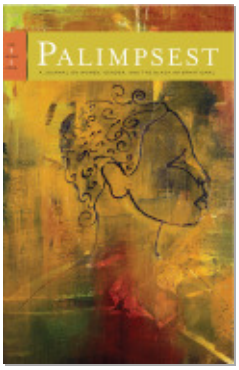
"Put Some Bass in Your Walk": Notes on Queerness, Hip Hop, and the Spectacle of the Undoable



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Because this is a history (of sorts), I'll open here by locating us in a time—the 1990s—and a place—New York City. But because this history is, essentially, a history of style, of movement, of arguable origins and promiscuous genealogies, this temporal and geographical frame will get broken, necessarily, by jumps in time. Because this article has taken as its main objects of thought a cadre of urban style-conscious young people, whom historian Robin D. G. Kelley has described as, the "brown bodies of varying hues whose lack of employment has left them with plenty of time to 'play'"[1] while performing their cultural lives upon the public stage of New York, there will be places where we will slip into a temporal space a few decades before the 1990s, as those genealogies I referred to earlier branch off, into other narratives.

The first time I saw a pair of young men voguing, moving sinuously, rhythmically, across the dance floor of a nightclub called Tracks in 1987, I felt the same way I felt the first time I heard rap music, standing on the broken, weed-strewn running track at my suburban New York junior high school. Voguing looked, to my neophyte eyes—new to social, public "gayness," new to the rarified, hothouse intensity of gay club life—as brazen and candid as rap music had sounded. It registered as something defiant in presentation yet simple and declarative in tone; as self-making; as powerful. I would later write about, and speak of, what I saw as the similarities in both forms, in voguing bodies and rapping voices, and the gender-fucking and -enhancing methods they both used to self-referentialize both the experience of being a "brown

body" on the public stage and the homosocial valences of that experience.[2] And I was told that I shouldn't say the things I said. I shouldn't align hip hop with ball culture, even if I believed that these brown bodies were actively theorizing through their physical and vocal aesthetic labor on the performance of race, gender, class, and sexuality by marginalized communities in American society, because one was "straight" and the other was "gay." I shouldn't think about or openly write about black male bodies in hip hop because the black male body had been historically under siege in American culture, a site of violence and trauma and demasculization. To equate boys in diva drag with boys in Kangols and Adidas was to besmirch hip hop, whose virtues, as a black male, as a black male writer, I was encouraged to extol and celebrate. It didn't help my case that I also had a theory about a common genealogical strain informing the contours of rap culture and ball culture. But I ceased to emphasize them; there seemed to be no point, and the irony of my ideas about the sayability of these defiant cultural forms being rendered unsayable was not lost on me. The argument would never be won.

That theory, as it were, was this: rap music, sonically and vocally birthed from a polycultural mix of influences, including the African griot tradition, Caribbean dub music, and loops of black American percussive funk breaks, is queer, having found its commercial foothold through the aural nuances of disco, most notably, The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," its music track built from a replayed break of Chic's "Good Times." Blasting from boom boxes and car stereos, emanating from the immense speakers that flew along the ceilings of strobe-lit, coke-fueled nightclubs, Chic's "Good Times" was, in many ways, the perfect disco anthem, a sonic blend of soaring strings, funky drumming, and vocal attitude. In that bit of sonic snatching, repurposing, resequencing, "Rapper's Delight" not only seduced its way into the disco landscape, it also broke ground for the broader dissemination of rap music's aural pleasures, climbing as high as #36 on United States pop charts and #1 on Canadian and Dutch charts. Also through this sonic linkage, "Rapper's Delight" helped to sell rap music's aspirational, consumerist ethos to the masses. Disco, too, was aspirational music: it trafficked in glamour; it sold a vision of access, of high living, of escape from the mundane. It was, in many ways—regardless of its European club lineage—a singular soundtrack of American Dreaming. And who dreamed harder, made their dreams (and nightmares) the stuff of publicly rendered fantasy better than rappers?

