabulously made-up creatures were, how they came to be, and what made them tick. Green Gartside, singer and founding member of the sui generis post-punk band Scritti Politti, notes that he drew great inspiration from a magazine interview with John Lennon in which the eminent Liverpudlian maintained



I.1 *Star Hits* (March 1984). Photo of Boy George by Janette Beckman. Courtesy of Janette Beckman.



I.2 *Smash Hits* (July 19–August 1, 1984). "Boy George and Four Close Friends." Photo by Andre Csillag. Courtesy of Andre Csillag.

that "we must make the workers aware of the really unhappy position they are in, break the dream they are surrounded by." For Gartside, "This was the stuff that I was finding out about—at eight, nine, ten years old. Apart from the power of the music itself, their musical-sophistication development really drew me towards being attracted to difficult musics and ideas. In a way, theory and politics and music were bound up for me from the very beginning. It's unimaginable to think of them as separate in any way" (2016, 196).

Star Hits magazine, discovered on a magazine rack at the local Alpha Beta supermarket, opened similar vistas and bestowed a wealth of information about a growing list of British pop stars whose singular music and relatable lives I became preoccupied with. It also served as a guide for discovering artists, writers, philosophers, and earlier musicians who not only compelled me to excel in school but also set me on the path toward an academic career and, as with Gartside, establishing an inseparable bond between theory, politics, and music.[5] Fittingly, Boy George's face was on the cover of the first issue of *Star Hits* I would purchase (fig. I.1). Shortly thereafter, I encountered *Star Hits*' predecessor and sister publication from across the Atlantic: *Smash Hits* (fig. I.2). And while it might mean something that Boy George was also on the cover of the first issue of *Smash Hits*

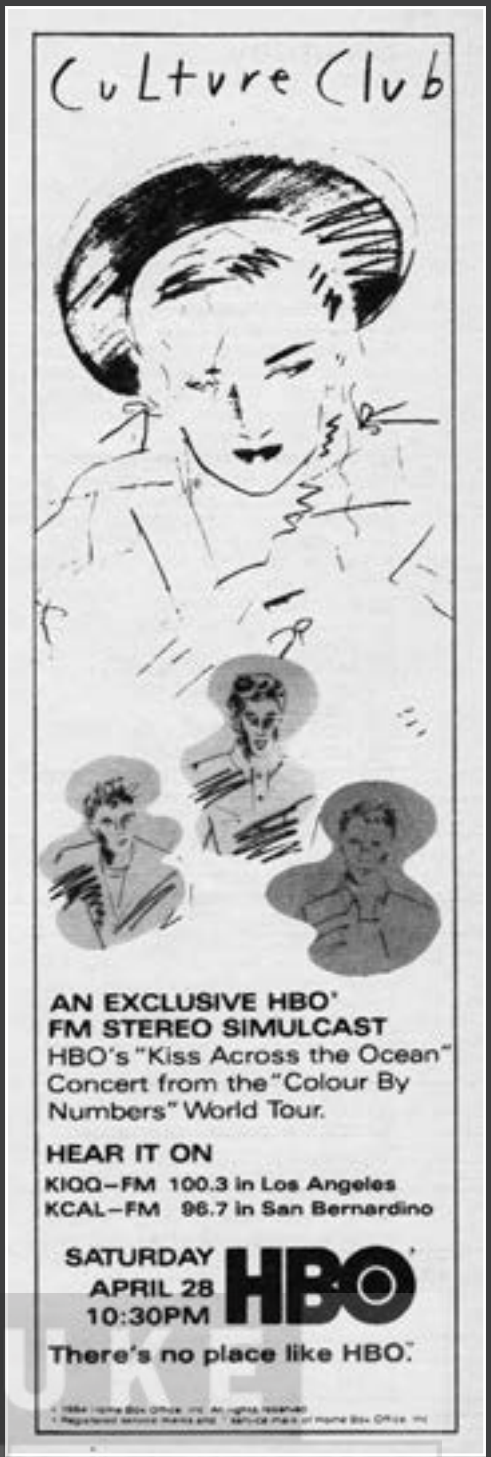
I'd own (purchased at Music Market in Costa Mesa), it was the interview with Sex Pistols and Public Image Limited singer John Lydon (or Johnny Rotten) inside that July 18–August 1, 1984, issue of the British publication that would impact me just like the Culture Club video. Interviewer Peter Martin, after asking Lydon what people thought of him in America after his move to Los Angeles, posed a follow-up question: "Apart from 'getting together a new band,' what have you been up to out there?" Lydon responded, "I hang around with the Chicanos (Mexicans who live in America) who are into all that cruising around in '50s cars. I've got a '57 Caddie (Cadillac). I got it for 2000 dollars. V-8 engine, the works. I've had it souped up so I'm going into races now—some serious stock car stuff. I love it" (Martin 1984, 48).[6]

It was this interview with Lydon that stuck with me throughout my teenage years when I was told this music was not meant for me. To employ a word whose recent parlance signifies recognition, I felt seen. Whether it was the aggression experienced at concerts or white peers who claimed white artists as rightfully theirs (consider the racist vitriol espoused at an X concert in Brett Easton Ellis's 1985 novel *Less Than Zero*—"'There are too many fucking Mexicans here, dude.' . . . 'Let's kill 'em all'" [184]—or when, in Depeche Mode's documentary *101*, about their historic concert at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, a white kid calls brown kids "poseurs" to regulate their claims to music incompatible with the culture to which they are essentially consigned), musical tastes were commonly demarcated in class-structured and racially segregated ways. As much as revisionist historians and commentators assuredly argue that people of color were "always present" in alternative music scenes of this era, such information does not counter the fact that I and many others were made to believe, by both whites and peers of color alike, that we did not belong.[7] This one sentence spoken by Lydon onto which I held firmly also charges the inspiration to circle back to this era to consider the intimate transatlantic connections that manifested in myriad ways, evidencing a politics of transcultural exchange that may perhaps prove exemplary if not instructive in our current historical moment in which renewed threats of global violence match the late–Cold War 1980s of my adolescence.

Part of the impetus to write this book comes by way of motivation from an assortment of recent publications—Francesca T. Royster's (2013) *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-Soul Era*, Carl Stanley's (2015) *Kiss and Make Up*, Michael Jaime-Becerra's (2019) "Todo se acaba: 11950 Garvey Avenue/7305 Melrose Avenue," Pete Paphides's (2020) *Broken Greek: A Story of Chip Shops and Pop Songs*, and Phuc Tran's

(2020) *Sigh, Gone: A Misfit's Memoir of Great Books, Punk Rock, and the Fight to Fit In*, among others—which intertwine a deep love of popular music with coming-of-age memoir. As Robert Edgar, Fraser Mann, and Helen Pleasance write in the introduction to their edited collection, *Music, Memory, and Memoir*, "Our teenage years and the records we bought have irreversibly shaped who we are and how we like others to see us" (2019, 1). In *Adolescent Alternatives: Road Trips with Japan, 1978–1980*, Stephen Holden, with regard to his love for the British band Japan, reflects, "I now think that such unconditional fandom is the exclusive domain of a teenager. Yet the memories of those times are ones that will live forever and resonate within me . . . even now. As I write this, I am getting a tear in my eye, evoking my long-lost youth in the here and now" (2020, 106). Quite similarly, *A Kiss across the Ocean*—the title taken from Culture Club's 1983 London Hammersmith Odeon concert, which I saw at the house of a friend whose parents subscribed to HBO (fig. I.3)—takes up memoir for capturing and blending both my early and current status as a fan of British post-punk music with the interlocking connections between this music and Latinidad in the United States.[8] Akin to James Clifford's 1997 book *Routes*, "The personal explorations scattered throughout are not revelations from an autobiography but glimpses of a specific path among others. I include them in the belief that a degree of self-location is possible and valuable, particularly when it points beyond the individual toward ongoing webs of relationship" (15). Such webs of relationship reveal a multifaceted intimacy that flies in the perplexed faces of those writers of the tedious articles intent on cracking the code to how Latinos/as could possibly listen to music that exceeds their reductionist designation of the cultural parameters of taste.[9]

As for Clifford, "the struggle to perceive certain borders of my own perspective is not an end in itself but a precondition for efforts of attentiveness, translation, and alliance" (1997, 15). Certainly, "my own perspective" is one of many nodes for chronicling multidirectional transatlantic exchanges since the early 1980s. One such recent example in this vein is Gurinder Chadha's 2019 film *Blinded by the Light*, about British-Pakistani Muslim teenager and Bruce Springsteen fan Javed Khan in 1980s Luton. Others are found in published interviews, autobiographies and biographies, feature-length films and documentaries, magazine and newspaper articles, promotional videos, music recordings, performance footage, and written and oral memoir—such as mine here and those which one might hear recounted among middle-aged concert goers in Southern California or written and read on friends' Facebook walls or under Instagram posts. While *A Kiss*



1.3 *TV Guide* (April 28–May 4, 1984) advertisement for HBO televised Culture Club concert, "Kiss across the Ocean."

