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Aurore Diehl

*Candidate*

American Studies

*Department*

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Thesis Committee:*

Rebecca Schreiber, Chairperson

A. Gabriel Meléndez

Antonio Tiongson

**WRITE OF THE VALKYRIES: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LIFE  
NARRATIVES OF WOMEN IN THE HEAVY METAL MUSIC SUBCULTURE**

**BY**

**AUORE DIEHL**

**B.A., AMERICAN STUDIES,  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2010**

**THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

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**May, 2013**

## **DEDICATION**

To my daughter, Trinity.

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# **WRITE OF THE VALKYRIES: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LIFE NARRATIVES OF WOMEN IN THE HEAVY METAL SUBCULTURE**

**By**

**Aurore Diehl**

**B.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2010**

**M.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2013**

## **ABSTRACT**

Despite women and girls making up a substantial portion of the audience and a small but increasing number of the musicians of heavy metal music, attention to their perspectives is frequently absent from scholarly treatments of the musical genre and its subculture. Feminist scholars writing about women musicians in popular music, likewise, seldom give much attention to female metal musicians. This is problematic because it excludes the voices of those women, many of whom are young and working-class, who have found the metal subculture to be a uniquely powerful venue for their self-expression. In my master's thesis, I will address this gap in the literature by analyzing the life narratives of three current or former female heavy metal musicians, a female fan, and a former groupie. My primary research question is: how do these writers view themselves in relation to heavy metal music and its communities of musicians and fans? Additional questions include: what motivated the authors to write their respective works of life narrative? What are some of the strategies developed by the authors for negotiating the male, and, in the case of the two non-white authors, racial gaze within the heavy metal

subculture? How do they incorporate photographs and other visual elements into their texts as forms of evidence? And, what are some of the discourses that contribute to the general exclusion of the perspective of women in metal culture from metal scholarship and feminist scholarship of women in popular music?

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## Chapter 1:

### Introduction

Cultural expectations surrounding gender and taste in the arts and entertainment are often overlooked in feminist discussions about how gender hierarchies work. This is problematic because when women and girls are given messages that their tastes in expressive culture are inappropriate, limitations are placed on them because of their gender as surely as when they are told that certain professions are closed to them or certain behaviors are “unladylike.” While these latter two examples of gender subordination are frequently named and contested by women’s studies scholars and feminist activists, the enforcement of taste boundaries receives less attention.

It is my contention that these rules concerning what forms of art and entertainment women should and should not engage with as either creators or aficionados are essential to the sex/gender system as theorized by Gayle Rubin. Rubin states that in order for there to be a gender hierarchy, there must be strictly enforced rules of gender difference. For women to remain subordinate to men, they must be kept distinct from them through a “taboo of sameness” that entails a sexual division of labor and the repression in women of whatever traits a particular culture regards as “masculine” (Rubin 1997, 39–40). According to Robert Walser (1994, 235), “cultural hierarchy functions to naturalize social hierarchies through the circular reinscription of prestige.” Based on the above theories on how cultural divisions serve to uphold social hierarchies, I propose that gendered taste boundaries perform the work of maintaining women’s difference, which in turn contributes to maintaining their subjugation. The analytical focus of the work to follow is on five selected written life narratives of women who have contested these

boundaries of taste by engaging in the consumption and production of heavy metal music.

### **Heavy Metal Music**

Heavy metal music developed out of British blues rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Levine 2008, 8–9; Weinstein 2000, 14–15). Walser (1993, 1) states that the term “heavy metal” originally referred to toxic elements and compounds and large artillery, giving it connotations of power and danger. The phrase was “applied to a particular musical practice when it made social sense to do so,” starting in the late 1960s (Walser 1993, 7). The music genre it designates appeared simultaneously in the United States and the United Kingdom and is characterized by distorted electric guitars; prominent and aggressive drums; extreme singing styles that include screaming and guttural shouting; and overall musical virtuosity (Brackett 2009; Wallach, Berger, and Greene, 2011, 4). Deena Weinstein finds that the genre coalesced during the mid-1970s and experienced a great expansion in both popularity and in proliferation of subgenres between 1979 and 1983 (2000, 21). Reporting on this period of growth and fragmentation, Walser (1993,13) lists the names of the subgenres that began to appear at this time in metal media and recording industry advertising: “thrash metal, commercial metal, lite metal, power metal, American metal, black (Satanic) metal, white (Christian) metal, death metal, speed metal,” and “glam metal.”

A number of metal scholars consider the increasing popularity of the genre in the United States and Great Britain in the 1970s and 80s to be a resistant response on the part of working class youth to the rapid deindustrialization taking place in both countries during those years (Walser 1993, x; Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011, 16). According to Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene (2011, 16), metal music came to prominence in the 1970s at the same time that the effects of deindustrialization such as

“increased unemployment and underemployment, economic insecurity, a weakening of unions, and a crumbling civic infrastructure” were becoming widely felt. The music has since spread throughout the world, carried in the wings of globalized trade. Contributing to its appeal in the Global South is the industrialization of that region that has been fostered by the same neoliberal policies of unfettered capitalism that caused the deindustrialization of the North. In countries throughout Latin America and Asia, young factory workers lacking union protections and seeing no hope for social mobility have taken up metal music as a form of emotional expression (Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011, 16). I will discuss this function of metal music as an outlet for extreme affect—termed “affective overdrive” by Wallach, Berger, and Greene—in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this work.

I point to the globalization of metal in order to support the argument that the music genre and its subculture are heterogeneous in nature: the musical boundaries and cultural meanings of metal music have been continually contested by its communities of fans and musicians since its inception. Metal scholars report that despite the general acceptance of the definition of the genre given above, exactly what bands and subgenres qualify as true metal music has been in dispute since the genre label emerged into discourse (Walser 1993, 6–7; Weinstein 2000, 14–15). Members of bands considered seminal to the genre by fans have disputed the metal designation, some quite vehemently (Walser 1993, 6). The boundary between hard rock and heavy metal is one such area of dispute, with hard rock being considered the broader term. In other words, while all metal bands play hard rock, not all hard rock bands play heavy metal. Some American groups like Aerosmith and Kiss, for example, are considered hard rock by some fans and critics

and heavy metal by others (Weinstein 2000, 20).

While I find the term “heavy metal music” as useful for outlining the parameters of my research, I am also aware that like all signifiers it is inherently unstable. For the purposes of this work, I consider bands as falling under the rubric of heavy metal music based on how the groups self-identify and whether or not they have appeared regularly in metal media and scholarship. As far as the authors of the primary texts are concerned, all of the musicians among them identify the music they perform as some variety of metal and the non-groupie fan self-identifies as a metalhead. The author who is a self-identified former groupie was primarily associated with bands that I would describe as metal based on the above criteria.

Just as there is no consensus within the global metal community where the boundaries of the genre lie, there is also no singular discourse of gender. Walser (1993, 135) argues that metal music and culture “includes a great variety of gender constructions.” He asserts that like most “cultural practices,” metal music is “continually in flux, driven by its own constitutive contradictions” (133) and supports this contention with regards to gender by observing that nearly “every issue of the fan magazine *RIP* in 1989 contained letters from fans protesting sexism” and “homophobia” (135). The interviews with metal musicians conducted by anthropologist Sam Dunn in the documentary *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (Dunn, McFadyen, and Wise 2006) also display the diversity of gender discourses within the metal community. In the film, members of the metal group Slipknot state that although they do not hate women, they view the metal scene as ideally a male-only space. Angela Gassow, vocalist of the band Arch Enemy, offers the opposite opinion: she holds that male fans appreciate the presence of women in metal fandom, in part because it defuses tensions that would otherwise arise

between men. In yet another interview in the film, Lemmy Kilmister, bassist and vocalist for Motörhead, defends the accomplishments of the late guitarist Kelly Johnson of the all-female band Girlschool from sexist detractors. While it is true that males outnumber females in the fan bases of many metal subgenres, the tendency of metal scholars to define metal culture as “masculine” or “male-dominated” obscures these complexities and ongoing contestations.<sup>1</sup>

The title of this work, “Write of the Valkyries,” refers to visual and textual representations found in metal culture of female headbangers as mythic warrior women. Female metal musicians sometimes appear wearing fantasy battle gear and holding swords on their album covers, Doro’s *Warrior Soul* (2006) and Lee Aaron’s *Metal Queen* (1984) being two examples, and Flight of the Valkyries is the name of a metal festival featuring female artists that took place annually in Baltimore, Maryland from 2007 to 2011.<sup>2</sup> Like the name of the Baltimore festival, my title is a play on *Ride of the Valkyries*, the popular term for a piece of music from Wagner’s *Die Walküre*. It is meant to reflect my arguments that the authors whose writings I have selected for this research describe employing metal music and culture as resistant technologies in their struggles against various forms of gender subordination.

### **Figuring Female Metalheads**

Due to the numeric majority of men and boys in the metal subculture and the common construction of the music as “masculine,” little scholarly work has been done on the perspectives of girls and women among its fans and musicians. If they are discussed at all, it is often in terms that limit their agency and present them as passive objects of the male gaze. In his book *Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*,

Jeffery Jensen Arnett (1996, 9) describes many of the female fans he observed at an Iron Maiden show as displaying a “neoprostitute style” that elicited rapacious looks from the male audience members. Similarly, Deena Weinstein, in *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, defines female metal musicians in terms of the male gaze: according to the author, they “do not transcend their primary role as sex objects” (2000, 69). While Arnett later theorizes that the female fans participate in the subculture for the same reasons that male fans do—to alleviate “alienation” and to satisfy “sensation seeking” (148) — Weinstein does not propose any possible reasons for the female presence in metal music scenes.

Similarly, avowedly feminist authors writing volumes about women in popular music generally devote little space to female metal musicians. Lucy O’Brien allocates a single page to women playing metal music in her *She Bop II: The Definitive History of Women in Rock, Pop, and Soul* and makes the contention, unsupported by any textual evidence, that certain female metal artists in the 1980s were “just seen as freakish” (2002, 251). In *Girls Rock! Fifty Years of Women Making Music* (Carson, Lewis, and Shaw 2004), the authors only mention two female metal artists and do not refer to the genre by name. Out of the books I surveyed concerned with female contributions to popular music, only Gillian Garr’s (1992) *She’s A Rebel: The History of Women in Rock & Roll* discusses women in metal in any depth. Garr gives a reasonably sound treatment of the topic over the course of five pages, offering readers at least a little insight into the experiences and motivations of female metal musicians (412–17).

I have found two scholarly articles that deal directly with the motivations and experiences of female fans of hard rock and heavy metal music: Susan Fast’s (1999)

“Rethinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman’s View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock” and “‘Hard and Heavy’: Gender and Power in a Heavy Metal Music Subculture” by Leigh Krenske and Jim McKay (2000). Fast employs the methods of visual analysis—applied to a Led Zeppelin concert video—and the analysis of surveys she distributed to fans of the group in order to answer her research questions about what motivates female fans and develop a more nuanced understanding of gender expressions in hard rock.<sup>3</sup>

Fast argues that when rock critics and music scholars describe the music and images of heavy rock bands like Led Zeppelin as “sexist and macho,” this serves to disallow “the dangerous possibility of women” being “sexual and powerful” (294). In this author’s view, these predominantly male writers are threatened by the prospect that “male rock stars’ power and sexuality could be understood, appropriated, or even controlled by women” (294). In her analysis of the fan survey she conducted, she found that Led Zeppelin fandom allowed both male and female fans to disrupt normative gender identities. For example, some women reported identifying with the group’s macho image and heavy music while some male respondents said they related to the tenderness and vulnerability expressed by its acoustic-orientated material (274).

Krenske and McKay’s article reports findings based on the ethnographic fieldwork Krenske conducted at a heavy metal nightclub in Brisbane, Australia. This work of sociological research reduces female metalheads to objects of study, sorting them into categories like “Metal Wench” and “Glam Chick” and analyzing their somatotypes (physiques) (295). The authors conclude that “women drawn to the HM scene to escape oppressive context[s]” such as stifling rural childhoods or everyday misogyny have

“merely inserted themselves into another” scene of oppression (302). While Fast imagines that Led Zeppelin’s female fans might engage with hard rock music in order to feel “powerful,” Krenske and McKay’s results are problematic, suggesting that female metal fans are under false consciousness, unreflexively “inserting themselves” into a sexist environment.

I hold that female members of the metal subculture are either given little attention or depicted as lacking subjectivity in many scholarly treatments of either the metal genre or of women in rock due to complex interactions of gender, class, and racial stereotypes. According to Bethany Bryson (1996, 893–894), the 1993 General Social Survey shows that metal music is the most disliked music in American culture. She describes this survey as a “nearly annual survey of noninstitutionalized adults in the United States conducted by the National Opinion Research Center using a stratified random sampling method” (888). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas about the role cultural tastes play in maintaining social boundaries, she theorizes that the high level of dislike for metal music reported by its respondents is due to the general public associating the genre with people of low socio-economic status, a dynamic she terms “symbolic exclusion”(886, 891–2, 896). Hence, it seems likely that regardless of actual socio-economic status, fans of the genre are understood to be lower-class individuals. This is borne out by the descriptions of metal fans offered by some journalists: one describes them as “slack-jawed, alpaca-haired,” and “bulbous-inseamed” (Duncan 1984, 36–37, quoted in Weinstein 2000, 1); another as “backward-hat wearing...mouth-breathers” (Michael 2010, 30). These depictions offer an indication of the raced, gendered, and classed vision of metalheads that exists in the American imaginary.

As female fans of a music genre closely associated with the white working class, I argue that female metalheads are subject to the negative stereotypes of white working class women that developed in the Victorian era. Anne McClintock (1995) proposes that the white working class woman, like the colonized woman, is a figure produced during the nineteenth century as the other of the white middle class woman. She is a “degenerate” figure understood through her association with “dirt and drudgery” (55–56, 77, 83–84). The working class woman was seen as a threat to middle-class stability because of her perceived economic independence from the heteropatriarchal family (Agustín 2008, 104–5; Ferguson 2004, 8–9). Regardless of their actual occupations, working class women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were equated with prostitutes by the upper class due to the latter’s view that these women lacked “proper places in a domestic structure” (Agustín 2008, 104). While these perceptions may have softened over time, I hold that at least vestiges of them survive in modern discourse.

At the same time, the U.S. working class has been stereotyped as uniformly made up of sexist and racist white males. Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm (2006, 358) state that by the 1990s, the American working class had come to be seen in the popular imagination as a group of “rednecks and Archie Bunkers looking to roll back the gains of the civil rights and women’s movements.” In his analysis of the functions of the racializing epithet “white trash” used to designate poor whites, John Hartigan Jr. (2005, 118-119) holds that upper-class whites apply this label to distance themselves from the “volatile social dangers of racism and sexism.” The white working class woman, therefore, either does not exist at all in the American imaginary, or exists as an uneducated, degenerate dupe of the incorrigibly sexist white working class man. I posit

that it is this set of ideologies of gender, class, and race that contribute to the gap in the literature regarding the positionalities of women in the metal subculture.

### **Methods, Methodology, and Primary Sources**

This dearth of attention to the perspectives of female participants in the metal subculture that I have pointed to in metal scholarship and feminist music history is problematic because it excludes the voices of those women, many of whom are young and working-class, who have found the metal subculture to be a uniquely powerful venue for their self-expression. In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminisms*, Angela Y. Davis (1998, xi) looks to uncover “hints of feminist attitudes” in the lyrics and performative texts of black women blues singer of early twentieth century, arguing that “black feminist traditions tend to exclude” the voices of poor and working-class black women. Similarly, I offer the observation that modern female youth of all races, especially those of the lower classes, often look to the oppositional music of the present day—including metal, punk rock, rap, and reggae—as an outlet for their thoughts and feelings. According to Lisa L. Rhodes (2005, xiv), playing loud music can be a powerful mode of speaking for women, a way for them to liberate themselves from cultural messages directed at them “to be quiet in public.”

