

The citation should be: DiGioia, Amanda (2020). 'Women, heavy metal music, and trauma', in Shadrack, Jasmine H. (author) *Black Metal, Trauma, Subjectivity and Sound*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 31- 42.

Women, heavy metal music, and trauma

Introduction

Women, heavy metal music, and trauma are intimately linked. In metal music, women and their anguish, agony, and torment often amount to little more than lyrical objects, filleted (be it physically or emotionally) for the audience's pleasure: an audience that is often perceived to be (though may not be in actuality) comprised of men. An example of this, which will be expanded upon throughout the chapter, is the overwhelming success and acceptance of multiple bands who hypothetically (via their lyrics) or literally (via fists, weapons, or sexual assault) abuse women. In order to experience trauma (physical or psychological), an individual must first experience either something distressing and/or violent. Men face different challenges within intimate partner violence, such as not reporting partner abuse because they convince themselves the incident was 'trivial and not worth reporting' (Coleman et al. 2008, p. 67), or because they fear being taken seriously due to constructs of masculinity under patriarchy. Any gender can be an abuser, and any gender can be abused. Though these statements regarding other genders are valid, further examination is beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses specifically on women, their trauma, and how these two linked ideas are dealt with in heavy metal music.¹

¹ I also want to take a moment for reflexivity: for the purposes of this chapter, I foreground women's experiences surrounding sexual assault and intimate partner violence/domestic violence. I am not qualified to talk about other forms of trauma women face. This is because while I have the hegemonically constructed disadvantage of being a woman, I fully acknowledge my hegemonically constructed privilege of being white. I am therefore not a member of communities impacted by those forms of trauma. The women and girls who these crimes affect directly are the ones who should be listened to, and whose opinions should be sought out regarding them. The same can be said of elaborating on trauma that women who belong to other marginalised groups face from heavy metal scenes. These groups include (but are not limited to) women of colour in metal scenes (racism and misogyny) or lesbians (homophobia and misogyny): other scholars who are members of those communities (such as Laina Dawes (2013), Joan Jocson Singh (2019), or Amber Clifford-Napoleone (2015)) should be referenced and heard. The metanarratives that tie women all together, however, are violence against women, and sex-based violence.

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Not all heavy metal music has violence against women entrenched within its lyrics.

However, all heavy metal music is produced in a world of patriarchal hegemony:

Whilst not all death metal or black metal or grindcore is as explicitly misogynist as the bands featured here, they do all function within the sexist power differentials of a hegemony that tells women we are not welcome, we are too much, not enough, too loud, too opinionated, not good enough. But then, we get all of this misery anyway because we all live inside the frame that produces and enshrines it. (Shadrack, 2017, p. 181)

Violence is part of the frame of patriarchal hegemony (Hunnicut, 2009) and heavy metal music and violence have been intertwined since heavy metal music's inception. The first song on Black Sabbath's *Black Sabbath* (1970), an album frequently cited as the world's first heavy metal music album (Wagner, 2010), has lyrical content that heavily implies the song's unnamed narrator has encountered, and then been dragged to hell by, the devil (the narrator's screams of 'Oh, no, no, please, God, help me!' fade away as if they are being dragged or dropped) scared' (Osbourne, Iommi, Butler, & Ward, 1970). By the end of 'Black Sabbath', hell and Satan have appeared on earth: this hell world features 'people running 'cause they're scared', ostensibly because of the all of the violence that had been unleashed (Osbourne, Iommi, Butler, & Ward, 1970). Violence in the form of being dragged to hell after encountering the devil or a demon was not a musical motif being invented by Black Sabbath. For example, in 1787² audience were treated to 'Don Giovanni! A cenar teco m'invitasti' ('Don Giovanni! You invited me to dine with you'), an aria from Act II of the opera *Don Giovanni* (1787),³ with both lyrical and musical parallels with 'Black Sabbath'.

² The opera *Faust* (1859) (by Charles Gounod, French libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré) also features a character (Faust) being dragged to hell by a demon (Méphistophélès) at its culmination.

³ The music of *Don Giovanni* (1787) was composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the Italian libretto was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte. For the sake of this article, I have used an online version of a 1961 English translation of the libretto by William Murray, which has no pagination.

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Like the unnamed narrator in 'Black Sabbath' (1970), Don Giovanni is dragged down into hell, screaming and/or singing as he goes:

Terrors unknown are freezing me, Demons of doom are seizing me, Is hell let loose to torture me? Or does it mock my sight? My soul is rent in agony! Condemn'd to endless misery, Oh, doom of wrath and terror, No more to see the light! (Da Ponte, 1961)

Amidst a chorus of demonic voices (the libretto notes that the voices are 'hollow', and come 'from below') singing about the appalling terrors that await him, Don Giovanni screams and is engulfed in flames (Da Ponte, 1961). The one witness to this horror, Don Giovanni's servant, Leporello, sings that the look, gestures, and cries of the damned Don Giovanni make him afraid ('The fire of doom surrounds him, Its fiery glare confounds him, What sounds, what sights of terror, Oh, I shall die, oh, I shall die of fright'! (Da Ponte, 1961)). Finally, in the opera's epilogue, Leporello confirms to the listener that Don Giovanni was indeed just dragged to hell by the Devil himself: '...Just over there the Devil came and dragged him down'! (Da Ponte, 1961). This highlights one of the differences between the opera and 'Black Sabbath' (1970): although the works deal with the devil in similar ways in terms of lyrical content, 'Black Sabbath' (1970) asks us to infer this from the screaming alone, whereas *Don Giovanni* (1787) confirms that, yes, the devil did just punish a wicked person.⁴ Another difference is that Don Giovanni is undeniably a man, and not just any man: Don Giovanni had a history of philandering, as well as abusing, and assaulting, women, as well as other crimes, like murder. While *Don Giovanni* (1787) is not a paragon for gender issues (Curtis, 2000), the opera does something that heavy metal rarely does, and that remains subversive today: the arrogant, ruthless, rapist is removed from society and burns in hell for

⁴ A brief, and non-exhaustive, list of scholarship that discusses both opera and heavy metal includes Walser (1993), Burge, Goldblat, and Lester (2002), and Arnett (1991).