across the Ocean at times emphatically sheds light on Latina/o/x fandom for British popular music (however unusual this might initially seem to those with preconceived ideas of people's musical tastes; for who, after all, gets to decide what we listen to, or that our tastes must naturally align with, for example, rancheras, salsa, hip-hop, or reggaeton?), fandom dissolves into a multipronged reciprocity derived from musically and culturally motivated multidirectional contact.[10]

MULTIDIRECTIONAL INTIMACIES AND THE TRANSATLANTIC TOUCH

In her 2016 book *Mozlandia: Morrissey Fans in the Borderlands*, Melissa Mora Hidalgo tackles at the fore what has been identified by many journalists, filmmakers, and critics alike as the curious phenomenon that is the US Latino fandom of Steven Patrick Morrissey (known simply as Morrissey or Moz), the former frontperson of the British band the Smiths. Hidalgo explains:

> I wrote this book because I, along with many other Latina/o fans, got tired of the same ol' questions of "why" we love Moz. The question of Latino (and more specifically, Mexican and Chicano) Morrissey fandom, and what have now become stock, if not clichéd, explanations, are useful starting points, and indeed they highlight important contexts for understanding this seemingly unlikely affinity. . . . I am less interested in asking that question again and producing the same evidence to show that, yes, a lot of Mexicans, Latinos/as and Chicanos/as *do* (as do many other groups of people) love Morrissey. We know these fans and communities exist, and it's not really so strange after all. Rather, I am interested in asking the "what" and "how" questions, new questions that provide us with nuance, complexity, insight, and new ways to see, hear, and understand these fan communities in "Moz Angeles" and around the borderlands. (2016, 5)

Drawing inspiration from Hidalgo in short-circuiting the "Why do Latinos/as love this kind of music or this particular band or singer?" question for the way it upholds a "strange phenomenon" evaluation, *A Kiss across the Ocean* operates in solidarity with *Mozlandia*, given how both refuse an exclusive framing by or focus on fandom. Our related approach is instead animated by a deep investigative labor propelled by fannish investment. Like Hidalgo's book, this project involves formations of Latinidad that exceed essentialist attachments to immutable cultural identities and affiliations to instead signal how they emerge in tandem with unofficial archives,

ephemeral evidence, and transnational cultural processes.[11] Emphasizing knowledges and experiences difficult to capture on traditional registers of analysis (not unlike post-punk itself, with its assorted sonic range encompassing sparse guitar jangles and electronically interwoven textures), it unapologetically takes pleasure in refusing ready-made academic and nation-based discursive frameworks.

Highlighting the varied collaborations, physical convergences, and mutual influences of British post-punk music artists and Latina/o/x communities in the US from the 1980s onward, the book explores the myriad ways seemingly disparate parties touch one another.[12] Indeed, we must not forget how this phenomenon is not only Latina/o/x fans flocking to Morrissey concerts and brandishing tattoos of their favorite Manchester crooner, but it's also Morrissey himself, who wrote about an LA-based Chicano homeboy named Héctor ("the first of the gang to die"), titled his 1999–2000 tour ¡Oye Esteban!, and declared his affection for Mexican people for being "so terribly nice" and who "have fantastic hair, and fantastic skin, and usually really good teeth" (Guerrero 2018). And as it's impossible for me not to also discuss Morrissey in this book (although this discussion is decidedly limited), I suggest an alternative angle from which to appraise his and many of his contemporaries' circulation within and impact on Latina/o/x communities. For as much as Morrissey has intimately touched Latino fans in manifold ways (as a considerable body of scholarship and journalism on the topic has insightfully shown), I argue that this touch is mutual.[13]

Karen Tongson, in *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries*, importantly comments on the way British popular music impacted youth of color (herself as well as the Latinos and Latinas among whom she grew up) in Southern California. Extending Jennifer Terry's unpublished formulation of "remote intimacies" allows Tongson to capture the temporal discontinuities between fans in Southern California and British popular music. As Tongson writes, "I have come to imagine remote intimacies describing the communities for whom intimacies cohere across virtual networks of desire through radio, music, and television, on the Internet, and now through online social networking sites. Remote intimacies account both technically and affectively for the symbiosis that can happen between disparate subjects—like the storied connection between Latinos and Morrissey, for example, or between suburban queer kids of color and Anglophilic ear candy in general" (2011, 130). Tongson's articulation of remote intimacies captures my own and many others' (urban and "suburban queer kids of color") attachment to many singers and bands from across the Atlantic. Indeed, "remote in-

timacy" helps charge the sense of touch on which this book focuses. But as I disclose the sweetness of this "Anglophilic ear candy" for Latina/o/x audiences (particularly relating to my own status as an adoring fan), I additionally document the allure of US Latinidad for British post-punk artists to underscore the interplay of reciprocal intimacy. Moreover, while deep connections are undoubtedly established across time and space, they often manifest in real time and thus generate a combined sensuality that is not flatly disparate but advantageous given the fortuitous opportunity of temporal and spatial alignment. As Iain Chambers notes in his book *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, the ubiquity of popular music of the 1980s and 1990s represents "a hegemony that has simultaneously created the conditions for an international sound network that subsequently encouraged a proliferation of margins and an emergence of other voices. In the wake of these developments, surprising trajectories can emerge on the musical map, resulting in stories of unexpected influences and strange combinations" (1994, 77).

Touch, then, registers the intimate bonds examined throughout this project given music's unbounded haptic capability of animating networks of cultural, collaborative, amorous, and political affiliation. In *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, media theorist Laura U. Marks compels us to see how learning to "appreciate the materiality of our media pulls us away from a symbolic understanding and toward a shared physical existence" (2002, xii). That is, the material effects generated by the circulation of media and its makers allow us to grasp the physical proximities of cultural producers and their audiences (and an attendant mutual acknowledgment) even when temporal and spatial divergences manifest. Touch therefore registers the material and psychic energies that animate the potentialities of unbounded haptic intimacy. Here, touch is proposed as one answer to Lauren Berlant's question, "What if we saw [intimacy] emerge from much more mobile processes of attachment?" (1998, 284). The title of the book therefore metaphorically signals how British post-punk touches Latinidad and vice versa, not unlike the way that a kiss transpires as a gesture requiring a "mobile process of attachment" to intimately bring together two distinct accomplices. After all, when a kiss is blown, it must successfully meet its intended target to actualize its affective motivation.

Additionally, touch helps index encounters that are horizontally organized and orchestrated by a dual recognition of lives and histories (no matter how limited or provisional) of those parties conjoined, acknowledged, or referenced. In a 2016–2017 exhibition at the Vincent Price Art Museum in East Los Angeles titled *Tastemakers and Earthshakers: Notes from Los Angeles*

Youth Culture, 1943–2016, Morrissey was once again deployed as exemplary of the appeal British pop music has for Chicano/a youths. Yet the exhibition's narrative minimized the multidirectional influences shared by US Latina/o/x communities and UK post-punk artists, a mutual movement of traveling cultures that Ariana Ruiz identifies as constituting a Brown Atlantic.[14] And parting ways with recent scholarly efforts to decenter punk's typically assumed origins from 1970s European and Anglo-American contexts, *A Kiss across the Ocean* takes a different tack by foregrounding networks of affiliation rather than playing the game of who-beat-whom to the preliminary punch. As with the curatorial goal of C. Ondine Chavoya and David Evans Frantz's exhibition *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, the book maps "a network of affinities, connections, affiliated aesthetic and conceptual practices, and political alignments" that is "promiscuous and capacious" (2017, 25). This includes Siouxsie Sioux's friendship with Kid Congo Powers; Marc Almond's affection for Chicano Scottish writer John Rechy; Adam Ant's attraction to racist and hypersexualized film and television images of Latinos; Blue Rondo a la Turk's devotion to the zoot suit and Latin music; and Holly Johnson's political awareness of the US's longstanding discriminatory practices against Mexican Americans.

At the heart of Chavoya and Frantz's exhibition is the loving bond between the late Los Angeles–based Chicano artist Mundo Meza and noted British fashion icon Simon Doonan. In an afterword to the exhibition catalog titled "Mundo Goes to Hollywood," Doonan narrates his relationship-turned-friendship with Meza prior to his death from AIDS-related complications in Los Angeles:

> We had an enormous amount in common. We were both immigrants in the land of opportunity. We also spent a great deal of time exploring each other's ethnicity. I was intrigued by his Mexican-ness, he was enthralled by everything that was trendy and English. He introduced me to Frida Kahlo's paintings and ranchera music and various artist friends from East L.A. like Cyclona and Patssi Valdez and Gronk. I introduced him to Boy George acolytes like Pinkietessa Braithwaite and the pop star Marilyn; they had recently moved from London and lived just around the corner. (2017, 367)[15]

The association established here—between Doonan and Meza, but also between Doonan, Meza, Pinkietessa, and Marilyn (Peter Robinson)—stands as one example of the Latino/British networks forged vis-à-vis friendship and mutual influence. Indeed, this is a kiss that has traversed the Atlantic Ocean and touched down on Southern California terrain.