Yet this “loudness” and intensity inherent in using metal music as a means of self-expression may render female fans and musicians largely illegible to many journalists and scholars as well as the non-headbanging public. Gayatri Spivak finds that while suicide bombing is a form of speech, it is a form so outside understood categories of expression as to be “an impossible phrase” whose “message will never be heard” (2004, 97, quoted in Rajan 2010, 124). While metal music may not be nearly as extreme a form of speech as suicide bombing, Arnett (1996, 14) terms it “the sensory equivalent of war,”

a description that has been taken up by other metal scholars.<sup>4</sup> Spivak (2004, 63–64) offers her family’s misreadings of the suicide of her great-aunt as an example of how even a woman who is “not a ‘true’ subaltern” and who leaves a written record can be effectively silenced because of gendered cultural assumptions. I offer my analysis of the selected texts to counter these factors that may contribute to their authors going unheard, even though they have published these written works.

The research methods I am employing to accomplish this are life narrative analysis supplemented by the visual analysis of photographs and other visual culture forms the authors include in their texts. According to Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson (2001, 3), life narrative is defined as a “term that includes many kinds of self-referential writing.” In contrast with the umbrella term “life narrative,” “autobiography,” refers to a specific type of self-referential writing that emerged in early modernity and “celebrates the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story” (Smith and Watson 2001, 2–3). In this thesis, I most often use the term “memoir,” which predates “autobiography” and does not have the same totalizing connotations, along with the broader term “life narrative,” to describe the texts I am analyzing (Smith and Watson 2001, 2–3; Quinby 1992, 298–299). “Memoir” is also the genre name I find most often used in the media promotion of the life stories of musicians and other popular culture figures. Life narrative, on the other hand, is perhaps the best term to cover the diverse nature of the texts themselves, as they include a short personal essay, a transcribed diary, and a self-help book. When I do use the term “autobiography,” it is in the generally when referencing another scholar who is applying it.

Timothy Dow Adams (2000, xxi) argues that when photography is used to

augment life narrative texts, the “interrelations” between the two “demonstrate the...tendency in both to conceal as much as they reveal.” Regarding combinations of autobiographical text and visual culture created by women artists, Smith and Watson (2002, 21) find that “visual and textual modes...confront and mutually interrogate each other.” Based on these concepts proposed by Dow and Smith and Watson, in this work I read the selected life narratives and the visual media that accompany them in concert with each other while bearing in mind that both are constructions, not revelations of “truth.”

I have chosen these methods because they allow me to address women’s participation in the metal music subculture in a broader way than Fast or Krenske and McKay did in their respective studies. Fast’s research was limited to the fan base of an individual band while Krenske and McKay’s report was based on ethnographic fieldwork done at a single nightclub. Through my analysis of these five life narratives, I am able to offer a glimpse into the diversity of women’s experiences in the metal subculture. Each life narrative provides a unique perspective as each author comes from a different background and writes about her involvement in divergent subgenres and scenes in different geographic locations.

The most crucial methodological practice I am applying to this work is that of self-reflexivity. Feminist researchers have pointed to the need for reflexive practice in ethnographic research, regardless of whether the researcher is a relative stranger to her subjects or is working within a community that she feels connected to by ethnicity or culture (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007; Zavella 1993). However, as a female researcher utilizing women’s life narratives as primary source material, I can also see myself as the “outsider within” (Zavella 1993) facing the same pitfalls encountered by an

ethnographer doing fieldwork in a community that she believes she has cultural ties to. I do my utmost to follow the guidelines for “holistic reflexivity” offered by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Deborah Piatelli (2007, 510), including maintaining an awareness of my standpoint and the personal biases I bring to the work. In this research, I counterbalance my understanding of the constructed nature of both life-writing and photography with a commitment to treating my authors and their life-worlds with respect, meaning that I strive to neither over-identify with them nor subject them to my own personal judgments.

The five main primary texts I draw on for my research are Sean Yseult’s *I’m in the Band: Backstage Notes from the Chick in White Zombie*; Keidra Chaney’s essay “Sister Outsider Headbanger: On Being a Black Feminist Metalhead”; *The Last Living Slut: Born in Iran, Bred Backstage*, a groupie memoir by Roxana Shirazi; *Diary of a Redneck Vampire: The True Story of a Rock and Roll Girl in a Boy’s World* by Flo, the pseudonym of a former heavy metal drummer; and *Right Side Out: In Tune Within, to be in Harmony with the World* by Annah Moore, a transwoman heavy metal guitarist. I have chosen these five texts to reflect the varied experiences of women participating in metal culture. They include works by three musicians—each of whom plays a different instrument, two non-white women, and one transwoman. I also draw on autobiographies by male metal musicians, promotional materials of the bands the musicians among my authors belonged to, and an episode of the Discovery Channel series *Beyond Ordinary* titled “Sex Change: Him to Her” that chronicles Moore’s sex reassignment surgery to help contextualize the authors’ writings.

### **Theories of Gender**

In this work, I draw on opposing theories of gender as performance and gender as ontological. Judith Butler (2004, 14) theorizes gender as “an identity tenuously

constituted in time,” through “*a stylized repetition of acts*” (emphasis in original). This idea that gender is a culturally scripted performance rather than an expression of essential identity is useful to this work, especially when considered in concert with the Judith Peraino’s (2006) work on the history of gender and popular music. According to Peraino, the cultural feminists of the 1970s asserted that men and women were fundamentally different and that the formation of a separatist counterculture was essential to women’s liberation (155–156). This understanding of gender supported the gendering of sound that defined “womyn’s music,” a musical genre associated with the radical/lesbian feminist movement. Peraino finds that rock drums, electric guitars, and driving rhythms were understood by cultural feminism’s adherents as male-coded and therefore inappropriate in the womyn’s music genre (159–160).<sup>5</sup> This gender coding of sound associated with the gender essentialism of cultural feminism is yet another impediment to understanding metal music as potentially empowering to women and girls.

At the same time, adopting a purely post-structuralist approach to understanding gender poses problems of its own. According to Linda Alcoff (1997, 340), if gender is understood as entirely socially constructed, there exists no subject of either feminist analysis or activism. I concur with Alcoff’s assertion that feminism needs to develop “an alternative theory of the [gendered] subject that avoids both essentialism and nominalism” (341). Transgender theorists have also argued that understandings of gender as purely performative or cultural undermines their experiences of having literal and physical gender identities (Stryker and Whittle 2006, 183; Prosser 1998, 59). Since one of my authors is a transwoman who she states she always imagined herself as having a female body even when her physical reality was otherwise (interview with Annah Moore

in “Sex Change: From Him to Her” 2005), I find it necessary to bring into this work these critiques of theories of gender as strictly performative.

### **Structure of This Work**

The thesis to follow is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter after this introduction, I consider the motivations, stated and unstated, that impelled the authors to write their respective works of life narrative. I interrogate the creation of these works in relation to the recent popularity of heavy metal memoir and the larger phenomenon of popular music memoir. The following chapter is concerned with the nature of relationships that the authors describe with metal music, its culture, and other individuals in the metal community. Here, I investigate how each writer related to other women and men in the subculture based on whether the writer self-identifies as a musician, fan, or groupie. I consider the factors in the authors’ experiences of metal culture that either support or undermine female solidarity, holding that a dynamic I term the abjection of the groupie operates as one of the primary forces undermining it.

Next, I consider how each author describes her experience of the male gaze, utilizing both textual and visual analysis to examine the authors’ varied approaches to negotiating it. With regards to Shirazi and Chaney, I look at how the male gaze is combined with and further complicated by the racial gaze. An important theoretical concept I bring in here is that of “macha femme” as a performative style, defined by Deanna Shoemaker (2010, 296) as an alternative femininity that “simultaneous conjures and resists fixed notions of masculinity and femininity across one body.” As an alternative femininity, the “macha femme” differs significantly from “female masculinity” as theorized by Judith Halberstam. In the final chapter before the conclusion, I discuss how the authors use visual culture or, in the case of Chaney, visual

language to augment their texts as a form of evidence.

### Significance

As a cultural product of the working class, metal music has been unfairly stigmatized for the sexism that pervades Western culture. Robert Walser (1993, 111) has cautioned against blaming metal music, originating as it does within “an economic and cultural underclass,” for social ills including sexism that are also perpetuated by “so-called high culture and the economic elite.” I seek to demonstrate that Venise T. Berry’s (1994, 188) intervention regarding hip hop music, that excessive focus on its negative portrayals of women overshadows the anti-sexist messages offered by female and non-sexist male artists, can also be applied to metal music.

Another intervention offered by this work is into the understandings of gender applied by many scholars of metal music. In my thesis, I seek to de-couple gender identity from qualities such as individualism, musical virtuosity, and rebelliousness that metal studies scholars often associate with both metal culture and masculinity (Walser 1993, 108; Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011, 25). I use examples from the five works of women’s life writing to support the argument that heavy metal’s unruliness extends to gender roles as well, fostering not “cultural masculinity” (Weinstein 2009, 17) but an array of alternative masculinities and femininities.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite these insights about how the meanings of gender are continually being contested in the metal subculture and his observation that the metal audience is “roughly gender-balanced,” Walser named his chapter on gender in metal music “Forging Masculinity” based on his reasoning that “metal is overwhelmingly concerned with...confronting anxieties...understood as particular to men” and it utilizes musical sounds that have been traditionally heard as male-coded to address these; see *Running*, 110. For more examples of references to metal as male-dominated or masculine in metal scholarship see Wallach, Berger, and Greene, “Affective Overdrive,” 24–25; Deena Weinstein, “The Empowering Masculinity of British Heavy Metal” in *Heavy Metal Music in Britain*, ed. Gerd Bayer (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 17–31; and Jeffery Jensen Arnett, *Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 12–18, 139.

<sup>2</sup> “Flight of the Valkyries History,” <http://www.flightofthevalkyries.com/history>.

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<sup>3</sup> Led Zeppelin is one of the bands at the contested edge/overlap between metal and hard rock. Many fans, critics, and scholars consider them seminal to the metal genre, yet others insist that they fall under hard rock, not metal. The group's vocalist Robert Plant has also disputed the metal designation (see Walser, *Running*, 6). Fast uses the broader term, hard rock, in her article, so that is the term I use to refer to the group in my analysis of her work.

<sup>4</sup> For example, this phrase is quoted in Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2003), 347–8.

<sup>5</sup> Note: the spelling “womyn” that designates “womyn’s music” as a specific genre is typical of the alternate spelling of the words “woman” and “women” (“womon” and “wimmin” being other examples) deployed in the 1970s by radical/lesbian feminists to take the “man” out of “woman” and “men” out of “women.”

## Chapter 2

### An Analysis of the Coaxers and Motivations behind the Texts

“The story told that can’t be real/somehow must reflect the truth we feel”

(Black Sabbath, 1981)

A work of written life narrative does not represent the literal truth about its author; instead, it represents “a special kind of fiction, its self and its truth as much created as (re)discovered realities” (Eakin 1989, xx, quoted in Waxman and Byington 1997, 165). In order to start analyzing the works I have chosen for this research, in this chapter I endeavor to understand what inspired the authors to create and publish these “special fictions.” Following sociologist Ken Plummer, Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson (2001, 50) theorize that for every work of life narrative there are three types of people: a “producer or teller of the story,” the “consumers...who interpret the story,” and “the coaxers, the person or persons, or the institution, that elicits the story from the speaker.” This chapter seeks to uncover the authors’ motivations for telling their stories and is especially concerned with the coaxers and coercers behind the selected works. In seeking to address the issue of the motivators for the production of these narratives, I bear mind that some of these might be internal to the narrators themselves and that the intended audience of a work also shapes the form it takes.

As I begin to assess the five authors’ reasons for writing life narratives that are concerned at least in part with heavy metal music, I first examine the nature of metal memoirs as a literary subgenre. I consider here how metal memoirs compare to other musical memoirs including those of jazz, country, and rock musicians, seeking to discover what conventions they share with these types of music memoirs, and what, if

anything, makes them distinct. Based on what I am able to discern about the genre, I can assess to what degree the works at the center of this research adhere to or diverge from its conventions, which in turn will help me to speculate about the authors' motivations for writing and publishing them. Later in the chapter, I analyze the creation of these texts in the context of women's exclusion from conventional music histories. Here, I will argue that beyond asserting their places in metal community, culture, and history, the authors are also intent on intervening to the silencing of women in the arts in general.

### **Metal Memoirs as a Literary Subgenre**

Heavy metal memoirs have enjoyed a fair amount of popularity in the early twenty-first century, a factor that may have played a role in encouraging the authors to write and seek to publish their works as well as influencing the publishers that released them. A search I entered on Amazon.com for "heavy metal music memoirs" yielded thirty books of life narrative focused on metal music, almost all of which were released in 2000 or later. Most of these were by well-known musicians, although there were also some by fans, groupies, journalists, and even one by a musician's father. A number of these, including *I Am Ozzy* by Ozzy Osbourne with Chris Ayres, *The Dirt* by Mötley Crüe with Neil Bozza, and *Slash* by the Guns N' Roses guitarist of the same name with Anthony Bozza have appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Metal memoirs might best be understood as a subgenre of rock memoirs, a genre that, according to Thomas Swiss (2005), possesses distinctive sets of both coaxers and defining characteristics. Swiss finds that while the most obvious reason that rock musicians write autobiographies is to make money, there are other motivating factors that come into play (288). He holds that although popular musicians who write autobiographies stand to gain not only from publishing royalties but also from potentially

increased music sales if their books are well received, rock stars also write to “control their own stories by telling them in their own terms” (288). In his analysis, rock musicians-turned-authors establish authority through a number of conventions: their books contain revelations previously unheard by the public, they aim to “set the record straight” regarding certain stories others have told about them, and they use photographs and other images as evidence to authorize their claims (288–290).

Rock and metal memoirs share certain features with the autobiographies of jazz musicians. According to Holly E. Farrington (2006, 378), a “casual tone and vernacular style...is common to many jazz autobiographies and denotes that participation of the reader, who will ‘come along’ for the ride.” For rock and metal narrators, this translates into texts laden with slang and profanity. Another quality Farrington associates with jazz autobiography is a focus on a sense of fraternity that is nurtured through the jazz lifestyle, i.e. drug-taking, in addition to the music (378). I have observed that this emphasis on fraternity is also present in metal memoirs written by male musicians, in which women often appear as objects, not unlike drugs, through which men bond with one another. I will discuss this convention in greater detail and how the authors of my selected texts disrupt it in the chapter that follows this one.

Country music autobiographies are also similar to metal memoirs in the ways that authenticity and thereby narrative authority are presented in gendered terms. The authority to tell one’s story can be asserted by a number of means, including the “authority of experience” and “identity claims” (Smith and Watson 2001, 27–28), this last point being notable because the identity most closely associated with both metal and country music is white, male, and working class. In music memoirs, establishing one’s

authenticity within a given musical genre plays an important part in establishing narrative authority. Pamela Fox (1998, 235–236) finds that country authenticity is often “defined by masculine codes of behavior, appearance and gesture: the mythic hard-drinking, hard-driving honky-tonk brawler.” These standards create challenges for female writers of country autobiography, whom Farrington finds resort to a variety of strategies in order to simultaneously perform country authenticity and femininity in textual form (236–7, 253). Similarly, male writers of metal memoirs deploy male-coded discourses of hard living and toughness in order to establish authority through appealing to ideals of metal authenticity, creating parallel challenges for the subgenre’s women writers.