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all eternity. In turn, the (women) survivors of Don Giovanni's abuse go from reliving their trauma daily while Don Giovanni walks free ('Only when I see him bound in chains will my anguish be soothed' (Da Ponte, 1961)), to finding solace when they are informed that Don Giovanni has been served his 'just desserts' (which are also the last words of the libretto) (Da Ponte, 1961). In today's world, Don Giovanni would most likely remain in society (due to truncated rape conviction rates (Lea, Lanvers, & Shaw, 2003)), and could probably perform in a band, or run for President of the United States, without trouble. In contrast, the narrator of Black Sabbath's song is not explicitly wicked, and, though sung by cis-man⁵ Ozzy Osbourne, has no definitive gender lyrically. However, this does not mean that the gender of the narrator is not implied to be male, or, alternatively, heavy metal music lyrics that victims whose genders are not named are completely gender neutral or malleable. Shadrack has noted that songs in heavy metal music that infer intimate partner violence without immediately identifying the gender of the victim must be placed in the context, history and name of the band who wrote them, and often 'only serve to add to the existent problematic assumption that the victim is always a woman and deserving of brutality' (Shadrack, 2017, pp. 170-184).

Notably, *Black Sabbath* (1970) also features a cover of 'Evil Woman', a song that garnered some popularity in the United States, originally written and performed by the American blues-rock band Crow (Alan, 2013). In his autobiography *Black Sabbath*, lead guitarist and lyricist Tony Iommi stated that the band recorded the song after Black Sabbath's manager Jim Simpson insisted that they record something commercial (Iommi, 2011). The lyrics describe a woman with the look of evil in her eyes ('I've seen a look of evil in your eyes, you've been filling me all full of lies' (Wagner, Wiegand, & Wiegand, Evil Woman,

⁵ Cis is a term that describes an individual whose gender matches the sex they are assigned at birth.

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1970)), falsely accusing the narrator of the song of being the father of her son ('You want me to claim that child you bore, well you know that it must be not be' (Wagner, Wiegand, & Wiegand, *Evil Woman*, 1970)). The narrator then describes her as a liar, flat out says she is an evil woman, and then asks her to stop sullyng his reputation. This one example of how heavy metal bands depict violence against women lyrically, or describe women as dangerous objects bent on the destruction of men, and whose bodies, trauma, and experiences are up for public consumption.

Violence against women is common, not subversive

If heavy metal music is, by definition, subversive, then it should be pointed out that there is nothing subversive about violence against women. Violence against women is common, global and pervasive: in all societies, women and girls are subjected to forms of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse (Storkey, 2015). The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that violence against women (particularly intimate partner violence⁶ and sexual violence)⁷ is a major public health problem and violation of women's human rights (World Health Organization, 2017). The problem is undoubtedly pervasive: the WHO's global estimates indicate that 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual intimate violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime, while global estimates indicate that 38% of all murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner (World

⁶ Intimate partner violence is also called domestic violence. Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes harm (physical, sexual or psychological). Examples of intimate partner violence include physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours (World Health Organization, 2017).

⁷ Sexual violence can be defined as 'an attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object' (World Health Organization, 2017, para. 3). Sexual violence by definition includes a lack of consent from one of the parties involved in the act.

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Health Organization, 2017). Intimate partner violence has more repeat victims than any other crime (End Violence Against Women, 2019). One in five women has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16, and approximately 85,000 women are raped and over 400,000 women are sexually assaulted in England and Wales every year (End Violence Against Women, 2019). In the UK, two women die every week at the hands of a partner or former partner (Refuge: For Women and Children Against Domestic Violence, 2017).

Women and men in heterosexual relationships may experience similar intimate partner violence behaviours (Hester, 2009, p. 3), and intimate partner violence, regardless of the gender of the victim, is woefully underreported. Conviction rates for rape are far lower than other crimes: only 5.7% of reported rape cases end in a conviction for the perpetrator (Kelly, Lovett, & Regan, 2005). Other reports suggest that tens of thousands of rape cases get dropped each year because of the stress and trauma associated with police investigation, a desire to move on from the rape, or safety concerns (Mayor of London: Office For Policing and Crime, 2019). Often, it is the rape survivor who feels 'on trial' in criminal proceedings, not the perpetrator: victim-blaming⁸ at its finest.

That being said, intimate partner violence research also indicates important gendered differences between how men and women are impacted by abuse. For instance, women in heterosexual relationships experience a greater amount of and more severe abuse from male partners: a 2008 study by the British Crime Survey indicated that physical and emotional impacts from intimate partner violence were significantly greater in women who survived such violence, as opposed to men (Hester, 2009, p. 3). Women experience domestic violence

⁸ 'Victim-blaming' occurs when the victim of a crime is inferred to have caused or deserved the violent crime that they endured: it is a form of prejudice, against victims, and often, women, people of colour, those who identify as LGBTQ, or other marginalised communities.

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with far more instances of reoccurrence – 89% of people who experience four or more incidents of domestic violence are women (Walby & Allen, 2004). Lesbians suffer from the additional risk of having their intimate partner violence incidents being recorded as assaults (Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003, p. 94). Women of colour in Western societies or the Global North face being a member of a devalued race at the same time as being a member of a devalued gender (sexism), and, are therefore of little central concern to members of the dominant class (white men): this may cause women of colour to be unable to access traditional helping agencies (hospitals, social service organizations of lawyers, etc.) (Rasche, 1988). In the West or Global North, women of colour face additional problems (which are the product of racism) when reporting intimate partner violence that are not experienced by white women. These include fear of police brutality against themselves and their men, or the fear of being viewed as a traitor for disclosing a problem that may tarnish the positive image their ethnic minority community has worked so hard to promote (Rasche, 1988, p. 165). Trans women face even greater levels of violence: the Gender, Violence and Resource Access Survey, conducted in the US, showed that 50% percent of trans respondents stated that they had been assaulted or raped by a partner, and 31% identified themselves as domestic violence survivors (Greenberg, 2012, p. 200). Other surveys showed that trans respondents reported that they had been subjected to domestic violence specifically because they were trans or gender nonconforming (Greenberg, 2012, p. 201). Another 2018 survey from the United States indicated fatal violence disproportionately affected trans women of colour, with the majority of these victims being black transgender women, showing how racism, sexism, transphobia, and (in the case of the United States) unchecked access to guns makes this community particularly vulnerable (Human Rights Campaign, 2019). All of this data reiterates the earlier point made: violence against women is common, and writing violence

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against women into lyrics as a means to shock one's fans is neither subversive, nor clever.