Doonan further illustrates here and in his 2009 memoir, *Beautiful People: My Family and Other Glamorous Varmints*, how British post-punk music and fashion (with which Marilyn and Pinkietessa are also associated) helped consolidate the bond between himself and Meza. As he explains, "There was no shortage of activities for us marginalized creative misfits in Hollywood. This was the early 1980s when, if you were au courant, you were probably worshiping ABC, Bow Wow Wow, and The Thompson Twins. Every week another new band of hopefuls—Spandau Ballet, Madness, The Specials, Siouxsie Sioux—was playing at the Roxy or the Whisky A Go Go" (367). Doonan in addition details how the fashion of the early 1980s was inextricably tied to the era's music.

> When we weren't watching live music, Mundo and I were flitting about in Vivienne Westwood pirate gear at "New Romantic" clubs with names like The Veil, The Fake, and Club Lingerie. It was good old-fashioned pointless fun. We took full advantage of the vogue for costumey dress up. I have boxes of snaps of us in various guises: Mundo dressed as Valentino, me as Betty Rubble, Mundo as a goat-legged Bacchus, and me as Queen Elizabeth II. The apotheosis of our overdressed trendiness occurred in 1981 when we were recruited by director Russell Mulcahy for the Kim Carnes "Bette Davis Eyes" music video. Mundo gets more screen time than me, but that's my gloved hand in the opening shot. (2009, 367)

That the "Vivienne Westwood pirate gear," commonly linked to Bow Wow Wow and Adam Ant, also adorned Meza and Doonan further points to how British post-punk aesthetics traveled to the United States and indelibly touched a Tijuana-born and East LA–raised Chicano multidisciplinary artist like Mundo Meza.[16] Moreover, Mulcahy's recruitment of Doonan and Meza in the US was motivated by his awareness of the New Romantic scene and its unmistakable style in the UK, which he had captured not much earlier in Duran Duran's "Planet Earth" video (both videos were shot and released within the first three months of 1981). Recalling the making of the "Bette Davis Eyes" video, Mulcahy explains, "The New Romantic thing was getting started and that was bigger in England, but it was going to a degree in America, and so we pulled these kids in."[17] Although Kim Carnes's music and style in Mulcahy's video do not entirely match the New Romantic sound and look adopted by Duran Duran, the "kids" in "Bette Davis Eyes" approximate an aesthetic with the band from Birmingham, albeit refashioned for and by a scene including working-class LA Latinos and Latinas also aspiring to make art.

On the East Coast, a Puerto Rican kid from the Bronx by the name of Michael Anthony Alago became a pivotal figure in booking up-and-coming bands at noted New York City venues like the Ritz and the Red Parrot in his capacity as assistant music director. Through his stint as an A&R executive at Elektra Records (during which time his renown would increase given his role in signing the band Metallica), Alago coordinated the introduction of post-punk bands to US audiences. In his 2020 memoir, *I Am Michael Alago: Breathing Music. Signing Metallica. Beating Death*, Alago writes about his role in Public Image Limited's historic yet notorious 1981 Ritz performance that resulted in riot-induced violence. To the great excitement of the Ritz owners and concertgoers who helped sell out the show, Alago successfully booked the recently formed Bow Wow Wow to perform at the venue. However, he was soon devastated to learn that the band's infamous manager, Malcolm McLaren, had canceled their appearance due to then thirteen-year-old singer Annabella Lwin's mother's refusal to allow her daughter to travel to the States.[18] Thanks to quick thinking and acting, Alago secured in Bow Wow Wow's place Public Image Limited, who at the time were visiting New York to promote their recently released LP *The Flowers of Romance*. With disappointment shifting to renewed excitement, Public Image Limited quickly sold out two nights at the Ritz. Yet John Lydon's post–Sex Pistols outfit delivered the dubious gift of an alternative performance instead of a clichéd rock concert. Alago explains:

> Little did we know, however, that the evening would turn into a violent free-for-all. At the start of the show, the song "Flowers of Romance" blasted through the speakers, but five minutes later, you could feel that something was not right. John and the band refused to come out in front of the screen. PiL saw this event as a performance art piece, but the fans wanted to see a concert. They wanted to hear the band play and play furiously—basically, they wanted Johnny Rotten in action. But they didn't get that, and the audience went ballistic. They threw bottles at the huge video screen. Chairs flew everywhere. The crowd pulled on the screen, tearing it down, ripping holes in it and smashing bottles on the stage. John still refused to come out front, because to him, this was not a gig. (2020, 60)

One might think such a debacle would be enough to congeal a lifelong animosity between all parties involved. Quite the opposite. Alago recalls, "After the show, a bunch of us, including photographer Laura Levine, gathered in the dressing room. Scott Rubinoff, a big PiL fan, whose head was bleeding from the crowd's attack earlier, was there as well—he was so excited to meet

John. We all drank up a storm, celebrating the chaos of the show. An unpredictable but lovely thing came out of it for me as well—a close, personal, and professional friendship with John Lydon—one that lasts to this day" (60).

Soon after the infamous and fortuitous PiL show, Alago would make his way to the UK "to scout out bands to perform at The Ritz." In a few weeks he saw "Bauhaus, Altered Images, the Thompson Twins, Theatre of Hate, The Cramps, and Echo and the Bunnymen at a Festival in Leeds, as well as Depeche Mode on *Top of the Pops* in London" (2020, 60–61). Unquestionably, Michael Alago epitomizes a central link between Latinos/as in the US and British post-punk artists, given his central role in enabling the spaces where those artists performed while maintaining intimate ties with central figures like Lydon.[19]

The momentum of the second-wave British Invasion of the early 1980s was unstoppable, compelling aspiring musicians in the US to emulate the sounds—and sometimes accents—of those artistic innovators from across the ocean. One such example is the Chicago-based band Ministry, whose Cuban American lead singer Al Jourgensen (née Alejandro Ramírez Casas) is intimately connected to the now-famous Wax Trax! Records independent label and considered a prominent figure in the industrial music scene. Yet before Ministry's turn to a hard-hitting industrial sound, the band's early musical offerings—including the 1982 single "Work for Love"—may very well have been pressed by a British label like Mute alongside acts such as Depeche Mode and Fad Gadget.[20] In the July 23, 1983, issue of the British magazine *Record Mirror*, Ministry is briefly spotlighted, with an unnamed writer beginning the feature titled "Gospel Groove" in the following way: "Just fancy this: America's been invaded by waves of British electro-talent and they don't even realise they have some of their very own" (14). The writer continues, "Ministry are from Chicago and strut a mean slice of white funk stuff. They are Al Jourgensen, Chicago's answer to [New Romantic founding father and Visage member] Rusty Egan, drummer Stevo (absolutely no relation [to record label Some Bizzare owner and Soft Cell producer of the same name]) plus a girl backing vocalist with the name of Shay Jones" (14). In the write-up, Jourgensen maintains that Ministry is "very off-the-wall for Americans" (and debatably insists that "nothing's come out of Chicago since 1927 when Muddy Waters was born"); yet the "white funk" of the band, he insists, is the result of his status as a Havana-born and US Midwest-raised descendant of Cuban musicians. In his absorbing memoir, *Ministry: The Lost Gospels According to Al Jourgensen*, the Ministry frontperson writes about one of his first memories recalling his uncles playing "tribal Cuban

music on congas" (2013, 8). Jourgensen explains, "That's where I got my first taste of contrapuntal beats and triplets, and it stuck with me. If you listen to Ministry, even the really old stuff like '(Every Day Is) Halloween,' 'Deity,' 'Burning Inside,' and up through 'Double Tap' from *Relapse*, you can hear the contrapuntal style blended with metal and whatever keyboard stuff I was doing" (8).

Reading and rereading my steadily mounting pile of British and American magazines and newspapers (including issues of *Star Hits*, *Smash Hits*, *Record Mirror*, *Melody Maker*, *Sounds*, *Creem*, *No. 1*, *New Musical Express* (*NME*), *Video Rock Stars*, and *Rolling Stone*), I soon found myself seeking out books, artists, and earlier influential bands and singers mentioned in pop star interviews, personal information questionnaires, and top-ten albums lists. Prompting my search for information on Jean Cocteau and Andy Warhol at the Santa Ana Public Library (noted by countless musicians—including David Sylvian, Bill Nelson, and Duran Duran's Nick Rhodes—as their favorite artists), scouring the bins at independent and mainstream record stores for vinyl by T. Rex, Roxy Music, David Bowie, the Velvet Underground, New York Dolls, and Sparks (name-checked as key influences), or learning about the everyday, working-class cultures of contemporary Britain (from which most admired performers emerged), these publications fed my intellectual curiosity and the ever-expanding musical network to which I felt intimately bound.

