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Rhetorics of Fear, Deployment of Identity, and Metal Music Cultures

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Rhetorics of Fear, Deployment of Identity, and Metal Music Cultures

by

Gregory Vance Smith

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Communication
College of Arts and Sciences
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the rhetorics of fear operating in public discourses surrounding metal music. This analysis focuses on how the public rhetorics deploy identity on listener populations through both the mediation and legislation of identities. Specifically, this mediation takes place using both symbols of fear and arguments constructed on potential threats. Texts for analysis in this study include film and television documentaries, newspaper articles, book-length critiques of and scholarship on heavy metal, and transcripts from the U.S. Senate Hearings on Record Labeling.

“Heavy metal” and “metal music” are labels that categorize diverse styles of music. While there is no exemplar metal song that accounts for a definition of the genre, the terms have been consistently used in rhetorics of fear. These rhetorical movements produce and deploy deviant identities, depend on the construction of cultural crisis, and generate counter rhetorics of agency for individuals and subcultures. The study moves 1) chronologically through metal history, 2) geographically from the United States to

Norway, and 3) contextually through media events that produce the public discourses of identity, crisis, and counter rhetorics. This study charts the rhetorical movements that have created fear within communities, leading to threats of legislation or criminalization of segments of the population.

Chapter One

Introduction

Heavy metal music, or metal music, is an international phenomenon that has spawned nearly four decades of diverse cultures. Stories in the media imbue the music, its creators, and the listeners with qualities that mark them as everything from out-of-control citizens to infant-sacrificing Satanists. These stories amalgamate in the performance within the culture, creating a space where contested meanings and identities indirectly battle with the larger culture.

Black Sabbath defined metal with a dark heavy sound created from distorted guitars, exaggerated bass, and forcefully strained vocals. The Birmingham, England group began as a blues band and developed a unique style that instigated the core elements of metal. At his last day working in the steel mill, guitarist Tony Iommi cut the end of his fingers off. Iommi then wore a homemade prosthetics and altered the construction of his guitar to be easier to play (Dunn). The resulting sound had a lower tone and established the “heaviness” of the music. Dark lyrics followed after the band noticed the crowds drawn to see the horror films at the theater across the street from their rehearsal studio (Osbourne). Because their audience was limited in comparison, they decided to experiment with a musical horror genre that first appeared in a song titled “Black Sabbath.” From the song’s success, the band took its name and shifted their

production to heavy sounding music with lyrics that had horror and science fiction themes.

Everything from the sound, lyrics, covers, and stage settings was lifted from cultural symbols of fear. The 1970 *Black Sabbath* album exemplified the gestalt horror concept. The bi-fold cover image established a fall scene with a black robed figure standing in front of an old mill surrounded with bare and color changed trees. Inside a still life poem is written in an inverted cross with the band information appearing in the cross and under the poem. The cover bridges images of secular creative darkness with religious darkness with text:

a faint sensual mist, that
traces its way upwards to
caress the chipped feet of
the headless martyr's statue, whose
only achievement was to die to [sic]
soon, and who couldn't wait to
lose ("Black Sabbath").

On stage, they displayed Christian crosses (sometimes burning), aligning their horror to Christianity's fear of succumbing to the seduction of Satan if one's trust in God and vigilance wanes. After Sabbath, all metal would be publicly questioned as having a direct connection to Satan. From the beginning, Christian-centric cultures have remained attentive to the potential of evil and metal to coexist as partners.

A 1998 murder in Milan exemplifies this coexistence. A young couple, Fabio and Chiara, disappeared in Milan after having spent the evening in a metal club. As a 2005

BBC2 broadcast outlines, Chiara had “satanic literature” and both were members of a group who “were into the most extreme forms of heavy metal music—death metal and black metal, music obsessed with images of murder and Satanism—and the role of the music is central to the story” (Bagnall). The elements of the story become more grotesque when, in 2004, one friend admits beating Fabio to death with a hammer and connects the group to a larger sect of Satanists called “Beasts of Satan.” Fabio’s father, Michele Tollis, is quoted as saying, “No one can contradict me when I say that heavy metal and Satanism are closely linked” (Bagnall). The concept of metal as a scapegoat for crimes that parents and communities do not understand has a long history of well-publicized accusations and trials, and in each case, a rhetoric of fear engages the community, directing their ire toward the music and its performers. When the murderers accuse a larger movement for prompting them to commit ritual murder and suicide, the police respond with an official request to create a special unit of police, psychologists, and a priest to “tackle the growth of new religious sects, particularly a violent breed of home-grown Satanists” (Duff). According to BBC2, “more than a million Italians belong to other minority religions, and some experts are worried that the new police squad could target members of them as well - even though, despite their perhaps strange beliefs, they are entirely harmless.”

For a 1990 article in *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Randy Lippert examined media, criminal, and academic indices and databases to determine if Satanism became a constructed social problem in Canada. The purpose of the study was to differentiate between historical evidence of people practicing criminal satanic ritual and media’s role in creating “a problem” on which to report. This asks whether ritualistic Satanism

actually exists. He determined that the American media played a large role in creating and defining Satanism, and that no evidence exists that any ritual crimes had ever taken place. Bagnall remarks on the fallacious rhetorical structure on which the media created experts, whether law enforcement or religious spokespeople, whose expertise could only be maintained through supporting the reality of the questions the media wanted answered. While Lippert does not describe his findings using a rhetorical lexicon, he points out instances where fallacies dictate the media coverage, crimes, for example, are reported as a symptom of a problem without connection to a problem. He also shows how metal music/Satanism and other popular culture/deviance pairings have bled into academic studies, using the example of psychiatric studies that looked at metal music and Dungeons and Dragons games as causes of drug abuse and suicide (426). Lippert's sociological approach to social constructionism shows how the U. S. media deploys "cases" of a Satanic problem, the media and experts examine and reinforce Satanic problems, and then the problem becomes legitimate as the public acceptance grows. Lippert's 1990 conclusion holds true in the 1998 Milan murder: The media connected the murder to the "Beasts of Satan," and Fabio's father legitimized the connection of heavy metal to his son's murder through his public reporting of metal as a source for the violence. By the media's legitimization of this man's claims and by implementing the preexisting drama of the music-spoiled youth, a threat to civil liberties has developed in Italy.

Murderers, victims, and their relatives are not the only agents in the dramatic coexistence of metal and Satanism. During times of local, national, and global crisis, the binary of "Us versus Them" is specified in a way that metal *listeners* are also implicated

in the drama. Listeners are either cast as agents that propagate the crisis or as a generic population at risk because of the crisis. In all cases, heavy metal listeners become subjects produced by and within the larger crisis.

Justification for this Study

Lippert points out in his study that after a constructed problem has gained public acceptance, the next stage is for the public to act to solve it. My study examines specific instances of public discourse that construct identity. More importantly, it moves beyond the problem/solution frame of much metal research and scholarship to address the cultural philosophies that allow fallacies to appear in discourse, be accepted, and unquestioned as reality. It is important because discourse produces identities, and no studies have looked at its effect on metal cultures. The rhetorical strategies of this production and deployment harm individuals, and most studies do not recognize the roles that social forces have on individuals and the subject populations. The rhetorical strategies of this production and deployment harm culture by framing acts and establishing scapegoats that limit cultural perception, hiding social weaknesses by imposing permanent cultural change, and no study to date has situated this harm in “a rhetoric of fear” that limits the possibilities of prevention or restoration of arbitrarily disciplined identities.

Literature Review

Over the course of my readings, I have discovered a wealth of academic works dedicated specifically to some aspect of heavy metal. Below I outline the most significant of these works to situate my own study in this scholarly conversation. Because of the varied disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields of the scholars, I have divided the review into sections outlined by similarities in research subjects. *Categories* includes those who, like sociologists and anthropologists, try to isolate and define types of individuals, groups and their actions. *Musicology and Phenomenology* has scholarship that focuses on the production and performance of the music. *Rhetoric and Mediation* highlights scholars who analyze systems of cultural production and commodities. *In-Depth Journalism* looks at authors who have done comprehensive studies of metal cultures without the objectives of academia. The review closes with a description of the gaps in the literature and the dissertation's place in the scholarship.

Categories: Social Dynamics and Systems

The pioneer critic of subculture, Dick Hebdige writes in a style that evokes a certainty of connection inherent in a methodology controlled by theory. The visceral connection to codes of style within socio-political contexts appears absolute in a way that, with any genre other than punk, would easily be refuted by a semi-capable scholar. Hebdige connects the social unrest of the poor economy with a style that came to be explicitly London punk.

Hebdige's major contribution to the study of subcultures exists in the choosing of terms from which other scholars can operate a starting point. His choice of Marxist

terminology and critical lens forces other interpretive styles to prove the inadequacy of hegemony and other concepts. But beyond the terminology, the contextual discourse proves very useful because of the significant power structures that influence oppositional meaning making within subculture groups.

Deena Weinstein's book *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* remains the primary source for most scholarship that deals with metal. It is a sociological study with a focus primarily on 1980s metal and the culture of its listeners. While Weinstein brings up many of the points that are covered in this project, she tries to fit them within neat categories that reduce both the music and the audience to generics. This suits her macro purpose, yet it introduces generalizations that do not hold true at local levels. The greatest attribute of the book remains the scope of the infrastructure in which the commercial music was created, processed, and delivered.

Sam Dunn, the director of *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, approaches an overview of contemporary metal from an anthropological vantage point. He looks at the genres, the performers, and the audiences in contemporary and historical eras. His study begins by tracing the origins of the genre from classical music and opera, to the blues and early hard rock, and the first bands considered metal. The formalist approach establishes a critical context where aesthetic reasoning can be inferred (chapter 3). Wagner's operatic sound construction is used to demonstrate orchestration as a role-model for the technological developments of metal artists.

The socio-economic environments of early musicians is explored, and Dunn establishes all of the origins as spaces of stagnant economics and cultural changes through interviews with several origin artists (i.e., Black Sabbath, Motorhead) and

contemporary artists (i.e., Korn, Rage Against the Machine). Cultural issues are explored through documentation of a multi-day metal festival in Germany, Satanic black metal in Norway, and interviews and concert footage in North America.

Keith Kahn-Harris takes a sociological look at historic and contemporary “extreme metal” that includes thrash, death, and black metal in his *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*. Among the few to look seriously at black metal, Kahn-Harris also demonstrates the cultural production through the exchange of subcultural capital in the fan created infrastructure.

Musicology and Phenomenology: Music and the Artist

Harris M. Berger, *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience*, creates an ethnomusicological reading of small music scenes in Ohio. The book, researched in 1993, uses concepts from anthropology, folklore, and phenomenology with a methodology of participant research and ethnographic work with specific performers and of specific venues. Although some analyses are dedicated to the glam metal genre, the focus of the metal throughout the book relates directly to 1993 death metal and hardcore. Highlights include a description of the political divisions between the analyzed subgenres, a description of the musical styles, and performances of violence and aggression at the shows. Berger focuses on the differences of the rock and metal performers to establish the importance of context on perception and attention.

The final section of the book focuses on explorations of race, class, and economics on the community of performers and listeners. The author introduces the idea that elements of music are informed by the quality of the social order from which they

came, establishing different experiences among performers and audience in various social and cultural contexts. As he closes his study, Berger begins to criticize the views and perceptions of his subjects from an activist scholar position.

Rhetoric and Mediation: Language and Power

In *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Robert Walser demonstrates that metal operates as a set of musical genres suited to audiences of mixed genders often located in transitional economies where listeners are exposed to tropes of power and mystery outside of those available to academic and political critics. The book opens with an exploration of the defining concept of power as a major trope in the culture, the origins in deindustrializing areas, and a critique of theorists' subjugation of the audience and genre. This work enters the arena of public critical discourse and academic labyrinths and demonstrates that heavy metal operates in a complicated, dynamic economy that had previously been glimpsed but never charted.

Yet in modern times, this problem is in part one that chronically plagues those scholars who are interested in taking popular culture seriously: a desire to find explicit political agendas and intellectual complexity in at least some popular art, and a distrust of those dimensions of art that appeal to the senses, to physical pleasure. But pleasure frequently is the politics of music—both the pleasure of affirmation and the pleasure of interference, the pleasure of marginalized people which has evaded channelization. (55-56)

Walser looks at the material presentations of signs and symbols in the stage production of Iron Maiden's 1988 concert tour, in the images presented in the album cover, and in the lyrics of "Seventh Son of a Seventh Son." Isolating the symbols, he finds images that others would characterize as a collection of historical symbols of power and religion that have no meaning in a post-modern collection, but he documents that the symbols have current power because they operate within the contemporary tradition of fantasy, myth, and history. Walser writes, "The loss of historical specificity we see in the bricolage of Iron Maiden is surely not something to celebrate in itself, but it is important to see that the loss of monovocal, hegemonic history enables other constructions and connections to be formed" (160). Walser also finds sense in the contradictions of heavy metal symbols:

"If in some ways heavy metal replicates the ruthless individualism and violence that capitalism and government policy have naturalized, it also creates communal attachments, enacts collective empowerment, and works to assuage entirely reasonable anxieties" (171).

A decade after the first wave of scholarship, academics looked more closely at metal without the façade of problem and solution driving the work. Although Joshua Gunn does not look specifically at the subject of heavy metal, *Modern Occult Rhetoric* does address the place of metal and its symbols within the cultural context of commodity systems during the period of time that a mediated identity was imposed on metal listeners in the U.S. Gunn's work looks at the commodity of the symbol systems that create meaning and value through secrecy. He illustrates the tendency to take symbols of the mainstream culture and infuse conflicting meanings. His reading of the "occult" in

contemporary texts demonstrates the application of the terms, symbols, and narratives to invoke a difference with a legitimacy for discrimination. In talking about an episode of *Judging Amy*, he recognizes that a character's affiliation with a coven of witches acts as a sign of "moral and intellectual deviance, which is used, in turn, to justify social and legal discrimination" (225-26).

Randy Lippert's previously mentioned essay stands out as the only attempt to chart the mediated spread of a metal-related concept. The essay traced the occurrence of terms and articles through criminological indices, newspaper archives, sociological, psychological and educational databases to trace Satanism as a topic or identifier that came into existence and peaked as mediation of "the problem" came into Canada and peaked. In his study, he marked that the existence of satanic crimes and issues came into existence (first appeared in reports and articles) after it had been mediated in the U.S. and how it gained credibility through claims makers who found their social positions enforced as experts:

An examination of Satanism suggests how influential news media and so called experts, especially those from the US, are in constructing social problems in Canada. It also reveals how social problems can emerge, grow, and become legitimated quite apart from conditions of objective reality. (436)

In-Depth Journalism: The Meta Story

Popular writers were not held back by the testable hypothesis or the thesis of academics. AP and *Wired* journalist Ian Christie offers an historical reading of metal that

illustrates that politics and mediation have significant effects on the consumption of the music. The tone of *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* is that of an educated fan looking back to construct the identity of what it means to be a consumer of the music. His readings may be superficial because of his purpose, but the points that he magnifies offer valid need for study. For instance, MTV pulls its most requested music (metal) from the afternoon block because the Parents Music Resource Center, better known as the PMRC, targets MTV's rotation and the network creates a late-night weekend block to which most of the metal videos would be relegated. While Christie's purpose in informing the reader about the action is to mark a change in the mediation of the music, the actions show a normalizing of nonmetal and a focused subjugation of metal as a deviant style and culture.