Hostile language and violence

Hostile language is often a precursor to violence (Perry & Dyck, 2014, p. 54), and academics, fans and other listeners may wonder if the words hurled at women by heavy metal music bands will cross this line. There is a precedent for this fear, both generally and in heavy metal music specifically. When Salvatore 'Sammy the Bull' Gravano, a former underboss of the Gambino crime family (one of the families who made up New York City's mafia) was asked if *The Godfather* (1972), a film based on a book by Mario Puzo, influenced the way he behaved when he was in the mafia, Gravano replied:

I only did, like, one murder before I saw that movie...I killed 19 people...It made our life, I don't know, it made our life seem honorable. I would use lines in real life like 'I'm gonna make you an offer you can't refuse,' and I would always tell people, just like from *The Godfather*, 'If you have an enemy, that enemy becomes my enemy'... He [Puzo] influenced the life, absolutely. (Goldberg, 2000)

Notably, Puzo wrote *The Godfather* (1969), and collaborated on the *Godfather* screenplays, without the influence of the mob,⁹ so here we have completely fictional works of art influencing real-life mobsters, and causing actual deaths. Metal also has a connection to violence, although artists who have been involved with heavy metal for an extended period of time often deflect criticism (such as Alice Cooper quipping 'There's more blood in *Macbeth* than in my shows and that's required school reading' (Donkin, 2008, para. 16)) or diminish the use of violence as a lyrical storytelling tool (such as Bruce Dickinson, the lead singer of

⁹ Throughout the article, Gravano is clear that he believes that Puzo had help from someone in the mafia when working on the various incarnations of *The Godfather* (1969, 1972) texts: 'Somebody had to be helping him...because he knew about our life cold,' he answers. 'He had the whole atmosphere, the way we talked. That wedding scene -- I mean, that was so real. ... Either he was getting help, or he was some kind of genius.' (Goldberg, 2000, p. 14).

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British heavy metal titan Iron Maiden, saying, 'We're not interested in being extreme...We're interested in being interesting and in animating people's imaginations with the stories that we tell and the songs' (Donkin, 2008, para. 27).

There are numerous academic arguments about the role of the arts as an agent of societal change that are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is nevertheless clear that violence and some forms of art have a relationship with one another. Some psychological studies have shown that violent lyrics in heavy metal music can increase aggression in males that listen to them (Mast & Francis, 2011, p. 63). Other studies from the 1990s indicate that 17 minutes of exposure to heavy-metal rock music, irrespective of lyrical content, led to increased sex-role stereotyping and negative attitudes toward women in men aged 18-24 (Lawrence & Joyner, 1991, p. 61). This data could be supported by the Dayton mass shooting¹⁰ suspect, who sang about raping and killing women in a pornogrind¹¹ metal band called Menstrual Munchies: their album titles include *Preteen Daughter P\$\$y Slaughter*, *6 Ways Of Female Butchery* and *Tilt Bench for Gynecology Or Total Rape*: the cover art showed the rape and mutilation of women (Wyatt, 2019). One of the shooter's bandmates in Menstrual Munchies, Jesse Creekbaum, who 'does not want to be associated with it', took many of the band's recordings down, so that the shooter would not be romanticized, but rather 'erased from history' (Newhauser, 2019, para. 8). Creekbaum said:

I feel shitty having let him be in the band, doing those lyrics...because I know, like, whereas I saw it as a joke — like, 'Let's play this and we'll shock some people,' and then the people that we know laugh — he didn't see it as a joke. He was like, 'Fuck, yeah. We're gonna do this...It's like, Jesus Christ, how much of this was like real life

¹⁰ The Dayton mass shooting occurred on August 4, 2019, in Dayton Ohio: ten people were killed and 27 injured.

¹¹ Pornogrind is a subgenre of grindcore, which emerged in the 1980s and is defined by the use of a 'blast beat' ('a drummer's rapid fire alternation between the bass drum and the snare drum' (Weingarten, 2019)). Pornogrind is grindcore with 'an over-the-top, juvenile obsession with sex, violence and the ways the two could combine on a woman's body. Think samples from porno movies, lyrics about sexual violence and gross-out album art' (Weingarten, 2019).

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for him? (Newhauser, 2019, para. 6)

The fact that rape, violence, and misogyny are a 'joke' meant to 'shock people', performed by men who we can infer have not been directly impacted by any of these issues, showing how privileged these men are. They are able to 'joke' about these issues, which are often the terrifying reality that many women (and others) live in. Meanwhile, the members of the 'tight-knit' porngrind scene were quick to circle the wagons and attest that they don't believe the content of the lyrics contributed to (or foreshadowed) the shooter's actions. One scene member goes as far to say, 'We get people like this, who, you know, are fucking sick in the head, who get into our scene and ended up killing nine people and almost, you know, putting a bad name on our scene. And that's not fair for the rest of us' (Newhauser, 2019). Clearly, protecting the scene is more important to this individual than self-reflection. Regardless of what individuals within the shooter's scene believe, there are several indisputable facts: the victims of the shooter remain dead; the shooter was a misogynist; and the shooter carried out violence similar to that he had sung about in his heavy metal band.

The data connecting violent lyrics in heavy metal music with increasing aggression in males stands in contrast to yet more academic work that indicates that extreme metal music can help people process their anger (Sharman & Dingle, 2015, p. 8). Fans and performers often describe listening and engaging with heavy metal music as being helpful in managing their well-being (Quinn, 2019). Death metal music fans are not desensitized to violence, and for them death metal music inspires joy and empowerment, not violence (Sun, et al., 2013). Some figures also indicate that teenage metal heads grow up to be happier and better adjusted adults (when compared to both current college-age and middle-aged comparison groups) than fans of other genres of music (Howe, et al., 2015, p. 624). While both sides of this debate

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rage on, it is clear that misogyny in heavy metal lyrics has been done to death (so to speak).

Metal music experiences, like all musical experiences, continue to be shaped by both gender and patriarchy, and the different social positions of men, women, and individuals who identify as genders outside the gender binary, greatly determine those experiences (Hill, 2016).

I am sick of hearing attendees talk about 'Fucked with a Knife' (1994) at academic conferences: Death metal and misogyny

Death metal bands have habitually described women being filleted, sliced, diced, or devoured within their lyrics for nothing more than shock value. Bands such as Prostitute Disfigurement specifically target women in marginalised communities: their 2014 release *From Crotch to Crown* (Willowtip Records) has a track entitled 'Dismember the Transgender'. Vulvodynia¹² has an opening sound clip of a brutal sexual assault on the first (and title track) of one of their albums, and features lyrics describing the violent murder and cannibalisation of a woman, highlighted by a shrieking refrain of 'Mangled fucking slut' (Vulvodynia, 2016). There are some in brutal death metal who are confronting misogyny, and while many of those are also women in the scene (such as Larissa Stupar, vocalist for the British band Venom Prison, and Mallika Sundaramurthy, vocalist for the US band Abnormality), there is also a phenomena of bands reflecting on past misogynist lyrics, and subsequently trying to make amends. Vocalist Duncan Bentley of Vulvodynia addressed the sexually violent focus of their last album, stating that the band 'doubled down' on their lyrical content after being accused of not being 'true slam' (Zorgdrager, 2019). Bentley offers no further explanation than this, as if violence

¹² The name of the band is a medical term for a condition defined as a chronic, unexplained pain in the opening area of the vagina. All band members are cis-men.