While metal is a subgenre of rock music, as I discussed in the introduction there are some musical and cultural characteristics that make it distinct. One word that sums up these differences might be “exaggerated,” a word Gillian G. Garr (1992, 416) uses to distinguish metal from hard rock. Another word, used to describe a number of metal subgenres, is “extreme.” As a literary subgenre, metal memoirs appear to have some additional conventions that would appear exaggerated or extreme even in comparison to other popular music memoirs. Metal memoirs frequently begin with narrations of extremely painful childhoods filled with intense poverty, physical abuse, early alcohol and drug use by the narrators, or a combination of these. According to Swiss, authors’ sex lives are commonly discussed in rock autobiographies (2005, 289). This is especially true of metal memoirs; in fact, Swiss offers an anecdote about an act of sexual “performance art” from the pages of industrial metal artist Marilyn Manson’s *The Long Hard Road out of Hell* to illustrate his point about sexual storytelling in rock autobiography (289–290). Authors of metal memoirs appear to be in competition with each other to offer the most

shocking stories not only of sexuality, but also of bizarre alcohol- and drug-induced antics and violence.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Five Texts Viewed in Relation to Metal Memoirs**

The popularity of metal memoirs appears to have played a major role in inspiring the writing and publication of Roxana Shirazi's *The Last Living Slut*. As a groupie memoir, it offers readers another perspective on the transgressive lifestyles detailed in the best-selling metal memoirs by musicians. In fact, the amanuenses of two such texts are Shirazi's acknowledged coauthors. According to the introduction to her book written by Neil Straus and Anthony Bozza, owners of Igniter Literary Group and co-writers of *The Dirt* and *Slash* respectively, Shirazi traveled to San Clemente, California to share the notes, essays, and diary excerpts that formed the basis for her manuscript with them (Strauss and Bozza, introduction to Shirazi 2010, xii).<sup>2</sup> The pair listened eagerly as Shirazi read aloud from these texts and enthusiastically coaxed her to continue reading. After potential publishers rejected the book, they decided to publish it themselves (xiii). It appears that Shirazi's chosen coauthors and publishers expected her memoirs to appeal to a segment of the book-buying public eager to read more about extreme metal lifestyles, the same audience that had purchased large numbers of the books they themselves had co-written.

The resultant published work adheres closely to the textual and visual conventions of metal memoirs. While the details of her childhood differ from those of male metal musicians growing up in the United States and Great Britain—Shirazi writes about growing up during and after the 1979 revolution in Iran during which she was sexually abused by neighbors and beaten by her step-father—this section of her text adheres to the

theme of childhood trauma common to metal memoirs (Shirazi 2010, 32, 48, 56). The main focus of the book is on excessive drug and alcohol use and promiscuous sexuality, also in keeping with metal memoir conventions. Published by Strauss and Bozza's Igniter Literary Group through Harper Collins' It Books, it closely resembles another metal memoir from the same book label, *Mustaine* by Megadeth guitarist Dave Mustaine with Joe Layden, in its graphic design. All of these textual and visual features appear geared to appeal to the audience of other well-received metal memoirs.

While Shirazi opens her memoir with what appears to be a feminist argument against sexual double standards, *Newsweek* book critic Katie Baker (2010) questions this stance in her online review of *The Last Living Slut*. In her foreword "A Few Thoughts on the Word 'Slut,'" Shirazi states that she intends to reclaim the word in question, insisting that women, like men, should not be judged by their sex lives alone (2–3). The author implies here that she had a feminist motivation for writing about her experiences as a metal groupie, even referencing gender theory by stating "the concepts of masculine and feminine are merely performances that have been produced as truths" (3n1). Baker, on the other hand, suggests that one of Shirazi's biggest motivations for writing was to seek revenge against two of her metal rock star boyfriends for emotionally abusing her ("Hidden Agenda"). She disputes Shirazi's alleged feminism, holding that "proximity to fame" is a "driving motivation" for the "persona [Shirazi] portrays in the book" ("Swipe this Critique"). I argue that the appearance of Shirazi's book is due to the influence of multiple coaxers, including Strauss and Bozza, the popularity of metal memoirs, and the author's drive to assert her own version of events while promoting sexual liberation for women.

In some aspects, Sean Yseult's *I'm in the Band* most closely resembles the best-selling metal memoirs written by male artists since she is the only one of the selected authors who enjoyed major commercial success as a heavy metal musician. She adheres to certain conventions Swiss ascribes to rock memoirs like revealing previously unknown details about her childhood and the early days of White Zombie, yet she deviates from the some of the characteristics of metal memoirs that I have noted. According to the author, she was neither poor nor abused during her childhood; rather, she fondly describes her parents as "two art-and-music-loving hippie bohemian scholars" (Yseult 2010, vi). Additionally, she downplays the use of intoxicants by White Zombie, countering the popular image of the band as "drug-crazed devil worshipers" by insisting that the only beverage the members had prior to performing was coffee and the only thing they ingested through their noses was liquid vitamin B-12 (76). Visually, her book deviates from the typical format of the rock memoir, as it is coffee table-sized volume filled with graphic elements on a black background, rather than the usual three hundred pages of text with an inset of photos in the middle.

Yseult told Kimberly Austin of the *Rock Book Show* she did not set out to write a book but felt compelled to do something creative with the band-related material she found stored at her house (Yseult 2011). This stated motivation is not surprising considering that she holds a bachelor's degree from the Parson's School of Design and owns a graphic design company (Yseult 2010, 34, 147). However, she also seems to have been motivated to "set the record straight" about her part in the band. In keeping with Swiss's assessment that rock musicians write autobiography to "control their stories," some of her text seems aimed at reasserting her roles as a co-founder and co-songwriter

of the band, roles she suggests were overshadowed by the media attention paid to her former bandmate and romantic partner, Rob Zombie (Yseult 2010, 75). The timing of the book's appearance also coincides with the launching of her latest musical project, Star & Dagger (Yseult 2010, 148). Yseult's motivations seem to be a combination of the sort that Swiss states are typical of rock star memoirs, to promote sales of her music and to control her own story, with the atypical goal of creating a work of visual art, which is in alignment with her background as a graphic designer.

Flo (2003), like Yseult, states that she felt compelled to do something with the metal band-related material she had on hand, in her case, the diaries she kept from when she was the drummer for the group she calls the Redneck Vampires. She writes that these journals continually weighed on her mind, like a "cat that curls up on the book you are trying to read" and that she became determined to transcribe them into print after a conversation she had with three other women she met at a hostel in Europe (1). When these women asked her what her dream job would be, she responded, "I've already done it" (1). As this group of coaxers encouraged her to tell the rest of her story about her life as a metal musician, Flo saw her personal truth escape "the specific instances that gave rise to it" and take on a larger meaning (Braham 1995, 48). Through speaking with other women, she found the "authentic impulse to write autobiography" (ibid.), the desire that human beings have "to talk to each other about life and death, about love, despair, loss, and innocence" (Hampl 1981, 699, quoted in Braham 1995, 48).

Utilizing an online self-publishing service and writing anonymously, Flo seems to have been motivated by neither money nor acclaim, but at the same time, publishing under a pseudonym brings her motivations as a life writer into question. For public

figures, the appearance of the author's name on the book jacket of an autobiographical work "is a kind of guarantee" of the "authority of the writer to tell his or her story" (Smith and Watson 2001, 27–28). Without that guarantee, readers might suspect her work to be a hoax. Yet even if she had used her legal name rather than the nickname given to her by her bandmates, Flo would still be a writer "marginalized by virtue" of her "lack of public status" (ibid., 28). Her *Diary* is rich with details that conform to the male-coded conventions of the metal memoir, including the florid use of profanity and tales of drug use and rough living on the road with her band. It is these details that help her to establish herself as a reliable narrator to her readers, to appeal to "the authority of experience" and thus allay any suspicions they might have about her having dishonest intent in writing.

Annah Moore's *Right Side Out* is unique among the texts that I discuss here because she frames her project not as a metal memoir but as a transsexual memoir and a self-help book. According to Smith and Watson (2001, 25), "narrators of trauma are often attentive to the therapeutic efforts the narrative might have on their readers" presenting them with the "possibility of community in identifying with their stories." Within the main text, Moore often writes in the first person plural with reference to the trauma of gender identity disorder. For example, discussing the suicide rate of pre-operative transsexuals, she states, "one third to one half of us make the decision to end our own lives" (114). She also offers advice to her readers while using narrative as a way to introduce her recommendations. A chapter on the therapeutic power of the written word starts with her recollections about her high school English class and ends addressing readers directly with detailed instructions for using journaling to solve personal problems (50–54). Her book adheres to few conventions of the metal memoirs subgenre, yet I have

included it among the selected texts because of the way she intermingles stories of her life as a metal fan and musician with her narrative of coming out as transgender.

Kiedra Chaney's biggest motivation for writing "Sister Outsider Headbanger" appears to be a need to reconcile seemingly incompatible aspects of her own identity. Her essay originally appeared as a feature in *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* in 2001, prior to the appearance of most of the book-length metal memoirs. According to the magazine's guidelines for contributors, it currently pays \$100 for features (Bitch Media 2013). Thus, it seems that neither the popularity of metal memoirs nor the intent to take advantage of such for monetary gain played a role in inspiring Chaney to write. Rather, she seems to be driven to solve the problem of her identity, which she lays out in the first paragraph by stating that as a pre-teen, she began to think she was "a white guy trapped in the body of a black girl" (Chaney 2006, 26). Throughout her work, she addresses the internal and external questioning of her identity provoked by her being a self-identified headbanger who does not fit the assumed gender and raced norms of metal fandom.

Chaney finds that her musical tastes puzzled both her African American community of origin and her fellow feminists, reactions that served to prompt the writing of her essay. As rock journalist Laina Dawes (2012, 79) asserts, some African Americans see black metalheads as rejecting black culture, as "an affront to the past and present struggles" of their own community. Likewise, metal music is commonly understood as a genre hostile to female participation. Sarah Thornton (1996, 10) cites Pierre Bourdieu as defining "cultural capital" as "knowledge that ...confers social status" and "social capital" as the form of influence one gains "not so much from what you know as who you know (and who knows you)." Thornton offers her own term, "subcultural capital," to

describe knowledge of the norms of youth cultures that confers status within them (11–12). Thus, one of the problems Chaney seeks to unravel in her text is that of her subcultural capital being out of sync with her social capital. I argue that the main coxer behind her written life narrative was the internal drive to explain herself in the face of social pressures to conform to gendered and raced taste boundaries.

### **The Exclusion of Women from Music Histories**

Another factor that I argue contributed to the writing of these narratives about women's lives in metal music is the problem of women's contributions to music frequently being overlooked in conventional music histories. According to Susan C. Cook and Judy Tsou (1994, 4), the original mission of feminist musicology was one of recuperative history aimed at rediscovering the contributions of women composers and musicians of Western art music "whose lives and work were not part of the accepted musico-historical canon." Likewise, the significance of women's work is frequently "overlooked and downplayed in many rock histories" (Garr 1992, xii).

This tendency to exclude women from music histories is part of the larger problem of women being frequently excluded from the making of art, of being seen not as artists but rather as "objects of art," as "objects of the male gaze—that of the artist and...the patron" (Smith and Watson 2002, 14–15). Mary Celeste Kearney (2006, 7–10) states that starting in adolescence, young women are encouraged to focus on the beautification of their bodies while being discouraged from creating art, music, or media. I propose that each of the authors is reasserting her own place, no matter how insignificant it might seem in comparison with the whole, into the histories of metal music, and, more broadly, the histories of music and the arts.

Smith and Watson (2001, 35) find that writers of life narrative "often incorporate

several models of identity in succession...to tell a story of serial development.” Most of the authors whose works I am considering write at the end of their narratives about their having moved beyond the identities and activities that form the main focus of their texts: Shirazi is no longer a metal groupie (305), Flo quit drumming for the Redneck Vampires (219), Yseult has not played bass with White Zombie since the group disbanded in 1998 (139), and Chaney is no longer heavily involved in metal fandom (30).

All of these authors, however, write with pride about their past accomplishments. The musicians among them express pride at having broken new ground for women, while Chaney feels pleased to have taken part in “messing with the images of who the ‘average’ metal fan is supposed to be” (30). While Shirazi eventually grew disenchanted with the sexism she found in the glam metal groupie culture, she was proud to have met, spent time with, and in many cases, had sex with the musicians who inspired her to become a groupie in the first place (4–6, 313). What is at stake in these texts is the “politics of remembering” (Smith and Watson 2001, 19): the authors’ acts of recollection “invite reading in terms of larger cultural issues,” intervening into the obscuration of the women’s lives in music, the arts, and in the world in general.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have sought to uncover the reasons why the authors of the selected texts wrote and published their respective works of life narrative. I began by discussing the conventions of metal memoirs as a subgenre of music memoirs, offering comparisons with other types of music memoirs including those written by rock, jazz, and country musicians. I considered how each of these works adhered to or deviated from these conventions of metal memoirs, using these assessments to support arguments about whether and to what degree the recent popularity of metal memoirs influenced the

writers' decisions to write and publish. I then looked at these works in the broader context of the relationships between women, music, and the arts, putting forth that these works may be viewed as intervening into the historic and ongoing problem of women being largely excluded from expressive culture except as objects of the male gaze.

Overall, I find that the reasons for crafting these narratives vary greatly from writer to writer. Most of the writers, in my reading, had multiple coaxers influencing their choice to write and publish. These coaxing and coercing "persons and institutions" also influenced how they wrote, impacting what parts of their stories they chose to emphasize and what parts they chose to deemphasize or leave out. Some of these motivating factors seem contradictory in nature: for example, Shirazi's apparent goal of riding the coattails of male writers of sensational, tell-all metal memoirs to fiscal success and notoriety seems at odds with her stated intention of promoting sexual equality for women. On the other hand, Yseult's stated objective of created an interesting visual record of her life with White Zombie does not directly conflict with the unstated aim that I attribute to her, that of setting the record straight about her role in the band. Ultimately, I argue that the authors all sought to contravene into the cultural limitations put on them as a result of their gender by writing and publishing these works. In the chapter that follows, I will examine to whether and to what extent they undermined gender rules through their involvement with metal music and its subculture and their relationships with other members of the metal community.

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<sup>1</sup> My assessment of the conventions of metal memoirs are based on my readings of Dave Mustaine with Joe Layden, *Mustaine: A Heavy Metal Memoir*, (New York: It Books/HarperCollins, 2011); Tony Iommi with T.J. Lammers, *Iron Man: My Journey through Heaven & Hell with Black Sabbath*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011); Slash with Anthony Bozza, *Slash* (New York: HarperEntertainment, 2007); and Ozzy Osbourne with Chris Ayres, *I Am Ozzy*, (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> Bozza is also the co-writer of *Tommyland* by Tommy Lee of Mötley Crüe and Strauss co-wrote *Don't Try this at Home* with rock and metal guitarist Dave Navarro.

### Chapter 3:

#### Relational Others: Metal Music, its Culture, and its Communities

“I’m not jealous/for my love, you are to share/with girls and fellas/everybody,  
everywhere”

(Rock Goddess, 1983)

Interrogating interpersonal relationships is often a central piece of autobiographical projects, especially for female narrators. According to Julie Smith and Sidonie Watson (2001, 64), for many writers of life narrative the process of “self-knowing” is “relational, routed through others.” They theorize a “range of relational others” that may figure into works of life narrative, including “historical, contingent, significant, idealized but absent, and subject Others” (67). Jeanne Braham (1995, 98) holds that for women in particular, their selves and life stories are “organized and developed *in the context* of important relationships” (emphasis in original). In the epigraph above, taken from the song “Heavy Metal Rock’n’Roll” by the all-female heavy metal band Rock Goddess, vocalist Jody Turner is addressing metal music personified, suggesting the intriguing possibility that the music itself can be a significant other, even an intimate partner. This is a particularly liberating idea for women, as a number of feminist theorists have argued that heteronormative relationships are inherently oppressive to them.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is concerned with how the writers of the selected texts envision their relationships within the metal subculture in their narratives, starting with their relationships with the music and its culture then looking at their interpersonal relationships with individuals in the metal community. Following Smith and Watson and

Braham, I examine how the writers define their selves and their lives' journeys through their interactions with these relational others. Here, I consider how they describe their experiences of both sexism and gender equality in the various metal scenes that make up the settings for their stories. I look for examples of women's solidarity in the narratives while considering the factors within and without the metal subculture that work to undermine it.

A number of feminist researchers have put forth that the perspectives of women and girls are frequently either misread or neglected entirely in journalistic and scholarly accounts of youth subcultures. Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs (1986, 16) question the claims made by *Time* writer David Dempsey that female Beatles fans in the 1960s were "merely 'conforming.'" Rather, they hold that the girls and young women who took part in Beatlemania were rebelling against "sexual repressiveness," challenging the "rigid double standard of female teen culture" (ibid., 11). Rosa Linda Fregoso (2003, 91–93) notes that Chicano scholars, even Chicana feminists, have largely overlooked the ways that young women participating in the Pachuco subculture of 1940s Chicano youth were subverting gender roles.<sup>2</sup> In her study of female punk rockers, Lauraine Leblanc critiques both subcultural and feminist theorists for "failing to address girls' subcultural participation" (1999, 8), while Michelle Habell-Pallán finds that Chicana punk rockers in particular are illegible to the "dominant culture" because they "disrupt fixed, one-dimensional notions of identity" (2005, 152–153).<sup>3</sup> All of these authors agree that when girls and women participate in subcultures, their relationships with them differ in both form and meaning from those of their male compatriots.