In the December 1984 issue of *Star Hits*, in a regular feature titled Get Smart (where readers' letters addressed to an imaginary magazine columnist named Jackie were cleverly answered), I discovered the existence of a New York City–based Japan fanzine titled *Japan: Made in the USA* (*J:MUSA*).[21] Despite disbanding two years earlier in December 1982, Japan was quickly becoming one of my favorite groups (I initially discovered them referenced as one of Duran Duran's principal influences). I clearly recall placing the requisite one-dollar bill in a folded sheet of notebook paper and sending for what "Jackie" fittingly called "an imaginative xeroxed fanzine." Not only was *J:MUSA* rich with information about Japan's former members and their musical associates (Peter Murphy from Bauhaus, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Yellow Magic Orchestra among them), but it was also a network of fans who made up my remote yet intimate community. Along with facilitating my letter writing to fellow Japan fans based in San Antonio, Ann Arbor, and Roseville, California, I was also introduced to one of the fanzine's main contributors with a strikingly familiar (i.e., Spanish) surname: Suzan Colón.

The daughter of the late Puerto Rican comics artist Ernie Colón and an Irish mother, Suzan Colón was involved with both *J:MUSA* and *Star Hits*. Not knowing anything at the time about her personal history, her last name alone made me privy to her existence as a Latina in my imagined community of British post-punk utopia.[22] David Keeps, former editor of *Star Hits*, recounts in a 2014 interview Colón's onboarding:

> Within the first year [of *Star Hits*' existence], two crucial things happened. A girl claiming to be our biggest fan and the publisher of a magazine about David Sylvian and his band Japan called the office three times in one day and I finally gave in and told her to come up when she mentioned she could type 86 words a minute. (This was in the murky past where no one used computers.) Her name was Suzan Colón. She became our intern. Then when [founding editor] David Fricke left the magazine, I became the Editor and gave Suzan a full-time job. She was more than a co-worker. She was a cohort, a comrade, and between us we could make the ridiculous sublime. We've been friends ever since (mullets i have loved 2014).

With her name first appearing on the December 1984 masthead of *Star Hits* as the magazine's assistant editor (and becoming deputy editor), Colón's presence in *J:MUSA* was equally enthralling as a result of bridging US Japan fans with the ex–band members based in the UK. In a feature titled "A Meeting of the Minds (Part II), or MADE IN USA Crosses the Second Plateau" (1984), Colón recounts her trip to Nomis Studios, described by famed producer and manager Simon Napier-Bell as "a London centre of operations for top musicians," to (unsuccessfully) secure an interview with any of the former members of Japan—David Sylvian, Steve Jansen (Sylvian's brother), Richard Barbieri, or Mick Karn—for the fanzine.[23] Before Sylvian's 1992 marriage to Mexican American Prince protégé Ingrid Chavez, Colón was early proof of a linkage between Latinas/os in the US and post-punk artists from the UK as a Latina who actively crossed cultural and geographic plateaus.[24] In the initial stages of this project, Colón was kind enough to answer questions and chat with me about her time with *Star Hits* on Skype. I made sure to tell her that her work, including her elegant writing, was an early inspiration to me. Allow me to offer an example. In the September 1985 issue of *Star Hits*, Colón published a review in the magazine's Nights Out section of the LA traveling club called the Fetish. It concludes, "When one gets too stiff from posing, there are videos of everyone from Bauhaus to Batman to squint at, and the music of Dead or Alive and T. Rex to slink to. The main activity, however, is The Promenade, though it's

so dark here tonight that the nocturnes have to use their sonar to avoid hair clashes. But if you're in Los Angeles on a Friday and you've got the hearse for the night, ask the palest person with the most hair spray where to find The Fetish. Bat's entertainment!" (Colón 1985, 45).[25]

More recently, Los Angeles–based gallerist and curator Danny Fuentes exemplifies such long-standing and enduring connections. In his 2018 *Los Angeles Times* article "For Outsiders and Outliers, Danny Fuentes' Gallery Is a Place to Call Home," journalist Andy Hermann spotlights the downtown LA gallery Lethal Amounts and its owner: "Fuentes was raised in pre-gentrification Glassell Park, a working-class Latino neighborhood under the threat of gang violence. At a young age, he discovered punk rock through an older sister. 'She was like, "OK, I'm gonna take you by the hand. Because you could either wind up a cholo and dead, or I could guide you a little bit."'" Noting how Fuentes, as a young gay man, was initially "drawn to . . . outliers like [Southern California–based band] Christian Death," Hermann remarks that "the owner of Lethal Amounts is challenging the conventional narrative of punk rock, which has tended to erase the influence gay culture had on its development." While the article almost exclusively focuses on "punk" (perhaps using it as a wide enough umbrella to encompass post-punk, not unlike calling a tangerine "citrus"), Fuentes's more recent efforts—such as exhibiting art by the late Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV frontperson and icon Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and hosting Soft Cell singer Marc Almond (the focus of chapter 4) under the auspices of a touring party dubbed Sex Cells, both in 2019—signal a deep bond to central queer figures of British post-punk.[26]

Hermann additionally gestures to the historical gap between Fuentes and those very things he has come to appreciate and spotlight in Lethal Amounts. He writes, "Though he's far too young to remember it firsthand, Fuentes' favorite period in art and music is an even earlier era in New York's demimonde: the 1970s, when punk-rock was born at CBGB and Andy Warhol's Factory was in full swing" (2018). This gap, however, does not diminish the intimate connection cultivated by Fuentes in his work with P-Orridge and Almond, for example, nor does it minimize his ability to touch and be touched the music or art of an earlier era. Indeed, the intimacy here speaks to what queer theorist Carolyn Dinshaw identifies as a "queer historical impulse" to make "connections across time between, on the one hand, lives, texts, and other cultural phenomena left out of sexual categories back then and, on the other, those left out of current sexual categories now" (1999, 1). As her queer historical impulse is primarily concerned with cross-temporal

sexual cultures, Dinshaw's formulation is correspondingly crucial for considering additional conjoint alignments established across time and space. Therefore the *post* in *post-punk*, typically granted a limited time frame and a sound purportedly more approximate to punk than pop, might be deeded a more capacious interval to account for the lasting effects of that music inspired by and following on the heels of punk, persisting in memory as much as it manifests in the present as, to extend the judicious insights of José Esteban Muñoz (2013), a post-punk "commons" aspirant for a queer futurity.

AUDIBLE ANTECEDENTS AND PUNK AFTERLIVES

What, then, counts as post-punk? In her book *What Is Post-Punk: Genre and Identity in Avant-Garde Popular Music, 1977–82*, musicologist Mimi Haddon (2020) pushes against previously narrow notions of post-punk to account for the genre's myriad influences feeding into its dynamic history. Haddon rightly argues that "the current discourse includes the following threads: post-punk is coherent as a movement or genre but is nevertheless stylistically diverse and hybrid. The music is oriented toward the radical, the new, and the experimental. It is not as mainstream as punk. The movement began in about 1978 and came to an end in 1985. And the genre displayed more 'musicianship' than punk, and assumed a kind of 'mature theatricality'" (2020, 4). Skillfully showing how such threads inevitably result in entanglement, she also reveals the impossibility of clearly differentiating categories like post-punk, punk, and new wave, which inexorably bleed into one another. And while Haddon's book is particularly useful and, in many ways, complementary to my project (especially around race and gender politics), I am less interested in genre and more invested in tracking post-punk's historical reverberations beyond the time period her book brackets (1977–82). As she importantly advocates "that the 'post' in post-punk might be an indicator of stylistic hybridity that emblematizes the symbolic capital that other genres of popular music, including punk, are seen to lack" (2020, 20), I extend Haddon's argument to suggest that the *post* heralds punk's afterlives that form a genealogy embracing the "stylistic hybridity" astutely captured in her study. As with Haddon's book, *A Kiss across the Ocean* refuses the common move to maintain a historiography of punk and post-punk that adheres to a masculinist taxonomy and upholds arbitrary brands of aesthetic purity that snub maligned categories such as the mainstream, the popular, and the spurious.[27]

But does Culture Club—with whom I began this book—qualify as post-punk (not to mention other music artists, e.g., Pet Shop Boys, whose connection to punk might appear something of a stretch)? I argue they do, especially in spite of what the title of music critic Dave Rimmer's book—*Like Punk Never Happened: Culture Club and the New Pop*—suggests.[28] In her classic work *Feminism and Youth Culture: From* Jackie *to* Just Seventeen, cultural studies scholar Angela McRobbie identifies "Boy George as [a] key figure in [the] post punk-to-pop crossover" (1991, 168). Yet Boy George and Culture Club (particularly drummer Jon Moss, who was briefly a member of the influential punk bands the Clash and the Damned) were both a part of the original British punk movement (with Boy George regularly citing Siouxsie Sioux, whom I discuss in chapter 1, as a contemporary and an exemplary figure) and formative in conceiving the New Romantic/Blitz Kids scene that arguably took the torch of its predecessors for establishing an alternative milieu for marginalized-cum-empowered youth.[29] This project is therefore attentive to how punk lives on in and metamorphoses into future movements and scenes; it simultaneously recognizes punk's passing alongside its enduring spirit. As Jayna Brown, Patrick Deer, and Tavia Nyong'o maintain, "if punk has an afterlife, it is because we are still sorting through the shards of history that cling to its edifice—and its ruins" (2013, 1).