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against women is a natural response to having authenticity challenged. In metal music studies and other fields, aggression has been gendered as masculine (Hill, 2017): for men, failure to be aggressive is often associated with not being masculine enough. Vulvodynia's latest album closes with 'Cultural Misogyny', whose lyrics critique, confront, and condemn patriarchy, learned misogyny in society, and female genital mutilation. In response to backlash against their name, Vulvodynia made shirts and donated a portion of their profits to a non-profit that helps improve the lives of women suffering from the condition the band is named after (Zorgdrager, 2019). Again, these actions are not necessarily an indication of sincere penance or reflection of their actions: one song lambasting misogyny and a couple of donations does not negate albums worth of misogynistic content. Other bands also pivot from past mistakes to instead focus their efforts on other forms of compensation: Chris Andrew, the guitarist of Devourment (a death metal band from the United States) says, 'If you're writing a song in 2019 about how you hate women, it no longer seems like a representation of something, it just seems like that's your fetish' (Zorgdrager, 2019). Has a song about 'how you hate women' ever been a representation of anything but some form of misogyny? Shadrack elaborates:

Given the data, violence against women could be understood as an epidemic of very serious proportions, so forgive me if I don't cheer on extreme metal bands who think this is a source for artistic inspiration. Purcell's statement [about how lyrics in Death Metal (like album art and band photos) serve predominantly as a means for bands to promote an image that visually displays the aggression and extremity of their music] appears to confer a free pass onto death metal because it is supposed to be extreme, but there are a great many extreme problems in contemporary society – so many that artists are spoilt for choice. Would it not be incredible for a death metal band to compose a song on the light judicial treatment of rapists such as Brock Turner, or on police brutality against African-Americans? That is worthy of artistic competence, not penning lyrics called 'On Her Guts I Cum'. Really. Grow up. (Shadrack, 2017, p. 181)

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Some scholars do not even take into account that the prevalence of violence against women in society does not make it taboo. Scholars who study extreme metal, grindcore, deathcore, and other various offshoots often claim that transgression and taboo are important aspects of these scenes, in terms of both lyrics and verbal and non-verbal behaviours that contravene the boundaries of what people are supposed to do or find appropriate. Some scholars go as far to say that they 'challenge' those boundaries, and 'EM [extreme metal] bands constantly transgress bodily, sonic and discursive taboos in a way that is inevitably bound to be criticized' (Kirner-Ludwig & Wohlfarth, 2018, p. 405).

However, these academics, at best, ignorant of several facts, or, at worst, flippantly ignoring them. Throughout the arts, depictions of women getting abused, sexually assaulted, or murdered in various violent ways is the norm, not the exception. Historically, representations of women in the visual arts (paintings, photography and most relevantly here, album covers) have been created with the viewing pleasure of heterosexual men in mind (Jansen, 2016). 'The male gaze', a term often used describe this phenomenon (representations of women in the arts created by and for heterosexual men), was coined by Mulvey in 1975 (Mulvey, 1975): this concept is far from new, and applies to heavy metal music album art and lyrics, created by men, for men.

Additionally, there is evidence that often, men do not face repercussions from harming women either professionally or socially that would occur if violence against women was truly taboo. Very recently, men were elected President of the United States after gleefully announcing that 'And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything....Grab 'em by pussy. You can do anything' (Trump, 2016), or, alternatively, became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom after police were called to a 'domestic incident' at their home (Waterson, 2019). In 2018, men who had previously pushed their

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penis into a fellow co-ed's hand during a party at Yale in 1983 were still elected to the Supreme Court of the United States (but not before someone mysteriously paid off their massive debts) (Stubley, 2019). 2018 was also the year that 5,000 people in Greensboro, North Carolina paid to see R. Kelly (a serial abuser of underage girls) perform. They were met by 35-40 protestors, one of whom remarked: 'If there were 5,000 people who paid money to see R. Kelly, those are also 5,000 people who say they don't trust black women and their families' (Knopper, 2018, para. 2).¹³ It took until 2019 for R. Kelly's label to drop him, which coincided with federal indictments for sex trafficking, after decades of cover-ups and protection, beginning when Kelly married a 15-year-old girl at the age of 28, and continuing with decades of domestic violence allegations, lawsuits, and child pornography charges. Kelly continued to record, perform, and collaborate unencumbered, until a group of survivors of R. Kelly's abuse broke their nondisclosure agreements in 2017-2018 by going to the press (Knopper, 2018). Yet, Kelly still has people that support him: in 2019, recording artist Erykah Badu stated that she still loved R. Kelly unconditionally (Snaps, 2019) and when R. Kelly was released from a Chicago jail in February, he was met with cries of 'Free Kells!' and 'I love you' (Rosenberg, 2019, para. 2). Some of Kelly's most loyal fans are women of colour who offer various justifications for their loyalty, ranging from 'I'm just here for the music' to the victim-blaming 'There are two sides to every story' (Grundy, 2019). Kelly, a sexual predator, gets support from the very group he preys upon.

¹³ Many of the women R. Kelly targeted for abuse were women of colour. Racial hierarchy in America caused 'pure' white womanhood to be juxtaposed with sexual stereotypes about black and Native women. This caused the stereotype of the hypersexualised, sexually promiscuous woman of colour to rise, and remain, in the United States. Saying a black victim deserved sexual abuse or assault because she was promiscuous is something that is, unfortunately, all too common. For more information, see P. H. Collins (2004). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. Routledge.

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'What happens when you love a music that doesn't love you back?'