### **Relating to Metal Music and its Culture**

My approach in this section to addressing the writers' relationships with metal

music and culture is to seek out those parts of their narratives where they either recollect how they became involved with these or relate a particularly affective moment of their experience of them. This focus on the affective is important because the nature of metal fandom is distinctive in the degree of passion its adherents have for the music. The editors of *Metal Rules the Globe* aver that metal music's sonic qualities "offer listeners musical experiences invested with serious, weighty, or powerful emotions," a quality that they term "affective overdrive" (Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011, 10). Along similar lines, Kiedra Chaney (2001, 28) observes that "metalheads are not casual fans," that their devotion to the music "borders on obsession." I contend that it is these powerful emotional experiences, these moments of "affective overdrive," that lead metal fans to form such strong bonds with metal music, its subculture, and its community.

As a transgender person, Annah Moore (2006) found adolescence to be a particularly painful time during which rock and metal music provided tremendous comfort. She remembers that she found the appearance of her secondary sex characteristics very upsetting because the masculine body she saw in the mirror was incongruent with her internal sense of being female (36). Her emerging sexual desires to have heterosexual relations with males as a female-bodied person were at odds with her physical reality (36). She writes that she became very interested in music in her early teens and recalls being emotionally overwhelmed by the over-the-top, androgynous performances by rocker David Bowie and the heavy metal group Kiss that she saw on television during those years. All of the pain and confusion surrounding her gender identity "disappeared...in a splendid euphoria of rock'n'roll"; Moore remembers, "I wanted to make others feel the feeling I had when I listened to that music" (39–40).

Judith Peraino (2006, 243) describes Marilyn Manson's gender-bending performances as offering fans a "space in which to revel in the transgressive erotic pleasure of the emasculated body." For the young Moore, rock and metal music provided her with an affective space to explore and share with others aural passions and pleasures, bypassing the incongruities between the shape of her body and her awakening sexuality.

Moore reports that as she moved through high school and college, her musical passions became centered on heavy metal. She imagines metal culture as a "place for outcasts, for guys who wanted to grow their hair long, and for those who broke away from social norms" (42). During the course of my research, I have become aware of two other out transwomen in the metal community: Marcie Free, currently lead vocalist with Unruly Child, formerly known as Marc Free of the popular 1980s glam metal band King Kobra, and Marisa (néé Michael) Martinez of the death metal group Cretin (Sharpe-Young 2006, 31; Free 2010; Parks 2008). The qualities Moore attributes to the music subculture may explain why it appeals not only to her but also to these other male-to-female transsexuals.

This author's assertion that metal culture is a place for people outside of "social norms" in relation to her identity as a transwoman brings into question Deena Weinstein's (2009, 19) ideas about the music subculture and "cultural masculinity." Weinstein maintains that metal's defining cultural characteristics like power, strength, and rebellion are "culturally masculine" and that all members of the subculture including female musicians are "playing with...cultural masculinity" (2009, 24–25). According to Joshua S. Goldstein (2001, 251–252), biological gender produces "overlapping bell-curves" of "human capabilities" including strength and aggression while "cultural gender amputates

these curves.” By these definitions, Weinstein may be correct in using “cultural masculinity” to describe certain qualities of metal culture, yet her insistence that even female musicians are “playing with” it forecloses on the possibility that women’s participation in the subgenre might serve to disrupt those cultural associations entirely (2009, 19). In my reading of her narrative, Moore utilizes metal’s power and rebellion as tools to help her come to terms with her transgender condition. Thus, it might be more accurate to explain her relationship with the subculture in terms of a transgressive femininity that undermines, rather than upholds, the construct of cultural masculinity.

Somewhat similar to Moore, Roxana Shirazi (2010) relates being drawn to metal music because she felt that there was something different about her sexuality. In her case, she conveys in her life narrative that even as a young child, she had a high level of interest in sex, something that made her feel like a doomed outsider growing up in the theocracy of post-revolution Iran. Both her playful erotic experiments with children her own age and the sexual abuse she describes suffering at the hands of a male boarder and a neighbor convinced her that she was “definitely going to hell”(32–33, 35–37, 52–53, 58). Her relationship to metal music appears to be an extension of her transgressive sexuality, as she writes about masturbating to a Guns N’ Roses music video as an eleven-year-old living in the United Kingdom (77–78). Her description of this event is one of pivotal affective overdrive, as the powerful orgasm she experiences forges a bond between her and the glam metal genre. This is consistent with Jeffery Jensen Arnett’s (1996, 14–15) thesis that metal fandom is made up of youth who are unusually driven to sensation-seeking.

Being a groupie in the glam metal subculture appears to have made her feel both

powerful and powerless. In her first chapter, she offers an overview of how she sees the prototypical glam metal concert, painting colorful portraits of all the major players of the scene in turn: the musicians, the fans, and the groupies, with these last two groups subdivided by age. She uses the most powerful images to describe the subdivision that she sees herself as having been a member of, the young groupies: “hunters, predators hiding in corners...their fish-cold faces are emotionless...their cheekbones could cut glass” (12). Yet she concludes this chapter by describing the life of a groupie as being “like that of a junkie,” a life wherein one has little control over one’s feelings and actions (13–14.)

Shirazi also analyzes her experiences in the metal groupie scene as an attempt to replace the sense of community that she lost when she had to leave behind her extended family and friends in Iran. Fleeing to the United Kingdom may have saved Shirazi and her family from the immediate threat of imprisonment and death under the Iranian Islamist regime, yet in addition to feeling isolated during her first years in her adopted country, Shirazi states that she was also poor, hungry, and bullied by her white schoolmates (70–71). Here, she counters the “gendered rescue narrative” that positions Western democracies as holding the solutions to the “oppression of women and girls under Islam” (Hesford 2011, 4–5). Journalist Kean Wong (1993, 21, quoted in Weinstein 2000, 283) finds that the “metal subculture has become...a refuge for those dislocated in urban migration” in countries throughout Southeast Asia. Similarly, Shirazi writes that she sought a new family in the glam metal subculture, only to discover that its “sexual double standards” were “no different from those of an Islamic fundamentalist country” (313). Her narrative indicates that the alienation she experienced as a refugee contributed

to her seeking sanctuary in metal culture, yet another port of refuge that failed to live up to its implicit promises.

Like Shirazi, Kiedra Chaney was introduced to metal music through music videos: she recalls being “fed a steady diet of Ratt videos on Chicago’s quasi-MTV UHF station” (26). She writes that even as a ten-year-old, she knew that “metal was power and power was irresistible” (26). In addition to being drawn in by the “force of those electric guitars, relentlessly pounding drums, and growling vocals” (26), she was attracted to metal because it was something foreign to her urban African American cultural upbringing. Listening to music that was different from the music she had grown up with allowed her to imagine herself as someone other than the “geeky, awkward pre-teen” she felt like much of the time (27). She finds that appropriating music that was “far away from [her] experience” empowered her because “it didn’t place definitions on who [she] was or could be as a black female” (29). Metal’s power and affective overdrive gave her the courage to explore her “identity as a black woman and a feminist” (30). With these statements like these, she demonstrates that metal music is a flexible technology that can be adapted to serve the needs of diverse individuals and communities beyond those commonly understood to be its core demographic.

Echoing Chaney’s narrative, Flo also writes about the sense of power she found in metal music. In a passage describing a performance with the Redneck Vampires, she writes that “I played that night for all the kids that picked on me when I was a little girl...for all the preppies in high school that made fun of my freak ass...I beat the shit out of the drums that night...I was avenged. I was redeemed” (162). This narrative of empowerment concludes with the final sentence of the book where she remembers her

last gig with the band: “I played for ...the little girl that was scared she wasn’t good enough...and for the woman that discovered she *was*” (220, emphasis in original). The use of the words “little girl” and “woman” suggests that she envisions her story as one of specifically female empowerment. The trajectory of Flo’s story resembles Chaney’s at this point as well, indicating that she utilized metal’s affective overdrive to navigate her way from feeling like a misfit as a youth to being a strong and confident adult.

Given that her book is a transcribed diary that only covers the years during which she was pursuing a career as a metal drummer, Flo does not provide many details about how her relationship with metal music and culture began. Her above-mentioned complaints about the kids who bullied her throughout her school years hint at the youthful frustrations that may have led her to metal music. She also complains about being mistreated by her older brother and feeling that her dogmatically Christian parents did not understand or support her (1, 64–65). These factors caused her to feel “a serious contempt for society” which she expressed by teaching herself to play the drums with the aid of “determination and an AC/DC tape” (1). Beyond feeling empowered and “avenged” through playing metal music, she also reports strong feelings of connection with her bandmates and their fans, as in this passage in which she describes playing with the group at a nightclub called Crossroads:

Each strike on my drums seemed to reach to the end of the earth itself. Words cannot do justice to the way it feels to perform live...To think that five people can combine themselves and their intentions and talents and produce organized noise...and then to perform it in front of 1,000

sweaty, screaming people. It's *unreal* (32, emphasis in original).

Here, she describes how she came to feel bonded with her bandmates and their audience through the communal production of metal music.

In contrast with Flo's apparently being attracted to metal as a rebellious response to her upbringing, Yseult treats becoming a metal fan and musician as a natural outgrowth of the childhood she spent training in the arts. In her narrative, she deftly ties her adult enthusiasm for the blues-based metal of Black Sabbath to the exposure she received to blues piano when she was studying to be a concert pianist as a child (x, xiv). Similarly, she writes that she chose to learn to play electric bass instead of electric guitar because she had grown up playing violin and the bass and the violin both have four strings (xiv).

She also draws close connections between her and Rob Zombie's co-founding of the group White Zombie and the visual arts training they underwent together at the Parsons School of Design. Yseult was studying photography and design at Parsons when she met Zombie there and she attributes their mutual attraction to their shared interests in extreme music and horror movie aesthetics. In her retelling the creation of White Zombie's first 7" record, she describes how she put her art school training to work by designing the band logo and taking the cover photo (xiv). By portraying her involvement in metal music as an extension of her background in better-respected expressive arts, Yseult contests common understandings of metal music as a cultural product of the uneducated masses (Bryson 1996, 891–4).

Becoming part of the metal subculture was a gradual process for Yseult because

even though she started listening to metal music at the same time she discovered punk rock as a young adult, most of her live concert experiences up until she started performing with White Zombie had been with punk music (xiii–xiv). With the addition of guitarist J. Yuenger, she recalls that she had finally found a musical writing partner who shared her fondness for both punk rock and heavy metal. After he joined White Zombie, the band transitioned from the punk and art band scenes of New York’s East Village to the Brooklyn metal scene. Yseult describes the cultural contrast between the two scenes as “art student dropout with vintage guitars, dressed in hip sixties vintage style” versus “high school dropouts in leather and mullets” (xxii). She finds that while White Zombie had confused the art band crowd, it was welcomed by the metalheads (xxii). Ultimately, she embraced the metal subculture because it the one that was the most receptive to her and her bandmates’ creative vision.

### **Interpersonal Relationships with Men and Women in the Metal Subculture**

Both Yseult and Flo describe themselves as being vastly outnumbered in terms of gender among metal musicians: Yseult’s calls herself “the only girl in a huge...sweaty, long-haired, denim and leather, moshing boy’s club” (i), while Flo subtitles her book “the True Story of a Rock and Roll Girl in a Boy’s World.”<sup>4</sup> For Yseult’s part, she finds this to be a largely positive experience, contending that she somehow managed to have “bypassed the sexism that was still prevalent” in metal culture in the 1990s (i). She recalls that virtually every metal musician or roadie she met during her years on the road with White Zombie treated her with respect. Being the lone woman living in close quarters with these men in vans, hotels, and dressing rooms, proved not to be unsettling for her. Rather, she reports that she found listening to her male peers’ stories about

“bodily functions, whoring, boozing, and gambling,” to be “completely absurd and hilarious” (xxx).

Describing the metal scene as overwhelming male from her perspective as a successful musician, she nevertheless remembers having occasions to connect with other women (ii, xxx). She found two female friends, Cynthia Howell and Shannon St. Smith, who enjoyed the rock lifestyle as much as she did and brought them on tour with her, the former as a bass technician and the latter as a bodyguard (70, 120). Her connections with other female musicians were limited, however, to experiences facilitated by the fact that White Zombie was a band that crossed several genre boundaries, falling under the rubrics of punk and alternative rock as well as metal. For example, shortly after playing a metal festival in England where Yseult was the only female performer, the group played an indie rock festival at Reading where she encountered a number of other female musicians, including members of Hole and Babes in Toyland (110).

From my perspective as a researcher, I have found that there are far more women musicians in punk rock and alternative hard rock as compared with metal and have been wondering what might cause such a difference in women’s involvement in these closely-related musical genres. One possible cause is that metal is defined by two musical characteristics associated with dominant constructions of masculinity: aggression and virtuosity. I have already discussed the male gender-coding of the electric guitar and rock drums in my introduction, while Robert Walser (1993, 108–9) notes a close connection between masculinity and virtuosity in Western music generally and metal music specifically. There seems to be more social acceptance in general for woman playing music that is either virtuosic but not aggressive, like Ani DiFranco, or aggressive but not

virtuosic, like the all-female punk band L7. Artists like these also seem to be more legible to feminists as promoting gender equality. According to Mary Ann Clausen (1999, 199–200), many female rock musicians may not have the chance to develop the virtuosity that metal demands because there is little social support for girls playing rock, which means they are less likely than men to start playing in bands in their early teens. Clausen finds that like Yselt, most of them do not start learning their craft until their college years.

Compared with Yselt's overwhelmingly positive report of her relations with male musicians and roadies during her years with White Zombie, Flo recounts a mix of positive and negative interactions with male subculture members when she was drumming with the Redneck Vampires. She recalls feeling very close to her bandmates, writing while on tour with them: "surrounding me are the boys I love more than anything, and the music we make together is a love I sometimes take for granted" (91). Especially close to the bassist, Ruger, she describes their non-sexual intimacy in this passage: "we snuggled every night and would just lay there and talk for hours" (90). At other times, though, she feels the other members of the group treat her as less than equal because of her gender (88). She recalls feeling excluded on several occasions, such as when the group went sightseeing in Chicago while she was sleeping and again they watched a video of one of their performances without inviting her (50, 90). Another time Ruger used "girl" as an insult directed at Ian, the band's lead guitarist, because he was "whining about wanting to eat" (86).

She reports incidents of more overt sexism in encounters she had with male members of the metal community outside of her band. Early in her tenure with the Redneck Vampires, Geoff, a friend of Ruger's, seduces her then breaks off their

relationship at Ruger's insistence (11–12, 16–17, 21). Prior to even meeting Flo, Geoff had proclaimed upon hearing that the group had a new female drummer that he wanted to have sex with her (9). The implicit message is that Flo has broken out of her gender box by playing a “male” instrument and Geoff meant to rein her back into heteronormative femininity. After Geoff breaks up with her, Flo writes that she feels “used,” “controlled,” and like “such a dumb ass girl” (21). At one point the band temporarily acquires a self-styled “manager,” Larry, who sexually harasses Flo. She reports that Larry tried to put her back into her proper female role by calling her “mama,” constantly phoning her at work, and showing up uninvited at her home (150–4).

Flo's interactions with female metalheads also vary in quality. On the one hand, she remembers enjoying attending metal shows with her sister, Savannah, and appreciates the support of her friend, Justine, who attended her performances with the Redneck Vampires as she had done with her previous band, Serpentine (6, 16). She also gets a tremendous boost of encouragement when a female journalist from *RIP* magazine reviews the band and compliments Flo specifically, calling her “impressive” (40–41). The author refers to the all-female band her group played a show with in Muskegon as “cool and unique” (86), yet she is annoyed by the “stupid girl bass-player chick” she meets at a Memphis club who tries to recruit her to join her band (80). In this case, band loyalty trumps gender solidarity, as Flo writes the other woman irritated her by insulting the Redneck Vampires in an attempt to win her away from them (80).