However, in another singularly American way, disco ultimately came under increasing scorn by the mainly white, mostly heterosexual music cognoscenti who derided the music in racially and sexually codified terms; disco, for many, was both "not black enough" and "too gay." Alice Echols writes in *Hot Stuff*, a history of disco music and culture, about the print media and music industry's initial resistance to disco as both a musical form and a cultural expression, highlighting

especially how disco was often positioned against more traditional rhythm and blues to enquire about the state of the black community and its musical legacy in the 1970s. As quoted in the book, a critic in *NME*, a popular British music magazine, wrote, "What happened to the days when black music was black and not this . . . pretentious drivel?"[3] Echols describes how many critics of disco diminished the form as "mindless" and "formulaic" and "banal," these critiques ultimately concretizing into a discourse of "un-naturalness" as a way to recast disco's apparently synthetic origins. Disco did differentiate itself from the "raw," "organic" authenticity of soul music and R&B, reaching for an elegance and sophistication of presentation, but it really just wanted to make bodies move, not unlike the soul and R&B that dominated the racialized cultural imagination of arbiters who thought it artificial, watered-down, not-black. But pontifications of disco's racial betrayals, its "un-naturalness," missed the point of this new sound. They disregarded, in fact, its articulation of a different kind of pleasure, the pleasure of marginalized bodies, female, gay, trans, black, Latino—and the mainstream that followed its cultural lead—who indulged, and felt indulged by, the universalist trappings of disco music, the way in which society could be remixed to mirror the social dynamics at play on the dance floor.[4]

Not only did we have here, in the resistance to disco, the continued iteration of black culture, blackness itself, as the "natural" thing that somehow transcended the mediated nuances of pop culture sensibility, but also a narrative of betrayal that trafficked in and defended R&B and funk with a kind of a sexualized racio-normativity; that is, disco had not only deblackened black music, but it had somehow resexualized it into something feminine and sentimental and schmaltzy, dismantling the "edge" that black funk and R&B especially, sold to the masses so well.

So what was one to make of this new sound, this rap music, straight from the streets of New York and New Jersey, in which "masculine" bodies and voices spit boasts and stories over disco music? It certainly wasn't coded as "gay," even though the music behind the voices was a snippet of the musical soundtrack that had been relegated across the sexual line to the "gay crowd." What people seemed to forget was this: disco was the soundtrack of urban nightlife in major cities like Manhattan, where straight men and women and gay men and women socialized together, united culturally by the aforementioned aspirational tone of disco's amplified beat. Much of the music itself arrived codified with a language of community building—"Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now," "Boogie Wonderland," "Funkytown"—emphasizing shared experiences for which the dance floor was the strongest metaphor. It can be argued that disco—before the fragmentation in urban culture caused by the rupture of rap's impending crossover appeal and with the entrenched racial separateness of some gay clubs—was the last theme music of culturally sanctioned straight/gay homosocial alliance for urban men of color.

And disco didn't have to shout its politics to prove its cultural worth: consider the oft-told story of the making of Chic's "Good Times." Band bassist Bernard Edwards arrived at the song's patented, muscular "da da dum dum dum" bassline after Nile Rodgers shouted that he wanted a "walking bassline" for the record's sound. "Walk, motherfucker! Walk!," he reportedly shouted at his bandmate.[5] The music was the message: African American history, it could be argued, is laden with the legacy of the "Walk," from the dangerous walks to freedom during chattel slavery to the decision to walk to work and school and church during the year-long Montgomery bus boycott to the walk across Alabama's Edmund Pettus bridge from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. Walking has long been a means toward liberty for African Americans, in the trek from embattled political, social, and economic marginalization to the aspiration of better jobs, educations, lives, the pursuit, as it were, of the so-called American Dream. Chic's hit, "Le Freak," with it's famous "Freak out!" lyric began life as "Fuck off!" because Rodgers and Edwards had been denied entry to the famous Studio 54 disco after being invited to the space by disco diva Grace Jones. But one also hears in Rodgers's command to "walk!" the shouts and screams of the audience at a drag ball, where the contestants rotated and pranced on makeshift runways, walked, as fashion models do, for the crowd. "You better walk!" "Sissy that walk!" "Work that walk, bitch!" Power, agency, liberation are found in the everyday movement of bodies that have known the potential for walking where and when and, most especially, how one *should* not.

Rap music queered an already "queer" form, layering onto the remixed, resequenced beats of the deejay's work a lexicon of (s)language and rhythmic rhymes that doubled and sometimes tripled the typical amount of lyrics usually found on an R&B or dance recording. Considering that in the early days of rap, rappers were resistant to the actual idea of recording themselves (instead they felt most comfortable in the live, improvisatory spaces of parties, parks, and clubs) even the decision to transfer an essentially folk culture onto vinyl can be read as a way to recenter the logocentric technologies of black voices, to map onto a popular culture already accused of exploiting the black body and voice, a genre of blackness, of urban-ness, of coloredness, that would make sayable some unsayable things. That this same music came to be the background soundtrack for the gay and trans bodies doing undoable things, such as voguing, modeling, cross-dressing in the "private" space of drag balls, speaks to the fluid uses of disco music and its "pretension." In the same way colored bodies have had to walk and have historically used the dregs of society handed to them to create culture, one could argue that the black community held onto the rhythms of disco and developed their own pop culture odes to glamour, to idealization.