Laina Dawes, when recounting her experiences combating racism and misogyny as a woman of colour within the metal scene, asks what happens when you love a music form that does not love you back (Dawes, 2013). Jasmine Shadrack expands on Dawes's question, saying:

As a fan and performer of extreme metal for the last twenty years, I and many other women who love metal have observed a problematic paradigm concerning extreme metal and women – more specifically, the obliterated female body, which exists as artwork, lyrical content and in band names. Even though the musical structure, technical and virtuosic playing and production qualities of these songs are undeniably brilliant, the content and ideological packaging can be deeply sexist. From Cannibal Corpse's 'Fucked with a Knife' (*The Bleeding*, 1994) to Prostitute Disfigurement's 'On Her Guts I Cum' (*Embalmed Madness*, 2001), it is important to analyse why violence against women exists as aesthetic and lyrical content when this form of 'extremity' is a reality for too many women. There is no denying that extreme metal offers its listeners a lot – solidarity, escape, a sense of empowerment – but there has to come a point when we must examine the content to demonstrate what exactly is being said given the socio-cultural reality of violence against women. When reality reflects art, a response is necessary. (Shadrack, 2017, p. 170)

The response from metal is not a roar, but a whimper. Journalists have noted that even when metal musicians publish contraversial statements in the press or a book, they face little backlash. When glam metal rock band Mötley Crüe's biography, *The Dirt: Confessions of the World's Most Notorious Rock Band* (Lee, Mars, Neil, Sixx, & Strauss, 2001) was published, it included a story in which bassist and songwriter Nikki Sixx said he 'pretty much' raped an intoxicated woman after he had had sex with her in a cupboard and then sent Tommy Lee in afterwards, so he could 'pretty much' rape the intoxicated woman too. Sixx's reputation did not take a huge hit. National Public Radio called the book 'one of the all-time great rock bios', and 'a good dirty rocking read', while writing off the band's misogyny as 'indicative of the gluttony that epitomized the '80s' (Bock, 2010). Misogyny did not magically begin or end with the 1980s. The film version of *The Dirt* (2019) brought Mötley Crüe a legion of

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younger, newer fans: 64 percent were in the 45 to 59 age group before the movie's release, while 62 percent were in 18 to 45 group afterward (Kelly M. , 2019). Because of the success of the film, the band reunited, wrote four new songs, and is planning to go on tour for the first time since their 2015 'farewell' tour (Moniuszko, 2018). As for the woman who was sexually assaulted in the cupboard, her story is still unknown, as is how that trauma impacted her; meanwhile, both men continue to control (and profit from) her story.

Polish extreme metal band Decapitated used to be highlighted as a band who 'do not need to use violence against women to manifest their representations of extremity' (Shadrack, 2017, p. 180). While this may be the case in their lyrics, it is not the case in life. In the autumn of 2017, Decapitated were arrested in connection with the kidnapping and gang rape of a fan following a show in Spokane, Washington. Again, several prominent metal musicians began to circle the wagons around Decapitated, including Nergal, the lead singer and songwriter of Polish black metal band Behemoth. On Instagram, Nergal posted that, while he does not support forced sex, he thinks that Decapitated are 'good, decent, and hard-working fellas' (Neilstein, 2017). Nergal's words can easily be interpreted as implying that Decapitated are therefore not capable of rape. Frankie Palmeri of Emmure and Hatebreed vocalist Jamey Jasta both initially supported Decapitated. Jasta simply tweeted '#freedecapitated', whereas Palmeri tweeted:

To be fair, 'kidnapping' I considered a far cry from what could be grounded in reality for a touring band. It's a shame what's playing out...Also I'm not a politician, police officer or lawyer, so please don't SJW trigger pleb me in to [sic] oblivion because I'm a civilian with [an] opinion. (Wookubus, 2017)

Noteably, Palmeri uses the terms 'SJW' (social justice warrior: a person who expresses or promotes socially progressive views) and 'trigger' (distress, typically as a result of arousing feelings or memories associated with a particular traumatic experience) as slurs and jokes

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here. Post-traumatic stress disorder, which is associated with triggers and traumatic experiences, is not a joke. Additionally, while fighting rape culture is socially progressive, as it goes against societal norms, it is never something to be ashamed of. Clearly, Palmeri and Jasta began to regret their initial support, and quickly backpedalled in different ways: Palmeri donated to anti-sexual violence organization RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), while Jasta later replied to a fan mentioning the Decapitated case that 'They're fucked' (Wookubus, 2017), insinuating that the band were likely to be found guilty.

It is easy to see why Jasta believed that Decapitated were 'fucked'. The women who reported being raped by Decapitated ran into the band after the show, while they were waiting to get a picture with the drummer of another band who had played that night. Court documents indicated that the women were invited back to drink on the band's bus, which was parked outside the venue (Sokol, 2017). Upon boarding the bus, the women reported that the 'vibe' then changed, and that they felt the band began to look at them as 'prey' (Sokol, 2017). After signaling to her friend that they needed to get off the bus, one woman went to use the bathroom before she left. She was then cornered in the bathroom, and forced to watch in the bathroom mirror as each band member raped her. The other woman was also forced to watch the rape, and, after refusing to give a band member oral sex, was pushed to the ground, bruising her knees and shins (Sokol, 2017). She drove away, was pulled over by the police for driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI), and called the other woman (who reported the rape) from the back of a squad car. The other woman had been carried off the bus and left on foot, calling several family members and then 911. She was found two miles away from the venue, and was brought to the hospital for a sexual assault examination (Sokol, 2017). Detectives who saw the woman after the incident noted that she had significant bruising to her upper arms consistent with being restrained, and noticed

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abrasions on her knuckles which had scabbed over (during the rapes, the victim described digging her fist into the wall to distract her from what was happening). When the band was interviewed by detectives from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department, Kieltyka, Decapitated's guitarist, told detectives he saw both Piotrowski and Wiecek engaged in sex acts with the woman in the bathroom (Sokol, 2017). Other band members and individuals on the bus were much more tight-lipped: while many admitted the women had been aboard the bus (only one claimed not to see her), many claimed that they did not recall what happened, did not see what happened, or that the women both came and left of their own free will.

When the rape and kidnapping charges against Decapitated were dropped without prejudice a few days before their trial was due to begin (Glover, 2018), many in the metal music community celebrated, as if this meant the band was exonerated. This is not the case. The term 'without prejudice' means that the men can be tried in the future for this crime. The motion also cites 'the wellbeing of the victim' as one of the reasons for dismissal. The Spokane County Deputy Prosecutor, Kelly Fitzgerald, stated that 'This has been traumatizing to her...It's obviously something that is a multiple defender case, and it would be a lengthy trial', and that 'while the state has a responsibility to the community in prosecuting crimes, in special assault cases they also have to be cognizant of victims, in this case a young woman' (Glover, 2018). Online discussions lambasted the victims, calling them 'crazy groupies'; asserted that the allegations were 'complete BS'; suggesting that the rape would not be possible because tour bus bathrooms are small; claiming that the victim must have made the story up because her boyfriend wouldn't have liked it if she slept with the entire band; and, of course, mentioned how false rape claims ruin lives (Gallier, 2017). The belief that we live in a society where men are constantly at risk from a false rape claim epidemic is false.