What McRobbie writes about Culture Club and other groups that "made it big" in the early 1980s—particularly in light of their appearance in magazines like *Star Hits* and *Smash Hits*—resonates for me as in thinking about my musical interests as a queer Chicano adolescent. Drawing on the writings of Paul Morley in the *New Musical Express*, McRobbie asserts that the era served as a moment when artists producing "pure pop" had the potential to be "subversively popular instead of being critical or radical from miles out on the fringes of the independent scene" (1991, 167). She explains:

> There was a moment, at the tail end of punk, when these musical energies were re-directed back towards that sector of the music industry which was most despised by serious musicians. This was a market which consisted of a female rather than male audience. The new attitude on the part of those bands and musicians whose interests were turning profits to be made from the pocket money of 13-year-olds, as a result of soft soulful pop tunes and heart-throb good looks ("Wham" were the best example) with a new commitment to the pop mainstream. There was a kind of camp splendour about having thousands of girls screaming and crying and setting up fan clubs up and down the country. (167–68)

McRobbie further name-checks Pet Shop Boys, whose "sweet sad strains . . . could be seen as taking this trend as far as it could possibly go" since they "represent the high quality end of the pure pop spectrum" (168); fittingly, Pet Shop Boys, whose singer and songwriter Neil Tennant wrote and worked as an editor for *Smash Hits* before becoming a music star, are the focus of this book's final chapter.

In his foreword to *The Best of Smash Hits: The 80s*, Tennant recounts, "I was lucky enough to work for *Smash Hits* in a golden age for British pop, between the end of punk and Live Aid [1985]. This was the period when young, intelligent pop stars had learnt the lessons and ideas of punk and decided to link them to the glamour of pop stardom and nightlife. A stylish, thoughtful, hedonistic pop era flourished, and *Smash Hits* was its house magazine" (2006, 3). Despite the disdain for the colorful and glossy *Smash Hits* by the supposedly more sophisticated music publications in circulation at the time, *Smash Hits* had a form and function that the others could only wish to claim. Tennant explains, "To realize what made *Smash Hits* special, you have to be aware of the competition: *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Sounds*; weekly newspapers whose styles ranged from the faux intellectual to leaden music criticism. In those days we used to call them 'rockist,' an ultimate term of abuse. Actually, from our Carnaby Street offices we could look right into those of the *NME* across the road and mock their failing circulation" (3).[30]

As noted earlier, I learned a great deal about politics—British and American—from the pages of *Smash Hits* and its US sister publication, *Star Hits*. Under that banner of politics were the antiracist struggles (Rock against Racism), the advocacy of workers' rights (Red Wedge), opposition to homophobic policies (anti–Clause 28 efforts), Caribbean and South Asian migration to Britain, the case for nuclear disarmament, and emergent discourses of gender nonconformity and nonnormative sexuality that incontestably fed into what would soon materialize as queer theory.[31] Consider by title alone Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1996) essay, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!" While punk is often heralded as clearing space for resistance to the powers that be, the gender alternatives alone offered by post-punk British popular music were for me unparalleled, generating a reverberating effect even when, as political pop music critic Robin Denselow puts it, "the music's over" (1989, xviii). And although the 1980s categorically fomented a chilling moment of notorious conservatism, it was also a time of queer-subversive possibility. This was true for youths in both the US and the UK. In the context of the former, British music also represented an alternative to the American mainstream

music scene that regularly upheld a straight white macho posturing and an antiqueer nativism, validated by mostly all-male hard rock ("cock rock") bands as well as alternative punk and post-punk artists.[32]

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL INTIMACY

A Kiss across the Ocean is organized into seven chapters and a conclusion that oscillate between the past and the present and from the UK to the US, simultaneously drawing on memory and relying on textual evidence held onto since the mid-1980s and recently obtained from personal, official, and unofficial archives.[33] Some of the magazines, books, and newspapers I reference in the following pages have been a part of my library for decades, weathering many moves—from Santa Ana to Berkeley and Santa Cruz, back south to Los Angeles, then on to Champaign-Urbana and Chicago, and ultimately returning to Southern California in Riverside. More recently obtained materials from libraries, used bookstores, the internet, antique and charity shops, and international sellers on eBay help fill in narrative gaps by supplementing what was initially understood or previously assumed.[34]

I regard the chapters in this book as similar to an assortment of tracks on a various artists compilation LP like the first one that made its way into my record collection: the original 1983 British volume of the long-standing worldwide marketing phenomenon known as *Now That's What I Call Music* (on which one can find a range of tracks including personal favorites like Heaven 17's "Temptation," Simple Minds' "Waterfront," the Human League's "(Keep Feeling) Fascination," and the Cure's "The Love Cats"). But because each chapter is shaped by some degree of intimacy personally held with the music artists spotlighted therein, the book as a whole might be best understood as my own greatest hits collection or an inspired mixtape (or, more recently, a Spotify playlist) consisting of bands and singers who saved my life or, at minimum, altered it. This compilation is further authorized by my self-recognition as, in the suitable words of Ariana Ruiz, "an authoritative musical cartographer" (2019, 198).

While there is to an extent a chronological linearity behind the placement of the artists introduced chapter by chapter and their appearance on the music scene, my relationship to them is best understood in the frame of the aforementioned queer temporality since my discovery of or admiration for them does not parallel nor approximate a strict historical timeline. A common move in corroborating true fandom for a band regularly comes by

way of one's ability to authoritatively evince an early discovery of or encounter with that band before others' initial (or lacking) encounter. "I was there," for example, is a declarative statement sometimes heard to firmly substantiate one's presence at a historic show or some such storied moment in musical history. My status, as will be made clear, is hardly one with momentous clout for shaping, let alone being seen in, the scenes discussed throughout these pages. Indeed, I anticipate the common condescending accusation, "You weren't there!" (to riff on the title of the 2007 documentary on Chicago punk) or, as I've been asked at live performances, "What are you doing here?"[35] Yet while I was indeed at times present, thus allowing me the opportunity to provide a kind of witness testimony, other times I admittedly wasn't.[36] Despite my more than occasional absence (after all, who can be everywhere and anywhere anyway?), sitting on my bedroom floor listening to records, tapes, and CDs on the Magnavox Integrated Stereo System MX 1810 my family chipped in to purchase for my birthday, while also reading assorted issues of periodicals and fanzines, provided that indispensable intimate touch.

In a letter titled "Out of the Closet" and published in the March 1982 issue of *New Sounds New Styles*, a reader named Maze from across the Atlantic—in Enfield, Middlesex, to be exact—writes in to stake a similar claim:

> I am truly amazed by your fabulous magazine. Being black I get criticized for buying your magazine by many of my friends but that doesn't bother me—they even laugh at the way I dress. I am sure there are many other black people who get looked down on because they want to express themselves through their clothes, and many more who are too scared to try it. Well, it's time we all came out of our closets, black and white, and wore the clothes we want to wear, not those our friends or parents like or even just those that are in fashion. (60)

As I began this introduction with my first encounters with the magazines *Star Hits* and *Smash Hits*, throughout the chapters I incorporate information gleaned from a host of music-based publications stemming from the early 1980s to the present. Not only do these print sources help chart a historical narrative of post-punk bands and singers featured here, but they also exist as resonant sources through which readers like Green Gartside develop a stronger familiarity with the artists to whom they become attached.

Indeed, getting to know one's favorite performers—a dynamic also predicated upon the act of touching—is often established through print media as well as chance encounters with songs played on the radio, music videos, posters, T-shirts, and other cultural ephemera. In a discussion of

Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* ([1957] 2009), Stuart Hall queries "relations between attitudes in the popular papers and magazines and the working-class readers to whom they were typically addressed" ([2007] 2019, 36).[37] Serving as a medium for transatlantic cultural exchange (particularly before the advent of the internet), popular newspapers and magazines functioned as sites of ideological struggle whereby repudiated "low cultural forms" might directly or implicitly communicate potentially mobilizing knowledges and catalyze relations between ostensibly dissimilar social actors. As previously noted, magazines like *Star Hits* and *Smash Hits* (and even the Neil Tennant–identified "rockist" newspapers) are illustrative given how they simultaneously tender critical information about local and global politics and, for the project at hand, chart a range of Latina/o/x and British associations—manifesting in myriad and often inextricably intertwined ways—that contour post-punk cultures.