II

On April 26, 2010, Tyra Sanchez (or The "*Other*" Tyra, as she'd been affectionately and bitchily anointed by host drag diva RuPaul) won the second season of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a reality competition show on cable television's gay-themed channel Logo. Stitching together the fashion, performance, and competition of hit series like *Project Runway*, *American Idol*, and *Survivor*, the TV show *Drag Race* is a "trans"lation of sorts, a knowing parade of gender-crossing celebration, blatantly refiguring reality TV into the queer spectacle it has always threatened to be.

Watching that second season, however, I wasn't initially interested in the winner or in either of the runners-up. My early fascination rested upon Mystique, a full-figured African American contestant from Texas by way of Chicago. Slightly inelegant in her makeup style and somewhat slapdash in her clothing choices, Mystique seemed to have little actual mystique; she seemed, in many ways, to be not an authentic full-fledged drag queen, but instead just "a boy in a dress," to quote the character Vida La Boheme from cult drag-themed film *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*.

Mystique only made it through three episodes of the ten-week show, but her appearance on the series was always entertaining, as it was fraught with the expected bitchy antagonisms that have come to define reality show competitions. Mystique remains most famous, not for her poor runway style choices, or even her acrobatic splits on the catwalk, but for her comments, particularly during a loud argument she had with glamorous co-competitor Morgan McMichaels that culminated in her defiant declaration, "Bitch, I am from Chicago!" Mystique is also famous for referring to herself with food metaphors, describing her breasts as a "cheeseburger, Taco Bell, and a Diet Coke on the side, girl." She notably called herself, "two-piece and a biscuit," referencing the fast food fried chicken of nationwide chain Popeye's. The down home, southern fried meal became a way of extolling the virtues and beauty potential of the "big girls," countering the glamour queen wannabe supermodels of the world who populated the rest of the cast. I suspect that the fast foodie in her made the other girls uncomfortable. After all, in the high rolling world of drag queenery, realness of representation isn't the sole aim. A certain regal beauty is often claimed, and a big girl, who seemed to value greasy food and tucking napkins into her blouse more than she seemed to value greasepaint and tucking her genitals, was only destined to be the brunt of bitchy jokes, or, at best, solemn regards. She'd never *really* be one of the girls.

A few weeks after the show ended, I discovered that Mystique, like most of the other contestants on the show, had a large following on Twitter where she tweeted her comings and goings, announced performances, thanked her fans,

and threw clever shade at her detractors. I decided not only to follow Mystique on Twitter and make myself privy to all she chose to share, I rallied myself to ask her a question. "Where did you get your drag name?" I asked her. "Why did you choose Mystique?" A couple of days later, her answer appeared in my own Twitter feed, and it was almost more satisfying than a two-piece and a biscuit in a food court after a long day of mall shopping. Succinct and to the point, she responded, "I love the 90s X-Men." Perfect. I love the *X-Men*, too. And I was hoping that was the reason. Of all the characters of the X-Men, blue-skinned Mystique is the ultimate outsider, not always accepted or trusted by the other mutants, as she is able to transform herself at will, shape-shifting herself from man to woman, animal to human and back again. In *Mystique* comic #23, after a violent episode, her adopted daughter Rogue calls her a monster and rejects her. The idea of the monstrous wasn't new to the *X-Men* comic series when this accusation occurred in 2005. In fact, the comic series exists as a rumination on "difference," on the slippages and linkages that result when the "human" meets the "superhuman," when the deviant meets the heroic, when the integration of society's cast offs demand alternative technologies of gendering and race-ing certain bodies.