According to the best available data, false allegations make up 0.62 per cent of all rape cases:

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by this measure, a man is 230 times more likely to be raped than to be falsely accused of rape (Lee G. , 2018). These fans are therefore relying on sexist tropes and assumptions. By calling them 'crazy groupies' these fans are saying that those women who went on the bus were at that gig for ulterior motives: they couldn't be there for the music, because they were women, so, therefore, they must have gone because they were sexually attracted to the band. None of those online commentators (or metal music artists, in fact) were on the bus with the women and Decapitated. Therefore, none of them know the truth.

Decapitated's defense attorneys did little to help matters, and fell back into the tried and tested rape defence of victim blaming. One defence attorney crowed that 'new evidence' that 'cast serious doubt' on the woman's story was the fact that she had been moshing and in the front row of the show prior to the assault, something that the lead singer of another band, Andy Marsh, a member of Thy Art is Murder, confirmed in written testimony. This was going to be used to explain some of her bruising (Glover, 2018). I have been listening to metal music since I was gestating in my mother's womb. I have been to many shows. I have been in many pits. I have never, in all of my life, had bruises that were consistent with being restrained on my upper arms from a mosh pit. The defense attorney continued to gloat, saying that if the case had gone to trial, they would cast the woman who reported the rape as untrustworthy, as she admitted to lying to police about injuries she sustained during an assault, when her boyfriend was arrested for stabbing three people. In fact, these injuries had occurred prior to the assault, not during an altercation between the three individuals stabbed and the couple (Glover, 2018). The woman's injuries the night of the stabbing were inflicted by her boyfriend during a domestic violence incident earlier that day, when he grabbed her by the hair and threw her to the ground (Culver, 2014). This is far from a smoking gun. Women victims of domestic violence commonly defend their partners due to the fact that the abuser

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shames the victim into (wrongfully) believing that their abusive behaviour is her fault, because they fear for their safety, or because they hope things will change (Refuge: For Women and Children Against Domestic Violence , 2017). These discrepancies can also be easily be explained by how trauma impacts memory. It is not uncommon for individuals who experience a traumatic event to not recall the incident. During traumatic events, the brain is wired to focus on whether the individual in danger should fight it or flee from it, which in turn shuts down areas of the brain associated with memory formation (Bremner & Marmar, 2002). This woman had just survived a domestic violence incident, then saw her partner stab three random strangers. She has been through layer after layer of trauma, and was unable to obtain justice; meanwhile, Decapitated have maintained their reputation, their friends in the metal scene, and their fan base, because (in part) the metal scene closed ranks.

Metal is just as guilty of supporting convicted criminals. In 2014, Christian metalcore band As I Lay Dying's vocalist Tim Lambesis was sentenced to six years in prison after pleading guilty for attempting to hire a hitman (actually an undercover police officer) to kill his wife, Meggan (Marshall, 2014), who is also the mother of his three adopted children. This was after Lambesis began both bodybuilding and philandering (his gym buddy informed the police of Lambesis's plans) (Downey, 2014). That did not stop the press from interviewing Lambesis. *Alternative Press* spent the weeks leading up to Lambesis's sentencing conducting a series of interviews with him, in which he said that several movie producers had offered him large sums for the rights to his story, and that prominent television producers asked him to be on their shows (Downey, 2014). The offers, interest and requests for Lambesis story were described as 'continuous and unrelenting' (Downey, 2014). Thus, abusing, or planning to murder women is not the taboo in society that we might expect, and clearly comes with many lucrative offers for men, even if they fail. The *Alternative Press* story attempts to frame

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Lambesis in a sympathetic light. Downey, the interviewer, swoons when Lambesis said he asked to adopt children wherever the need was greatest ("It seems like asking, 'Where's the greatest need?' is the best question you can ask" (Downey, 2014)). Notably, Downey does not acknowledge the fact that Meggan wanted, and wanted to try for, biological children.

Meggan is then portrayed as not allowing Lambesis to be a father to his children, allegedly claiming that parenting was 'her thing' (Downey, 2014). Again, Downey is quick to build up Lambesis by saying 'Part of parenting is providing', and downplaying Meggan's claim that Lambesis was continuously texting when he was with the kids as 'not uncommon in the modern business world' (Downey, 2014). I suggest that another important part of parenting is not hiring a contract killer to murder your children's mother.

Meggan is described as unimpressed by Lambesis's professional accomplishments, while simultaneously being 'resentful' of his bodybuilding (both assertions unchallenged by Downey). Perhaps a more skilled interviewer might have asked if he ever thought what it was like raising three adopted children as a de facto single mother while your husband was recording, touring, having several extra-marital affairs, or going to the gym all of the time. Lambesis also takes no responsibility for his actions, and instead blames them on an adverse reaction to steroids that he was taking while bodybuilding. Lambesis' bandmates, reps from management and Metal Blade Records along with band attorney Ian Friedman were in attendance, supporting Lambesis at his arraignment (Whitt, 2013). In 2014, Lambesis changed his plea from 'not guilty', to 'guilty', which caused other members of the band¹⁴ to focus their energy on a new band (Wovenwar) without him. Lambesis was released on parole on December 17th 2016, serving only two-and-a-half years of a six year sentence, and

¹⁴ These other members are Jordan Mancino, Phil Sgrosso, Nick Hipa, and Josh Gilbert.

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remarried in April 2017 (Pasbani, 2017). Dokken guitarist George Lynch, whose child was engaged to As I Lay Dying guitarist Nick Hipa, said:

He's [Lambesis's] out, he's got a mega record deal, he's got a book deal, everything's lined up for him. I mean, he's gonna skate through life. Everybody else is suffering. His wife is living in fear, his children are living in fear. His band doesn't have a pot to piss in. (Pasbani, 2017).

The band reunited and sold out their first show in four minutes (Leighton, 2018). As I Lay Dying Fans pleaded on the venue's Facebook page that the band use its 2,000-capacity mainstage: the band refused, preferring to play in a smaller setting to 're-establish chemistry' (Leighton, 2018). Fans argued passionately that reuniting was legitimate:

It's just not fair to the other four guys in the band. When they broke up, they were selling out the Soma mainstage and playing big stadium shows in Europe. They were Metal Blade's number one band, bigger than Cannibal Corpse or King Diamond. Why should the other guys pay for Tim's crime? They lost their careers when they did nothing wrong. I'm sure they'll make plenty of fans very happy. (Leighton, 2018)

In 2018, As I Lay Dying announced both European and North American Tours. While some venues and festivals, like Resurrection Fest in the Spain, and Growlers in Tennessee, cancelled As I Lay Dying shows after backlash against Lambesis, the majority of shows either upgraded or sold out (Casteel, 2018).