For Moore, one of the most significant uses she finds for the affective overdrive of metal music while making her transition to womanhood was in forming a short-lived band with her soon-to-be-ex-wife, Cindy. After a previous attempt at transitioning, she

writes that she missed Cindy and their son Anvil so much that she stopped taking hormones, cut her hair, and briefly changed her name back to Adam in one last attempt to save her marriage (132–137). Toward the end of that year, around the time she realized that living as a man was not working for her and she started taking female hormones again, she formed a band named Bittersweet with Cindy on vocals, herself on guitar, and drummer named Steve (137). The songs that she recalls writing with Cindy were “pretty heavy, both musically and emotionally” as Cindy “poured out her heart and feelings about...how she was affected” by Moore’s choice to re-transition (137). Although the band never performed live or even found a bass player, Bittersweet appears to have served an important function in helping Moore and Cindy come to terms with the complicated emotions surrounding Adam becoming Annah once more, this time permanently.

Playing in a metal band during the time she started living full time as a woman offered Moore opportunities to experience relationships with men and women that affirmed her new feminine identity. After leaving Cindy and Anvil in Phoenix, Moore moved to Austin, Texas to start a new life. Almost immediately, she found a sales job at Guitar Center, which led her to joining a metal band called Boneglove. The group consisted of five men and one other woman, Ali, a keyboardist who became one of Moore’s best friends. Moore relates that when she came out to the group as trans, they were “very accepting and curious” (146). Another positive interaction with a metal community member occurred while she was in this group when an attractive woman screamed to her from the front row at one of its performances, “You rock! I wish I were you!” This moment was a revelation for Moore, who while living as a man had often felt

the same way about the women she saw around her (147).

Moore writes that she also came out to the next band she joined, Red Volution, but not until right before she had her sex reassignment surgery (159–161). The four men in the band were surprised because they had never suspected that she was anything but a natal woman, something she took as a great compliment. Like the members of Boneglove, Moore reports that her Red Volution bandmates were completely supportive, and they even agreed to appear with her in an episode of the Discovery Channel program *Beyond Ordinary* titled “Sex Change: From Him to Her” (161). The episode features interviews with a number of transsexuals and followed Moore as she traveled to a clinic in Montreal to have her surgery. Near its end, she is shown in rehearsal with Red Volution, having returned to Austin after recovering from the successful procedure (“Sex Change: From Him to Her” 2005).

In contrast with musical memoirs by men that emphasize “fraternity,” almost all of the relationships Chaney writes about in metal community are between girls and women. She describes how she met her friend Nicole when she noticed Chaney’s copy of *Metal Edge* magazine hidden in her notebook and how she attended metal concerts with her all-female, all-black “metalhead clique” (27–28). The author focuses on gender solidarity in metal culture by detailing how female fans of all races “found ways to connect with each other: as pen pals, chatting in the women’s restrooms during concerts,” and “at record stores” (29). The subject position of the female metalhead, according to Chaney, is one that combines male-coded aggression with the empowering feminine sexuality that Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs (1986) attribute to female Beatles fans. She describes female fans as experiencing desires to not only be like the male metal rock

stars, but also to meet their heroes, to have romantic and sexual relationships with them. I argue that it is this distinctive combination that results in the powerful solidarity among female metal fans that Chaney reports in her essay.

But where do the women who actually live out this second set of fantasies, the groupies, fit into this positive vision of women's empowerment and solidarity in metal music as put forth by Chaney? She states that *Metal Edge* magazine, with its pull-out posters of attractive male musicians, gave female metal fans an appropriate outlet for their "lustful groupie desires," implying that it would destroy their "hard-core credibility" to act on them (29). For Gillian G. Garr (1992, 128–9), the groupie is not a figure of women's empowerment in rock music, but a negative stereotype that serious female musicians struggle to overcome. Susan Fast (1999, 256) criticizes Steve Waksman's use of Pamela Des Barres's groupie memoir *I'm with the Band* as his "primary example of heterosexual women's engagement with rock music" in his article about Led Zeppelin. With the very title of her book, Yseult seeks to make the important distinction that she is *in*, not *with* the band, as opposed to the title of the Des Barres book. She reports that meeting the women she witnessed either "clawing their way on stage" or receiving "a 'Tulsa' backstage pass ('a slut,' backward)" from roadies was always an uncomfortable experience for her (ii).

I term this desire on the part of female metal fans, musicians, and even scholars like Fast to distance themselves as far as possible from groupies as the abjection of the groupie. In the introduction to this work, I argued that the negative stereotype of the pathologically sexual white working class woman adheres to some extent to all women in metal. I hold that because of being associated with this abject figure, most female metal

subculture members pass the abjection on to groupies, those women whose relationships with the subculture are defined by expressions of non-heteronormative sexualities.

According to Anne McClintock (1995, 71), “in order to become social, the self has to expunge certain elements that society deems impure.” Thus, female headbangers reject groupies as a threat to their metal authenticity and their place in metal society. Yet Lisa Rhodes (2005, xi, 256) finds that groupies share female rock musicians’ love of music and that “the more self-possessed groupies,” like the musicians, seek to “expand the social possibilities for all women.” Inspired by Rhodes’s interventions, I now consider Shirazi’s experiences of relating to others on the metal scene.

The abjection seems to cut both ways, as Shirazi’s text generally treats other members of the metal subculture outside of musicians and her groupie circle with contempt. She depicts non-groupie fans as sad wannabes who “go home to bedrooms tucked safely in suburbia, their walls full of posters and angst” after the show is over (12). In this author’s assessment, these young fans are “all puppy fat and tender skin”; the older male fans are typified by “sagging tattoos” and hairlines “in violent retreat”; and the “older groupie mafia” are “defeated” and “desperate” (12–14). She does not mention encountering any female metal musicians, but she does describe a female band manager as a “wild-eyed cavewoman” with a “Lego haircut and butch clothing” (100–101).

Contrary to Garr’s (1992, 128) assessment that groupies reaffirm “a societal system in which women were defined by the man they were aligned with,” in much of Shirazi’s narrative the focus is on her relations with other groupies. Gayle Wald (2002, 16) finds that female fans of boy bands use the “fan practices” they develop around these all-male groups “to mediate intimate relationships between and among girls.” Similarly,

the male glam metal musicians Shirazi's groupie set has sex with often appear as interchangeable objects that facilitate the erotic friendships the women share with each other. The author describes having sexual relations with her fellow groupies as something she enjoyed both on its own and as foreplay to sex with male musicians (97, 103–104). In her acknowledgements, Shirazi gushes with love and lust for these other women: "Lori, my soul sister...I love you"; "Em - my poet...I can't believe all the things we've been through together"; "Ostara, my fairy angel. You are dirty as hell and I love it!" This is the inverse of the dynamic I have observed in the metal memoirs of male musicians, in which women are the objects that men bond over.

Yet she also discovers that there is an ugly misogynist underbelly to the backstage world of glam metal when she allows herself to become emotionally involved with some of these men. According to Shirazi, "the rules of groupiedom" demand that a groupie never "become emotionally attached in any way" to the musicians she has sex with (222). As long as she was able to maintain her detachment, she also maintained the illusion that she was on par with the musicians she slept with, if not superior to them. When she fell in love with keyboardist Dizzy Reed of Guns N' Roses, she opened herself up to horrific abuse. Shirazi writes that she was pregnant by him and desperately wanted to carry the pregnancy to term, but he insisted that she have an abortion (240–242). Afterward, Shirazi recalls that Reed proceeded to torment her by text message, sending her texts reading, "I hope you go through more abortions...Have a great life...Have a wonderful time aborting your children" (184). After another emotionally abusive relationship with a glam metal musician, she reports that she was admitted to a psychiatric ward for a month, where she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and prescribed Valium and

antidepressants (304). It was at this point that she realized “the backstage world was actually too conservative and limiting for [her] wild spirit” (305).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have sought to understand the dynamics of the relationships that the authors of the selected texts describe having with metal music, its subculture, and other members of the metal community. Regarding these first two, in analyzing these relationships I have also sought to understand some of the reasons that the authors were attracted to metal music and culture. Each of the authors appears to have had a different set of life circumstances that draw her to the music and its subculture, although some of the more common attractors reported by these narrators were the sense of power and freedom that the music instills in its listeners and a sense of community.

In the second section, I looked at the kinds of personal interactions the authors describe having with other men and women in the metal subculture. Again, these are quite varied, ranging from the positive and affirming to the vicious and sexist. While sexism exists in metal culture as it exists in other parts of society, the range of interactions reported by the authors suggests that it is not necessarily more prevalent in metal communities than it is elsewhere. The fact that most of the writers relate being treated with respect and dignity by men in the metal subculture at least some of the time offers the possibility that sexism is not an intrinsic part of that culture. It is also significant that Moore reports being able to come out as a transwoman to and be supported by two of the bands she was in, thus countering the common class-based stereotype of metalheads being incorrigible bigots. I have pointed to examples of how the metal subculture can provide a space for bonding experiences between women while considering the issues that can undermine women’s solidarity within it. Chief among

these issues is the divide between metal groupies and other female subculture members, which I term the abjection of the groupie.

I presented an argument in this section that the nature of the relationship Moore describes having with metal music and its subculture run counter to the notion proposed by Weinstein that all metalheads are expressing or “playing with” cultural masculinity. It might be more accurate and productive, in my assessment, to consider female metalheads to be expressing alternative femininities that allow for women possessing certain qualities associated with metal culture like strength, virtuosity, rebelliousness, and sexual aggression. I will develop this idea further in the following chapter, which looks at the ways that the authors depict their experiences of and responses to the male gaze within the world of heavy metal.

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples include Shulamith Firestone, “The Dialectic of Sex,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson, 19–26; Monique Wittig, “One is not Born a Woman,” in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 9–20; and Catherine MacKinnon, “Desire and Power,” in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 256–265.

<sup>2</sup> This gap in the literature identified by Fregoso has since been addressed by Catherine Sue Ramirez’s *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Also see Angela McRobbie with Jenny Garber (1991), “Girls and Subcultures,” in Angela McRobbie’s *Feminism and Youth Culture: From ‘Jackie’ to ‘Just Seventeen,’* (Boston: Unwin Hyman), 1–15.

<sup>4</sup> Note: moshing is another term for slam-dancing. Slam-dancing is more commonly used by punk rockers; metalheads prefer to use the word moshing.

Chapter 4:  
Negotiating the Male Gaze

“Tight pants and lipstick/she’s riding on a razor’s edge/she holds her own against the  
boys/cuts through the crowd just like a wedge”

(Sammy Hagar, 1981)

This chapter’s epigraph, taken from a song called “Heavy Metal,” illustrates the complexities inherent in how the male gaze works in the metal culture. Spoken from the point of view of a male singer, the first line sexualizes and objectifies the female metal fan, reducing her “tight pants and lipstick.” While some feminists have complained of women being reduced to body parts like lips and hips by popular media, this woman is represented by the female-coded ornaments that adorn them. The second line suggests her perspective, of walking “a razor’s edge” between performing metal authenticity and femininity. With the third line, the speaker implies that the female fan has achieved a kind of equality with the “boys” by incorporating the correct amounts of strength and confidence into this complex performance. Finally, the fourth line is somewhat ambiguous, as gender relations in metal culture (and elsewhere) often are. Does the female fan “cut through the crowd just like a wedge” because she is powerful and respected, or do the “boys” move aside to get a better view of her “tight pants and lipstick”?

The male gaze, according to Laura Mulvey (1989, 19, 25), contributes to maintaining gender difference and thereby the gender hierarchy by reducing woman to the passive object of the “voyeuristic-scopophilic look” and situating “man as the bearer of the look.” While Mulvey states that “this complex interactions of looks is specific to

film” (26), her theories have larger implications, as any time a woman appears in public she is subject to the scrutiny of the male gaze. According to Mulvey, the cinematic “spectator identifies with the main male protagonist” and “the active power of [his] erotic look” that produces the “sexual objectification” of the woman (20). Since the “spectator” can be either male or female, the male view of woman is naturalized as the normative perspective, and women judge themselves and each other in accordance with it. Like the film actresses discussed by Mulvey, women who are public figures are especially vulnerable to being judged by their appearances. Female politicians and journalists, for example, are “sexualized and trivialized” by the mainstream media in such a way as to undermine their credibility (Gill 2007, 114, 117–24).

The racial gaze has been theorized in much the same way in that the white gaze is naturalized as the normative way of seeing. Through their encounters with the racial gaze in cinema and in interactions with whites, non-whites come to see themselves as the Other. W.E.B. Dubois (1903, 3, quoted in Rony 1996, 4) describes this effect as “double consciousness,” the sensation of “always looking at oneself through the eyes of others.” According to Fatimah Rony (1996, 5), Franz Fanon “writes eloquently about the humiliation of being forced to identify” with cinematic representations of blacks as “servile and inferior.” At the same time, he finds that “a black schoolboy ...deluged by Tarzan stories... ‘identifies himself with the explorer...the white man who carries truth to the savages.’” bell hooks (1996, 19) theorizes the intersection of the racial and male gazes as producing “a culture where black female bodies are stereotypically ‘seen’ in a sexual light” to such an extent that they can not be easily read by film “audiences of any race” as having any other meanings. Rock journalist Laina Dawes (2012, 114–5) uses a

comment that she found posted on a popular metal website stating that black women are “sexy, but not beautiful” as evidence that this way of viewing women of color also exists among metal audiences.

In this chapter, I employ both textual and visual analyses to look at the ways the authors of the selected life narratives describe their experiences of the male gaze and how they attempt to negotiate it, treating their different approaches to female gender performance as representing divergent strategies to that negotiation. Here, I consider the problem of the gaze in broad terms, including how it is internalized and how women judge themselves and each other based on male-imposed standards of appearance. The writers who are also musicians—Flo, Annah Moore, and Sean Yseult—all seek to avoid being overly sexualized and objectified while at the same time endeavoring to neither deny their female identities nor alienate their male fans. As a transwoman who is also a performing artist, the male gaze is a double-edged sword for Moore: according to her narrative, she wants to be read as female and seen as attractive by men, but, like Flo and Yseult, she wants to be respected as a musician. The two non-musicians among the authors, Kiedra Chaney and Roxana Shirazi, are also the two women of color. In their works, these authors describe having to contend with the ways that the male gaze is compounded by the racial gaze.

### **Metal Musician Macha Femme**

I hold that in order to bridge these contradictions between needing to appeal to some extent to the male gaze without losing their metal authenticity, each of the musicians adopted variations of a performative style Deanna Shoemaker (2010) calls macha femme. Shoemaker develops her ideas about this style based on African American writer and performing artist Sharon Bridgforth’s use of the Spanish word “macha” to

designate “a woman who stands in femininity as a warrior” (296). She goes on to define macha femme as an “expression of femininity as a powerful energy that includes emotional, sexual, spiritual, and mental power” (296). In developing this concept, she critiques Joy Press and Simon Reynold’s use of what she considers “reductive” terms like “male impersonation” to define “transgressive women musicians” (296). I understand this macha femme performative identity outlined by Shoemaker as an alternative femininity, rather than a female masculinity. Judith Halberstam (1998, 3, 13) imagines female masculinity as a “masculinity without men” that is exemplified by “cross-dressing women,” “butch lesbians,” and “female-to-male transsexuals.” Although Flo and Yseult describe themselves as being “one of the boys” in their narratives, they also express feminine identities that seem distinct from any of these examples of female masculinity identified by Halberstam. Moore, as a male-to-female transsexual, is the opposite of a female-to-male transsexual.

As the most successful out of the musicians, Sean Yseult (2010) faced the greatest public scrutiny, having to contend with the male gaze in the form of millions of viewers of her group’s music videos and performances. Yseult was dubbed “the chick in White Zombie” by Beavis and Butthead at the same time that her band catapulted to fame due in part to its being endorsed by the animated duo.<sup>1</sup> She accepts the title as “an affectionate nickname,” even putting it in the second part of the title of her book, *Backstage Notes from the Chick in White Zombie*. I consider this to be a gesture of compromise with “the legions of metalheads” in exchange for them accepting her “on a level reserved for their favorite band members” (i). This is one example of how she negotiated a delicate balance

between trying to avoid being objectified while not alienating her band's largely male following.