In Norway, the authors of *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* do a comprehensive analysis of the social and media creation of the Norwegian Black Metal (NBM) scene. Journalists Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind reconstruct the mediated events that led to the shift of NBM as music for and by deviant youth. The NBM story is important because the Norwegian culture offers a closed context where the social rhetoric can be seen as a nearly hegemonic voice that borrows from the U. S. tales of satanic involvement. The authors give historical information, interviews, and insight into the national culture that may serve as a foundational context on which to build an argument with outside sources. By seeking information from the performers at the center of the public discourse and providing a timeline of journalistic entries into the dialog, they have charted a broad ethnographic study of the culture and the events.

A Survey of the Literature

No study on metal is perfect because metal does not exist as a standardized body for study. For example, Berger creates constraints in his ethnographic study of metal cultures by approaching the scene of a few isolated metal venues. The anthropological approach establishes data relevant to the place and time, yet it has the pretense of generalization to the broader cultures. This desire was evident in Berger's need to critique the metal genres for not creating political action to improve their lives, reinforcing the less sensational stereotypes that metal listeners are burnouts without the ambition to better their lives or societies.

On a more positive note, Gunn looks at symbols and culture not as distinct unchanging elements to be analyzed but as vibrant events that evolve over time and space. This removes the symbol, the music, and the culture from a determined pattern to analyze each in the relation to the other. Walser also begins to break down the stereotypes to explore the music and socially accepted music for what they are to the performers and fans. As a marker of scholarship, *Running with the Devil* opens the discourse from one of blame and disciplinary myopia to being a rich field where cultural domination collapsed to be reconstructed in a variety of hard and shiny effigies and mirrors.

Lippert's study showcases the media's and academia's roles in creating questionable realities that have the ability to damage the social fabric by creating "problems" to be solved. His work mirrors that of Moynihan and Soderlind in their tracing of the connections of the mediation of Black Metal and Satanic panic. Lippert's work is the key to understanding the rhetorical shift as a product of the social discourse.

Academic studies began by focusing on the assumed ill effects of metal. Psychological analyses looked for connections between deviance and the music, often establishing the music as a cause and not a symptom of behavior. Psychologists, sociologists, and communication scholars tried to find a connection between taste and behavior, between influence and behavior, and between message and action as it related to the metal genre. Many of the studies began with a problem, for example violent behaviors, and sought to find a connection to the music. Junk science confused the rhetoric of popular discourse as an agent of affect, reinforcing concerns such as vandalism and drug use as the result of messages that were thought to permeate the genre. Even Berger seems compelled to break from his role as documenting observer to reframe his audience as unwitting class pawns in a Marxist hierarchy (291-292).

My Approach to Filling the Gaps

Metal scholarship has been hindered by limiting approaches, blinding methodologies and disciplinary motives, and studies built on fallacies. First, theories transcend to ideology, placing the subjects in a constituted reality in which they do not participate. Secondly, what is popular in public discourse frames the subjects and their contexts, ignoring the subjects' own relationships to their world. Third, scholarship has been directed to analyses that fit within the popular discourse of metal cultures.

Going beyond the category-building approaches that often stray into generalized indictments of reality, this dissertation maps the locations of particular music styles and communities. This view must be realized to destroy rhetorical binaries when blame, threats, or deviance enter the public discourse about metal or any other population under

scrutiny. My methodology and theoretical base do not limit how I will construct an analysis, and they are designed to open multiple views of the culture, performance, and rhetoric of subjects under analysis. Beyond the subject and method, my purpose is unique in this branch of scholarship. The popular discourse becomes part of the analysis, and instead of limiting the analysis, it opens up more of the rhetoric to examination. Courts convict on the basis of the rhetorical possibilities, parents evoke legislation for the sake of fulfilling the binary, and communities split on the basis that members fit mediated profiles of deviance. My project complicates the possibilities.

The key issues central to the work of this dissertation includes identity/deviancy, crisis discourses, and rhetorics of fear. Each chapter demonstrates the processes by which deviant identities are produced and deployed, how crisis is rhetorically produced, how rhetorics of fear are specific transformations of culturally potent icons and symbols.

Identity and Deviance

The public discourses on metal communities produce and deploy identities that mark them as degenerates or deviants who are opposed to the common good. As a representative anecdote for this operation, the Norwegian press linked black metal fans to the American fundamentalist version of Satanism with desecration of graves and blood sacrifice becoming central to metal listeners' lives. In this context identity operates as a paradox between the deployed identity and the individual's concept of agency and phenomena understanding. Through the use of rhetorical strategies and symbolic cultivation, institutions create and alter identities within an understood binary that closely resembles Foucault's norm/deviant reading of society. In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault

remarked on the many avenues of control that institutions put into place to control incest as a deviance and practitioners as deviants (129-31). To control those with access to psychoanalysis, repression and its relief acted as a control. For those who did not have access, their conduct was regulated to the point that children could be removed from families with a questionable past. Through medicine and the state, the identity of a person who commits incest became criminal, and one who exhibited incestuous desires had to do so through private discourse with a psychiatrist, the only official relief. As the culture shifted, this element of sexual identity became entrenched in repression and limited to secretive discourse, but a new identity was created, the at-risk child. The child had no control over the identity and did not play a part in its creation, but the identity was imposed and reinforced through the child's removal from the home. While Foucault states that there is no binary of power of ruler/subject, power does flow through all levels of society, affecting productions of families, small groups, and institutions, imbuing dominations at their points of convergence (Foucault 94). While Freud may not have played a direct role in the criminalization of incestuous families, within the culture's fields of power, the conditions allowed for his ideas to be produced and reproduced, reinforcing class values. But moving away from Foucault's domination views to Deleuze's mapped culture, one sees that individuals and small groups do not necessarily operate in resistance with the dominant norms and deviances unless they are in a position where that becomes the only interactive option. "A map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing [a genealogy] always involves an alleged 'competence'" (Deleuze 13). Because the Norwegian Black Metal creators were located in Norway, the media "traced" deviance to their identities, but because their norms, art, and economic networks

were globalized, the media's deployed identity did not fit theirs, nor did it have an effect on their production of deviance. Because this deployment functioned outside of strict economic parameters, this shows an attempt to create classes where none exist, demonstrating a condition of post hegemony spurred entirely by mediated communication. This is the functioning of deployment at its origin level where voices within power create an "ideology" within the constructs of previously accepted boundaries.

Crisis Discourses

During times of social, cultural, and political crises, a rhetoric of fear functions to create scapegoats and place blame outside of the scope of the crisis. For the rhetoric to function effectively, the crisis must be a central issue within the culture and a foundation of symbolic recognition must exist within the community. The conservation of the American families with children at risk allowed for U.S. national rhetoric. A triple murder in a protestant Arkansas community placed the accused teens' connections to metal symbols at the center of rhetoric in both the media and trials. In Norway, a string of arsons targeting historic churches created the opportunity for rhetorics of fear to be incorporated into the public discourse by both the media and metal artists.

Rhetorics of Fear

In each culture that has created a problem around metal cultures, rhetorics of fear take the place of analysis and critical understanding of the metal cultures. These rhetorics are built on the dramatistic framing of the social interactions, reconfiguring and

applying old symbols to reframe the public understanding of situations that lack understanding. The rhetorics are built on the binaries and inverted hierarchies present in institutional discourse. In Christianity, one binary is God and Satan, and a corresponding hierarchy is God is to be emulated by man. If Satan becomes the focus, the inverted hierarchy to be more like Satan becomes a cornerstone in the rhetoric of fear. In most cases, symbols of Christianity have been reconfigured to impart an understanding of deviance in a concise good versus evil paradigm, but other institutions also produce this pattern. In the criminal justice system, citizen versus criminal operates as a binary, and a rhetoric that inverts the hierarchy to show the potential for developed criminality produces an identity of deviance. An example of the rhetoric of fear is metal has an effect on the growth of criminality in an individual or a population. The rhetoric of fear presents problems of deviance and issues identities of deviants through the rhetorics pattern of inverted hierarchies based on the culturally negative identification of institutional binaries. This pattern frames the norms of the culture at risk and identifies the deviance and deviants creating the risk. A rhetoric of fear predicts a motive with a purpose that inverts the hierarchal perfection of the culture. When a crisis occurs in the culture, the deviants identified in the pattern become perfect scapegoats because they carry the symbols identified as deviance and understood as an identity of the deviant.

The rhetoric of fear also generates counter rhetorics, and metal cultures are complicit in the conflagration of the symbols equated as deviant. Within the commercial environment of music production, images of sexuality, violence, and religion may be reworked to provide a new symbolic meanings or group specific commodities. While an inverted crucifix would have one meaning to the Church, it can have different meanings

to a Florida death metal band, a Norwegian black metal band, or a British metal band. These meanings are neither translated nor accepted by the general population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the rhetorics of fear operating in public discourses surrounding metal music. This analysis focuses on how the public rhetorics deploy identity on listener populations through both the mediation and legislation of identities. Specifically, this mediation takes place using both symbols of fear and arguments constructed on potential threats. Texts for analysis in this study include a wide variety of discourses offered in print media, film, and television. Chapter 2's look at early metal discourses include Penelope Spheeris' *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II: The Metal Years*, articles from the *New York Times* and *Orlando Sentinel*, Mötley Crüe's album *Shout at the Devil*, "Looks that Kill" video, and interview with Alexie Sayles for a British talk show. In Chapter 3's look at the conservative rhetoric of fear, the texts include the introduction to Tipper Gore's *Raising Kids in an X-Rated Society*, the opening statements to the Senate Hearings on Record Labeling, Twisted Sister's "We're not Gonna Take It" music video, and a segment from ABC's *20/20*. Chapter 4's texts include a recounting of personal experiences during the Satanic panic, segments compiled in *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders in Robin Hood Hills*, and an article from an Arkansas paper. Chapter 5 texts include *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of Satanic Metal Underground* and Varg Vikernes' website.

"Heavy metal" and "metal music" are labels that categorize diverse styles of music. While there is no exemplar metal song that accounts for a definition of the genre,

the terms have been consistently used in rhetorics of fear. These rhetorical movements produce and deploy deviant identities, depend on the construction of cultural crisis, and generate counter rhetorics of agency for individuals and subcultures. The study moves 1) chronologically through metal history, 2) geographically from the United States to Norway, and 3) contextually through media events that produce the public discourses of identity, crisis, and counter rhetorics. This study charts the rhetorical movements that have created fear within communities, leading to threats of legislation or criminalization of segments of the population.

Methodology

My methodological tool is close textual analysis, a careful and critical reading of public discourse generated around heavy metal music and its communities. Textual analysis focuses on language but understands that the language operates within a narrative pattern that transcends a specific time. The text operates through the limitations of understanding through recognizable frames of interpretation and has an agency that brings into being a reality of context. This agency within the text derives from the power vested in the cultural transmission of signs and symbols and is wholly empowered by the cultural production of a norm regulating society. My understanding of textual analysis is informed by literary and cultural critics who attend to texts as powerful forms of communication.

Kenneth Burke connected the grammar and rhetoric of cultural discourse to actions that individuals and groups took within a social system, specifically attributing the perceptions, the philosophies, of all involved as limitations that constructed blinded

understandings of reality and potential actions. His work with narrative and symbolic norms demonstrates the ability to understand breaches where symbols and perceptions develop new meanings. In *Permanence and Change*, he notes that classical periods with significant standardization of perception and expectation have extreme symbolic morphs where those with a different perception reinvent symbols with the grotesque “when it is easiest to imagine the grotesque, or when it is hardest to imagine the classical” (137). This movement from the symbol to the production and interpretive differences shows how norms can be challenged by their unbelievable nature, creating multiple levels of perception and sets of norms in a time and a place. Michel Foucault charted how the construction of an analysis through the genealogy of a term could demonstrate the cultural importance of transmissions of ideas and the development of social structures that enforced and reinforced determined perceptions and individual reactions within a morphing social context. His fundamental study on the concept and terminology in *The History of Sexuality* shows norm creations, shifts, and acceptance in ways that impose identities that had neither personal acceptance of labels or of community application of the labels before the introduction and shift of culture.

My methodology combines the elements of these traditions to regard a text as production and as the performance of cultural rhetorics through words, actions, limitations, and the construction of physical space. Understanding the construction of ambiguities, through both the New Critic and Burkean lenses, one may find an entrance into a scene and to the rhetorical structure of the scene whether it exists as words on a page, distorted bass at a concert, or in the combination of clothes chosen for a day at the office.

Specifically, I analyze the genealogy of “metal” as it transcends a label for a musical genre to a produced and deployed identity of deviance and threat through a rhetoric of fear cultivated in the public discourse of artists, journalists, special interest groups, and the mediated individuals. The primary methodology is a close textual reading of the competing public and subculture voices that have entered a public engagement. These include video documentation by metal opponents and metal artists, the lyrics and music of artists involved in each genre discussion, and journalistic writing that has had mass circulation. Textual analysis will allow maps to be created of cultures and symbols in the dynamic conflicts of violence and meaning.

Chapters Outline

Chapter two is an analysis of the construction of metal identity through early texts and stories. Early media coverage and metal artist performance choices are discussed. The texts “Looks that Kill,” *Shout at the Devil*, and *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II* demonstrate the mediated identity of metal through the 1980s. The U. S. media spawned Satanic panic and its connection with metal through Fundamentalist Christian literature centers this chapter’s rhetoric of fear argument. Using Joshua Gunn’s theories about the capital of Occult Rhetoric, I establish the primary cultural motivation behind the rhetoric of metal detraction and the use of culture’s negative symbols for self identity. Metal culture and music uses symbols and language that fit within institutional rhetorics of fear where binaries frame meanings and apply identities through the institutional orientations.

Chapter three focuses on the convergence of institutional rhetorics of fear that constructed a blanket of negative identities for metal fans. During this period, media events centered on parental groups (i.e. PMRC) and fundamentalist organizations' attributions of criminal purpose to the performers while establishing the youth as controlled agents. Their public rhetoric formulated metal decadence versus home, God, and community. This conservative rhetoric of fear is based on a rhetorical construction of culture at risk for disintegration. When the experts addressed metal as a problem, they gave it the properties of a mental illness or a drug addiction, a deviant cause with deviance as an effect.

Building on the other chapters, chapter four explores the media's creation of scapegoats using the metal community to address sudden tragedies in which explanations are either absent or self-incriminating. The subject focus of the chapter is the investigation, arrest, trial, and conviction in a triple murder case. Lacking evidence or clear motives, the symbols of metal culture are entered in a trial as evidence of supernatural purposes. In the orientation of the community, the symbols of metal turned the bearers into scapegoats.

Chapter five looks at the limited context in which Northern European metal developed and in which the Satanic panic spread from the U. S. to Norway. The chapter focuses on the development of the Black Metal genre through an escalating appropriation and transformation of symbols. Through the mediation of crimes committed by artists from the scene, the rhetoric escalates on both sides as does the actions of the artists, media, and police. Symbols of the Church of Norway that have lost their presence in everyday lives are infused with binary meanings that become objects of action (church

burnings, grave desecrations), ushering in a rhetorical battle for culture. In the end, the performativity of earnestness in a hierarchy of extremes establishes the rhetoric of fear in a culture that exists through an institutional rhetoric of homogeneity, procreating Satan in an evaluation of Norwegian order that causes new categories to be created and a potential for the diversities of other institutional rhetorics. In particular, the piousness to anti-Christianity led to a rhetoric of the colonized that resurrected the concept of an artificial heritage and a nonexistent enemy. In this rhetorical frame, the Nazi ideal of purity and myth reawaken, and the NBM rhetoric is appropriated for a new Nazi orientation.