Some bands are more astute about the harsh realities that women face than others, but their responses can still miss the mark. Johannes Persson, frontman of Swedish post-metal greats Cult of Luna, derided Lambesis and his 'cowardly' bandmates without naming names in an interview with *The Quietus*:

The background that I'm from – the musical background – was very much integrated with a lot of ethics and it was a very political scene too, which when you come from that kind of scene you think that everybody else thinks the same way in a sense. So, for example, when a person that just tried to [have his wife killed] – something that happened just a couple of years ago – is out touring and people are happy to have a

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forgive and forget attitude about it? I cannot get my head around it. I cannot. How is that not a person you now don't want anything to do with in your entire life? How can [journalists] write about that band? There are a thousand other bands you can write about. How can you go to their show? How can they not be constantly questioned every single day about it? I don't understand because with my background we call bullshit on people. However, it might not sound like it, but I'm all for second chances, as long as that person has shown deep regret and I think that some time must-have passed before you can actually see if a person is sincere enough, and most of all you see it through their actions, not through their words. For example, OK, let's talk about this case right now – I'm not even going to say his name – but if you're sincerely sorry, like I said: fine. Take all your proceedings, everything from every tour and donate it to a battered women's shelter. Of course, you can take enough to make ends meet but just saying, 'I'm sorry', doesn't cut it, especially when your band called you a sociopath before. That's how they work. They adapt to what fits them at this moment. I'm not buying it. You donate your money – at least that's an action, that's something that shows you're going to do something that's not for yourself. This is also about those coward fucking band members who threw shit on him one second and then when their other band didn't work well [they welcomed him back] – money talks. That's how it works. (Franklin, 2019)

While some may argue that an anonymous call out is better than none at all, there are several inherent problems with Persson's response. As I stated previously, in regards to Vulvodynia, donating money to a charity does not adequately compensate for or negate violence, nor does it show that an individual is genuinely penitent or reflective. Donating money to a charity is only indicative of someone having enough capital to do so and says nothing about growth or change within that donor. Persson acknowledges this ('...Money talks. That's how it works'). Perhaps abusers could get involved with charities (such as the Phoenix Domestic Abuse Services) who offer weekly programmes to help men confront their actions and change their behaviour: abusers and survivors alike need support if they hope to break out of the cycle of abuse¹⁵ (Hindley, 2018), as well as donating money. In the United Kingdom, more than 3,000 people attend such courses, and the number grows each year: the vast majority of those who attend are men (Hindley, 2018).

¹⁵ Of course, some abusers who attend the course may not change at all.

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There are better examples of heavy metal bands standing in solidarity with women than the one above: American heavy metal band Baroness stood in solidarity with a woman, Rosie, who had reported being harassed at one of their shows, by denouncing both the assault and gender-disparity in heavy metal music via their Facebook page: Helfrich and I note this as an 'example of a cultural shift from hyper-masculine male to aware feminist' (DiGioia & Helfrich, 2018, p. 366). Jocson-Singh has studied how some female death metal musicians utilise vigilante feminism¹⁶ as a form of empowerment that 'allows them to coexist in a liminal space so often dominated by their male counterparts' (Jocson-Singh, 2019). Though not mentioned in Jocson-Singh's article, *Lingua Ignota*¹⁷ and *Feminazgul* are two such examples of a band utilising vigilante feminism to not only exist in a space dominated by men, but to also confront and subvert oppressive power structures in heavy metal music, while simultaneously helping other women and abuse survivors.

In lieu of murdering women in her lyrics, like some of her heavy metal counterparts, *Lingua Ignota*'s 'Holy is the name (of my ruthless axe)' (Hayter, 2017) features a someone with reverence for vaginas and menstruation: ('Holy is the name of the seeping gash' (Hayter, 2017)) violently murdering their rapists:

Holy is the name of my ruthless axe. Holy is the name of the endless night. Holy is the name of my gleaming scythe. All my rapists lay beside me. All my rapists still and grey. (Hayter, 2017)

A rapist receiving some form of comeuppance in real life is a rarity, both due to the underreporting of rape and the lack of successful rape convictions. Even a conviction does not necessarily entail meaningful punishment: Brock Turner was sentenced to only six

¹⁶ Jocson-Singh defines 'vigilante feminism' as being: 'the use of violence by women in some way, shape or form (in this case through lyrical content and musical style) to fight back against their attackers for self-empowerment (D'Amore 2017)' (Jocson-Singh, 2019, p. 265).

¹⁷ *Lingua Ignota* is Latin for 'unknown language' and the musical act is comprised of one person: a multi-instrumentalist woman named Kristin Hayter.

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months in prison after being convicted of three felonies (assault with intent to rape an intoxicated woman, sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object, and sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object (Cohen, 2018)).¹⁸ This is what makes *Lingua Ignota*'s lyrics so subversive and a prime example of vigilante feminism: the rape survivor is not the one who lies damaged and bleeding in *Lingua Ignota*'s text, but instead, it is the rapist who haemorrhages. *Lingua Ignota*'s Kristin Hayter describes herself as a survivor of abuse¹⁹, and her music as 'survivor anthems', including elements of transformation and retribution (Kalev, 2019, para. 2). Hayter also contextualises her music, acknowledging heavy metal music's misogyny problem: ('A lot of my work comes out of extreme music and heavy music that's in a misogynist context' (Kalev, 2019, para. 3)). Hayter elaborates:

There's so many layers to survivorhood. There's rage and despair and we don't really talk about that...Because I don't get to enact violence or murder my abusers; I get to make music instead, and this has been fantastic revenge. If everything ends tomorrow, I [have] already won. (Hayter quoted in Kalev, 2019 para. 4, 10, 2019).

This also highlights *Lingua Ignota*'s subversive choice to kill someone who is, or is implied to be, a man. As previously stated in this chapter, Shadrack (2017) has noted that songs in heavy metal music that infer intimate partner violence without immediately identifying the gender of the victim must be placed in the context of the band that wrote them. In this case, the context of *Lingua Ignota*'s lyrics is even more subversive, both in the context of extreme metal, and in society: a rape survivor with appreciation and reverence for vaginal power obtains catharsis by butchering her victim, who, in the context, can be presumed to be a man.

¹⁸ The judge that sentenced Turner, Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Aaron Persky, was later recalled from the bench: he is the first Californian judge to be recalled from the bench in the past 85 years (Cohen, 2018). It is the opinion of this author that the recall was deserved, and that Brock Turner should still be in jail.

¹⁹ Hayter's abuser was a 'very powerful noise musician in the Providence community' (Hayter quoted in Kalev, para. 3, 2019).

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Lingua Ignota's subversion goes beyond that in *Don Giovanni* (1787): instead of justice by proxy via demons, it is the rape survivor herself that dispenses deadly vengeance.