Marvel Comics' *X-Men* series debuted in 1963, starring a team of gifted white suburban kids possessing superhuman abilities growing out of mutations in their genetic makeup. Mutants are different from other superheroes in the comic universe who historically had been "made superhuman by radioactive materials, scientific experimentation, or extensive physical training."[6] The mutants of *X-Men* weren't like Batman or Spiderman, who haunted the edges of urban America, battling the forces of evil. They weren't like the "alien" Superman from another planet who nonetheless fought for the American way. Instead, according to historian Ramzi Fawaz, the *X-Men* series popularized "the genetic mutant as social and species minority,"[7] and helped to "lay the foundation for reimagining the superhero as a figure that, far from drawing readers to a vision of ideal citizenship through patriotic duty, dramatized the politics of inequality, exclusion, and difference in postwar U.S. culture." The creators of the *X-Men* series asked readers to identify and root for a group of innately "deviant" heroes, who didn't just fight bad guys but were enmeshed in a project to "[explore] the complex and often contentious relations between human beings and an emergent mutantkind."[8]

In its original incarnation, *The X-Men* was not a major success; Marvel Comics eventually shut down production on the series. In 1975, however, reconceived as a diverse, multiethnic team of mutants, the series returned to drugstore shelves, this time becoming the most successful comic series in history. Fawaz sees in this revamping not just a passing nod to the dominant thrust of identity politics in the 1970s but an attempt to actually engage with

and critique the heteropatriarchy being challenged by prominent activist social movements of the time. The X-Men now included a Russian and a German superhero, but most notably, another woman named Storm, an African goddess able to manipulate the weather. "By expanding the racial, geographic, and gender makeup of the mutant species to include characters and identities previously ignored by the series," according to Fawaz, "the new X-Men articulated mutation to the radical critiques of identity promulgated by the cultures of women's and gay liberation."[9]

The X-Men now reflected the hopeful (if not always successful) aim to create strategic political and social alliances across identity groups seeking to effect change for their communities. "By developing the capacious category of 'mutation' as a biological marker and a category of otherness akin to race and gender, the *X-Men* deployed popular fantasy to describe the generative alliances across difference being forged by radical feminists, gay liberation activists, and the counterculture in the 1970s."[10] The X-Men's "otherness," as it were, situated them at an odd crossroads: even their heroic deeds couldn't shield them from an oft-cited outcast status, from their families, or from the community they were enlisted to protect. As Fawaz writes: "*The X-Men* developed the popular fantasy of the mutant superhero not only to resist a variety of repressive social norms—including racial segregation, sexism, and xenophobia—but also to facilitate the ground from which new kinds of choices about political affiliation and personal identification could be pursued."[11]

The *X-Men* comics, and subsequent movies, are nothing if not allegories of difference, shifting as the narrative does between representing the outcast mutant experience as—at various turns—Jews who have suffered in concentration camps (for example, the "Days of Future Past" storyline of 1981's issues #141 and #142 in which mutants are incarcerated into internment camps, arguably the second most popular *X-Men* narrative after the Dark Phoenix saga); blacks who tilled American soil as slaves ("I don't answer to my slave name," Mystique tells authorities when they try to question her after her capture), and most tellingly as metaphors for the tribe of gay men and women who must piece together a "coming out" if they are to live as their "true" and "honest" selves.

In one scene in the first *X-Men* film sequel, for instance, when Ice Man is visiting his family with other members of his superhero team, his family, who don't know he's a mutant, find out in a loud and unexpected way. Their questions to him are, "When did you know you were a mutant?" and "Have you ever tried *not* being a mutant?" This scene has echoes of the gay child explaining himself (being explained?) to worried and frustrated parents who just don't understand. Mystique says that she took the name of the shape-shifting and dark-blue-complexioned female mutant because she "liked the 90s X-Men." Though she didn't name herself Storm, the African weather sorceress as played in the film by Halle Berry, she chose another "colored" female mutant, one

who, with one mere telepathic decision, could morph herself into the shape, voice, and face of anyone she wanted to, crossing closed barriers, thresholds, and situations not meant to be penetrated. Even in her slapdash gowns and female attire, Mystique layers another level of "difference" onto the presumed queerness we locate in her drag queen persona, further queering the already gay-inflected nuances of *The X-Men*. Even more interesting, Mystique's (born Donte Sims) entire drag name is actually Mystique Summers Madison, which takes its middle name from the surname of *The X-Men*'s Scott Summers (aka Cyclops) and Madison Jeffries, a mutant with the strength to reshape seemingly unmutable forms, and who would on occasion actively work against other mutants. In this self-naming, Mystique has crossed genders and races in search of a performable persona, positioning herself as shape-shifting race rebel (who doesn't answer to her slave name), cross-gendered male leader of the team, and combatant to others within her own denigrated species.