Chapter 1, "Red over White," considers a singer and her band that got their start as part of an early roster of acts emerging from the mid-1970s British punk scene: Siouxsie and the Banshees. Although singer Siouxsie Sioux early on cultivated a reputation for her standoffish and irreverent persona (hence her nickname "the Ice Queen"), she and the band would be claimed by Latina/o/x fans in the US for both their wickedly stunning musical oeuvre and their razor-sharp, formidable image. Purveyors of a recalcitrantly aggressive punk sound that, true to post-punk musical sensibility, soon blossomed into an elaborate soundscape crafted by haunting synthesizers, intricate string arrangements, and psychedelic-tinged melodies, Siouxsie and the Banshees were also attuned to Latina/o artists—Kid Congo Powers and Vaginal Davis, for example—with whom they cultivated intimate ties. The chapter shows how Siouxsie's touch extends from the stage to the everyday, documented in an array of sources such as literature, television, visual art, and memoir.

Adam Ant, a contemporary of Siouxsie Sioux's, rose to prominence with his band the Ants after their formation in 1977. Chapter 2, "Touching Prince Charming," examines the charge of racism against Ant by the organization Rock against Racism (RAR) in the band's eroticization of Nazi fascism. While Adam and the Ants would make a concerted effort to deny their alignment with racist projects, I nonetheless suggest a critical examination of songs like "Puerto-Rican" and "Juanito the Bandito" to signal the way Latinos, for better or worse, have served as a source of inspiration in Ant's musical repertoire. For as much as the anthem-like "Prince Charming" grants an aural force field for the disempowered ("Ridicule is nothing to be scared of"), the two aforementioned tracks reveal the racial discrep-

ancies underscoring a resonant repertoire known as "Ant Music for Sex People." The chapter therefore ponders the predicament in which a Latino fan is placed when he finds himself questionably reflected in the lyrics of a beloved music artist.

Chapter 3, "Darker Entries," examines a band inspired by the energy of punk but shifting the aesthetic in a direction that additionally incorporated an early glam style (consider, for example, their grippingly frenetic cover of T. Rex's "Telegram Sam") that catalyzed the movement identified as goth. Indeed, Bauhaus, whose first single from 1979 was "Bela Lugosi's Dead," would cultivate a following that took to the band's darker yet highly sexualized image. Not unlike Siouxsie and the Banshees, Bauhaus would deny their categorization as goth but nevertheless inspired a movement of individuals embracing their music and identifying as such. Contesting the taken-for-granted whiteness of goth style and sound (in terms of a seemingly requisite pallid visage as well as an Anglocentric cultural impulse fueling what counts as the genre's musical origins), the chapter points up the band's acknowledgment of its Black and US Latina/o influences and audiences and thus compels one to rethink the title of their last album as something of a declaration: *Go Away White*.

One of the most recognizable British post-punk pop songs in the United States is arguably Soft Cell's 1981 "Tainted Love," a cover of the 1964 Northern Soul classic originally recorded by Gloria Jones.[38] While Soft Cell is often granted the dubious recognition of a "one-hit wonder" (the song ranked number 5 on VH1's *100 Greatest One Hit Wonders of the 1980s*), this debatable if not nativist honor ignores the prodigious outpouring of this creative duo composed of singer Marc Almond and keyboardist Dave Ball. Chapter 4, "The Shining Sinners," examines how Soft Cell's and Almond's solo work is stimulated by a strong familiarity with and lasting attachment to Latina/o/x sexual cultures. From the work of Chicano Scottish writer John Rechy to the deliciously seedy hotspots of pre-Disneyfied New York City, Almond's and Soft Cell's seductively perverse lyrical and sonic reveries are acutely attuned to the vibrancy of queer Latinidad.

Chapter 5, "Zoot Suits and Secondhand Knowledge," is distinct in contrast to the other book chapters, as the band on which it focuses—Blue Rondo a la Turk—did not receive playtime on my teenager turntable or Walkman cassette player. Yet my embrace of the band, as I explain, came by way of my entrance into Chicano/a studies and British cultural studies through an early interest in the zoot suit subcultures to which my grandparents and their peers belonged in 1940s Southern California. Unpacking the

secondhand adoption of the zoot suit and Latin music by the short-lived but notable ensemble, I examine not only their chosen aesthetic, which in some ways complemented while standing in sharp contrast to their contemporaries and collaborators in the New Romantic scene, but also their studied and distinctly animated Latin sound that significantly impacted and shifted the aesthetic contours of early 1980s post-punk culture.

Like Soft Cell, Frankie Goes to Hollywood is often considered a one-hit wonder in the United States given the remarkable success of their first single, "Relax" (although their second single, "Two Tribes," nearly cracked the Billboard Top 40 but rarely registers as a hit thanks to the selective amnesia feeding into the mind-numbing 1980s nostalgia machine). And similar to the Leeds duo of Almond and Ball, the Liverpudlian quintuplet embodied an eye-opening and politically stimulating sexuality—often in the form of an infectiously pulsating queer disco beat—that appealed to many a young queer kid like me. Chapter 6, "Mexican Americanos," traces and links the appeal of Frankie's assertively queer stance in the midst of Reagan/Thatcher Cold War conservatism to lead singer Holly Johnson's solo hit "Americanos," an homage to Chicanos and their incessant historical erasure from the grand narrative of American history. Looking across the ocean for inspiration (although with an idea initially incubated in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Johnson's song—a great success in Britain but failing to chart and circulate widely in the US—communicates a profound political investment by a gay man from England to utilize one's unflinching queer boldness to direct attention to a regularly maligned racial/ethnic population on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

With its title influenced by the words on a van parked at a Miami beach and spotted by Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe (who in turn posed for a photo in front of the van for the cover image of their single "Domino Dancing"), chapter 7, "Latin/o American Party," takes as its subject the indelible influence of Latin freestyle on the Pet Shop Boys' variegated musical sensibilities. Focusing in particular on the track "Domino Dancing," the chapter challenges the commonly held belief that the video for this distinctive and memorable first single from 1998's *Introspective* was largely responsible—in its courtship of homoerotic imagery—for short-circuiting the band's heretofore escalating commercial success. This chapter, however, argues that the ability of "Domino Dancing" to absorb a seemingly uncharacteristic sound—one that flies in the face of those who may see freestyle as too poppy for serious consideration and a lesser-than offshoot of hip-hop—served as a touchstone moment for Pet Shop Boys Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe to

flesh out their potential for moving in sonically innovative directions, no small thanks to the influence of Latin musical styles and cultural aesthetics.

Spotlighting three Los Angeles–based tribute bands—Strangelove (which pays homage to Depeche Mode), the Curse (a nod to the Cure), and Sweet and Tender Hooligans (a band honoring the Smiths)—and the Anaheim-based DJ/selector collective Ghostown, the book's conclusion registers the emergence of Latino-fronted music acts and activist networks that pay homage to British bands that have, since the 1980s, made a lasting impact on US Latina/o/x communities. Refusing to regard the tribute band and subsequent generations of music fans as engaged in a simplistic performance of mimicry and woefully mired in uncritical nostalgia, I position these artists and activists as partaking in uncompromising acts of resignification while considering the historical and cultural politics of the enduring appeal of British post-punk music. Since mainstream popular culture's frequent attempts to revisit "The 80s" are laced with romanticism and flimsy grabs at reviving the decade's frivolous (not to mention reactionary) elements, the Latina/o/x fans and members of Strangelove, Sweet and Tender Hooligans, the Curse, and Ghostown take seriously the foundational songs from the past that both made us cry and saved our lives. I ultimately show how popular music facilitates understanding of the intimate connections between foundational British bands and successive generations of fans.

Allow me to offer some points of clarification regarding this project—and in many ways to address questions my reader may have pertaining to the book's significance, questions that have been posed to me at bars, before concerts, over collegial dinners, or during after-lecture Q&As by often perplexed strangers or colleagues. First, this book is not an uncritical fetishization of British culture, particularly as some monolithic entity. On the contrary, I hope to reveal the deep connections between working-class, racialized, queer, and historically marginalized individuals and communities from the trajectory of popular music.[39] Indeed, when I began discovering more about the British bands I was drawn to, I realized and appreciated that they, too, were—as Danny Fuentes and the patrons of Lethal Amounts are described by the *Los Angeles Times* (Hermann 2018)—the "outcasts and outliers" of the dominant culture. As should go without saying, reading "British" and "American" strictly on the surface forecloses the ability to ascertain the nuances of and interruptions within national histories and cultures while ignoring the way networks of affiliation always manifest in complex and ostensibly paradoxical ways. Second, I realize that my youthful dislike of most US punk and post-punk bands (Blondie was one of the

few exceptions) had to do with the fact that they reminded me of peers with whom I held an antagonistic relationship, those very kids whose "possessive investment in whiteness" and upper-/middle-class entitlement extended to forms of cultural expression they assumed were theirs merely based on surface-level perception of rightful ownership.[40] And third, this project is best understood as embracing cultural hybridity rather than endorsing cultural appropriation. Nestor García Canclini's classic formulation of cultural hybridity—which, to my mind, stands in stark contrast to the recently resuscitated and often sanctimonious indictment of cultural appropriation—is useful for understanding the bilateral transatlantic dispatches mapped in this book. To be sure, the charge of cultural appropriation too easily shuts down deliberation on the ways disparately situated people and histories indelibly move and touch one other. I maintain throughout *A Kiss across the Ocean* that the charge of appropriation bars recognition of mutual exchange and give-and-take dynamics, elements that are indeed at work in the encounters between British post-punk artists and US Latinas/os. Overall, the book follows the lead of Frances Aparicio and Cándida Jáquez (2003), who draw on the idea of cultural hybridity to explore the impact of transnational "Latino/a American musical migrations," and extends the analytic parameters of their important book *Musical Migrations* to consider the multidirectional, transatlantic intimacies in popular music cultures.