Similarly, Feminazgul (a one-woman black metal project created by and featuring Maggie Killjoy) has taken a frontline stance against right-wing beliefs in heavy metal music. Killjoy explains how the name of her band, 'Feminazgul', functions as a *Lord of the Rings*²⁰ (1954-1955) allegory in a feminist context:

I've got two different answers. The first one is the most honest one, and it's shorter. A few years ago, my friend said "I'm not a feminazi, I'm a feminazgul." And I loved that spin on it, and especially once I transitioned (I am a trans woman) I thought "hell yeah, I'm going to name my black metal project Feminazgul." But I'm hugely into Lord of the Rings, because I'm hugely into allegories of power. Lord of the Rings is, in one understanding, the perfect anarchist parable. Power cannot be wielded, it must be destroyed. Okay, on the other hand, Tolkien was unconsciously—I hope unconsciously—pretty racist and all the villains in the books are either non-human or people of colour... But the Feminazgul, in particular... what do the Nazgul do besides find men who have power (the ring) and take that power away from them? Sure, the regular Nazgul then give it back to Sauron, but hey, since I'm making this shit up, the Feminazgul can do whatever they want. So yeah... in short, Feminazgul hunt men who hold power. (Killjoy quoted in Davidson, 2018, para. 6-8)

Here, Killjoy is truly subversive in her feminist, undead wraith hunting men who hold power, as opposed to what is common both in heavy metal and society (powerful men hunting women). This makes the name of Feminazgul's debut album, *The Age of Men is Over* (2018), even more apt: the album name both references the film version of *The Return of the King*²¹ (Jackson, 2003) and the fact that resistance to patriarchy (which only truly benefits a select

²⁰ For further heavy metal scholarship that discusses *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), please see: Donnelly, K. J. (2006). "Musical Middle Earth". *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*; Straw, W. (1984). Characterizing rock music cultures: The case of heavy metal. *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de musique des universités canadiennes*, (5), 104-122; and Kuusela, T. (2015), "Dark Lord of Gorgoroth": Black Metal and the Works of Tolkien. *Lembas Extra 2015: Unexplored Aspects of Tolkien and Arda*. Edited by Cécile van Zon & Renée Vink, pp. 89-120.

²¹ The line is uttered by an orc, Gothmog, the Lieutenant of Morgul, after killing Madril, the badly-wounded captain of the Ithilien rangers, with a spear during the Battle of Osgiliath 'The age of Men is over. The time of the Orc has come!'

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group of white, cis, heterosexual, able-bodied men) will soon hopefully topple the institution. Like Shadrack (2017), Killjoy take metal musicians to task for not being subversive as they think, and, like Shadrack (2017) confronts them by saying: 'Want to actually rebel? Do it by refusing patriarchy, refusing white supremacy, refusing all the systems that say the world revolves around you' (Davidson, 2018, para. 27).

There are other examples of musicians calling out violence against women in lyrics as failing to be subversive. In his text *Choosing Death: the Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore*, Arch Enemy's Angela Gossow is quoted in an interview with Albert Mudrian, saying:

I loved Cannibal Corpse's *Eaten Back to Life*, because it was so extreme at the time when I was a kid, but I didn't sing along with those lyrics...It's somehow just a bit intimidating. It's so much about violence against women. It's not a guy who's being totally shredded – it's always women...I just don't know how they can justify that. (Mudrian, 2004., p. 251)

Some bands take these views further, and suggest alternative solutions to writing heavy metal music lyrics as a way to process misogynist fuelled anger. Antifascist Death metal band Putrescine contributed to the resistance of patriarchal hegemony in heavy metal music over the course of several Tweets, saying:

Can't believe Death metal's been around for over 30 years and people still think violent misogyny makes good lyrics. There's so much fucked up shit in the world to write about and be angry about, if the top of your list is "women" you don't need a brutal slamming death metal band you need a therapist. Grow up and write about dismembering J*ff b*zos, you dorks. (Putrescine, 2019)

Putrescine do something subversive in these tweets: they suggest that men who are angry about women are not the norm, and that they need therapy to process their misogyny. A study that reviewed several epidemiologic surveys found that two-thirds of mental health outpatient visits were made by women, reflecting a cultural taboo surrounding men seeking

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psychological assistance (Vessey & Kenneth, 1993).²² A psychology professor interviewed by the American Psychological Foundation elaborated, noting that this was socially constructed:

I don't think that it's biologically determined that men will seek less help than women...So if that's true, then it must mean that it's socialization and upbringing: Men learn to seek less help. (Good, quoted in Winerman, 2005, p. 57).

These behaviours are taught, and reinforced, through masculine role socialisation²³ and social norms²⁴ (Winerman, 2005, p. 57). The mere suggestion that men should go to, and would benefit from, therapy, from a heavy metal band, is a subversive act: it puts the culpability and onus on abusers. These moments of subversion and solidarity with survivors of trauma, though valid, are few and far between: golden threads in a horrific, muddled, tapestry of acceptance and ignorance surrounding women's trauma in heavy metal music.

Conclusion

When the treatment of women in the heavy metal music scene is coupled with the fact that many women die at the hands of their current or former partners, it cannot be interpreted as anything but sobering. Women who are victims of domestic violence or sexual violence are either unheard (meaning they don't report crimes committed against them), or instead report the crimes to a judicial system influenced by rape myths, assuming that they survive the crime at all. Their lyrical counterparts can sometimes suffer similar fates in the context of

²² The researchers of this article failed to engage with the fact that the majority of the women who attended mental health outpatient visits were white, which could reflect the lack of access to psychotherapy because of various barriers (economic, cultural, etc.) in communities that consist of people of colour.

²³ Examples of masculine role socialisation include traditional male values of toughness, independence, and emotional control do not align with openly discussing and expressing emotion, which is a necessity in talk therapy (Winerman, 2005, p. 57).

²⁴ An example of men being negatively impacted by social norms when they contemplate going to therapy is when men worry that society will deride them for seeking therapy because it is not 'normal' for men, as they are expected to 'tough it out' (Winerman, 2005, p. 57).

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heavy metal music. Serial killers who target women and violence against women have been around for much longer than metal music. With so much to be angry about in our modern world, it is truly baffling that metal artists from any country still believe that violent misogyny is a suitable topic for metal lyrics. There is nothing subversive about misogyny and violence against women: as this chapter has proven, the behaviour that many heavy metal band members direct towards women, coupled with a brief analysis of lyrical content depicting women, shows that in many aspects, heavy metal music is not subversive: rather, it is licking the boot of traditional distributions of power. Violence against women is very common in the world, and therefore has surely lost its ability to shock. If heavy metal wishes to retain its reputation as subversive, it must find something less commonplace than violence against women to write about.