

The role of the technology that has transformed the world offers many perspectives of sociological analysis: the dilemma of security/privacy, surveillance by the government, of consumption, cyber security and cybercrime, genetics, and identity:

“It may appear that technology is the driving force that has created this new world but we must remember that technology develops out of social need, whose use is determined by social experience, expectation, knowledge and power.” In short, says Goldberg, studying technology sociologically gives us the perspective to evaluate which aspects will be the dominant ones in the 21st century.

It is an excellent work and very original in teaching students as well as others interested in the subject to learn to think sociologically.

Petty: The Biography. Warren Zanes. New York, New York: Henry Holt, 2015. 336 pp. \$30 hbk.

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Let us start with the obligatory conflict-of-interest housekeeping: This reviewer is partial to the music, ethic, and ethos of Tom Petty—and not just because I live in Gainesville, Florida. I have loosely tracked his career since sometime around 1980, when I first heard “Refugee” as a high school freshman in the Midwest. It sounded so cool and so unlike either the basic Styx-Foreigner-Boston-REO line up or the Zeppelin-Floyd-Sabbath-AC/DC contingent that dominated rock radio play at the time.

So, when I cracked the cover of Warren Zanes’s comprehensive biography of Tom Petty, I went in wanting to like it. By the time I finished, I loved it. That is largely because Zanes, a musician himself (a member of the Del Fuegos) who holds a PhD in visual and cultural studies and who has taught at several institutions, including New York University, tells a richly detailed story about far more than Tom Petty’s life. It is also a story about life in the music industry, the life and struggles of a band (actually, several bands), and the life of Petty’s own family, from his grandparents through to his daughters.

Zanes’s book, which moves chronologically, works for several reasons. First, he conducted extensive interviews with key people in all phases and aspects of Petty’s life, from members of the Heartbreakers and Mudcrutch (a precursor to the Heartbreakers) to wanna-be Heartbreaker Stevie Nicks, singer Jackson Browne, and Petty family members, including current wife Dana and daughter Adria. Second, the book does not sugarcoat the rough patches or duck the hard issues. To wit, it addresses: Petty’s physically abusive father and their contentious relationship (Petty, at one point, speculates whether his hunting-and-fishing father was scared his son was gay); the collapse of Petty’s first marriage to Jane and her descent into mental illness; his own use of heroin and related period of clinical depression; and feuds, battles, and breakups with bandmates like Stan Lynch. There is also discussion of Petty’s driving, internal rage—“I snap, and some of it comes out. It *really* comes out, in a scary way”—and the

time he punched a wall, shattering his hand in frustration because of how a song for “Southern Accents” just was not coming together.

Third, Zanes sprinkles in a bevy of colorful details and anecdotes. There are fun ones, like Petty and “Born to Run”—era Bruce Springsteen cruising down Sunset Boulevard toward the Pacific in Petty’s brand new red Camaro, blasting the Rolling Stones’ “12 X 5” on eight-track tape. Or the time when, at a party hosted by Dave Stewart of Eurythmics (and “Southern Accents”) fame, Timothy Leary reached out to Petty with a hit of acid that Petty rejected. Leary quickly quipped, “More for the rest of us.” And then there are somber anecdotes, like Los Angeles-based Petty choosing not to attend his mother’s funeral back in Gainesville—something he still feels conflicted about, given their close relationship—because “I’m not going to let this be about me. I can’t deal with that.”

Although it initially might not seem so, Zanes’s book, along with Petty’s ambition, drive and focus, provide some valuable lessons for those of us on tenure lines in academia. At the outset, the stage/studio dichotomy in the music world neatly mirrors the classroom/office dichotomy in higher education. Professors perform, inform and, yes, even entertain on the classroom stage, but if we do not produce articles back in the office, that stage will disappear. We feel the pressure to produce to earn tenure. Likewise, for Petty, “the pressure to write was palpable,” as he worked “years living inside the album cycle.” If you do not produce, then you are only a local band—or dumped from the tenure track.

The process of trying to produce an album also is somewhat akin to publishing a peer-reviewed article. First, they often both take a great deal of time from concept to completion. Second, and more important, everyone else—producers and record companies, on one hand, reviewers and editors, on the other—is full of suggestions and one’s own visions for the record or article that you want to produce. Sometimes you suck it up and bow to reviewers by making the changes, just as recording artists must do, but sometimes you explain why you are not going to make a change or two. Like the time Petty’s record label was rebuffed when it asked him to substitute the word “champagne” for “cocaine” in the song “Listen to Her Heart” because the drug reference might hinder it from hit-single status. “The executives were thinking about radio. Petty was thinking about a song,” Zanes explains.

Finally, in academia there is always the tension between the need to publish solo with the benefit of publishing with co-authors from whom one can learn and stretch while also demonstrating collaboration. Petty has done both in the record world: “The solo records made me realize how good the band is. But the solo records were also important to the life of the band. I always came back different. Things need to breathe.”

Ultimately, a close read of “Petty: The Biography” demonstrates several qualities that serve successful academics well: drive, work ethic, focus, and a touch of neuroticism, all to put out the best possible product in the studio and on stage. And as for that stage/studio and classroom/office analogy, the line sometimes blurs, as both sides of the house demand attention. As Petty puts it, “When I’m playing a show, I’m at the office.”