The multidirectional "kiss across the ocean" spotlighted in the forthcoming pages represents more than an act of, once again riffing on Culture Club vis-à-vis the title of their 1982 debut album, "kissing to be clever," but rather traces a number of sensuous connections involving listeners, lovers, spectators, collaborators, friends, fans, and exemplars. Let's begin, then, with one of the many bands with which I became familiar from the pages of *Star Hits* and *Smash Hits*: Siouxsie and the Banshees. The inimitable influence of the band's singer—namely the Banshees' iconic frontwoman Siouxsie Sioux—extends to almost every other artist discussed in this book, not to mention generations of Latina/o/x musicians and fans. Notwithstanding the nocturnal setting in which the band's edgy music and overall shadowy aura are often comfortably cast, the first chapter ardently aims to throw light on Sioux's formidable transatlantic touch.

Notes

A KISS ACROSS THE OCEAN: AN INTRODUCTION

1. In his illuminating book I *Wonder U: How Prince Went Beyond Race and Back*, Adilifu Nama maintains that "during the early 1980s racially integrated bands, such as The Specials and Culture Club, also contributed to creating deeper fissures in the structured absence of blackness at MTV and helped undermine MTV's strident Jim Crow programming. The optics of racially integrated bands playing British new wave pop songs on the emergent music channel helped to destabilize the erroneous notion and prevailing racial politics of the American music industry that black artists play only R&B music" (2020, 48). Indeed, the "Karma Chameleon" video exemplifies Nama's argument.

2. I would like to make a point here, before proceeding, for those given pause by the fact that I start this book with Culture Club. A few years back on my Facebook page, I mentioned Culture Club's August 17, 1985, show at the Pacific Amphitheater in Costa Mesa, California, as the first concert I ever attended. I was quickly met with derision from some "friends" and colleagues who thought it fun to berate a silly 1980s pop band, perhaps because Culture Club didn't match the stature of a respectable act noted for their tacit seriousness, critically acclaimed musicianship, and assured heteronormativity. I could make the argument that it was Culture Club that led me to artists like Roxy Music, David Bowie, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and so on—which, in a way, I do—but I also refuse to deny that I continue to value my Culture Club albums, and I will not pretend they are no longer in my collection, nor deny that I ever owned them to boast in elitist fashion a collection devoid of bands and singers that test one's bogus sophistication in musical taste.

3. Here I am drawing on Welsh literary critic and cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams's notions of culture as "ordinary" and "a whole way of life" (see Williams ([1958] 1983, [1958] 1989). I also nod here to the excellent Cherry Red Records compilation CD *Shake the Foundations: Militant Funk and the Post-Punk Dancefloor 1978–1984* (2021).

4. Important to note is that this second British Invasion, like the one preceding it, was in no way uniform or static, as the artists constituting such invasions were diverse and hailed from disparate locations in the UK. For more on this point, see Jack Hamilton's (2016) important book, *Just around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination*. *Creem* magazine, under the auspices of its special series *Creem* Close-Up, would publish in June 1984 an edition titled *The British Invasion, 1964–1984*, that connected these British invasions regularly rendered as temporally distinct.

5. It was Scritti Politti, with their song "Jacques Derrida" from the album *Songs to Remember* (1982), that inspired my interest in literary theory and my sitting in on Derrida's lectures while I was an intercampus exchange student in 1995 at the University of California, Irvine. Relatedly, Mark Fisher notes in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* that his introduction to the French philosopher "came in the pages of the *New Musical Express* in the 1980s, where Derrida's name would be mentioned by the most exciting writers" (2014, 17).

6. In a feature titled "The Americanization of John Lydon: A Progress Report," published three years earlier in the noted British music-fashion magazine the *Face*, Lydon notes the "awfulness" of London that prompted his relocation to the US (Salewicz 1981a). The feature concludes by informing the reader that "a camper van was being inspected prior to a projected drive to Mexico—John is very fond of Mexican beer" (49). Worth noting is Lydon's observation of the Sex Pistols' show in San Antonio, Texas: "There was a lot of Mexicans in the audience. They looked like wild Indians to me. This very large Mexican contingency decided that they liked us, so that shut the cowboys up and the bottles stopped being slung" (Lydon 1994, 243). This show is the basis of Jim Mendiola's film *Pretty Vacant* (1996). For an insightful reading of Mendiola's film, see Habell-Pallán (2005).

7. I admittedly find these revisionist histories reductive and much too quick to erase the contradictions and complexities of music genealogies. In the rush to decolonize punk, for example, history is rewritten in an ironically sanitized and politically expedient fashion.

8. *Latinidad* is a term that enables comparative or parallel consideration of distinct Latin American–origin groups in the United States. Coined by sociologist Felix M. Padilla (1985) for examining the cohabitation of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago, Latinidad is often contested by those who, on the one hand, hold fast to nation-based attachments to culture and ethnicity and, on the other hand, those who prefer to dismiss its quotidian realities and political potentiality, often imposing Latin American cultural phenomena on racialized, working-class US communities. For two brilliant and queer exceptions to these exhausted takes, see Juana María Rodríguez (2003) and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera (2012). Furthermore, throughout this book I oscillate between,

and at times simultaneously reference (*Latina/o/x*), *Latino*, *Latina*, and *Latinx*, the last term of which registers a refusal of the male/female gender binary. Unlike recent books that adopt *Latinx* (or *Chicanx*) in indiscriminate fashion, my continued use of the first two terms is motivated by an attentiveness to historical context (and thus working against the anachronistic tendencies of those mainly aspiring to convenience) and an insistence on reading *Latinx* as a queer signifier with its distinct temporal resonances. See my essay "X Marks the Spot" (Rodríguez 2017) for a more detailed discussion.

9. Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* guides my thinking here. An exemplar of these tedious articles is Chuck Klosterman's "Viva Morrissey!" in the August 2002 issue of *Spin*. Also, while this project might very well index an intimacy between two continents, my use of *intimacy*, as will soon be made clear, is distinct from how Lisa Lowe (2015) adopts it in her book *The Intimacy of Four Continents*.

10. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg's use of "multidirectional" helps ascertain that which is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (2009, 3). Aiming to illuminate how inspiration often operates on a two-way street with intimacy mutually felt, this project adopts the multidirectional to offer a layered historical account of the cultural politics of influence.

11. Inspiration here derives from José Esteban Muñoz's (1996) classic essay, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts."

12. I am well aware of earlier examples—whether it be Beatlemania in the 1960s or the arrival of cross-Atlantic punk bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash in the 1970s—signaling a connection between Latinas/os and British music artists. While recognizing the porousness of decades, his book, however, starts with and builds from the 1980s.

13. Consider, for example, Gustavo Arellano's (2002) insightful "Their Charming Man: Dispatches from the Latino-Morrissey Love-In."

14. See Ruiz (2015). Ruiz's work builds on Paul Gilroy's (1993) foundational book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, which also influences my project given Gilroy's refusal of a nation-based analytic framework. Peter D. O'Neill and David Lloyd's (2009) edited collection, *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas*, has been equally instructive with its transatlantic approach inspired by Gilroy's paradigmatic lead.

15. It is fitting that Doonan titles his essay "Mundo Goes to Hollywood," the afterword for *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, the accompanying catalog for the exhibition of the same name that underscores the artistic work and influence of Mundo Meza. Given Meza's love of British popular music, he

was no doubt a fan of Frankie Goes to Hollywood whose singles "Relax" and "Two Tribes" and album *Welcome to the Pleasuredome* commanded a considerable audience, and especially a gay male fan base, in the US. I discuss the group and singer Holly Johnson in chapter 6.

16. See the insightful blog post "Post-Punk Pirates, Princess Diana, and Bow Wow Wow at World's End" (Gorman 2016).

17. The quote from Mulcahy is taken from the blog post "80sonVEVO GAMV Takeover Week 9 w/FEATURED VIDEO Kim Carnes' 'Bette Davis Eyes'" (Golden Age of Music Video 2013). For more on the history of the "Planet Earth" video, see Stephen Davis's (2021) *Please Please Tell Me Now: The Duran Duran Story*. Mulcahy also directed the videos for foundational New Romantic band Spandau Ballet's "Chant No. 1 (I Don't Need This Pressure On)" and "True." Worth noting is the striking similarity between the dancers' movements in "Bette Davis Eyes" and the video for David Bowie's "Ashes to Ashes," directed by Bowie and David Mallet and featuring Steve Strange and others associated with the New Romantic–populated clubs Blitz and Billy's in London. See Boy George's (1995) *Take It Like a Man* for more on Strange and company's enlistment in the video.