The final chapter recounts the development of primary ideas and shows them in play with one another. It details how an unpacking of cultural expectations and beliefs will allow new questions to be asked during times of crisis and blame.

Chapter Two

Metal Discourse: Performance, Media, and Fans (1980-1989)

Rock and Roll Rebel

Growing up in 1980's rural Alabama, my first exposure to heavy metal music was in church. While I never heard the music there, preachers invoked it in sermons about popular music genres that led to teenage pregnancy and drug addiction. A culmination came in one service where a specific teenage girl was publicly addressed as having redevoted her life to Christ and had given up the music and lifestyle that had caused her shame. As the service ended, she stared at the carpet as she walked down the aisle leading to the exit.

At another church, the library carried the book *The God of Rock* by a conservative preacher who pulled out all of the stops to interpret lyrics and album covers as works of the devil (Haynes). The thesis of the book links rock music to sex, drugs, and violence. Metal, by the author's standards, leads straight to the demonic. Feeling the pubescent urge to rebel, I used the book to choose musical groups to expand my experience beyond the small universe of traditional community and protestant mores. I embraced the fear that Ozzy Osbourne's name could provoke and bought a cassette tape that showed him costumed as werewolf, *Bark at the Moon*. Listening to Ozzy, I was barking at the moon

Exemplars of Fear in Early Metal Discourse

This chapter analyses early texts of the discourse of metal that reached large segments of the general U. S. public, creating a frame in which identity of metal performers and listeners became topics of debate. I have chosen two works by Mötley Crüe as exemplars in early metal discourse for two reasons. First, Mötley Crüe is important to seminal metal scholarship, Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal* (1991) and Robert Walser's *Running with the Devil* (1993). While neither Weinstein nor Walser analyze the group or their works, they do establish the group as either exemplary of an aspect of metal or as one of the originators of style. As importantly for this paper, Walser points out that Mötley Crüe and the other L. A. bands were at the center of the popular expansion of metal when heavy metal sales grew to 20% of all U.S. record sales in 1984. Second, Mötley Crüe's video "Looks that Kill," and the Mötley Crüe album *Shout at the Devil* are important examples of the music video age for their popularity, visibility, and provocation. The album was released in 1983, when the Satanic panic was on the rise and music videos became widely available. MTV, the broadcast networks, and syndicated programming showed "Looks that Kill" and the resulting album sales give a quantitative view of the large listenership for *Shout at the Devil*. Mötley Crüe is criticized by the evangelicals, and has a persistent image among metal fans and those critical of metal into the early 1990s, as long as the band remained together. Mötley Crüe was one of the most popular and successful bands from the Sunset Strip, and U.S. metal became know for the glam bands from that scene.

I have also chosen to analyze Penelope Spheeris' documentary film *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*, one of the only examples of a media product focused entirely on the early metal scene and the fans. Hair metal from the 1980s is often confused for all metal in the public discourse, and this perception came largely from Spheeris and the film about the L. A. metal scene. The types of metal musicians and fans became the stereotypes of jokes; not only did Spheeris produce the only documentary on metal and limit it to a particular scene, she also directed the *Wayne's World* movie. There is no scholarly debate on the mediation of metal, and unless a person has been a consumer of a large sample of the media and mediation of the Sunset Strip scene, there is no bigger picture than the view Spheeris mediated.

The general scholarship of metal has mostly evolved from Weinstein's sociological approach and Walser's interdisciplinary musicological approach. In well researched and expansive studies like Harris M. Berger's phenomenological and musicological study *Metal, Rock, and Jazz* and Keith Kahn-Harris' *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* subjects and theories are so specific to a community, time, or theoretical base that they have limited value in a discussion of the evolution of population identity or the rhetoric in the public discourse. Walser established metal in music history and introduced many possible points of study; it is from his review of the fantasy imagery in Iron Maiden's work that I begin to draw my methodology.

The chapter consists of a close textual reading using Kenneth Burke's concepts of orientation, a perception of symbols that have been connotatively and formally charged. Orientation refers to trained incapacities which structure behavior in ways that limit perceptions beyond the expected pattern. According to Burke, an orientation "forms the

basis of expectancy—for character telescopes the past, present, and future. A sign, which is here now, may have got a significance out of the past that makes it a promise of the future” (*Permanence* 14). Specifically, judgments are made through an individual’s orientation that match the expectancies and blind other interpretations through piety, making things fit within a system of belief (74 & 75). Institutional orientations are built on piety of the binaries that define the institutions. Within orientations, some symbols become “charged.” In a text, charged symbols rely on the symbolic which is independent of the text and the formal which requires an understanding within the context of the text (*Counter-Statement* 163-65). Symbols of metal culture take symbols pious in institutional orientations to create planned incongruencies that allow the destruction and recreation of orientations (*Permanence* 111). As an explicit example, the World Trade Center buildings fit within certain orientations before their destruction in a terrorist attack, but the buildings became charged with that action in discourse following the attack. As shown by the terrorist actions from their perspective, the symbols can also be impieties which are attempts at creating new orientations (80). A rhetoric of fear questions the stability of the hierarchies that establish the order in an orientation.

Newspaper coverage, artist interviews, and secondary sources demonstrate the competing discourses in which symbols obtain incongruent meanings that lead to a generalization of identity for metal fans. The first section, “The Iron Mask: The Media and Metal Identity Production,” demonstrates the identity production of criminal, Satanic, and pathological identity from the mainstream documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years* and how the media perpetuated these symbolic identifications. The second section, “Connotations and Denotations: A Rhetoric of Fear

through Malleable Symbols” demonstrates how cultural frames facilitate the mediation of false identities through culturally charged symbols. The third section, “Performing Expertise and Deviance through a Rhetoric of Fear,” is an analysis of the symbol use in Mötley Crüe’s album *Shout at the Devil* and how it reinforced the mediation of their negative identity. This chapter argues that metal symbols create identities framed by a rhetoric of fear through the orientational limitations of secular and religious authority.

The Iron Mask: The Media and Metal Identity Production

The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years captured the Los Angeles glam metal scene in 1987 after the scene had fully broken open to become the heart of mainstream metal. Released nationally in 1988, the documentary has had an extended life on home video and television programming like VH1’s *Heavy: The Story of Metal*. The film is directed by Penelope Spheeris and follows her 1980 documentary on the Los Angeles punk scene, *Decline of Western Civilization*. Spheeris has since directed the big screen adaptation of *Saturday Night Live*’s spoof on metal fans, *Wayne’s World*. The documentary featured interviews conducted by Spheeris with established hard rock and metal performers. Others interviewed include groupies, fans, and performers who had not garnered success. The film took a view of L.A.’s metal scene to communities across the country with a movie poster titled “It’s more than music...it’s a way of life.” Under the titling, the image of the poster shows a male guitarist performing, his long hair and shadow covering his face. The performer holds the guitar and wears fringed black leather, acting as a decontextualized metal identity. Under the image, the subtitle of the film *The Metal Years* boldly exhibits the largest print on the image,

creating a frame for the performer as a cultural type. The national response was in line with the documentary's title and its editing which focused on subjects of decadence, deviance, and dimwittedness.

In a review of the film, the *Chicago Sun-Times* delivers an opinion that the metal culture exists as symbolic of negative cultural attributes.

Heavy metal embodies adolescent fantasy, a fantasy that includes the crassest American dreams: wealth, women, power, fame and a life of ceaseless, irresponsible self-gratification. Distorted in these rouged faces and bloated lives one can see reflected the fundamental ills of our culture - greed, sexism, materialism - as well as the indomitable individualism that founded it” (Keough).

The Atlanta Constitution focuses on the values of the scene. “[Spheeris’] latest subjects, which include dozens of Sunset Strip scenesters interviewed for the movie, are only in it for the money. And the fame. And the sex. And the beer. Though not necessarily in that order” (Dollar). *The Miami Herald* chimes in with a language establishing the idea of debauchery.

Two pudgy girls cheerfully admit that yes, group sex with band members does happen sometimes, “but only about four times since we’ve been in L.A.” And how long is that? “Five weeks.” Spheeris lets her subjects be themselves -- often devastatingly -- but asks the tough questions, too. “Would you go out with a girl if she pays for some food if you don’t like her? Isn’t that prostitution?” (Adrianson)

The New York Times also reviewed the film with a disparaging eye on the performers and audience as stupid and dangerous to themselves and others.

For all the amusingly fatuous remarks heard here - and Miss Spheeris has a great ear for these - the overriding dimness of most of the fans and musicians is frightening. The women are happy to be exploited, the men avid for new forms of self-destruction, and no one can see an inch beyond tomorrow. (Maslin)

Megadeth's Dave Mustaine, whose music was favorably featured at the end of the film, said the movie "really opened people's eyes up to metal. After seeing the movie, I was kind of like 'Man, there are a lot of creeps in Los Angeles, aren't there?'" ("The Looks that Kill"). Spheeris' film is the only significant example of the culture of Sunset Strip metal, the primary American metal scene of the early 1980s, packaged for a broader audience. The film operates to connect metal symbols to deviance through careful editing of interviewed sequences.

The documentary is shown in a quick series of interviews with local performers, established stars, fans, a nightclub owner, and a probation officer. Interview locations ranged for most of the established performers, but performers not yet established were shown on stage. Fans are shown in interviews in an area similar to chain photography studio sets where a small seating area keeps everyone in frame. Some interviewees are identified through text on the screen, and others are not identified or not consistently enough to understand who they are or what role they play in the culture. Interview segments are mostly edited, in ways that scenes outside of the interview add a context to the discourse. Some interview segments are extended, but many are little more than

support for segment of the scene or another voice in a thematic montage of comments. Because of the incomplete nature of each interview segment, a lack of consistently identifying who is being interviewed, and the quick cuts to other interviews and performances, the identities of the interviewees becomes blurred.

Editing creates a story that is not told through the individual interviews, establishing metal performances and audiences as types of people exemplified through the featured segments. Spheeris asks questions from off camera, giving her questions the function of narration. The cinematography isolates the subjects during interviews, and scenes outside of interviews show activities ranging from standing outside of clubs, performers on stage, a group soaking in a hot tub, to a dance/stripping competition. The criminals, devil worshippers, and psychiatric cases all become fixtures in metal culture feeding into the political, religious, and cultural rhetorics of fear.

Headbangers as Street Bangers: Metal Appearance as Weaponry

The collage of interviews begins with performers and others talking about metal, establishing a definition for the music and culture. The expert chosen to tell where the music comes from is Darlyne Pettinicchio, probation officer. This authority figure appears later in the film explaining the deprogramming regime of metal fans used by an operation called Back in Control, punctuating that metal dress includes acting symbols that must be removed in order to move the fans away from the criminal path. The symbols of metal are considered weapons and a uniform of criminality. Instead of offering multiple interpretations or uses of the symbols, Pettinicchio offers singularly functional purposes of metal regalia.

The documentary cuts from a close up of her sitting behind an office desk to teens being patted down by security guards and uniformed adults.

Pettinicchio: One of the things that we have found which we call de-metaling is a program that actually gets the kid out of heavy metal.

(The scene changes to show uniformed officers patting down teens in metal garb.)

We have certain rules, removal of heavy metal albums or tapes, not allowing the child to dress in any style of heavy metal, which would mean taking these kinds of things away from him,

(she reaches into a pile of metal garments and pulls out a glove with metal stars and hemispheres)

not allowing him to wear the heavy metal t-shirts that depict the band members with pictures of monsters, or skeletons, or whatever graves on them.

(The scene flashes to security doing a pat down then back to her lifting a leather gauntlet with metal studs)

This right here just covers the forearm and again is just used as garb and it basically talks about an image related to heavy metal which is one of power.

(The scene cuts back to the pat down where a security guard is pinning a fan's hands behind his head. It returns to her picking up a metal gauntlet covered in rows of spikes)

This also is worn over the forearm. And this was homemade, as you can tell it has just screws and nuts in it and a piece sheet metal.

(Cuts back to legs being patted down then her pulling a spiked dog collar to her neck.)

This right here is a collar that is worn around the neck. And also it can prevent any kind of choke hold if you get involved

in a riot and the police are trying to contain the situation.

(The scene cuts back to the pat downs and then to her lifting a leather bracelet with studs and putting it around her wrist)

For youngsters on probation under probation supervision, this will constitute a weapon, and they are not allowed to wear this.

Spheeris: Are you aware of anyone being hurt with those things?

(cuts back to the pat down)

Pettinicchio: Oh, yes!

Pettinicchio offers no details, leaving the audience to accept this claim without evidence. Playing on the secular fears of out-of-control youth, the probation officer constructs a criminal identity whose symbols act as weapons as much as they offer an identity. To deprogram the youth, once the uniform and symbols have been removed, the negative influence ceases to exist. The rhetorical framing of the symbols as criminal weapons, influence, and uniform uses fear to imbue the symbols and those who wear them as embodied criminals.

Devil Horns: Christian Deviancy in Metal Gestures and Costume

Continuing to use Pettinicchio's authority as a civil servant dressed in middle class professional garb while sitting in a windowed office, Spheeris documents the most universal symbol of metal, the devil horns, a fist with pinkie and index fingers extended. The hand sign appears in music videos, concert footage, and in most other video materials used in this study. While the symbol has appeared in contexts outside of metal, the original user of the symbol in contemporary music was Ronnie James Dio. Because he is not interviewed in the film, it is important to understand his creation of the symbol and the effect that he witnessed as it spread through the metal culture to understand the lack of meaning and intention used in concert footage.

When Ozzy Osbourne left Black Sabbath, he was replaced by frontman Dio. One of Osbourne's characteristic stage gestures was the peace symbol, making "V"s using index and middle fingers. To establish a different presence, Dio gestured with fists that have the pinky and index fingers extended. His consistent use of the gestures created recognition with the fans and eventually became a symbol of acceptance, acknowledgement, and reciprocity between the fans, expanding beyond the Black Sabbath and Dio shows to become a general symbol for metal. In *Heavy: The Story of Metal*, Dio explains the use of the "devil horns." He says that his first exposure was through his grandmother who used it to protect from or give the evil eye. With an ironic and surprised tone he explains the symbol's evolution.

My Grandmother used to do it. She was born in Italy and didn't speak English and had her superstitions. It's called the Moloch, [...] the devil. I

tried to create it within the confines of the band Black Sabbath, and the evilness that was supposed to be that band. And now it's crossed over into everything.

A quick search on "Moloch" leads to many possible interpretations of the meaning, and little agreement on a common origin. The hand symbol is also not limited to Dio's grandmother and metal culture as it is also displayed in association with fandom for the University of Texas Longhorns and University of South Florida Bulls. While the symbol has no pure origin or direct connection to Satanism or other religious origin, the connection with metal did infuse the devil that Dio intended in Satanic panic interpretations.

In Spheeris' production, Pettinicchio applies an interpretation of Christian and inverted Christian meanings to the symbol.

Many kids if you ask them they will say its means heavy metal.

It's the two fingers up to represent the authority of the devil...

The three fingers down to represent the denial of the trinity.

Also within this hand gesture, we have three sixes from the Book of Revelations in the Bible. (She points them out with one hand while making the gesture with the other hand.)

