



Torch Singing: Performing Resistance and Desire from Billie Holiday to Edith Piaf (Ethnographic Alternatives)

Stacy Holman Jones

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In this innovative book, Stacy Holman Jones presents torch singing as a much more complicated phenomenon than the familiar trope of a woman lamenting her victimhood. With an ethnographer's eye, she observes the bluesy torch singers, asking if they are possibly performing critiques of the very lyrics they sing. From this perspective, we see the singer giving expression not not only to desire but also to an incipient determination to resist and change. Holman Jones also reveals points of contact in the opposition between spectators and performers, emotion and intellect, and love and power. Instead of interpreting the expression of love as a woman's violent mistake—as willing deception and passive fate—Holman Jones allows us to hear an active search for hope.

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