Could one argue that Mystique arrived at *Drag Race* already ready for battle? As it turns out, she *wasn't* like the other girls, but not *just* because of her bodily heft or the devotion to fast food that contributed to it. As I watched Mystique's episodes again, after learning of the origins of her drag name, I reconsidered—perhaps reread—Mystique as a different kind of text than I had before. Perhaps I was imposing my own fantasy upon her, but I saw her time on *RuPaul's Drag Race* as a kind of cultural project, an attempt to circulate a new narrative of queer activism drawing directly from the well of "inequality, exclusion and difference" that Fawaz articulates. If in fact Mystique could be read as a superhero of sorts, she had marshaled the spatial limitations of both the show and the reality TV game itself, twisting it, as Madison Jeffries might, into a newer, queerer shape that demanded space for her countrified, keeping-it-real self. Mostly rejected by the other outcasts—for lacking the glamour and stature seemingly required to compete—Mystique had produced her own social world within the rejection, replacing "realness" with "keeping it real."

In one way, I read Mystique as a kind of rapper—self-named, draped in performance drag, defiant in difference from the pop landscape that rejected her, yet proving through her difference that she could bend the convention of form to her own material condition. In the theatre of American popular culture, we hadn't seen a character like Mystique—the "Other" Mystique—this "mutant" of sorts who scared the competition, who destabilized the expectations of drag queen dazzle, who didn't win the prize but left a mark nonetheless, recasting the trope of the glamorous trans with a unique dignity.

III

Reading trans theorist and historian Susan Stryker's "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix" led me to think of both the

film *Monster*, in which the "lesbian" Aileen Wuornos lashes out as a serial killer and of *The Children's Hour*, in which the lesbian character Martha Dobie describes herself as a sort of "monster" to defend herself against the hostile stares of the delivery boy and the community at large. As much as film occupied my thoughts after reading Stryker, theater also intruded, specifically Tony Kushner's epic theatrical piece *Angels in America*. Stryker reclaims the "monster" to describe her position as a trans individual—"flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born."[12] She writes of how the "affront you humans take at being called a 'creature' results from the threat" that "the term poses to your status as 'lords of creation,' beings elevated above mere material existence."[13] Creature, she writes, as in monster, as in not human. Yet Stryker, in reclaiming the abject position of monstrous outcast, creates subjectivity that isn't about "superior personhood" but is instead connected to something potentially "divine" in its difference.[14] At one time, she informs us in the essay, "monsters, like angels, functioned as messengers and heralds of the extraordinary, [serving] to announce impending revelation, saying, in effect, 'Pay attention; something of profound importance is happening."[15] Kushner ends his play with: "You are fabulous creatures, each and every one. And I bless you: More life. The Great Work Begins."[16] Those words are spoken by the character Prior, mirroring the words of the Angel who crashes into his room at the end of the play's first part, setting him on his path to realization and the work of enlightening the close-minded world around him. Prior has been constructed, in some ways, by society around him, as a "monster" of sorts, stricken, as he's been, with AIDS—something, indeed, "of profound importance" nevertheless relegated to the margins by a government more concerned with mythical values and circulating narratives of fear than with actually acknowledging the devastation at work. Those resistant words of Prior's—a call to arms, a genealogical and rhetorical move toward the future activism that will define an era—bring me back to Susan Stryker, who writes: "The monster accomplishes [this] resistance by mastering language in order to claim a position as a speaking subject and enact verbally the very subjectivity denied it in the specular realm."[17] The angel, the monster, speaks.

When I consider the social and political imperatives, implications, and proclamations of Kushner's work, subtitled "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes," I begin to think of it as not just a "queer" text, but ultimately a potentially "trans" text, crossing, as it did, from the small nonprofit theater world to Broadway to globally mainstream HBO-airing, award-winning media event; crossing, as it does, between comedic and historical and dramatic moments, fluidly mastering the language and discourses of so many different "genres," suturing together disparate theatrical registers in order to create its living form; cross-dressing, as it does, the actors who embody (em-body?) the characters, so that the Mormon housewife is also the Jewish rabbi and also the martyred Ethel Rosenberg, and

literally raising the dead in (and giving new life to?; Dr. Frankenstein at work again?) such characters as Roy Cohn and Rosenberg. The play is, in some ways, a monster itself, problematizing and troubling notions of gender much like Stryker's citation of Peter Brooks, who posits *Frankenstein* as a work in which the monster might be "also that which eludes gender definition."[18] Like the monster, a drag queen is a sort of fiction that walks the culturally and socially produced line of gender and sexuality performance, a fiction that isn't natural or fixed, that speaks to Jacob Hales's notion that "there is nothing necessary, nor necessarily natural, about any culture's gender concepts."[19]