Yseult crafted her image in such a way as to mediate between her female identity and the fierceness of metal culture. One way she accomplished this was by choosing stage clothes that combined images of dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity, which seems to be in accordance with Shoemaker's (2010, 296) notion of *macha femme* as "a performance that simultaneously conjures and resists fixed notions of masculinity and femininity across one body." For example, she combined engineer's boots with knee-high stockings or wore a tube top under a leather vest (Figs. 1 and 2). She used her design training to create custom leather hotpants that featured black and green flames and the WZ logo (Fig. 3 and 4). These images display how she combined artistic creativity and aggressive images with feminine fashion and sexuality, this last toned down by her wearing the hotpants over tights.

Yseult's wide stance in the second photo seems to be closely aligned with Bridgforth's idea of the *macha* as one who "stands in femininity as a warrior" and a live video of White Zombie I accessed on Youtube displays this same performance style in action. Onstage, she uses a wireless transmitter on her bass guitar that allows her freedom of movement, striding from one end of the stage to the other while aggressively swinging her neon yellow hair and the neck of her instrument (*White Zombie – Bizarre Festival* 1995). As a metal musician, she exhibits qualities that most female performers are denied; for example, she seldom smiles and she takes up a large amount of physical space. While much of the visible portion of the audience is male, her interpretation of

metal femininity breaks the scripted passive role of the female performer theorized by Mulvey.

Despite all of this work to forge a balance between her identities as a woman and a metal musician, she found herself misread because of gender assumptions within the metal culture. In her narrative she expresses frustration about the numerous times she was mistaken for a “friend or fan of the band” by over-zealous local stagehands and not allowed to take her place on stage until after “the intro tape...was rolling and...the pyro firing up” (ii). In the gaze of the male stagehands she was read correctly as female, yet they seem to have assumed that all metal musicians must be male. This assumption also caused her to be misread as male by groupies on several occasions and once by a gay man who “placed an ad directed at [her] in the L.A. Weekly personals” (ii). She insists that she “wasn’t trying purposely to look like a guy” and mentions her wearing hotpants as evidence that she was visually displaying her female identity. Instead, she attributes these misrecognitions to her slender build and her choice to go by her given name, Sean, instead of feminizing it to Shawna (ii).

As a drummer, Flo (2003) had the advantage of being partially hidden behind the drums and therefore able to avoid the male gaze to a certain degree, at least while performing. Among her other strategies for negotiating it was her cultivation of an alternative femininity that included playful visual elements like a tattoo of an angel on her leg, purple-dyed hair worn in pigtails, an eyebrow ring, green combat boots, and “this cool shirt that says ‘Stop staring at these,’” indicating her breasts (92–93). This last item indicates her awareness of the male gaze and offers a textual response to it that is direct and defiant.

This defiance seems to have resulted in her being misread as sexually uninterested in men, despite her identifying as heterosexual. One incident she describes as informing her of her apparent non-heteronormativity is when she met drummer Vinnie Paul of the thrash metal group Pantera and he signed an autograph for her “Eat Pussy...Vinnie Paul,” which made her wonder, “why do people assume I’m a...dyke?” (24–25). When she accidentally forgot her make-up bag in Champaign, Illinois, her bandmates immediately started making “dyke jokes,” and bassist Ruger remarked that she got “more chicks in Champaign than they do” (85). In the following excerpt, she realizes that they are talking about:

“The group of chicks that follow me around wanted (sic) to get me high all the time...Gee, girl, girl on drums, girl must be a dyke!(...) I had no idea those chicks were gay. I don’t care if they are or not, I just feel dumb cuz (sic) I didn’t know” (85–86).

These experiences relayed by the author suggest that by failing to adhere to the established visual signifiers of femininity in addition to playing a male-coded instrument, she became read as lesbian by both men and women.

As a woman who had previously lived as a man, Annah Moore offers some unique insights into the nature and effects of the male gaze. She describes one of her first experiences with it as occurring outside of the metal culture when she was first starting to read as female. In her recollection, she was at a grocery store when a large man who “looked like a jock” started obviously staring at her. She believes he was staring not because he was reading her as transsexual, but rather because he was attracted to her: “it

was one of those ‘you’re hot, and so am I! I want you now!’ stares” she has since come to recognize (2006, 152–153). Moore reports feeling pleased by this “fantastic verification” of her female status, yet “freaked out” because of the intensity of the unwanted attention (152–153). In the text that follows, she ties the objectifying power of the gaze to sexism in general. Here, she finds that since she has transitioned, men no longer take her seriously when she tries to talk to them about pursuits that are socially constructed as masculine like “fixing cars [,] or building guitars” and concludes that “even if they’re not sexually attracted to them,” men treat women “like objects in so many ways” (153–154).

She also reports that this objectification has affected her life as a metal guitarist, offering as an example that since she began living full time as a woman, the simple act of buying guitar strings has become more complicated. She finds that music store salesmen generally assume that she is shopping for someone else or waiting for her boyfriend while he shops (172–3). Once she began to be read as female, she discovered that she was no longer perceived by male music store employees as a musician, the same problem Yselt encountered when male stagehands would not allow her onstage with the band she co-founded. Moore writes that she enjoys “playing along with their game” until she surprises them by asking to try out an expensive guitar with a high-end amplifier and proceeds to “blow their minds with [her] twenty-plus years of heavy metal guitar-playing experience” (173). Her response to these occasions when her female appearance causes her to be treated as ignorant about music is to use the sound of the heavy metal guitar to combat the objectification of the male gaze.

In order to further analyze Moore’s performance of metal femininity, I would like to reference some contextualizing forms of visual culture from outside her written

narrative in the form of a promotional picture she posed for with the thrash metal band Ignitor (Fig. 5). Moore appears in this photograph fourth from the right, after lead singer Erika T. Swinnich. The group wears a uniform of black leather with metal-studded wristbands and belts. Swinnich and Moore's appearance only varies slightly from the rest of the group in that they wear a bit of make-up along with low-cut tops. The group members all gaze into the camera with surly expressions as if to issue a challenge, possibly even a threat, to the viewer. This image balances the idea of band unity, which is expressed by the members wearing similar outfits and facial expressions, with a nod to the fact that they are a mixed-gender group, expressed by the small variation in appearance between the men and women.

I contend that the alternative femininities displayed by Yseult, Flo, and Moore interacts with the male gaze in such a way as to simultaneously appeal to and deflect it by combining signifiers of feminine sexuality with signifiers of strength and aggression. The display of the female body produced by items of clothing like Yseult's hotpants and Moore's low-cut top and the wearing of make-up by all three serve to acknowledge the musicians' female identities and make them appear attractive to male audience members. On the other hand, the wearing of heavy leather boots and studded leather wristbands removes the idea of vulnerability and sexual availability from the equation. In her book *Alternative Femininities*, Samantha Holland (2004, 83–84) finds that when women wear combat boots or similarly “masculine” footwear, they employ them as “semiotic battledress” that allows them to adopt an aggressive stance that resists “both traditional feminine behaviour and appearance.” Lauraine Leblanc (1999, 156, 163–4) similarly holds that when punk girls combine items like army boots and leather jackets with

“fishnet tights and mini-kilts” they are “creating strong self-images” that demonstrate how “women can change the rules of the femininity game.”

### **Convergence of Male and Racial Gazes**

Chaney (2006) employed several different strategies to confront the convergence of the male and racial gazes she encountered in metal culture. This author writes that she was made aware of her “double outsider status” at “concerts, where guys would gawk and point” at her and her friends as if they were “Martians instead of black girls” (28). Her description of this as an ongoing rather than singular occurrence indicates that despite being fixed by this unwelcome racial and gendered gaze, she and her friends continued attending metal shows. A number of the black women interviewed by Laina Dawes (2012, 133–134) expressed the opinion that “the more their presence was felt” at metal shows “the more people will think it is normal for them to be there.” Chaney and her friends confronted the intersecting gazes by persisting in being present and visible at shows, “headbanging and moshing and howling the words to the songs” (28).

Yet she also relates how she took advantage of being relatively anonymous as a music consumer and a letter writer in order to address issues of bigotry in the metal culture. She recalls that over time, she began to listen to metal songs more critically and made a conscious choice not to “support bands with racist, sexist, or homophobic lyrics” (29–30). She also started writing “angry letters to metal fanzines when they made racist comments” (30). By acting and speaking out against prejudice from a place where she was hidden from the gaze of sexist and racist members of the metal community, she was making an effort to educate her fellow metalheads. This created the possibility that she and others like her would be treated with more acceptance when they were out among the larger community at shows and other events.

According to bell hooks (1996, 14), “sexism and racism converge” to make the demands of the male gaze even more “tragic and horrific for black women” because “glamour, beauty, [and] desirability are always encoded as white.” These insights appear to hold true for other women of color, as illustrated by Roxana Shirazi’s (2010) memories of her adolescent years as an Iranian immigrant in the United Kingdom. Ridiculed as a brown-skinned “Paki” by her schoolmates, she remembers wishing that her skin were white instead of olive (74). To that effect, she writes that she once covered her face with hair-lightening paste, but after all the pain and burning she found she had “only become red and raw,” not white (74). Due to her internalizing the racial and male gazes, she rejected the gifts of handmade Persian clothes that her mother gave her and instead began wearing short skirts, shaving her legs, and leaving the top buttons of her shirt undone (74–75). The author reports that these efforts put a stop to the teasing and at the end of this passage she proclaims with grim pride, “I was a Western girl now” (75).

The sexually provocative image she adopted as a glam metal groupie represents one of the two main approaches to gender performance that various scholars have attributed to female metalheads, the other being the more aggressive approach I ascribe to the musicians among my writers in the previous section of this chapter. As mentioned in the introduction, these scholars frequently report this type of female gender performance strictly in terms of how male metalheads respond to it, rather than interrogating the strategies and motivations of the girls and women who employ it. One exception to this oversight can be found in Robert Walser’s *Running with the Devil*, in which he finds that “female fans...are invited to identify with the powerful position created for them” by the “femme fatale” figures commonly depicted in glam metal videos (1993, 118–9). These

videos “locate women at a nexus of pleasure and dread,” envisioning them as “mysterious and dangerous...threats to male control and even male survival” (ibid.). These theories offered by Walser provide insight into another possible motivation as to why some female metalheads choose clothing and behavior that actively invites the male gaze.

Beyond the intention Shirazi expresses to lessen her racial otherness by performing Western femininity, the image she crafts also reflects Walser’s ideas about feminine beauty and sexuality being portrayed as powerful by some aspects of metal culture along with her stated desire to have sex with metal musicians. Throughout the book, Shirazi repeatedly uses lavish detail to describe the corsets and high heels that make up her groupie wardrobe, suggesting that much of her identity and personal power was bound up in these objects (98, 118, 136). While Susan Fast argues that it is “empowering for female fans to gaze at male rock stars” (1999, 279), Shirazi finds that for her, “watching rockers...onstage was foreplay” (176). Her experience of the erotic power of the music was not complete without “making out with the ravishing rockers” after their performances (176). Hence, although her strategy for negotiating the male gaze may be one that allowed her to be objectified and sexualized by it, it also made her feel powerful and facilitated her getting what she wanted out of her relationship with the glam metal subculture.

Interestingly, once Shirazi becomes involved with the groupie lifestyle, all references to race disappear from her narrative. Although she reports having plenty of conflicts with both men and women in the glam metal community, she never mentions anyone calling her “Paki” or similar racial epithets. Even when Dizzy Reed was subjecting her to outrageously misogynistic abuse via text message—she states that at

one point he called her a “urine semen pussy-stained whore”—there was no racial name-calling (185). This omission may be an act of wishful thinking on the author’s part, reflecting her continuing to idealize the glam metal culture to a certain extent even after she becomes largely disenchanted with it. On the other hand, it may represent her having the same success that she had as a schoolgirl in obscuring her ethnicity through her choice of gender performance.

Shirazi’s race does not reappear in her text until she recalls a brief affair she had with an unnamed British politician after leaving the groupie lifestyle. She does not mention the man’s race, but the intersection of the male and racial gazes appears to be a factor in their relationship. Having met her at a political fund-raising party, this man knew nothing about her groupie past. She remembers that on meeting him for their first date on which she had assumed they would have dinner and discuss politics, the first thing he said to her was, “Your place or mine?” (306). Puzzled, she reports reluctantly going home with him, wondering why he was behaving in this manner. She considered her “choice of attire: Long skirt? Check. No revealing bosom? Check. Sensible shoes? Check” (307).

The mystery was solved when the politician boasted to her about how he “fucked a different young Somali or Middle Eastern girl every night” (309). Bringing to mind hooks’ and Dawes’ statements about the sexualized portrayals of black women in popular culture, it appears he assumed that she was sexually available based not on her dress or past behavior but on her being Persian. She concludes this chapter by remarking: “I decided never to see him again. At least rock stars weren’t hypocrites. They were what they embodied” (307). While disillusioned by the sexual double standard she had

encountered within the glam metal subculture, Shirazi was even more offended by the sexist and racist hypocrisy of this well-respected man who positioned himself as champion of the downtrodden (307, 301).

## **Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that some women in metal resist the objectification and sexualization produced by the male gaze by crafting performative styles that combine dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity. I contend that these resistant gender performances are best understood under the *macha femme* rubric proposed by Shoemaker rather than Halberstam's "female masculinity" or Weinstein's application of "cultural masculinity" to metal culture. I found that while Shirazi, as the *groupie* among the selected authors, chose to embody an image intended to appeal sexually to the male gaze, she did so in a way that made her feel powerful and allowed her to fulfill her own desires. As one of the women of color in this research, she sought to minimize her racial difference through the performance of Western femininity as she had come to understand it. Chaney, on the other hand, negotiated the intersection of the male and racial gazes by refusing to let the stares of white male metalheads keep her from enjoying metal concerts.

One of my main interventions in this chapter is that the male gaze is not unique to the metal subculture but rather something that all women in Western/American culture have to contend with. As a numeric minority in some, but not all, metal subgenres, female metalheads may find themselves on the receiving end of the male gaze somewhat more frequently at metal events than in other environments. On the other hand, metal music and culture gives them a number of tools for resisting the objectifying force of that gaze, including the power that comes from playing the music and the opportunity to be loud and exuberant in public spaces. Items generally considered male-coded like heavy

leather boots and studded wristbands are acceptable accessories for female metalheads, and for those choosing to wear them they represent the possibility of both semiotic and literal defense against predatory male looks and behavior. In the next and final chapter, I continue my discussion of visual culture by considering how the photographs and other images the authors choose to include with their life narratives both provide evidentiary support for their stories and perform additional discursive work.

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<sup>1</sup> Yseult even provides visual evidence of this on page 49 of *I'm in the Band*, where she reproduces a *TV Guide* article about how White Zombie along with other underground punk and metal bands (including the all-female Babes in Toyland) had enjoyed a “boost in popularity” after getting the “thumbs up from MTV’s Most Moronic.”

## Chapter 5:

### The Authors' Use of Visual Culture as Evidence

With the exception of Chaney, all of the authors in this study utilize photographs and other elements of visual culture to expand upon and offer tangible proof for the narratives they put forth in their texts. According to Thomas Swiss (2005, 290), writers of rock autobiographies “use photographs to...sanction, through photography’s evidentiary power,” their “‘true’ account of events.” Linda Haverty Rugg (1997, 14) finds that the “integration of photographs into” autobiography “seems to claim the body as the source and focus of the...text.” Swiss considers this insight to be especially applicable to the reading of rock autobiographies as he points to the importance of bodies as the sites of performance in rock culture (290). By choosing and arranging the photographs and other visual evidence that accompany their texts, rock authors exert control over their self-images (Swiss 2005, 290).