While Pettinicchio's statements are refuted by fans and performers in cuts after each of the above statements, the interviewees lose credibility through the director's frame of deviant sexuality. The interview segments often place the performers and fans in deviant positions through both editing and rhetorical framing. In the first 10 minutes of the film, Paul Stanley from KISS is interviewed while in bed, the camera offers an overhead

mirror perspective, and several women in lingerie lie with him, caressing him. His band mate Gene Simmons is interviewed in a lingerie store looking over women wearing lingerie as they shop for more. The scenes are framed as candid interviews without a connection to KISS' marketing of their sexually explicit music and image. At 37 minutes into the film, Spheeris asks Paul Stanley, "And we can safely say that, because this is a documentary film, you actually do live like this." Stanley responds, "As often as I can." This is followed by a female metal artist saying that female performers can take advantage of male fans, and Pettinicchio states that women are presented in a misogynist domination fantasy. Groupies tell the camera that their favorite pastime is sex, and male performers state they allow female fans to take care of them financially. Spheeris overtly positions this as prostitution through her questions. Fan and performers' make-up, hair, and stage clothing is tied to deviances of both secular and religious performances of sexuality and gender. The filmmaker's choices in questions to ask, answers to include in the documentary, and teens to interview produce a limited view of the teens in a dominant view of deviance. The groupies brag about the number of sexual encounters and group sex acts that they have participated in during the few months they had been in Los Angeles. One male teen in glammed hair and makeup is asked questions that provoke concerns of sexual confusion and poor familial relationships. In the questions and answers shown, youth with problems, or at least socially deviant issues, become the bearers of the only metal fan identity shown.

An imbalance of authority created by the scene selection and edits shuts down the dialogic possibilities. In one of the cut-away sequences with Pettinicchio, a teen tells the camera about the "devil horn" gesture: "Or it can be the sign of Satan according to the

Jesus Crispies outside the arena with their big Jesus posters...” The film cuts away to Pettinicchio and she states: “This is his head, this is his horns, and if you do this you’re absolutely possessed.”

The fan’s interpretation demonstrates the dialogic imposition of outside meanings on the symbol charged with the Satanic and the Dionysian qualities of deviance. Even though the fan’s rhetoric undermines the seriousness of the protestors, he demonstrates a clear understanding that the protestors have interpreted and use the symbol for their purpose. Instead of establishing a dialog to create a shared meaning with the Christian opposition, the rhetoric also functions as a barrier to Christian empathy through the cereal box branding of the protestors as “Jesus Crispies,” establishing a tone that can easily be misidentified as sacrilegious or at least dismissive. The elements that have charged the symbol are the same elements that frame the dominant culture’s “reality.” Burke states “though man is typically the symbol-using animal, he clings to a kind of naïve verbal realism that refuses to realize the full extent of the role played by symbolicity in his notions of reality” (*Language* 5). For the dominant culture built on Christian understandings, the symbol framed as “devil horns” invokes action of Satanic or pagan qualities. Burke demonstrates using the idea of a tribal belief in a hex and a tribesman confronted with “the sign that for some reason those in authority have decreed his death by magic, and he promptly begins to waste away and die under the burden of this sheer thought” (7). While the symbolicity of the metal performers and fans incorporate the gesture as a symbol of metal as created by Dio, the dominant culture, or at least the Christian base within the culture, have a visceral reaction to the symbol as it is framed within their reality.

Following the Path to Hell: Metal as a Pathological Symptom and Cause

The religious and the criminal include symbols that invoke fear for particular orientations, but the medical also has themes that provoke negative reactions from the public whether a psychotic killer leaves a dismembered body or an alcoholic bum reaches for change on a street corner. While several scenes from *Decline* mention, glorify, or renounce drugs and alcohol, they become a focal point for many of the established and would be performers, creating a pathology of substance abuse in the metal culture. The first fan interviewed in the film is a teen male who states that he likes to get drunk and watch the headbangers make fools of themselves. Spheeris asks bands about their alcohol and drug use, and many volunteer substance abuse as a mark of their lifestyles. In the same frame, as the male performers' willingness to prostitute themselves and the groupies' boasts of deviant sexual appetites, substance abuse and the symbols of liquor bottles and beer cans invoke a lifestyle of disintegration.

One example stands out from the rest because it balances an alcoholic with a silent parent present in a scene where an opulent middleclass home is changed to the gutter in which a drunk has curled up to die. The scene takes place in a lit pool at night, and W.A.S.P. guitarist Chris Holmes literally pours fifths of vodka in his mouth. Dressed in his performance leathers, Holmes lays on a pool float near the edge of the pool with his mother sitting in a deck chair beside him. Her posture, facial expressions, and body language display discomfort and uncertainty as Spheeris, off camera, questions Holmes. As the interview progresses, Holmes becomes less and less coherent, and his mother becomes more fidgety in her seat when she is in the frame. The water both isolates and traps Holmes as the questions become more pointed. His answers devolve to "See this"

as he turns up a fifth. Taken out of time and placed in a surreal context the viewer gets his slurred proclamation, “I’m a full-blown alcoholic.”

Spheeris: Do you think you might be covering up some pain?

Holmes: Oh, yeah. Probably...

Spheeris: What would that be from I wonder.

Holmes: Look here. Do you like this label? (He holds a bottle toward the camera)

Spheeris: Let’s not avoid the issue.

(Holmes kills off another fifth.)

Moving from a probing tone to one offering a leading question, Spheeris goes into a narrative frame that produces the idea that under the surface pain drives the performer’s behaviors.

The symbol of alcohol appears in the lyrics of songs like AC/DC’s “Have a Drink on Me” to W.A.S.P.’s “Blind in Texas” and it appears on album art like in Guns N’ Roses *Appetite for Destruction* where lead singer Axl Rose holds a green beer bottle and guitarist Slash has a liquor bottle half hidden behind his top hat that sits on the floor in front of him. Neither alcohol nor drugs have a singular meaning throughout the rhetoric of metal artists and fans (the complexity will be further explored in chapter 3), yet Spheeris’ language focuses on the pathology of addiction, a psychological pain that drives Holmes. His pain, masked through egregious drinking, becomes synonymous with the drug and alcohol use shown by the fans and other performers. Immediately following the sequence equating performers to prostitutes, the band London is shown backstage drinking and talking about the artists who have been in the band but left to make it big in other groups. One of the band members says,

We've been in this town for so long like we're like a cheap hooker on the street—nobody wants to know about us. So what happens is we have a big following out of town, we come back here they offer us fifty bucks to play in the Troubadour or wherever...on a Tuesday. But we will do it for a bar tab.

They go on to joke, “Our dicks get hard for gold cards” and “We are not role models for your life.” The band’s lack of commercial success is paired with alcohol abuse, self-prostitution, and a conscious awareness of a deviant position in dominant culture.

Holmes, as a success in the metal culture, is an example of decayed mental, social, and moral elements—a leather-clad symbol of the pathogenic metal culture. Spheeris asks Holmes, “When you were a little kid did you want to be a rock star?” He answers, “Yes I did. Definitely. She wouldn’t let me. I go, ‘Mom, could I take rock guitar,’ she said, uh, well, ‘N-no, you can’t. Ya-ya-you’ll turn into one of those drug infested rock stars.’”

The drug and alcohol use highlighted in the interviews tells the story of a culture imbued with substance abuse issues that cover up underlying problems. The story of the glam metal artist, as told by the montage of the film begins with a kid who doesn’t like authority and runs away. Some males dress in women’s clothes to represent a lifestyle or an identity that is never explained. In a long string of interview segments, would-be stars cannot admit to not making it to commercial or cultural success. The prototypical metal kid moves to L.A. and plays music while he prostitutes himself to women for groceries or money for band promotion or she is used sexually and financially by performers. They engage in reckless substance abuse and deviant sex. They aspire to be successes, but whether they are or not, they will burn out and be incapable of remaining in society.

This film created not just an identity for the performers but one of fans that extended beyond the Sunset Strip. In a recent interview for a VH1 television show, Rikki Rachtman, who appears in the film as the co-owner of The Cathouse club and later became the host of MTV's metal video show *Headbangers' Ball*, reflects on the scene with Holmes. "What was funny all the sudden became very sad" ("The Looks that Kill"). The statement that appeared in the *New York Times* review extended outside of the Sunset Strip to identify all metal fans: "The women are happy to be exploited, the men avid for new forms of self-destruction, and no one can see an inch beyond tomorrow" (Maslin). In the film, an authority figure and the interviewer present scenes that correlate the metal world to common fears in orientations where prisons, asylums, and hell are logical destinations for the youth who embrace the music and culture. The rhetoric that establishes the frame is built on symbols from the institutional rhetorics of crime, religion, and psychology. *Decline* establishes and maintains a rhetoric of decay to cast metal performers and fans with the identity of the criminal, the Satanist, and the insane.

Connotations and Denotations: A Rhetoric of Fear through Malleable Symbols

Even though the symbols of metal, like the devil horns, 666, and pentagrams have a strong association with metal, no one has done an in-depth study to understand the symbols and their complexity in metal or in the public discourse. Weinstein writes "metal deploys Satan and suicide as symbols of freedom from and resistance against organized constraints. It is a form of life, not of decadence" (260). And she also points out fundamentalists "take the use of these symbols literally and are convinced that the music is a tool of the Anti-Christ. Satanism, along with suicide, sexual perversion and

mayhem form a unity in the fundamentalist mind” (261). For Kahn-Harris, the satanic symbols are part of subcultural capital and required for maintaining a cultural identity through the reflexivity inherent in the scene (121-127). While both statements can be justified in particular contexts, neither applies well to a diverse mainstream listenership, nor to the evolution of the symbols’ usage.

Weinstein points out how the sacred and secular mix where, in her terms, suicide can be seen as deicide when one kills a self created in the image of God, sexual perversion compares to Sodom and Gomorrah, and violence against others and satanic symbols affiliates one with the anti-Christ (261-62). But Joshua Gunn’s study of occult and occultic rhetoric demonstrates that occult texts, by definition, hide their meaning from outsiders. These practices establish the format for their own misinterpretation by a general readership who are not indoctrinated in how to read the metaphors and irony. In Gunn’s study, the occult rhetoric thrived until technology, mediation, and cultural shifts caused outsiders to perceive that those affiliated with the occult did so to gain social position, wealth, or other secular goals. But when Anton LaVey came on the scene with the *Satanic Bible* and film about the rituals in his objectivistic Church of Satan, the images from the film, including a nude woman on an altar, the pentagram, and costumed ritual of Christian inversions, became scenes that were taken out of context and placed in media presentations as a proof of evil, devil worship, crime, and abuse. Gunn analyses the satanic panic in the media to show how the scenes from LaVey’s film became visual proof of the broadcaster’s claims of the issues that comprised the satanic panic.

Early in this chapter, I introduced Kenneth Burke’s concepts of “orientation” and “piety,” and the general idea that groups and cultures sustain their worldviews through

systems of metaphors, symbols, and connotative associations. Burke further investigates what might happen when worldviews and cultural meanings undergo transition, when groups might compose new or ‘counter’ meanings to oppose older stable associations, linkages, and meanings—when pieties are assaulted or undermined by newer cultural formations. I will extend this analysis in more detail in Chapter 5.

Gunn’s study of the occult suggests that the very success of the ‘counter’ meanings of the occult rhetoric in providing collectivizing and shared symbols that signify identity, shared values, shared senses of alienation, and, perhaps, shared senses of purpose invites and exacerbates the likelihood of misinterpretation by the dominant media. Occult is, by definition, hidden and apart, and the separatism and oppositional character of these symbols is key to their workings to collectivize and communicate among their users. Thus Gunn distinguishes between “occult” rhetoric, wherein shared metaphors and senses of irony construct a shared context for initiated members, and “occultic” a more general level where the symbol is not interpreted within a specific context by comes to stand for stable meanings to all cultural members: A Nazi swastika has transcended all specific contexts and exists as a symbol fully charged for Westerners because of its cultural history. Contemporary “hate groups” cannot possibly use the swastika as a symbol without invoking those associations and pieties. Similarly, fundamentalist Christians understand the symbols appropriated by metal culture from an orientation or worldview that connects all evil to Satan. When metal cultists use satanic symbols, those Christians are likely to associate satanic influence to a broad array of social problems, crimes, and general senses of disorder they experience. I shall argue that in such instances, it is possible show that the non-fundamentalist and metal cultists

and artists have different uses for these symbols: these symbols have been selected from the dominant culture because they are fossils and pious relics of a worldview they wish to challenge.

To demonstrate this confusion of meanings, I will examine two cases where occult symbols became occultic, where the specific uses of such symbols among metal artists and listeners were appropriated into the interpretations. First, I will look at a *New York Times* article that pairs metal with a series of social problems. Secondly, Mötley Crüe's use of the pentagram operates as a symbol of deviance for a conservative population.

Gangs and Serial Killers: The New York Times Mediating Connotations of Deviance

First, connotations of problems were connected to satanic elements and music using preexisting social problems for their structure. Judith Cummings, a Los Angeles correspondent for the *New York Times*, exemplifies this approach in her 1986 article, "Youth Gangs Rise in Suburbs in West." The article appeared in a Sunday edition of the *Times*, which reaches a broad national audience. Cummings' article demonstrates how metal acquired the citational charge from loose association to examples that had been mediated through explicit narratives and understood structures. The article opens by defining the attributes of perceived social problems and then symbols of deviance are entered through testimony evidence by unnamed experts.

Officials in California say gang membership is increasing among white, middle-class suburban youths, and the officials say these gangs are

engaging in such criminal acts as gang fights and robbery, and that some take part in Satanic rituals.

By combining the unexpected socio-economic background of the youth gang members with predefined attributes of “gangs” and “Satanism,” the article establishes an identity to the problem that is understandable to the majority of the U.S. population.

With no direct evidence cited, the article moves to expert opinion using discursive statements that build on mediated social issues. “Many [authorities] cite such factors as decreasing parental supervision over children and the breakdown of traditional family units because of divorce.” The markers by which the gang can be recognized falls to the level of symbols with connotations that link music, specifically rock, punk, and metal, to extreme deviance.

Some of the white gangs adhere to a white supremacist philosophy and employ Nazi symbols, according to the police and social workers. [...] [The gangs] are described in such overlapping variations as heavy metal, punk-rock and stoner gangs. Some are distinguished by enthusiasm for certain rock music, others by their use or sale of drugs. [...]

Particularly troubling to some officials is evidence of devil worship among a few of the youths. The police attribute some incidents of grave robbery, desecration of human remains, vandalism of churches and ritualistic animal sacrifices to the gangs. The authorities say they have not been able so far to determine whether there is a link between the gang phenomenon and a suspect, Richard Ramirez, who was arrested last fall in a series of killings in suburban Los Angeles that were called the “nightstalker

slayings.” In court appearances Mr. Ramirez has flashed the pentagram, or 666, sign of devil worship written on the palm of his hand. Once he declared, “Hail, Satan!” in the courtroom. Teen-age girls appear at Mr. Ramirez’s hearings, waving and calling his name in the manner of the groupies who follow rock stars.

Expert testimony creates the perception that a problem exists that can be defined by street crime, Nazism, and devil worship. Without any evidence provided beyond testimony, the *New York Times* added to the creation of a national perception of a problem that links youth, music, symbols, and acts of extreme violence. Both the pentagram and 666 became a fixture of media. The connotation made between music and a serial killer further charged the symbols with meaning. Josh Gunn points out that much of the Satanic panic programming, specifically TV host Geraldo Rivera’s special on Satanism, used decontextualized scenes from LaVey’s documentary *Satanis* with voiceovers and onscreen text to construct proof of the stories concerned. Out of context of the Satanist community, symbols, such as the pentagram on the cover of the *Satanic Bible*, had meaning applied to them.