And those "gender concepts" seem to receive their main circulatory power through the continuous transmission of popular culture, mediated by the ofttimes awkward coalition of consumer desires and corporate strategies, where the stabilization of the "natural" often reinscribes narratives of gender and sexuality. Until a comic such as *The X-Men*, or a show such as *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and a contestant like Mystique appear on the scene to recover difference from the margins, to queer the preconceived notion of gender and sexuality standards. Elsewhere, I've written about Michael Jackson as potentially the first "trans pop star," crossing as he did through his embodied exhibition of cross-racial androgyny through both movement and surgery, across constantly blurred lines of identity. But perhaps I should broaden my thinking about the trans-ness of popular culture writ large and posit that film, television, and music exist as "trans" art forms in this late capitalist era marked by technologies of production that often seem to threaten the position of the "real" voice or visage or narrative formations with the simulacrum forces of auto tune and green screen cinematography; perhaps we can reimagine ways of removing television from the control of advertisers back into the hands (and eyes) of viewers. These media mix the science of technology with the "natural" of performing bodies, cutting and suturing together, as I've written before, pieces of singular moments to create dream-like narratives, sharing a real similarity to the "seams and sutures" that Stryker references as representative of the postsurgical trans body.[20] Film often seeks—through masked ideology; I think of Lacan, on suture, as the "conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic"—to transform subjects into gendered, raced, and classed objects constructed for visible/visual pleasure while at the same time posited as "natural" things.

Film editor Christine Jorgenson was a "natural thing" at one point in her life, working for major production companies like RKO. Susan Stryker writes of imagining Christine Jorgenson, preoperative Christine Jorgenson, sitting in his editing bay, "Going, 'wait!' You cut the medium, you splice it together, you project through it, tell a story. I can do that with my body!" In other words, Jorgensen could see how her body, and thus her self, could be repurposed, resequenced into a different kind of representation, an alternative kind of "natural thing." Stryker reads through Jorgensen's reach for a different

embodied self-structure the "trans" possibilities of popular culture—film, in this case—and how it queers one's own experience as a human. That "repurposing," that "resequencing"—the potentially synthetic acts denoted by, for instance, sampling—has been wielded against popular music in the decades since the rise and domination of hip hop and rap music.

Mystique played out her performance on *RuPaul's Drag Race* like a rapper. I theorize that rap—often so regarded as naturally butch and heterosexual as to be considered the domain of superheroes on a cultural rather than policing mission—has a DNA born in queerness. When I watched her on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, I thought about the flamboyant bursts of energy that emanated around the Uptown spaces where drag balls were thrown in the 1990s. I thought about the striving, hungry bodies poised to pounce upon the competition. I thought about the giddy rhythms of the host's intonations, his incantations of shade and celebration. Mystique had no "mystique" mainly because, in her reach for the crown of the Next Drag Superstar, she showed all the seams. She went for "the real" rather than going for "realness." She remixed the track. She wasn't like the other girls. That was the undoable thing.

Notes

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2. In a profile of LL Cool J originally published in *Spin* (SPIN Media LLC, 1991); and reprinted in Raquel Cepeda, ed., *And It Don't Stop: The Best American Hip hop Journalism of the Last 25 Years* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2004).
3. Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 8.
4. For a broader look at the musical and social implications of disco's history and appeal, see Echols; Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970–1979* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, *Last Night a Dj Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (New York: Grove Press, 2000).
5. Gavin Edwards, *Is Tiny Dancer Really Elton's Little John?: Music's Most Enduring Mysteries, Myths, and Rumors Revealed* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), 168.
6. Ramzi Fawaz, "'Where No X-Man Has Gone Before!' Mutant Superheroes and the Cultural Politics of Popular Fantasy in Postwar America," *American Literature* 83, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 362.
7. Ibid., 362.
8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 363.
10. Ibid., 361.
11. Ibid.
12. Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (1994): 238.
13. Ibid., 240.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes: Part One: Millennium Approaches Part Two: Perestroika* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003), 298.
17. Ibid., 241.
18. Ibid.
19. Jacob Hale, "Are Lesbians Women?," *Hypatia* 11, no. 2 (1996): 95.
20. Scott Poulson-Bryant, "Michael by Michael Jackson," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23, no. 2 (2011): 249.