Swiss states that most writers of rock autobiography only use photographs as “a ‘natural’ and expected supplement to the text” (290). However, a number of the authors I have selected for this project are more like Marilyn Manson, who Swiss cites as the exception because he utilizes “not only photographs but other documentary evidence (his early poems, letters from religious critics, etc.) in innovative ways” (290). Annah Moore’s book includes copies of her artwork and song lyrics along with photographs, while Sean Yseult’s reflects her training in the visual arts with its collage-like format that integrates news clippings, gig flyers, album covers, ticket stubs, promotional photos, and her handwritten notes. Roxana Shirazi’s memoir is also rich its use of visual culture and includes reproductions of works by the controversial Austrian artist Gottfried Helnwein

and ephemera like condom packages and backstage passes.

In the chapter to follow, I present a larger overview of each author's use of visual culture as evidence including a close reading of one or two images—or related sets of images—from the pages of each of the life narratives. I consider the reasons why Moore, Yseult, and Shirazi chose to include the variety of visual media discussed above.

Although the images that accompany Flo's *Diary* consist of just the front and back covers, they represent another way for her to establish her authenticity. While Chaney's essay does not include any visual elements, at least not in the version I was able to access in the *Bitch* compilation, I will also offer a brief analysis of her use of visual language.

### ***I'm in the Band***

By reproducing pages of her musical ideas handwritten in standard notation, Sean Yseult (2010) provides readers with visual evidence of her compositional contributions to White Zombie. These examples of her written music are very detailed, including time signatures, ties, multiple note values, rests, repeat signs, sharps, flats, and naturals (xxiii, 13–15). This visual evidence intervenes into the dominant beliefs in the music industry that even if women can play metal music, they cannot compose it (interview with Susan Fast in Binks 2008). In the accompanying text, she states that she often writes out music in this fashion because she frequently finds herself without an instrument on hand when musical ideas come to her (13). This statement serves as further proof of her compositional abilities, since only highly trained musicians can hear music in their heads and then transcribe it without the aid of an instrument. Similar to Robert Walser's use of metal guitar parts transcribed into standard notation to further his argument about how metal guitarists' use of conventions borrowed from classical music collapse the "Great Divide between 'serious' and 'popular' music" (1993, 65, 71–75, 107), Yseult's choice to

include this material reminds readers once again of her own classical training.

The reproductions of her notes regarding band logistics perform similar work to assert the leadership role she played in White Zombie. According to Mary Ann Clawson (1999, 207), a single member can become indispensable to a rock group due to her business and social skills even if “she is a woman and a bassist.” Yseult offers convincing visual evidence of her possession of these qualities by presenting copies of detailed band itineraries and networking contact information culled from the notebook she used for keeping track of band business during the group’s early years (18–19).

An image that performs particularly important discursive work in Yseult’s book is the photograph taken by DJ White in 1995 of her walking out on stage at Monsters of Rock, England’s legendary metal music festival (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> This photo appears both within the book and on its front cover. White positioned Yseult alone in the frame and shot the photo from the rear of the stage. She wears black engineer’s boots, black knee-high stockings, and black shorts combined with primary colors—neon yellow hair, a red t-shirt, and red, blue, and yellow decals on her bass. This color scheme appears especially powerful in contrast with the pale overcast sky, the vast white stage, and the ocean of muted pink faces that make up the background. White photographed Yseult from below, a technique that “deliberately ‘idealizes and monumentalizes’ the subject” (Creef 2004, 27). This perspective makes her appear enormous, taller even than the gigantic speakers mounted on metal scaffolding in the middle of the crowd.

Yseult comments on the performance the image represents in two separate sections of her text. On both occasions, she seems torn between wanting to call attention to the concert she considers her group’s “crowning achievement” (110) yet wanting to

downplay it, or at least the role her gender played in making it notable. In her introduction, she states that after her appearance at Monsters of Rock she was interviewed by a television news crew who asked how she felt about being the second female musician to perform in the festival's history (ii). She complains that she did not know how to answer this question because "discussing [her] gender seemed to belittle what [she] was trying to achieve: equality" (ii). Returning to this moment in the main text, she contrasts the success of the performance with how ill-prepared she felt. It was "physically the toughest gig" she remembers playing, "no coffee, and barely time to wake up," yet she also recalls that "80,000 people pogoed, moved like the sea, and sang" along with the group (110). Despite Yseult's seeming ambivalence about whether to celebrate or downplay this achievement, the choice to put this monumental image of her on the front cover serves to solidify her importance in the history of metal music.

### ***Right Side Out***

Annah Moore (2006) uses visual evidence in the form of photographs to track how she brought her physical being into harmony with her interior identity. Metal culture plays an important role in her evolving self-image and provides a bridge that connects the male-bodied Adam with the female-identified and -bodied Annah. The first adult images of the author show her as a male headbanger with long hair, wearing black t-shirts and leather jackets (Fig. 6). Next, there are a series of photos of her with exaggerated make-up and hair and campily dramatic facial expressions (Fig. 7). Of this part of her life, she writes that she was suffering from what she calls the "slingshot effect," something she has observed to be common in transitioning female-to-male transsexuals. According to the author, many transwomen "overmasculinize" prior to transitioning to compensate for their internal feminine identities. Then, when they begin expressing these identities, they

tend to “overdo it and go to the extreme of the *femme* side” (141). In the photos representing what Moore considers her “slingshot” phase, there are no visible indicators of her metalhead identity.

The image that accompanies her chapter titled “Never Rule Out Your Dreams” is significant because here she offers readers a visual representation of herself as having accomplished her goals. In the text, she enumerates the dreams that have come true for her: she has become the woman she “needed to be,” she has had sexual relations with a man as a woman, she has become a published author, and she is in “the world’s coolest metal band” (172). The photo that accompanies this list is the only one in the book that shows the author as both a woman and a metal musician (Fig. 8). She appears with long hair wearing a renaissance-style blouse and her right hand is fretting the neck of a USA Jackson Rhodes electric guitar.<sup>2</sup> Her face is just-noticeably made-up and there is a hint of a satisfied smile on her lips, but there is also a vague suggestion of menace in her expression as her eyes are slightly narrowed. This combination of photo and text suggests that in order to feel that she has completely externalized her “true” identity, she needs to perform neither exaggerated masculinity nor exaggerated femininity but an alternative femininity that celebrates her female body even as it incorporates elements commonly read as male-coded like the electric guitar and the aggressive facial expression.

Moore devotes several chapters in her narrative to the healing powers of the visual arts and the written word and there are samples of her artwork, poetry, and heavy metal song lyrics dispersed throughout the book. One drawing by the author, dated 1979, depicts the torso of a flayed corpse on top of a post that is covered with runes (Fig. 9). While Moore states that this piece was inspired by a horror movie and her anatomy class

(50), it also seems to reflect the horror imagery common to the lyrics and album covers of 1970s metal acts like Kiss, Alice Cooper, and Black Sabbath. In retrospect, she believes it represented her desire to rip off her skin in order to display her hidden female identity (51). Curiously, it also seems to prefigure the cover for Iron Maiden's *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*, released in 1988, that features the detached torso of the band's zombie mascot (Fig. 10). Moore employs similarly violent and bloody imagery in her lyrics with lines like "tear away the skin that keeps it all inside" ("Endure," 85) and "I pick up a handful of glass and blood/the bits of my life drip from my fingertips" ("Hear Me Scream, 37). These examples show how Moore used the extreme visual aesthetics associated with metal music to express the suffering she endured when she trying to conceal her female gender identity.

### ***The Last Living Slut***

Like the narrative itself, the elements of visual culture in Roxana Shirazi's (2010) memoir seem support contradictory arguments. For example, most of the photographs she provides of herself and her mother in Iran depict them wearing Western dress without head scarves. These images that support her descriptions of her family as modern and progressive—she states that her mother was a college professor and a socialist activist before the revolution—while contesting common media images of Iranian women and girls (11, 15, 22–23, 33, 29, 75). The front cover, however, features a reproduction of the author's passport picture taken when she left Iran at age ten, in which she is wearing a head scarf and montoe, the long black robe all women and girls are required to wear under by the Islamist government (Fig. 11; Shirazi 2010, 47, 59). Here, the juxtaposition of the author as a young girl in traditional Islamic garb with the book's provocative title seems aimed at shocking prospective readers into buying the book.

Certain critics of metal have applied a discourse of victimization to describe the relationship between the music and its subculture with its female participants. In her analysis of Tipper Gore's *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*, Lauren Berlant finds that Gore imagines her work as protecting "the *vulnerable little-girl citizen* of American culture" from "unwonted encounters with all kinds of 'excess'" (1997, 72–73, emphasis mine). In this book, Gore makes the same arguments that she and the Parents Musical Resource Center made before the U.S. Senate, where they accused various genres of popular music, especially rap and metal, of damaging American youth by exposing them to "sex, drugs, and violence" through their lyrics (Garr 1992, 426–7). The metal groupie scene in particular been depicted as victimizing to its female participants. Filmmaker Penelope Spheeris states that male metal musicians expect groupies to play "a very medieval, submissive role" and that the groupies tolerate this because they are motivated by "a search for love and attention" (Spheeris 1988, quoted in Garr 2002, 413). While the other authors in this research largely deflect these ideas with their narratives and visual evidence, the elements discussed below imply that Shirazi is somewhat more ambivalent about them. She deploys images in her book that, like the text itself, suggest her involvement in glam metal culture made her feel alternatively powerful and powerless.

A set of photographs credited to London-based high fashion photographer Andres Lesauvage seem to support the idea that the author attained a prestigious position in the backstage world of glam metal.<sup>3</sup> These images depict the author nude except for fishnet stockings and high heels in a variety of sexually suggestive poses with a shirtless tattooed man wearing leather pants with a studded belt and a black bandana. They can be found distributed throughout Shirazi's book and on Lesauvage's website (Fig. 12).<sup>4</sup> Unlike the

musicians in the snapshots credited to the author's personal collection, the man in these photographs is not identified anywhere in the book. Given this omission and that the photos were taken by a professional photographer, it is possible that he is a model meant to represent a composite of the musicians that Shirazi has had sexual relations with.

What is fascinating about the composition of these photographs is that Shirazi appears as the main focus and the unnamed man is largely reduced to an object. The man's face is turned away from the viewer in all of the different poses, hidden behind Shirazi's hair or face. His eyes are mostly hidden as well, and they are closed in those shots where they are partially visible. He serves as a prop, as visual proof of the author's sexual prowess and desirability, and as clothing, covering her breasts, buttocks, and genitals with his hands, arms, and torso. It is Shirazi's face that draws the viewer's eye, her eyes wide and her lips parted in sensual enjoyment. Her make-up is heavy and flawless; her hair is pulled away from her face, falling in luxuriant waves behind her. Although mixed in with them, these glamorous images contrast sharply with the messy and chaotic snapshots of the author's groupie activities (Fig. 13).

The intent of this soft porn portraiture seems to be to give the author greater control over her image, albeit in a manner that might be somewhat deceiving of less-observant readers. By replacing Shirazi's famous musician lovers with an anonymous stand-in, this photograph seems to invert the argument made by Rebecca Forrest (2008, 1) that metal groupies serve a passive function in the "construction of the mythology and the persona connected to metal rock gods." Like the focus the author puts on her relationships with other groupies, these photos counter Gillian G. Garr's (1992, 128) notion that groupies derive their identities and statuses from the men they sleep with.

Rather, these images seem to make the same argument that the book's editors do when they put forth that Shirazi "believed in the rock'n'roll myth and when she was unable to find anybody who lived up to it, she chose to embody it herself" (xiii). Here, she seems to imagine her status in the glam metal culture deriving from her bold and uninhibited sexual appetite and activity, the same elements that Forrest claims contribute to the god-like status of metal musicians themselves.

Yet the author's choice to include several pieces of artwork by Gottfried Helnwein among the visual elements in her book seems to complicate if not contradict this impression as well as some of the textual statements made by the author and her editors. Strauss and Bozza profess strongly in their introduction that Shirazi is not a victim, while the author expresses the intent of personifying a "new, positive, and celebrated meaning" of the word "slut" (xiii, 3). Yet the juxtaposition of Helnwein's images of abused little girls with Shirazi's trophy snapshots of her backstage adventures (Fig. 13) suggests a disturbing connection between the battering and sexual abuse she reports suffering as a child and her groupie lifestyle as a young adult. In her acknowledgements, she thanks Helnwein for allowing her to use these pieces, writing that the images of abused children that typify his work "have resonated in [her] being" since she herself was a child (314). Art writer Debra Koppman (2008, 6) describes Helnwein's work as "not only a commentary on...atrocities, but also on the complicity of onlookers," finding that as spectators, "we are all implicated in [his] unfolding dramas." The placement of these images within the book reminds readers of the author's childhood trauma, almost seeming to indict them as complicit in it even as she endeavors to present her unconventional sexuality in a celebratory and liberatory light.

### ***Diary of a Redneck Vampire***

The front cover of Flo's (2003) book consists of a blurred photograph of a two-lane highway running through a barren landscape with a promotional band photograph superimposed over it at an angle (Fig. 14). The following text has been digitally added to the band photo to make it resemble a gig flyer: "TONIGHT; 10:00 pm; all ages show; \$5, New Daisy Theatre on Beale; The Redneck Vampires." This added text serves to support the veracity of the narrative, as the Flo reports that the group often played shows at the New Daisy Theatre, a venue in Memphis (19–20, 133–134, 193).<sup>5</sup> Photographer Rick Dacus positioned the five band members standing shoulder to shoulder in a circle and shot them from above. This common technique in musical group photography—arranging the members in a tight formation looking up as one at the camera—gives viewers the impression of the group as a unified whole. The placement of the band's image over the picture of a highway leading to a distant horizon suggests the band's seemingly endless touring schedule described by the author in her narrative.

Flo changed the names of the group and its members to protect the privacy of her relational others in her *Diary*, and the faces of all the individuals in the band photo are blurred except for the author's (2, ix). The choice to leave her own face unaltered and recognizable suggests an awareness on her part that having violated the autobiographical pact by publishing under a pen name, she needs to give readers some alternative guarantee of her credibility. According to Haverty Rugg (1997, 14), the most basic function of photography in autobiography is to "denote the subject" of the work, "much as the name underwrites the authority of the autobiographer in Lejeune's autobiographical pact." This is in reference to Philippe Lejeune's statement that what

defines autobiography for the reader is “a contract of identity...sealed with a proper name” (Smith and Watson 2001, 8). The photo that appears on the back cover (Fig. 15) offers further proof that the speaker of the narrative is a real person, as it contains details that conform to Flo’s self-description in the text, including her purple-dyed hair and eyebrow ring (92–93). Likewise, the sardonic expression of the woman in the picture matches the acerbic and sarcastic tone of the written narrative.

### **“Sister Outsider Headbanger”**

As mentioned earlier, Chaney’s essay does not incorporate images in the literal sense, but I would like to highlight here how she uses visually charged language to support her key points. She writes that when she listened to Metallica or Corrosion of Conformity, she did not imagine herself as “a ‘bitch,’ a ‘ho,’ or some anonymous jiggling booty in a rap video” (29). With this last phrase, she offers readers a persuasive mental picture that illustrates how rap, a genre of music that has been “linked to the cultural experiences of the black community” (27), could nevertheless confront young black women with less than positive images of themselves. In contrast with this visual, she relates the enjoyment she experiences whenever she sees “a girl walking down the street sporting a ‘fro and a Korn T-shirt” (30). It is the combination of visual gestures representing black pride and metalhead identity adorning a female body that seems to cause the author such vicarious pleasure, as she holds the “act of participating in rock music” is “pretty subversive for black women” (30). This contention is supported by Maureen Mahon’s (2004, 205) argument that despite its idealization of black American culture and its experimental approach to “categories of race and sexuality,” rock remains a “sharply racialized and gendered terrain.” The author employs contrasting textual images to support her argument that her metalhead and black feminist identities are not

mutually exclusive, but rather mutually supportive.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have been exploring the ways that the selected authors integrate visual culture into their narratives in order to illustrate their stories and make discursive statements. Following Swiss, I have offered examples of how the writers use the “evidentiary power” of not only photography but also other forms of visual evidence including artwork, ephemera, and handwritten notes to support their versions of events. The use of these types of evidence also aids them in reinforcing the arguments that they present in the textual portion of their books. Yet their uses of visual culture do not always appear as seamless extensions of their texts; in some cases, the images complicate or even conflict with the written portions of the books.