18. Bow Wow Wow would, however, play the Ritz later in September 1981. See John Rockwell's (1981) review in the *New York Times* and Paul Gorman's (2020) exhaustive biography *The Life and Times of Malcolm McLaren*.

19. See also Drew Stone's 2017 documentary, *Who the Fuck Is That Guy? The Fabulous Journey of Michael Alago*.

20. Fittingly, all three acts at one point shared the same American label, Sire Records.

21. My thanks to Suzan Colón, who informed me in a personal conversation that "Jackie" was really her and editor David Keeps answering *Star Hits* readers' letters.

22. Benedict Anderson's (1983) notion of "imagined community" is quite fitting here, given the way preinternet print cultures—namely fanzines—assisted in assembling networks of fans organized around particular bands, singers, and musical movements.

23. Taken from a post on Simon Napier-Bell's Facebook page dated March 26, 2018.

24. Some may take issue with my identification of Japan as post-punk, especially since the band early on eschewed punk aesthetics for a glam sound and style. However, their move away from a discernable glam inflection, most commonly marked by *Quiet Life* (1979) and *Gentlemen Take Polaroids* (1980), their third and fourth albums respectively, would subsequently position them alongside musical contemporaries influenced by punk but now, like Japan, gravitating toward a more post-punk electronic sound.

25. Personal communication via Skype with Suzan Colón, August 8, 2017.

26. For two important accounts of Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, see their posthumously published memoir *Nonbinary* (P-Orridge 2021) and Simon Ford's (1999) classic *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle*.

27. I wish to note here Greil Marcus's assertion in a 1980 *Rolling Stone* article that "postpunk pop avant-garde" was a term that he had "thought up in California, after listening to the new music coming out of England: some of it willfully obscurantist and contrived, and some of it—most notably the late-1979 debut albums by Essential Logic, the Raincoats (both Rough Trade bands), and the Gang of Four (a leftist group signed to the EMI and Warner Bros. multinationals)—sparked by a tension, humor, and sense of paradox plainly unique in present-day pop music" ([1980] 1993, 108).

28. Nevertheless, Rimmer acknowledges that while his book "is the story of Culture Club . . . it's also the story of pop music since punk" (1985, 5), therefore about, temporally speaking, post-punk. The phrase "like punk never happened" was spoken by Paul Weller, singer for the Jam and later the Style Council, in a *Smash Hits* interview with then-journalist and later Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant. See Watkins (2016, 212).

29. See Kasper de Graaf and Malcolm Garrett's (1983) *When Cameras Go Crazy: Culture Club*.

30. Bassist John Taylor also makes this point but within the context of Duran Duran's success, in which *Smash Hits*—and not the pretentious weekly music papers like *NME*—had a hand. See Zoë Dobson's (2019) documentary *Duran Duran: There's Something You Should Know*. Pat Long's book, *The History of the NME: High Times and Low Lives at the World's Most Famous Music Magazine*, further reasons, "Until MTV, radio and press had been the most important way for record companies to break new bands. Now that it was shifting to television, a generation of new British bands appeared without the sanction of *NME*'s writers. The paper was left at a loss as to how to deal with them, but *Smash Hits* thrived" (2012, 144).

31. For an illuminating oral history covering the emergence of Rock against Racism and Red Wedge, see Daniel Rachel's (2016) *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge 1976–1992*.

32. Here I'm thinking of X's 1983 "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" ("Will the last American band to get played on the radio please bring the flag?") and the Dead Milkmen's 1987 "Instant Club Hit (You'll Dance to Anything)" ("You'll dance to anything by any bunch of stupid Europeans / Who come over here with their big hairdos / Intent on taking our money instead of giving your cash / Where it belongs / To a decent American artist like myself").

33. In this vein, I see my book in conversation with Daphne A. Brooks's (2021) stunning *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound*, especially the chapter "'If You Should Lose Me': Of Trunks and Record Shops and Black Girl Ephemera."

34. Of course, with the advent of the internet, many previously hard-to-find or out-of-print materials are more readily accessible, whether through official institutional databases or unofficial social media archives (found on Facebook, for example) established by dedicated followers.

35. *You Weren't There: A History of Chicago Punk, 1977–1984* was written and directed by Joe Losurdo and Christina Tillman and released in 2007. Laina Dawes's (2013) book, *What Are You Doing Here? A Black Woman's Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal*, makes clear by title alone the interrogation she's accustomed to receiving at events where she, as a Black woman, purportedly does not belong.

36. On the complexity of attending gigs, I've learned a great deal from Graham Duff's (2019) superb *Foreground Music: A Life in Fifteen Gigs*.

37. Matthew Worley's keen assessment of youth culture operates in a similar fashion. He writes, "Youth culture should not be understood simply as a model of consumption, or a product of media invention, but as a formative and contested experience through which young people discover, comprehend, affirm and express their desires, opinions and disaffections" (Worley 2017, 2–3).

38. For more on Northern Soul, see David Nowell's (2011) *The Story of Northern Soul: A Definitive History of the Dance Scene That Refuses to Die* and Stuart Cosgrove's (2017) *Young Soul Rebels: A Personal History of Northern Soul*.

39. And there are also moments when I'm stopped in my tracks by stumbling upon unsavory depictions of Latinos/as in my favorite music performers' song lyrics or memoirs. This will be clear at various moments in the book. One such example is found in the pages of *True*, the autobiography of Spandau Ballet's bassist Martin Kemp (2000). Writing about the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles uprising (rendered by the mainstream media as "riots" inciting looting, arson, and indiscriminate violence) provoked by the Rodney King verdict, Kemp details queuing with his wife, Shirlie Holliman, for a British Airlines flight to London "next to a cheap Mexican flight to Mexico City" (2000, 236). Instructed by her to glance upon the neighboring gate, Kemp expresses disbelief as "every other young Mexican was carrying a TV or a microwave on his shoulders, or pushing them around on trolleys—not in boxes, just wrapped in paper tied with string. . . . It looked as if they had definitely been out shopping for their cousins back home over the last couple of days, or nights" (236).

40. The phrase "possessive investment in whiteness" is George Lipsitz's (2018). See his book *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. My connection to Blondie may have been an unconscious

awareness of their connection to Latinidad as exemplified by their incorporation of Mexican mariachi in their 1980 hit single, "The Tide Is High." See Josh Kun's (2017) insightful introduction to his edited collection, *The Tide Was Always High: The Music of Latin America in Los Angeles*.

CHAPTER 1: RED OVER WHITE

1. For more on Blade's formative influence on Southern California fans of British post-punk music and *Video One*, see his autobiography, *World in My Eyes* (Blade 2017).

2. Relatedly, Ned Raggett's (2019) "A Long Term Effect: Tim Pope on Four Decades of Work with the Cure" for the *Quietus* is a stellar piece on the history of Pope's video work, particularly with the Cure.

3. Or, as Michael Jaime-Becerra elegantly puts it in his essay "Todo se acaba" about being a young Chicano from El Monte, California, who spends his first paycheck on the *Wild Things* EP by the Creatures, the Banshees side project featuring Siouxsie and Budgie, it was "something only mentioned in fan books or alluded to in interviews" (2019, 111).

4. This icy disaffection keys into Sioux's nickname of the Ice Queen, as declared on the December 3, 1977, cover of *Sounds* and on which she appears wearing the classic Sex shop "tits" T-shirt. This issue of *Sounds* also features Vivien Goldman's (1977) highly regarded and now classic interview "Siouxsie Sioux Who R U?"

5. For another account of Siouxsie and the Banshees' coming-of-age impact, see Sue Webster's *I Was a Teenage Banshee*, in which the author identifies the band as her "teenage obsession that dragged me kicking and screaming throughout my adolescence" (2019, 11).

6. Vivien Goldman's (2019) brilliant *Revenge of the She-Punks: A Feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot* offers a detailed genealogy of such "really wild women." Goldman's analysis stands in stark contrast to that offered by critic Sean Egan, who is incapable of seeing the sexism behind the "inordinately long time" it took Siouxsie and the Banshees and the Slits "to get a record deal" (2019, 172). Perhaps this is why Egan dismisses the Banshees' *Join Hands* as "unmelodic and tedious" and the Slits' *Cut* as "hardly offer[ing] profound insight" (173).

7. See Caroline Coon (1977), *1988: The New Wave Punk Rock Explosion*, for an account of the 100 Club festival.

8. The quotes from Sioux and Pirroni are taken from the segment "Siouxsie Sioux" from the 2009 BBC documentary *The Queens of British Pop*. For a recorded version of Siouxsie and the Banshees' 100 Club performance, see "Siouxsie & the Banshees—the Lord's Prayer (100 Club Punk Festival 20-09-1976)," posted