Through the mapping of this stock footage, the rhetoric or suasive movement of rumor panics is shown to depend on the “reality effect” of the image, and at a more basic level, on the movement toward the sign-value typical of commodity fetishism within a circulatory network.

(Gunn 194)

The symbols act as occultic markers establishing the perception of reality by their application to culturally understood stories. In light of the rumor panic of the late 1980s

and early 1990s, LaVey's playful attempts to re-signify highly connotative signifiers of darkness and evil as "kitsch" backfired, as his church was later plagued by accusations of ritual murder, child abuse, and other occult crimes (193). The pentagram no longer acts as a symbol through which ritual magic can be worked. The pentagram becomes a symbol that exists not as a representation but as object, a reality built from the connotations of the symbol. All of the meanings created in the context of television programs become part of the public discourse.

The formal repetition of commodity exchange is a larger, structuring logic that is reflected in the thinness or formalization of Satanic texts, to a lesser degree in the reduction of *The Satanic Bible* to its cover [the black color, the baphet pentagram, and the word "Satanic"], and to a greater degree within the fragmentation of Satanis as stock footage. (Gunn 202)

The mass use of the symbol creates the ability for the symbol to be adapted by anyone for the purpose of his or her story through mediated connotations perceived as reality.

The disconnect of experience and of meaning permeates the mediation and scholarship of metal in a way that those outside of the genres' fan bases apply their own meanings to the symbols and through connotation, the identities of metal fans. In the same way that Pettinicchio established the satanic meanings of metal symbols, the artists often use those symbols for an effect that does not reflect the beliefs of Christians, the horror of Hollywood films, criminal prospectus of a parole officer, or occult writings. This dissonance has a precedence in occult texts written for the insider, those written for a general audience, and the period after Anton LaVey publishes the *Satanic Bible*. Through his analysis of occult rhetoric, Gunn found that the symbols and metaphor that

operate within the privileged rhetoric and grammar of occult texts allowed misinterpretations by the emergence of mass media and that mediated interpretations infused the symbols and metaphors with meanings recognized by the general readership through a context of social climbing and devil worship. Once LaVey stripped the symbols of their metaphoric context, they have a rhetorical power to be what they represent instead of a representation. The pentagram is no longer a symbol to be interpreted, it is Satanism, ritual sacrifice, or an existential anti-God. Metal may work with both the representational and the existential attributes of symbols, creating interpretations that allow mediated animosity or establish a fixed identity through symbol choice.

Among the bands involved with this type of symbol use, Mötley Crüe exhibits both the occult (interpretable through the band's lexicon) and occultic (existential) symbol use for the privileged audience. Mötley Crüe used pentagrams in videos, albums, concerts, and publicity photographs, but the symbol did not function as a masked knowledge or a visual metaphor for ritual thought. The album *Shout at the Devil* and its associated mediation featured the pentagram and other symbols that created the identity of the band through a careful use of symbols for the purpose of contextualizing with the music and performance. Nikki Sixx, Mötley Crüe's leader, shares his rhetoric of the symbols outside of their popular contexts:

I had ideas for the album and the tour that had to do with the mass psychology of evil behind Nazism and with the Anton LaVey books on Satanism, which was really more a personal philosophy with a shocking title than an actual religion. I had grand ideas of creating a tour that

looked like a cross between a Nazi rally and a black church service, with Mötley Crüe symbols instead of swastikas everywhere. (Strauss)

Symbols like the pentagram and swastika carry power, and while their use through history demonstrates the potential for complexity, an audience or observer would need a specific frame of reference for the complexity to exist. In regard to the swastika, Heller and Pomeroy write, “Unless the history of the Nazi era (1933-1945) is totally rewritten—and the danger of that is ever present—the swastika will remain forever the most powerful logo of the age, the manifestation of evil and hate” (201). Heller and Pomeroy write for a graphic designer working in a hegemonic culture, a culture that carries the reality of the swastika as the Nazi ideal or a manifestation of genocide. A swastika would only have a peaceful association for someone who understood it within a pattern of a celebration and life, primarily those in eastern religions that have before and after WWII had the symbol as a part of their own religious orientations. But even in the west, the symbol became a uniting force in the early stages of the Nazi regime, giving a specific segment of the German public a symbol charged with heritage and hope as much as the Stars and Stripes appeal for a segment of the U.S. population. Now the swastika has a more dramatic charge in Germany as it has been outlawed by the state and cannot be legally used. For a neo-Nazi, what symbol could offer more power?

In the same manner, Sixx looks to the existential power of the symbols to create a pattern on which to build Mötley Crüe as a new symbol representative of his vision. In Burke’s terms, Sixx attempts to operate through the manipulation of beliefs to discredit an ideology (*Counter-Statement* 163). That Nazis are the enemy and Satan is evil are dominant beliefs in culture where the dominant ideologies are built on Christian and

American (nationalistic) dogmas. In Josh Gunn's concept of occultic commodities, the collection of symbols builds an identity through the collective assemblage. By prominently utilizing symbols of power, the lyrics, music, costume, and performance together create a pattern in which a new symbol exists specific to Mötley Crüe for those who accept the constructed orientation, the indoctrinated fans and artists. For those looking in from the outside, the symbols fit within their own orientation with the "enemy" and "evil" denotations unaltered.

Beyond the limited numbers who could see a concert, music videos functioned to bring an awareness of new music to a large segment of American youth, as such, the video acts as a commercial exhibiting the commodities of the production. Mötley Crüe's first video from *Shout at the Devil*, "Looks that Kill," uses the pentagram as an active agent that marks the group with a mystical identity. The video setting resembles a Mad Max wasteland in which the band rounds up wild women and locks them in a cage. The women are a threat, and caging them is less about a play on dominance and more thematic to survival as the wasteland setting suggests. Another woman appears and takes on the role of a powerful enemy as she blasts through rock and sets the scene on fire before releasing the captive women. The rhetoric of the song states that the "she" of the song can destroy a man. "She has the looks that kill," and her agency makes her stronger than any individual band member. In the scene, pentagrams appear on the lead singer's headband and decorate double bass drums, and when the liberating woman appears, Tommy Lee slams the drum and a computer generated pentagram flies across the stage and is absorbed by her shield. This prompts the band to track her down in pack fashion, and once the four of them surround her, they each lift one fist over their heads, creating

an explosion in which they and the woman disappear. In their absence is a flaming pentagram. Contextually, the pentagram appears in the moment the group unites and expresses their will. Walser references “Looks that Kill” as an example of a metal subject of female characters victimizing males where the males reproduce the hegemonic repression of women by “confronting the threat head-on” (118). The power of symbol becomes the power of the band, the Satanic connotations lost in performance through the archetypal brotherhood.

Parts of the audience may not perceive the connotations, and most of the symbols are fossils until they have been brought into the metal performance. Walser noted that the lyrics of Iron Maiden’s “Seventh Son of a Seventh Son” develop a narrative about supernatural qualities of a pagan traditional belief, but instead of promoting a belief, the symbols operate independent of their sources to “engage with socially produced anxieties and fantasies about power, history, and morality” (155). Weinstein wrote that “symbols of Satan are found in nonreligious cultural forms and artifacts throughout the West,” and in metal, it is not a countertheology, instead “a criticism of the phony heaven of respectable society where no one boogies and everyone goes to ice cream socials” (260). In stark contrast to Mötley Crüe, the band Slayer uses the pentagram and Satanic rhetoric for political irony playing both the LaVey objectivist Satanism and the Christian version to attack organized religion as a subjugating institution as understood in Marxist theory. This can be seen in their early lyrics: “The holy cross, symbol of lies/ intimidate the lives of Christian born/ speak of death, the words of hate” (“Haunting the Chapel”). With each album, Slayer became more direct in anti-church comments. By 1986’s *Reign in Blood*, the band made direct statements as in this verse from “Jesus Saves.”

You go to the church, you kiss the cross

You will be saved at any cost

You have your own reality

Christianity

You spend your life just kissing ass

A trait that's grown as time has passed

While some later lyrics seem more straightforward, the band's image, publicity, and packaging present symbols that make the context of the message unclear. This is especially relevant in the Nazi-like images associated with the band. The danger of the irony to the uninitiated is that it is reconstituted through the understanding and experience of the listener (Gunn 164-165). In a question asking about the connections of Slayer to Nazi and Satanist intentions in the media, guitarist Kerry King stated:

I think in Europe it was bigger than everything, but they had to deal with Nazis in the flesh. But, I think they jumped on the bandwagon and said 'You guys were praising Nazis,' and we answered to that for many years. It's not what's going on in our music, and those guys were just making it up. (Hess)

Outside of the intentions of any of the metal artists or the understanding of the audience, the media connected metal's music and symbols to reflect predefined social ills. As the mediation of the Satanic problem began, fundamentalist orientations connected social ills to Satan and infused the discourse with pronouncements of deviant and anti-Christ identities. What had been fossil symbols in the general culture became charged with negative connotations to the point that the secular population did not look

for context. Mediated connotations transformed metal symbols into existential symbols of deviance. Regardless of the performance, the context, or the understanding of the intended audience, the symbols became more powerful as the mediation increased, mirroring the growth and spread of the satanic panic. At this point, the U. S. metal artists and audience lost their voice.

Performing Expertise and Deviance through a Rhetoric of Fear

A 1986 article by John Gholdston in *The Orlando Sentinel* relayed the interest heavy metal had gained on an Orlando Christian radio talk show. The article began with a statement that ushered in a claim that named bands and their music “advocated” taboo acts (Gholdston). “Heavy-metal music by groups such as Mötley Crüe, Iron Maiden, and Black Sabbath screeched over the airways of Christian radio stations. Lyrics advocated incest, devil worship and violence.” Without direct correlation to actual lyrics, the pronouncement stood as fact. Later that year, television evangelist Jimmy Swaggart delivered a televised sermon to boycott the stores that sell metal music and magazines, drawing the attention of Wal-mart who contacted him about his claims (Goldstein). Swaggart singled out pop magazines *Hit Parader* and *Creem*, and the heavy-metal band Mötley Crüe, as prime offenders, citing a story in *Hit Parader* that chronicled the sexual escapades of the Crüe. However, Swaggart was unable to pinpoint any other precise examples of allegedly pornographic material in magazines or current songs.

Throughout 1986, Mötley Crüe stood as a band accused of indecency and Satanism in several media outlets and through the claims of people like Swaggart who used their notoriety as a symbol of the generic deviancy attributed to the music. Mötley

Crüe's album *Shout at the Devil* gained international media attention for the title of the album. On the British music program, *The Tube*, comedian Alexie Sayles interviewed band members Nikki Sixx and Tommy Lee.

Sayles: You've been accused of, in the past, devil worship and inciting violence.

Lee: (holds his hands up in a defensive posture and shakes them) Ooo-ooo-ooo.

Sixx: We're scary guys.

Sayles: Did you do it guys? Did ya?

Sixx: We are pretty scary guys. Can't you see us. No, you know, with our album *Shout at the Devil* that's what that all came from. And the thing with *Shout at the Devil* was "shout at" the devil, shout at war, shout at anything that's negative, you know. It was a real positive, it was supposed to be a positive message, but everyone took it...

Sayles rocks his head and squints his eyes in a comedic gesture of disbelief.

Sixx: It was "at" not "with."

Lee: Nobody read the title right.

Sayles: I'll believe you guys. You know, because we are such good friends.

By 1986, the mediation of metal had saturated the culture to a point that Mötley Crüe could be connected to pornography, incest, devil worship, and violence without the claims requiring support. Evangelists like Swaggart could promote their position by finding the anti-Christ at work in the recording industry. By calling for censorship or by telling people to boycott sellers of metal music and media, Swaggart and others reinforced the concept of threat in metal and further legitimized the symbolic meanings placed on the groups, music, and fans.

The rhetoric of fear created an identity for anyone using the symbols of metal. To wear a jacket patch of Mötley Crüe, one took on the same identity markers that the band carried. A band playing hard rock could adopt a metal costume style and be considered metal. To wear one's hair in a style associated with metal, to listen to metal music, or to have an attitude associated with metal marked one as a threat whether they intended that or not.

On the inverse, those who used the metal symbols to construct a deviant identity for others became experts in those subjects. Walser notes that University of Denver professor Carl Raschke wrote a book attacking heavy metal as a cause of deviance, and although he manufactured evidence and made unsupportable claims, he received a positive review in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, an endorsement from the primary news source for university professionals. The rhetoric of fear follows the questions in Sayles' interview of Mötley Crüe where an accusation of deviance and a pronouncement of intention collide in a symbol that exists beyond the context of the artists or their works. The early mediation of metal created a rhetoric of fear based on the convergence of the Satanic panic and discourse about problems in youth cultures.

As the rhetorics converged, a title like *Shout at the Devil* developed to become proof of an argument through the performativity of the title. As an existential symbol, "devil" had both secular motives of deviance and religious motives of anti-Christ affiliation. Because of this, no dialog can exist between the dominant culture and the metal cultures in shaping a shared meaning between the mutually exclusive orientations, and a positive identity, the expert, can be created through the construction of a rhetoric of fear that uses metal symbols to construct a threatening identity for others. For a metal

fan, the identity constructed through the convergent rhetorics takes their subculture symbols and reconstruct them as occultic markers that carry the existential charge of evil and deviance. To continue to use the symbols as the rhetoric of fear saturates the culture, whether the symbols are long hair or concert t-shirts, the metal fan performs an identity of deviance, devilry, and malleable construction of problem as the rhetoric of fear evolves.

Conclusion

During the 1980s, the symbols of metal became firmly entrenched in rhetorics of fear through the mediated discourses of institutional experts from evangelists to news reporters. Metal music and performance freely appropriated symbols from institutional rhetorics. Pentagrams and inverted crosses could only be mediated to a larger public through the orientational frame of the institutions' rhetorics of fear, the stories of deviance and decay that define their purpose and create orientational identities. Spheris and other "experts" entered the public discourse as they learned the patterns of the rhetorics of fear and had the ability to regurgitate those rhetorics to a general audience. By 1986, the symbols of metal had been interpreted through the criminal system, churches, and sanitariums evoking a particular identification that silenced the artists and fans whose orientations did not depend on the absolute hierarchies of the binary system. To perform a metal identity placed a metal fan or performer in the rhetoric of fear, removing the details of their lives with an understood relationship to threats in the culture. While no common cultural system applied to the metal community, the institutional rhetorics created an identity complete with beliefs, values, and attitudes

drawn from symbolic meanings of the negative aspects of the institutional binaries.

Metal entered the rhetoric of fear, positioning its players and fans in preordained roles to be judged as deviant.

Metal culture and music uses symbols and language that fit within institutional rhetorics of fear where binaries frame meanings and apply identities through the institutional orientations. Experts from the institutions, like the parole officer, invoke the binaries of the system through mediated narratives that share the orientational frames of the dominant culture. The symbols used in metaphors and ironies by metal artists become literal representations in the media and the institutions. From local and national news reports to mainstream documentaries, the symbols of metal became connected to deviance. The criminal system binary of criminal/citizen, Christianity's binary of good/evil, and the mental health system's binary of healthy/ill have created fearful representations and consequences of deviances as defined by institutions, accepted by the population, and reinvented by the media. The binaries of institutions define the identities of the institutions, their purposes, and acts. An artist who reworks the symbols with new meanings for an insider audience risks being identified by the negative institutional binary because orientations have been shaped through the limited functions of institutions like the church and criminal justice system. When symbols are stripped of the institutionalized meaning without a cultural precedent, they embody the reality they represent to those who perceive the symbols only in the context of a rhetoric of fear, the orientation of the institution.