For Yseult, the inclusion of her handwritten sheet music and booking notes works to assert her importance in White Zombie as a composer and de facto manager while an idealized performance portrait helps to solidify her position in the history of the metal genre. The photographs in Moore’s book illustrate the evolution of her current female metalhead identity while the reproductions of her art and poetry demonstrate how she used extreme images to help her cope with the pain and confusion she experienced prior to coming out as transgender. Shirazi’s utilization of the visual as evidence proves as complex as her narrative, both contesting and affirming stereotypical images of Iranian women and girls as well as the idea that metal culture, especially the groupie subculture, victimizes its female participants.

The front and back covers of Flo’s *Diary* contain a few well-chosen images that assist the author in countering suspicions that readers might have regarding the authenticity of the narrative due to her choice to publish anonymously. Finally, Chaney

constructs two contrasting textual pictures of young black women to demonstrate how metal can be empowering to them, potentially more so than other musical styles more closely associated with African American culture. Specifically, she views the “girl” in the Korn shirt as presenting a more positive image as compared with the reduction of young black womanhood to “anonymous jiggling booty” she finds in the music videos that accompany some rap music.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: at both places in her text where she discusses Monsters of Rock, Yselt refers to the festival as “Castle Donnington,” a name for it that is common among metal fans. However, its official name is Monsters of Rock; it used to take place at Donnington Park, England.

<sup>2</sup> This is Moore’s preferred brand and model of guitar (see Moore, *Right Side*, 173), made by the Jackson Guitar Company as a tribute to the late heavy metal guitarist Randy Rhodes, best known for his work with Ozzy Osbourne.

<sup>3</sup> For information about photographer Andres Lesauvage, I consulted

<http://www.photomodel.com/lesauvage> and  
<http://www.lesauvagephotographer.com/http://www.lesauvagephotographer.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> Shirazi 2010, viii–ix, 7, 126–127, and pages 1 and 4–5 of the color inset; and  
<http://www.lesauvagephotographer.com/http://www.lesauvagephotographer.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> According to its website, the New Daisy is still in existence and continues to host live musical performance, including those by metal bands. <http://www.newdaisy.com>.

## Conclusion

In this work, I have set out to analyze a small collection of written life narratives in order to come to a better understanding of why women take part in the heavy metal subculture and what kinds of experiences they have while doing so. This project seeks to address the lack of attention to the perspectives of girls and women that I have identified in the literatures of metal music and of women in popular music. The metal scholars who have defined the music and its subculture as “male-dominated” or “masculine” and have thus focused their research efforts on masculine perspectives in the genre frequently offer nuanced and well-thought out reasons for doing so. However, this tendency in metal scholarship still renders millions of female fans, musicians, and other subcultural participants like band managers and journalists in the global metal community effectively invisible and silent.

I have not set out to argue that the metal subculture is an idyllic space where gender difference and hierarchies are non-existent or unimportant, but rather that like all subcultures, it reflects the larger societies in which it is embedded. In ignoring the voices of women and girls in this subculture, we run the risk of missing out on unique insights into how gender hierarchies work and strategies to subvert them. I have critiqued Deena Weinstein’s writings about female metalheads in particular because the passive constructions she uses to describe them imbue them with virtually no agency of their own. Rather, in her treatment they seem to appear magically at metal concerts and scenes as if willed into being by the desires of their male counterparts. Based on my readings of my five selected primary texts, I have offered evidence that women and girls exercise

agency, thought, and self-reflexivity in the choices they make to engage with metal music and culture.

Like Susan Fast in her study of female participation in Led Zeppelin fandom, I have wondered why women would participate in a music subculture that is so often described as male-dominated and sexist by journalists and scholars, a perception that appears to be shared by much of the American public. Some of my results seem to confirm Jeffery Jenson Arnett's thesis that young people become involved with metal music and culture to address feelings of alienation and to satisfy drives for high levels of sensation. This is somewhat ironic, considering that Arnett describes metal as male-dominated and holds these motivating factors that he attributes to metalheads, feelings of alienation and sensation-seeking, to be predominately male issues. Yet feeling alienated seemed to play a major role in Keidra Chaney, Roxana Shirazi, and Flo's attraction to metal music and its subculture. Shirazi also reports that her one of her other reasons for wanting to become a part of the subculture was her drive to experience intense sensory stimulation, especially of the sexual variety.

However, there were other motivations that the authors report for becoming headbangers that fall outside of Arnett's somewhat reductive thesis. Sean Yseult, for instance, connects her metal fandom and musicianship with her lifelong training in and passion for the arts. Here, she points out that metal is not an isolated phenomenon existing in an alternative universe, but as an art form that is intrinsically connected to other music genres and the arts in general. For Yseult, playing metal music seemed a natural outgrowth of studying classical music as a child and graphic design as a young adult. Annah Moore also draws a connection between her love of playing and listening to

metal music and the pleasure and therapeutic effects she reports obtaining from her engagement with a number of expressive arts, including music, visual art, and writing.

Some of Moore's other reasons for becoming a metal fan and musician would surely confound Arnett, as she states she was initially attracted to metal music as a young teen because it helped her to cope with her gender identity disorder. Her narrative also seems to call into question Weinstein's theory that all metal subculture members are engaging with cultural masculinity. This idea of Weinstein's becomes increasingly hard to reconcile with Moore's story as she describes looking to metal culture as a form of affective sustenance when she comes out as transgender, starts living full time as a woman, and takes the final step to externalizing her female identity by having sex reassignment surgery. At every step of this long and complicated process, she states that she looked to metal music and culture to help her cope with the complex emotions she and those around her were dealing with. Examples of this include her forming a metal band with her then-wife in Phoenix and being out to and fully supported by two sets of bandmates in Austin.

Moore's narrative also illustrates the necessity I outlined in my introduction to analyze my primary source material utilizing both essentialist and performative theories of gender. When she discusses the "slingshot" phase of her coming out as transgender, she demonstrates an understanding of how certain aspects of gender are performative and getting them "right" takes a lot of practice. On the other hand, she describes having an innate sense of being female and goes to extraordinary lengths to bring that hidden identity to the surface, to live with her "right side out." The other authors likewise hold fast to their identities as women even as they challenge notions of what constitutes

appropriate feminine desires, visual presentations, cultural tastes, speech, and behavior. For this reason I argue that it is more accurate to understand their varied performances of combined metal and female identities as alternative femininities, rather than “female masculinities” or adoptions of “cultural masculinity.” I imagine these alternative metal femininities as similar to the punk femininities identified by Lauraine Leblanc. In my reading of their life narratives, these authors present the disruptive possibility that there exist such things as female rebelliousness, female power, and female sexual aggression.

My two chapters on visual culture illustrate some of the advantages and disadvantages for women and girls taking part in the metal subculture. On the one hand, I have stated that as a numeric minority at many metal concerts, women can find themselves at the center of much unwanted male attention. On the other hand, the performance of metal femininities allows female metalheads to break from traditional constructions of femininity in a number of ways; for example, they can be loud and boisterous in public or they can wear accessories like combat boots and spiked wristbands that are normally constructed as masculine. Even Shirazi, whose hyper-sexual attire would not impress most feminists, argues that in her performance of what I would call yet another alternative femininity, she at least was being honest about who she was and what she wanted.

All of the authors either directly state or at least gesture toward feminist motivations for their being involved with metal music and the writing of their narratives. Ysuel states in her introduction that her intent in performing metal music was to achieve “equality.” Her reasons for writing appear to be more subtly aimed at this goal, as she uses both textual and visual evidence in her book to assert the important roles she played

in the band White Zombie and in metal history in general. Moore's given intention for writing her book is to help other male-to-female transsexuals find the courage to live full lives, while her transition to womanhood informed her about gender inequality and provoked her to complain about the sexist treatment she encountered as she began to read as female.

Shirazi introduces her book by making the statement that in both living the nonheteronormative groupie lifestyle and writing about it, she means to promote sexual equality for women. Identifying herself as a "black feminist" and a "headbanger" in the title of her essay, Chaney uses her narrative to illustrate how these two seemingly antithetical identities actually fit together. In her introduction and her conclusion, Flo makes statements that suggest her *Diary* might be read as a tale of female empowerment. She recalls that she found the inspiration to transcribe her journals about her life as a metal drummer when she was a solo traveler in Europe telling her story to fellow female travelers, a scenario which has strong feminist implications. Likewise, her conclusion describes her as moving from being an insecure "girl" to a mature and self-confident "woman" through the experiences she had as a metal musician.

I have offered examples from the texts wherein the writers describe using metal music and culture as the basis for social bonding with other women and girls while considering the factors can impede female solidarity in the subculture, the greatest of which I have termed the abjection of the groupie. I have argued that in order to conform to gendered codes of metalhead appearance and behavior as well as to deflect the negative stereotypes that adhere to them due to intersecting ideologies of race, class, and gender, female metalheads reject groupies as antithetical to their relationship with the

music subculture. At the same time, I have noted that Shirazi presents a metal groupie viewpoint in her narrative that is equally contemptuous of other girls and women in the subculture who are not groupies.

In exercising self-reflexivity as a methodology, I have done my utmost not to gloss over the seamier side of metal culture and lifestyles while trying to avoid either over-identifying with or applying my personal judgments to the authors whose works I have selected. By presenting samples of some of the rough language, intense experiences, and extreme behaviors found in the texts, I have tried to offer a balanced view that neither idealizes nor condemns either the metal genre or the writers themselves. I contend that in performing these transgressive acts, writing about them, and using profane language to do so, the authors have broken extant codes of feminine decorum, asserting their rights to experience all aspects of life as fully as men are allowed to under the current gendered standards of behavior.

With this thesis, I have barely begun to delve into the complexities of the selected texts of life narrative themselves, much less the problem I set out to address of the general lack of knowledge about the perspectives of female participants in the heavy metal music subculture. I was very pleased when Laina Dawes' *What are You Doing Here? A Black Woman's Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal* was released at the end of 2012, shortly before I began work on this project. Despite its subtitle, this book is not so much a life narrative as it is a journalistic treatment of the experiences of black women in extreme music scenes, including metal, punk, and hardcore. This book gives me hope that more feminist scholars and journalists will take on the topic of women's lives in metal music, an area that virtually cries out for more serious investigation.

## Appendix: Figures

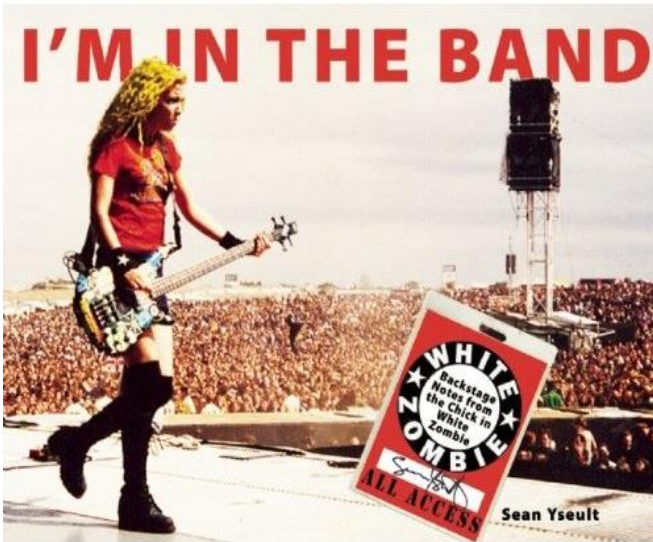


Fig. 1 (Chapter 4, page 55; Chapter 5, pages 68–69) Fig. 2 (Chapter 4, page 55)



Fig. 3 (Chapter 4, page 55)



Fig. 4 (Chapter 4, page 55)



Fig. 5 (Chapter 4, page 59)

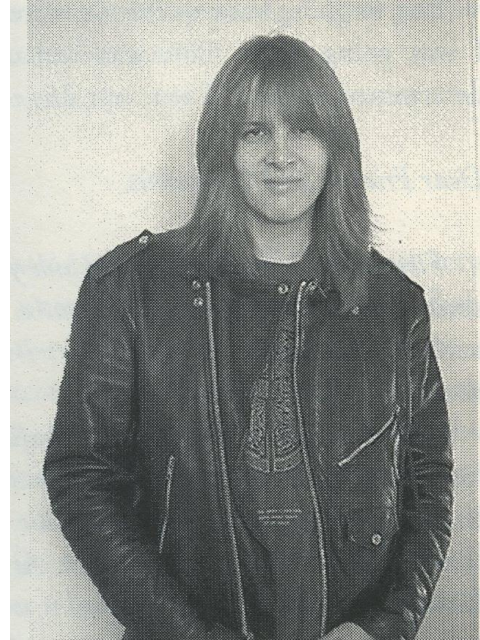


Fig. 6 (Chapter 5, page 69)



Fig. 7 (Chapter 5, page 70)



Fig. 8 (Chapter 5, page 70)



Fig. 9 (Chapter 5, page 71)

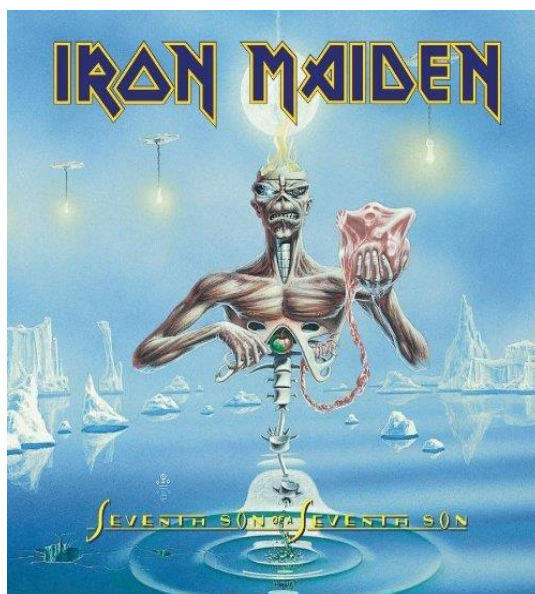


Fig. 10 (Chapter 5, page 71)



Fig. 11 (Chapter 5, page 72)

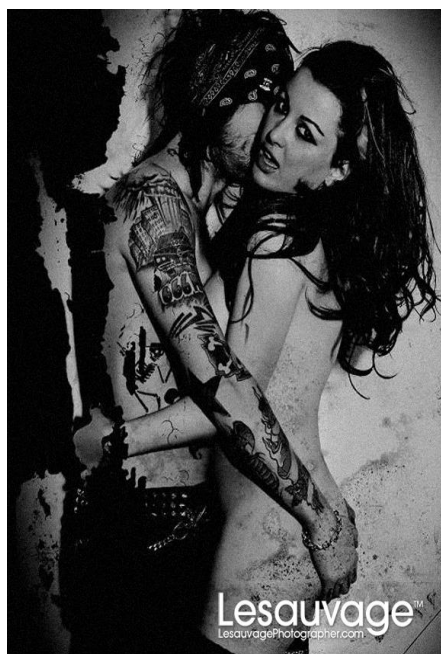


Fig. 12 (Chapter 5, page 72)



Fig. 13 (Chapter 5, pages 73–74)

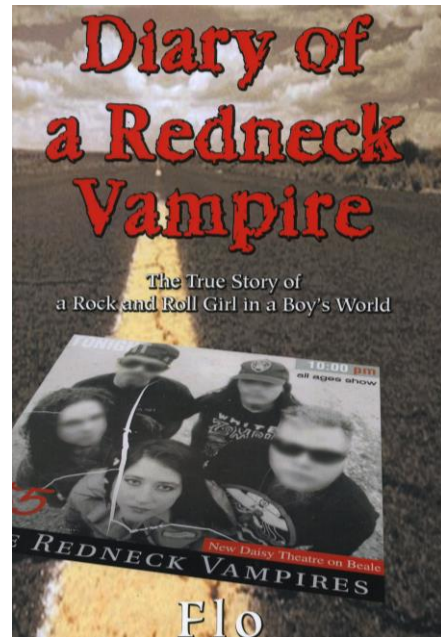


Fig. 14 (Chapter 5, page 75)



Fig. 15 (Chapter 5, page 75)

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