Chapter Three

Conservative Rhetoric and Metal Identity (1985-93)

In 1991, a friend took me to a party populated mostly by members of a local metal band. At one point in the conversation, one of the band members said, “You don’t look like a headbanger.” I didn’t know what to say, and before I could think of how to reply, he asked, “Who do you listen to?” I can’t remember what groups I told him, but he told me, “That’s not metal.” It turned out the group and their friends listened to music I never experienced again until I began researching this dissertation project. The music they played had strong atmospheric elements and probably would be considered death metal. While I was transfixed by the music, I had been shaken up by both the critique of my appearance and a rebuke for what I thought was metal. Despite our taste differences, I found elements of their music to like and they admitted to having listened to my favorite groups at earlier times in their lives. For the rest of the night, I was treated as an insider in their group.

The statement, “That’s not metal,” is typical of debates regarding the genre, or style, of music termed “heavy metal.” Sociologist Sam Dunn creates a tree of 24 subgenres to study the branching development of metal, but instead of demonstrating a definitive process, it marks points of contention and arguments about subgenres

categorized under titles, like early metal, that did not exist in a cultural context when the included groups performed. Dunn begins compiling his work decades after many of the groups included performed because there is neither an official or commonly understood definition of heavy metal. Only in the category New Wave of British Heavy Metal does the term “heavy metal” appear. Dunn’s categories, like most fans’, establish points of debate instead of absolute defining terms.

If fans, sociologists, and music historians are unable to agree on a definition, then critics of heavy metal in the middle 1980s were steadfast in their agreement on *their* definition of heavy metal. Weinstein begins her study of metal with a definition from rock critic Robert Duncan:

Heavy metal: pimply, prole, putrid, unchic, unsophisticated, anti-intellectual (but impossibly pretentious), dismal, abysmal, terrible, horrible, and stupid music, barely music at all; death music, dead music, the beaten boogie, the dance of defeat and decay; the *huh?* sound, the *duh* sound, . . . music made *by* slack-jawed, alpaca-haired, bulbous-inseamed imbeciles in jackboots and leather and chrome *for* slack-jawed, alpaca-haired, downy-mustachioed imbeciles in cheap, too-large T-shirts with pictures of comic-book Armageddon ironed on the front. (Weinstein 1)

Senator Al Gore adds his laundry list of characteristics: “explicit violence and sex and sado masochism and the rest” (Record Labeling). “Heavy metal” has no holistic definition outside of the conditions placed on it by the critics who denounced it.

Chapter Preview

This chapter charts the production of heavy metal as a social problem from 1985 Senate hearings through an episode of the ABC's *20/20* broadcast in 1987. The 1985 hearings construct a frame where children are at risk from music, and this view is upheld by both the Senators and the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC). The view constructs a rhetorical frame of children and youth at risk and urges a change in constitutional policy—freedom of speech should give way to censorship for the kids' sake. I term this view a conservative orientation because a rhetoric of fear is established for the stated purpose of protecting society from damage to its youth through music, a claim that requires a perception that without the threat, the youth are not at risk.

Randy Lippert's analysis of the Satanic panic illustrates that the satanic problem becomes socially constructed through mediation of claims. The 1985 PMRC testimony at the Senate Commerce Committee hearing operated as the watershed moment in defining heavy metal as a public problem. The hearings acted as the primary mediation to a mainstream audience that a problem existed. The Senate hearings brought parental groups and fundamentalist organizations' attributions of criminal purpose to the mainstream public discourse, establishing performers and young fans as agents of deviance as an effect caused by corrupting music. This public discourse cemented the identity of metal fans as deviants from a conservative view of normalcy.

The first part of this chapter, "The PMRC and the Heavy Metal Monster" defines the PMRC as an institutional force using metal scholarship to demonstrate the PMRC's orientation and the rise of Tipper Gore as the group's dominant voice.

“Young Minds and Strong Words” examines the conservative framing of metal as a scapegoat to problems associated to youth cultures in the Senate hearings that lead to regulations of music content and the labeling of music deemed objectionable by the conservative base in power at the time. First, the section tackles the rhetoric of the hearing, examining language of opening statements that demonstrate an orientational conflict between the conservative view and metal performance.

“Rhetorical Warfare for Orientational Control in the Home” analyzes Twisted Sister’s video “We’re Not Gonna Take It” to explore the claims made about it when a small part of it was entered as evidence in the hearings. While the PMRC labels the song as violent, the video demonstrates a nonviolent handling of an abusive home, a threat to the conservative hierarchy of “home.”

“Hindsight and 20/20” demonstrates the constructed problem as it was mediated after the publication of Gore’s book in 1987. The ABC primetime news show *20/20* produced a segment on the metal problem that does not offer claims outside of those entered in the discourse in the PMRC hearings, and it marks Tipper Gore’s continuing presence as an expert witness.

The PMRC and the Heavy Metal Monster

In 1985, the PMRC attempted to create regulation in the music industry. According to Tipper Gore in her Senate testimony, the impulse for starting the PMRC began when she overhears her young daughter listening to Prince’s “Darling Nikki” from the album *Purple Rain*.

I knew a girl named Nikki
I guess you could say she was a sex fiend
I met her in a hotel lobby
masturbating with a magazine

Offended by the reference to female masturbation in the lyrics Mrs. Gore became a founder and prime face for the PMRC. “Tipper Gore, for example, makes it clear that she considers rape and masturbation equal threats to ‘morality’” (Walser 117).

A small but immensely successful minority of performers have pioneered the "porn rock" phenomenon. A Judas Priest song about oral sex at gunpoint sold two million copies. So did Mötley Crüe's album *Shout at the Devil*, with lyrics like: "Not a woman, but a whore/I can taste the hate/Well, now I'm killing you/Watch your face turning blue." Sheena Easton's "Sugar Walls," about female sexual arousal, was an even bigger hit on Top 40 radio stations. And Prince peddled more than ten million copies of *Purple Rain*, which included a song about a young girl masturbating in a hotel lobby. (Gore)

Robert Walser positions Gore as “the single most influential critic of heavy metal in the 1980s” who used her “status as wife of U.S. Senator Albert Gore, Jr.” to get both media attention and political support for her cause (137-38). The PMRC founders were known as the “Washington Wives” due to the prominent influence that their husbands had in the government, including PMRC cofounder Susan Baker’s husband James Baker, the Treasury Secretary. Music journalist Ian Christie writes, “On September 19, 1985, the Senate Commerce Committee convened hearings at the insistence of Mrs. Baker and Mrs.

Gore to advance their belief that record albums should be rated and restricted in the same manner as movies” (120). As the Senate committee, the PMRC, and musicians and music industry convened, “Religious protestors outside the congressional offices waved placards for the TV cameras reading ROCK MUSIC DESTROYS KIDS and WE’VE HAD ENOUGH” (120). The music at the center of the PMRC’s critical attack was a genre they termed “porn rock” (Walser 138). The PMRC wanted to impose a rating system based on the subjects of sex, violence, drugs and alcohol, and the occult (Christie 123). Of the fifteen exemplar songs presented by the PMRC, nine were by groups that fall into hard rock/metal categories.

Deena Weinstein reasons that the symbolic elements of the music led to it being a proper target for a group.

It is no accident that those who testified against heavy metal at United States Senate hearings in 1985 were representatives of parental interest groups (PMRC and PTA), fundamentalist ministers, and physician-owners of psychiatric hospitals specializing in the treatment of adolescents. Heavy metal’s inherent power, tied to rhetoric and imagery that puts forward themes that adult society tries to repress, is an act of symbolic rebellion, another chapter in generational conflict. (Weinstein 43)

The senate hearings led to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) voluntarily applying “explicit lyrics” warning stickers to albums, cassettes, and CDs. According to Christie, “worst of all, however, the PMRC lent legitimacy to the idea that singing about devils and monsters is a form of witchcraft, a crazy red herring that put metal musicians on the defensive—and sometimes the offensive—for decades” (123).

Abingdon Press, an imprint of the United Methodist Publishing House, published Tipper Gore's 1987 *Raising Kids in an X-Rated Society*. In it, Gore illustrates multiple pleas for the protection in the conservative rhetoric of the day.

The dilemma for society is how to preserve personal and family values in a nation of diverse tastes. Tensions exist in any free society. But the freedom we enjoy rests on a foundation of individual liberty and shared moral values. Even as the shifting structure of the family and other social changes disrupt old patterns, we must reassert our values through individual and community action. People of all political persuasions — conservatives, moderates, and liberals alike — need to dedicate themselves once again to preserving the moral foundation of our society.

By combining the concepts individual liberty with family values, Gore creates a static perception of an unchanging structure, a moral foundation, at risk of decay or change. Walser writes that Gore's book is "the fullest articulation of the PMRC brief" (138). He notes that in the book Gore hangs her authority on being a parent, and she neglects to mention her opponents are also parents. Gore represents "heavy metal as a threat to youth, enabling her to mobilize parental hysteria while avoiding the adult word *censorship*" [Walser's stress].

It is clear from Gore's book that heavy metal participates in a crisis in the reproduction of values, that it is a threat because it celebrates and legitimates sources of identity and community that do not derive from parental models. For the PMRC, assuming the universality of "the American Family," an institution of mythic stature but scant abundance,

provides an absolute norm that can be righteously defended. Gore attempts to naturalize her perspective by appealing to “common sense” universals, such as the “shared moral values” that underpin “our” society.

(Walser 138)

Diversity for Gore could only exist in a fictional narrative where the same “family values” operate across socio-economic and cultural boundaries with the same results for all. To conserve these values in society, Gore recommends individual and community action to preserve a social moral foundation. Walser writes, “like so many recent appeals to ‘common sense’ and ‘morality,’ Gore’s book is a call for the imposition of official values and the elimination of cultural difference” (139). In such a world, there is no diversity, only a sameness. As described by Walser, Gore’s statement is a conscious effort to create the conditions that Foucault showed in the deployment of sexuality during the Victorian era when medicine, education, and religion together created a concept of normal sexuality that would eventually be accepted by the general population.

Gore labors to portray such violence as an aberration of youth and commercial exploitation, scapegoating heavy metal musicians and fans for problems that are undeniably extant but for which she holds entirely blameless the dominant social systems, institutions, and moral values she defends.

(Walser 144)

Tipper Gore had a public voice and used it to present music as the cause of a social ill. Her husband had the authority to give her a national stage where others could embrace her rhetorical construction of a problem and act in accordance with their perception of “the American family needs protection.”

In her prior work with the PMRC, Gore focused the conservative plea to protect the ideas and institutions surrounding children and by extension the conservative belief in a static world. While the music industry found themselves on trial, the entire population would be affected. At the heart of the conflict, metal music became a primary focus. The rhetorical frame presented metal as porn, and at its core, highly deviant character traits and actions. The danger to the conservative base was not masturbation, violence, rape, or the occult, but direct questioning of the processes behind the institutions of American society. Metal, its performers, and fans became the enemy of the American Family, the conservative idea of an institution on the brink.

Young Minds and Strong Words: The Stakes of Youth Orientation

The opening statements of the PMRC hearing established claims and a tone that is carried through the rest of the public discourse on the problems of metal. Tipper Gore addressed the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, framing potential listeners as “young minds at stake.” The rhetoric establishes what Walser refers to as a “‘hypodermic model’ of musical effects; meanings are ‘pounded’ or ‘dumped’ into listeners, who are helpless to resist” (141). The framing can be seen in Tipper Gore’s opening statement at the hearings.

The issue here is larger than violent and sexually explicit lyrics. It is one of ideas and ideal freedoms and responsibility in our society. Clearly, there is a tension here, and in a free society there always will be. We are simply asking that these corporate and artistic rights be exercised with responsibility, with sensitivity, and some measure of self-restraint, especially since young minds are at stake. We are talking about preteenagers

and young teenagers having access to this material. That is our point of departure and our concern.

Because the issue at the heart of the hearing had to do with the industry labeling the “offensive” albums with what has since become the generic “Warning. This album contains explicit lyrics,” there is the open-ended question of what defines “ideas,” “ideal freedoms,” and “responsibilities.” Ideal freedoms and responsibilities are terms of the utopic lexicon, an obtained perfection and its protection. Walser connects the hypodermic model to Joe Stuessy, a professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In his expert role, he is called to testify for the PMRC, and later he is cited in Gore’s book. At the hearing, he begins by making many claims on music as an agent of influence, but he offers only his academic affiliation as support. He moves away from the “porn rock” label to mention heavy metal directly.

Today's heavy metal music is categorically different from previous forms of popular music. It contains the element of hatred, a meanness of spirit. Its principal themes are, as you have already heard, extreme violence, extreme rebellion, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and perversion and Satanism. I know personally of no form of popular music before which has had as one of its central elements the element of hatred.

Like Gore, he closes his statement by invoking an image where children are at risk from the all out attack of the music, and parents operate as knights in arms.

We hear frequently about the first amendment problem. In closing, I would say that while we must protect our first amendment freedoms, we must also protect minors from the abuse of those freedoms. The first

amendment, as I understand it, is not a blank check. There are legal, constitutional limitations when we feel that the abuse or the use of a freedom negatively impacts the health of another segment of society. Use of the airwaves for pornography and immoral purposes, especially when aimed at minors, must be controlled somehow. [...] Parents are fighting this scourge all over the country. We plead for help from city councils, radio stations, advertisers and the record industry itself.

In his opening statements, Senator Ernest Hollings framed the hearings as a precursor to legislation that would remove what the panel considered offensive material from the air.

But in all candor, I would tell you it is outrageous filth, and we have got to do something about it. I take the tempered approach, of our distinguished chairman, and commend it. Yet, I would make the statement that if I could find some way constitutionally to do away with it, I would.

In her opening statements at the Senate hearing, Florida Senator Paula Hawkins provokes the idea of government legislation as an aid to parents. “It is the parent we blame if the child gets on drugs. It is the parent we blame if the child commits suicide. It is the parent we blame if the child burns down a building. Just how much guilt can we place on these parents without giving them some assistance?” But Sen. Hawkins goes on to speak from experience.

I speak as a legislator. I speak as a parent, a veteran who has brought three children through adolescence. I know the temptations dangled in front of teenagers and I know the frustrations parents experience all through this process. The sense of hopelessness when you get the feeling your child

will not listen to you. There is in these times often a need to look to a force outside yourself for help. The question we must ask is, should the force be the Government, and that is what this hearing is designed to determine.

When Gore provokes the idea of shared moral values, she brings in disparate ideas from both religion and the media, and when Hawkins speaks, she has created a scene in which parents are “powerless” to intercede as pornographic metal is “dangled in front of teenagers.” Between Gore and the PMRC, the youth of America had become potential players in the disintegration of culture, consumers and purveyors of filth. Both social stasis and liberty were the victims of the teen rebellion. In Hawkins’ rhetorical shift, the music industry presents an undeniable temptation to engage the immoral, rhetorically repositioning the teen deviance from the shoulders of the parents of America. A rhetorical step has been taken in framing the family in legislative terms. Institutional terms like “parents,” “minors,” and “youth” remove the *familiar* elements from the family unit. Raymond Williams analyzes the evolution of the term family to the 19th century bourgeois family that stood for parents and children where the definition came from the industrial separation of work and home. Williams ends his analysis of “family” with the insight that one should consider the previous meanings of the term “when we hear that ‘the family, as an institution, is breaking up’ or that, in times gone by and still hopefully today, ‘the family is the necessary foundation of all order and morality’” (134). As he traced the concept of family, it became both a separation from one’s income (work to raise family) and it became a symbol of “the only immediately positive attachments in a large-scale and complex wage-earning society” (133).

When Hawkins asks should the government step in, her context is when a child will not listen to the parent. In this orientation, the youth of America became the degenerate product of the mediated culture. They are no longer “positive attachments” and instead attached problems, deviants through their choice of music. Hollings describes music as “filth” allowed by the constitution, and the problem becomes one of legislation. Suesy’s model of the hypodermic effect from music positions it as an “scourge” capable of damaging the “health” of society by taking over children and teens through its “extremes.”

The rhetorical removal of familial terms and positioning of the concept of family ceases to exist because music takes the place of the parents. The rhetoric of the hearings bounces back and forth from the legal, to the moral, to the medical in a scene in which the family is no longer defined by the separation of work and family but a separation of culture and family. Culture has ceased to be a product of the family and the society as it has become an unregulated commodity. Music, in this presentation, has the potential to cause behavior as deviant as someone under the influence of drugs, and the metaphoric formula of music’s influence is the destruction of the controlling influences of home and the values of the American family.

Rhetorical Warfare for Orientational Control in the Home

During the Senate hearings, Dee Snider from the glam metal band Twisted Sister became the genre’s only voice to speak before the committee. Twisted Sister came to the public attention through the videos released on MTV, “I Wanna Rock” and “We’re Not

Gonna Take It,” a song that became a focal point for the PMRC. Twisted Sister’s primary gimmick was performing in garish make-up and big hair.

Senator Hawkins introduced the video in the following manner.

One criticism of the rock industry is the way it portrays values in rock videos which are viewed by the kids. There are suggestions that the move to label rock albums be extended to videos as well. I do not watch much television. I am not sure how many of my colleagues get much opportunity to watch any of the music video shows now available on cable and free TV. [...]The next video is by the group Twisted Sister, and we will show you a brief portion of that. This is a very popular video.

And she closes by stating, “Mr. Chairman, I think a picture is worth a thousand words.

This issue is too hot not to cool down. Parents are asking for assistance, and I hope we always remember that no success in life would compensate for failure in the home.”

Because a “brief portion” was shown to the committee, I think a description of the full version sheds new light on the condemnation and demonstrates that more is to be learned from the video about failure in the home.

The video begins with an extended monologue of a father who comes into his son’s room, speaking in an antagonistic tone. The father’s message compares directly to a drill sergeant using exaggerated pitch and tone, and he flaunts authority by pushing books off a shelf, telling his son the room is a mess and to clean it up. As he moves over the son seated on the bed, he screams:

What kind of a man are you? You’re worthless and weak. You do nothing. You are nothing. You sit in here all day and play that sick,

repulsive electric twangger. I carried an M16, and you, you carry that, that, that guitar. Who are you? Where do you come from? Are you listening to me?

The monologue ends with a question to the son, “What do you want to do with your life?” Up until this point, we have seen a father who is, by current standards, psychologically and verbally abusive to his son. But the son’s response breaks away from the expected pattern. He doesn’t sulk nor cry. He doesn’t show fear or intimidation. Instead, he smiles and with an adult voice says, “I wanna rock” then he strums the guitar. The force of the sound propels the father through the window, and as he lays stunned on the ground outside, the mother dumps a bucket of water in his face. Suddenly, slapstick comedy enters a scene that appears headed for a tragic ending with a psychologically wounded child. The brutal reality is met with a play of imagination. The son never assaults the father, allowing his musical heroes the opportunity to block the father from his presence.

Tipper Gore and the PMRC’s “Filthy Fifteen” lists “We’re Not Gonna Take It” as an exemplar song that promotes violence. But the song does not demonstrate any violent inclination in the lyrics, only an abstract “we’ll fight the powers that be.” But in the rhetorical differentiation of the family versus culture, the video breeches the conservative view that family should remain separated from a culture. The video creates a positive effect when a child ignores the directives of the father while emulating and becoming a costumed metal performer like the dangerous, metal musicians. The power of music, the hypodermic effect, makes a great scapegoat for family violence as it injects identity into the teen.

Twisted Sister offered an alternative to the perception that dysfunctional family relationships must have a tragic outcome through the infusion of hyperbolic comedy and a disturbance of temporality. After the threatening father flies through the window, the boy stands up contorts his arms and hands and spins, transforming into an adult Dee Snider in makeup, and he sings the lyrics of the song to his brothers. As they hear the message, they turn into the rest of the band, and their combined adult bodies and voices make the father inconsequential to their progress as they move through the house. The temporal shift makes the father and his attempts at abusive behavior setups for increasingly slapstick comedy, reducing each confrontation to a laugh.

After an opening address of “We’re not gonna take it anymore,” the lyrics become specific in their purpose. “We’ve got the right to choose and/ There ain’t no way we’ll lose it/This is our life, this is our song.” Far beyond a rebel without a cause cliché, the message has a pertinent objective to remove the listener from a mindset of present tense to a duality of present and future, creating a shift in the agency of the speaker/listener “we.” The song attempts to enmesh the speaker’s agency with the listener’s, and actualizes a rhetoric of power and agency. As for the hypothetical situation of a listener child in an abusive home, it separates the abuse from the trajectory of future interactions, and offers a simple model of orientation on which the child will be able to frame future relationships. Using the comedic elements of the visual slapstick, the child is learning how to deal with the abuse and frustration by creating dreams of possibilities without having the tragic outcome of being beaten, crying himself to sleep, or finding an end in the more extreme possibilities of using drugs or committing suicide. Snider told the committee,

The video "We're Not Gonna Take It" was simply meant to be a cartoon with human actors playing variations on the Roadrunner/Wile E. Coyote theme. Each stunt was selected from my extensive personal collection of cartoons. [...] By the way, I am very pleased to note that the United Way of America has been granted a request to use portions of our "We're Not Gonna Take It" video in a program they are producing on the subject of the changing American family. They asked for it because of its light-hearted way of talking about communicating with teenagers.

The PMRC found the song dangerous to the youth because it established the potential for violence. Twisted Sister performed something more dangerous than a call to violence against parents—the temporal shift afforded a call to violence against institutional thinking. "We'll fight the powers that be/ just don't pick our destiny 'cause/ you don't know us, you don't belong." Because the PMRC based their rhetoric on music as a causal agent in youth deviance, the transformation scene created a visual example of their worst fear. In a few seconds, the controlling father loses authority to a boy transformed into the embodiment of "heavy metal" through the recitation of a lyric of immoral desire: "I wanna rock."

Hindsight and 20/20: Heavy Metal, a Problem?

ABC's primetime news program *20/20* starred Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs. The usual format included interviews of celebrities and political figures and investigative reports of consumer and social problems. In a 1987 episode, Stone Phillips reports on heavy metal as a problem. By the time of this interview, not only had "heavy metal"

become a descriptor for music, it became the identity for its listeners, a clique for burnouts.

More than fifteen minutes of the show is devoted to the report, and quick discussion with Barbara Walters frames the beginning and the end. The report begins with Walters sitting behind her anchor desk, speaking to the camera.

When a form of music our children like becomes linked with ghoulish images and violent theatrics [pause] and even suicide, it demands our attention. Perhaps more to the point, the children need our attention. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers are locked onto so-called “heavy metal music.” Are they despairing? What are their common bonds? And, as Stone Phillips asks, is there a message that is too loud for us to hear?

From the beginning a problem has been established in which children are “locked on to the music.” The report opens with a scene from an unidentified music video of a kid sitting in front of a television listening to metal as a parent comes into the room and clicks the remote while saying, “what is this garbage that your watching, I want to watch the news” (The video is “Peace Sells” by Megadeth). The scene then cuts to a real local news cast with John Marler Eyewitness News 7 on the screen who begins to say, “Good evening, it was rock ‘n roll turned ugly.” The scene cuts to a newspaper showing a headline “HEAVY METAL MADNESS” written in large font in all caps at the top to the page. Under that, the subheading reads “Riot rocks Meadowlands after Iron Maiden show.” Under the subheading appears a large publicity picture of the band blindfolded, shirtless, with their hands tied behind their backs as if awaiting execution before a firing

squad. Instead of cropping the image to what relates to the story, below the picture appears another large headline, “CITY ALERTING AIDS VICTIMS’ SEX MATES.”

Phillips’ voiceover proclaims that a rock riot led

police to mobilize an army at the group’s next stop. At issue the impact of this loud, raucous music—heavy metal music—played here by the super-group Iron Maiden. Screeching guitars, flamboyant bands, lyrics obsessed with sex, Satanism, and even suicide. This isn’t mainstream rock ‘n roll. It is the music of today’s teen rebellion.

The comments of the voiceover establish an identity that is not mainstream, is flamboyant, engaged with Satanism, and even suicide. As the voiceover plays, images from Iron Maiden music videos punctuate each element. With the context removed, the images act as a visual proof of the voiceover statements. We are introduced to a group of young teens who are asked what metal is about. One replies that metal is about togetherness, then he states, “got to fight for our right to listen to our music and party, man.” The next scene is Michael Konsevick, a teacher at Teaneck High where we later learn the kids attend. Konsevick references Frank Zappa at the PMRC hearings in stating that parents need to take responsibility in checking out content when they see an album cover “with guy with a chainsaw between his legs.” The voiceover continues:

Critics say there is something seriously wrong with metal music, outrageous by design, that it may have contributed to a number of teenage suicides like the ones in Burgenfield, New Jersey March 11th. Four young people died in a suicide pact. A heavy metal cassette box was found at the scene.

Immediately the voiceover points to another news story about a suicide in Illinois. A local reporter states the girl who committed suicide was “obsessed by lyrics by the rock band Metallica. Lyrics that she wrote down.” To give the story credence, the brother of the girl reads from a folded piece of notebook paper: “I lost the will to live/ Simply nothing more to give/ I will just say goodbye.”

Then the voiceover announces a “videotape by a Christian group that criticizes a song by Ozzy Osbourne linked to a 1984 teen suicide in California.” A section of the lyrics to the song are shown on a screen over Osbourne’s face as that section of the song plays in the background. The first set of lyrics flash on the screen: “Breaking laws, knocking doors but there’s no one at home. Made your bed, rest your head, but you lie there and moan.”

The next set of lyrics pops up over the same image of Osbourne’s face. “Where to hide, suicide is the only way out. Don’t you know what it’s really about.” Without adding context, no one would know that the lyrics describe an alcoholic’s descent, and *20/20* did not bother to fact check the lyrics or decided not to provide the context when choosing to broadcast the clip.

The next scene begins with Phillips providing support to the music as agent while visual images provide evidence:

(The scene cuts to a group walking with “Stop rock” signs),

The music has prompted pickets,

(The scene cuts to a pile of albums on fire)

record burnings,

(The scene cuts to a camera panning over the Senate committee hearings)

even congressional hearings where a call for record companies to print lyrics on the album covers as a guide for concerned parents sparked a debate over censorship.

The first three minutes of the report go by without Walters or Phillips questioning any of the claims being made by the local TV reports, the Christian special interest group, or providing context for any interviewees' statements.

The identities of metal, its fans, and the performers have been constructed by repeating preexisting media reports and not critiquing or questioning those representations. Phillips frames metal in a negative light, but the red herring evidence of crimes and suicides (one linked to metal by an empty cassette case) and the actions against metal validate the negative identities. The scene changes to Tipper Gore speaking. Phillips introduces "Tipper Gore, founder of the Parents Music Resource Center." The audio picks up as Gore says, "Parents should realize that we have explicit and graphic sex, extreme violence, suicide in lyrics that is going to children that are not even teenagers yet or young teenagers."

The scene cuts to Bruce Dickinson, the lead singer of Iron Maiden:

That's why it annoys the hell out of me, that people are saying we are a negative influence. I just wish people would get a sense of proportion about what's right and wrong, and who are the real people who are poisoning peoples' minds, and why they are doing it. We say things to people that mean something, I mean, in our own little way, that kids can relate to.

Bruce Dickinson's response is a comment taken out of context. The sentence structure presents the form that Dickinson's preceding statement had been positive, and

then the comment broadcast was a response to critics with general statements of Iron Maiden's music as negative. The editing places Dickinson's comments as an answer to Gore's claims of explicit and extreme content, forming the argument that other people "are poisoning peoples' minds" so what they are doing isn't so bad.

Dickinson's interview is followed by Phillips' voice over stating that he is going into the metal youth culture and behind the scenes of a concert to find out what metal musicians are saying to their audience. He begins by introducing the youth fan culture. He shows a group of boys that may be trying to mosh, the physical dance where listeners bump into one another at concerts, but the boys are instead play fighting. He states they are the typical metal audience. Then he is shown standing outside of an industrial building.

This is the high school in Teaneck, New Jersey, a school with a reputation for excellence. But like just about every other high school in America, Teaneck High has its own group of so called tough kids, hoods, or burn-outs. Some into drinking or drugs, others who aren't into much of anything all, except heavy metal music.

At about five minutes into the segment, the identity has been established. Phillips reinforces it by stating that the music brings them together but otherwise, they can't relate to cliques. All of the kids interviewed have strong New Jersey accents, and as a contrast, Phillips interviews Sheigh Crabtree, a former Teaneck student who Phillips claims could be considered a prep. She does not speak with an accent, and she offers a condescending attitude. "Instead of people just ignoring them, saying they are heavy metal kids, they need some support, they need someone to inspire them, someone to look up to." After a return to Tipper Gore for her recital of an out of context Mötley Crüe lyric, the focus

returns to the teens. The editing of the segments undermines their presentation as valid critics of their own culture. In response to a question about music as a causal property for suicide, one of the teens remarks, “you’re not going to do it, unless you got real bad problems.” But immediately, the teens are juxtaposed exhibiting antisocial or juvenile behavior.

One of the parents of an interviewed teen is presented as an unwitting witness to his child transforming into a metal fan. As pictures transition from a toddler asleep in a Mickey Mouse cap, to the toddler standing in a powder blue dress coat, to wearing black and white face paint, to another in a full KISS-like costume the voiceover states: his father “never understood as Jay transformed himself into a heavy metal aficionado at age five.” Both Jay and Allen, another teen interviewed, are shown in situations where they are being disrespectful to their unsuspecting parents. A close observer will note that before each incident, the teens speak to the crew before acting.

Following the segment on the teens and their culture, the edits cut back to Phillips stating, “some counseling groups say metal is out of control.” The scene cuts to a title page printed “The Back in Control Center Presents The Punk Rock and Heavy Metal Handbook by Darlyne R. Pettinicchio.” Pettinicchio is not a psychiatric or psychological counselor; she is a juvenile parole officer featured as an expert in Spheeris’ *Decline of Western Civilization: Part Two*. Phillips provides a few examples of how to “demital kids” from Pettinicchio’s rules which include imposing a dress code and tearing down posters.

At the end of the interview, Bruce Dickinson tells parents that they need to listen to their kids to understand what they are going through and why they “like things and

why they don't like things." Barbara Walters states, "You know Stone, this is hostile music, and these are kids who seem to feel the world out there is hostile to them. So much of it is a matter of self-esteem." Walters' summation presents a less menacing version of the metal fan as deviant, by claiming the music is hostile and the youth have self-esteem issues. Phillips then confirms that the experts say the music can't cause a suicide, but this is an afterthought, new evidence, added after fifteen minutes of teen transgressors, six suicides (the one contributed to Osbourne's music pictured), expert witnesses connecting the "extreme" deviances from Stuessy's claims to metal music, and unbalanced juxtaposition of critic claims to fan or performer responses.

20/20 presented the young metal fans as not being bright and more juvenile than normal for their age. Even though metal music was not shown with the power of Stuessy's hypodermic influence, the editing and the juxtapositions situated it in a far from normal light. Walters' introduces the segment by stating the listeners are "locked in" to the music, as if imprisoned in the scene or culture, and Phillips states: "This isn't mainstream rock 'n roll. It is the music of today's teen rebellion." Heavy metal in *20/20*'s presentation is a culture of burnouts who are antisocial except with other metal listeners. Metal music is physical, hormonal, and provokes violent play if not violent acts. Young metal fans are at-risk youth, potentially one song away from suicide.

The Conservative Rhetoric of Fear

As the Senate committee hearings, news stories, and parents groups labeled heavy metal as deviance, it also cast the fans as deviants. For fans to be seen in a Judas Priest or Metallica t-shirt, they took on the peculiarities that had been attributed to the

artists and held the potential to be Satanists, rapists, abusive to women, thieves, perverts under any definition, and most importantly, the other. Metal music was defined as filth, and metal fans were defined as transgressors. The term heavy metal went from being the proprietary term of fandom to a label of scorn by institutional experts led by Tipper Gore and Joe Stuessy.

The conservative argument repositioned family as separate from culture and children as a property that needed protection from the vandalizing influences of metal. During the *20/20* program, the only lyrics demonstrated were shown because families connected them to suicides. Fans were shown as burnouts who were not good in school and had poor social stature. *20/20* demonstrated that the mediation of metal as a problem following the same formula established by the PMRC two years earlier in that metal music operated in a hidden area where its influence placed its young listeners at mortal risk. While experts like Gore and Pettinicchio insist that metal creates a criminal culture and causes personality and behavioral changes, the general sentiment evens out with an “extreme” burnout, an economically and socially deviant listener, the persistent metal identity.

The conservative rhetoric of fear is based on a rhetorical construction of culture at risk for disintegration. From the PMRC’s appearance before the Senate until the closing of the decade, metal became symptomatic of the ills of society and a promise of further infection. When the experts addressed metal as a problem, they gave it the properties of a mental illness or a drug addiction, a deviant cause with deviance as an effect. An empire of porn dangling in front of the American family’s teenagers, encouraging them to engage in or emulate sexual perversions or antichrist acts of suicide. The fear centered

on parental failures to guide the teens from the immoral choices or parental blindness to the “reality” of the metal youth. While this rhetorical stance originally applied to all popular music and their listeners, the media only presented heavy metal music and its fans with the deviant identity.

Chapter Four

The Convergence of Rhetorics of Fear

My favorite t-shirt during high school advertised Iron Maiden's 1988 album, *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*. Screen printed scenes from the album jacket showed the band's cartoon mascot, Eddie; a crystal ball with an embryo inside; and a scene of a Eddie's decapitated head floating in the air with a spoon dipping yellow fluid from the brain pan. Having listened to the album many times, I knew the concept narrated a tragedy about a seventh son born with a sixth sense that acted as a curse. The title character discovers that there is no escape from the way he has been born, and even suicide could not remove him from a supernatural existence. The images on the shirt had a gruesome edge, but the album's concept had been based on a fiction series, images from the "Book of Revelations," and a folk belief that the seventh son of a seventh son was born with supernatural powers.

For my peers and my teachers, however, the shirt had other meanings. For them, I, the bearer of the symbols, wore them as a uniform of what they understood the metal world to be. The depictions of living-dead corpses, symbols of mystical artifacts, and the evidence of violence invited the interpretation of me as the devil worshipper and

criminal. As an initiated listener, I knew that the album presented a tragedy of existential knowledge, and I could understand the damned-if-I-do, damned-if-I-don't narrative.

Robert Walser writes “mystical metal bands like Iron Maiden often draw upon the mystique of precapitalist cultures to construct their spectacles of empowerment” (154). He goes on to connect the symbol system to the construction of a sense of community and to a social space where “fans can experience a utopia of empowerment, freedom, and metaphysical depth, constructed in part out of ideas that have been excluded from the utilitarian world of work and school” (154-5). To take this a step further, the symbols also remain outside of the lexicons of organized religion. Walser notes that while the PMRC claims the mystical nature of the title song encourages youth to engage in a pagan religion, “metal musicians and fans draw on the power of centuries’ worth of imaginative writing to make sense of their own social experiences and to imagine other possibilities” (186). While Walser sees this use of fossil symbols as the result of a break with “monovocal, hegemonic history,” the newly powered rhetoric goes beyond the institution of school with the potential to break any attempt to create hegemony through a monovocal institutional rhetoric.

As the PMRC and other institutional authorities created deviant metal, these authorities positioned the music, performers and fans in hierarchies shaped by the institutional rhetoric. On a scale that judged normality from neutral to positive (citizen to good citizen), the negative hierarchy was in binary opposition to the positive (citizen to criminal). The more deviant symbols collected, the lower the metal fan or performer fell in hierarchical station. The deviant identity based on differentiation and comparison to a hegemonic, institutional normal, earned the metal fan an identity built through the

narrative placement and social construction of metal in the converging social order. While the collection of symbols allows a way for the metal fan or performer to question elements that cannot be questioned in the institutional rhetoric, the mediation of the symbols allow the institutional norm a way to categorize and separate the metal listener.

Chapter Preview

This chapter examines how local cultures and metal interacted during the Satanic panic. Specifically, this chapter begins is an exploration of the religious orientation of a rural community in north Alabama at the height of the Satanic panic in 1989 and how the performance of the religious views created an atmosphere that marked metal listeners as a danger. The second part of the chapter is focused on the investigation, arrest, trial, and conviction in a 1993 triple murder case in West Memphis, Arkansas.

To explore the construction of the metal deviant in Lexington, Alabama, I posit personal experience and firsthand knowledge of the culture and its relationship to metal and metal fans. In order to understand the investigation, trial, and conviction in West Memphis Arkansas, I use the HBO documentary *Paradise Lost* and local news accounts. Building on previous chapters, this section will explore the media's creation of scapegoats through the hierarchy in Christian perception. Hierarchy is examined both by Kenneth Burke's concept of hierarchy as a way of categorizing the world and Michel Foucault's theory of hierarchy creation as a stage in the process of institutional discipline (*Discipline* 170-194). Kenneth Burke establishes that rhetorical hierarchies are at play in all social relationships, and within any society mysteries act to establish the differences of class. "Reverence, God, and hierarchy are found to be the ultimates of the dialectical

process” (*Rhetoric* 275-276), and mysteries of hierarchical relationships goad cults who produce and collect symbols around them to realize a perfection of their position and point them toward a higher position (*Rhetoric* 332-333). Because the rural community is comprised of protestant churches with similar yet divergent beliefs, Burke’s concept of ordering illustrates that symbolic exchange in standard conversation operates to create and maintain social hierarchies based on a God versus devil view of the world. In a culture based on this hierarchical pattern, the communication of symbols associated with protestant Christianity may raise one’s status to being more Godly, and therefore on a higher level of the protestant hierarchy. But metal symbols, once associated with the devil, mark a person who attempts to be more like the protestant devil. This identification placed a metal fan as an outsider in the protestant culture, and the resulting identity marks the fan with a purpose of evil. This chapter argues that a rhetoric of fear predicts a motive with a purpose that inverts the hierarchal perfection of the culture, and in the case of metal fans during the Satanic panic, fashions them as scapegoats.

Saturday Night Live in Alabama

In the area around Lexington, Alabama, the ratio of religious denominations to residents can lead one to believe that the community has very little solidarity in belief systems, but general conversation often includes statements like “God bless you” (beyond a response for a sneeze) or “I’ve been praying about that.” While the general population framed their everyday small talk and conversations around a dialectic hierarchy of human/ supernatural, a smaller group of people invested more in symbolic communication provided by the church or by the Christian media. My friend’s parents to

the preacher's wife listened to radio talk shows, watched evangelical talk shows, and bought books and other media by people who had created identities as experts on the current state of the world through a Christian perspective. At times, media from one of the more extreme evangelicals would be shown as part of a church group meeting. One particular friend of the family personified the trend more than any other. I learned never to mention any television or music that I liked in her presence because it would be connected to the devil and often an apocalypse narrative. While her behavior may have appeared extreme, she would not face rebuttal, and she always reminds me of Dana Carvey's "church lady" character on *Saturday Night Live*. The church lady caricature skits operated in the scene of a talk show where she interviewed guests who came under her scrutiny. She would look for double meanings in what they said and seemed completely blind to possibilities outside of narratives of sin, satanic influence, and a segregation of the guest from her own holy nature. Carvey's punch lines usually include the words "sin" and "Satan." By her ability to connect Satan to everything secular, the church lady exhibits an identity through the dexterity of her symbol application. The humor of the church lady skits and the hierarchy of Christianity are similar. On one hand, the church lady can separate and compare the guest to her perceived norm, but the audience can see the audacity and single-mindedness of her character. The humor exists because the norms of the SNL audience and much of American culture were not those of conservative Christians.

For the church lady to exist in reality, she would have to mirror the institutional rhetoric of the community. In rural Alabama, the satanic panic rhetoric mirrored the fire-and-brimstone fundamentalist protestant community and the apocalyptic evangelicals

who found an opportunity with every tornado. One real “church lady” that I knew believed to watch *The Exorcist* would open the viewer to be possessed by a demon. It was not the movie that acted as a conduit but the *desire* to watch the movie and the act of watching that she considered an occult ritual. The church lady had mastered the Satanic panic rhetoric and used it purposefully in crafting her identifying role in the religious community, establishing herself in a better place in the hierarchy.

The church ladies of the community were the extreme, but they often gained influence in how the church orchestrated educational aspects beyond the weekly sermons. In addition to the Sunday morning and evening services, the church that I attended held Sunday school classes before the morning service, a similar Sunday evening class, and Wednesday night classes for youth while adults attended a service and business meeting. In the summer, week-long, half-days of Vacation Bible School taught Bible lessons with crafts and activities. And the most militant aspect was Bible drills where the ‘tween and teen members memorized bible verses, could recite and locate the chapter and verse in a Bible, and competed to be the first to find the entry in the Bible. After months of practice, we began competing with groups from other churches and at the regional and state levels. Church was not only a place for guidance but an educational institution that trained a rhetorical mastery of Biblical texts and an understanding of secular symbols through the lens of interpretation applied to those texts.

Although most people in the community never experienced this level of education, all are expected to behave in a ritualistic display of symbols of Christian identity. People have the obligation to treat others in accordance with biblical principles. For protestants, especially those from evangelical congregations, verbal and other

symbolic self representation as members of the religious community are standard. A Jesus fish stuck on a car, a bare cross on a necklace or pin, and religious or church related bumper stickers all acted as symbols of identification for public principles. One night I had a flat on a busy road, and a man in his early twenties stopped to help, and instead of taking money or thanks, he used the time that he worked to tell me about his personal relationship with God and how I could have the same thing. Communication in everyday interaction had ritualistic functioning that followed a grammar of emulation of the protestant view of the behavior of Christ. Within this culture, the Satanic panic and the esoteric symbols displayed by the media fit within a rhetorical hierarchy where God and Satan, heaven and hell are polar opposites. The symbols of metal already had a place in opposition to those seeking perfection as the church ladies. Even the label of the genre, “heavy metal,” acted as a rhetorical movement toward the perfection of the Satanic. A pentagram was not taken as a symbol but as a ritually charged reality in the same manner as the Jesus fish. Skulls and symbols of decay were the embodied reality of hell, and for someone to wear clothes or own albums with these symbols, they ritually claimed a part of hell in the orientation of the church ladies. The symbol brought the reality into opposition with the ritual behavior of everyday communication.

I knew closeted classmates and friends from church who listened to artists like Ozzy Osbourne, Poison, Mötley Crüe, and Quiet Riot, yet they did not display any symbolic connection to the bands or the music. Those who did faced judgment by our peers and community. The highest profile metal head at my school was a guy who transferred from California. He had long hair, wore band shirts, and had an earring. One fall evening, he was attacked in the stands of a football game, and a group of students

ripped out the earring, tearing his ear in the process. By literally tearing the symbol from the metal fan's ear and publicly humiliating him in the process, they enacted a ritual of victimage, sacrificing the flesh of their classmate for the solidarity of their group identity.

The next week, those same students stopped me in the hall between classes, and asked me: "Did you hear about what happened at the game?" Unlike the Californian, I spoke their language, I told them, "I'm not a California pussy-willow ("willow" added after pause for any teacher that might overhear the conversation). My family has been here for six generations, and we wouldn't have lasted this long if we were weak. I believe in an eye for an eye." As I said this, two of the would be lynch mob started to look around nervously as the halls were clearing, and they left. I continued, "Do you know the story of Van Gogh?" He shook his head "no." Although I didn't know what really happened, I explained how Van Gogh cut off his entire ear as I drew the process in the air near the jock's head. Left alone, the jock who had spent the last few days bragging about what he had done found out the context was not the same. Instead of a grab and go attack, a few words reframed what was about to happen in a way that the attackers did not feel justified in pursuing the action. My extremes in dress and symbol use made me a target, but once I performed an aggressive personality to support the symbols of metal, they became symbols to inspire a protective fear. By tempering the metal symbols with a statement of heritage and community, the context for justification vanished and the action would then be framed as an attack against the community.

Not long after I began wearing the Iron Maiden t-shirt and ear piercings, I embodied an identity and provoked reaction from those around me. A pentagram was spray painted on my driveway on a Halloween night, my mother had burned all of my

metal music cassettes, and the preacher at my former church decided to perform an intervention to save my soul. At its peak, I had barricaded myself in my bedroom and wondered what I would do if he were able to break down the door.

All of these actors and acts had purpose, the earring rippers, the preacher as violent shepherd, and the mother burning music: the purpose was to express moral indignation. Burke marks the purification of our culture creates criminals for a perceived guilt. The scapegoat function alleviates the undercurrent of guilt felt by the society (*Rhetoric* 406). The guilt and the reasons for it are too complex to identify with certainty, but an athlete banned from participating in sports may have led to the earring ripping incidents, a rough divorce or pressure from the church ladies may have led to my mother burning my music, and I may have become identified as symptomatic of the preacher's performance at his church. In a sense, once the metal symbols have become associated with evil, the identity of the scapegoat occurs through the reflection of guilt and pronouncement of moral indignation with through a rhetoric that constructs the criminal.

The dialogic exchange of symbols in an ever increasing perception of fear can never be more than balancing one party's symbols against another until the stage of victimage has been completed by one of the parties. The rhetoric of fear is the process of establishing a target for victimage. The perfection of Christian belief prescribes enacting mortification, the pattern of the sacrifice of Christ for all man's sins, and the hierarchy frames perceptions of reality. Burke points out that the dialectic of human endeavor is not just gaining a social advantage but also a matter of form, "the persuasiveness of the hierarchic order itself" (*Rhetoric* 276). Motives may produce human actions impossible to understand or explain outside of the social hierarchy, the rhetorical form that frames

perception. This concept complicates the analysis of motivation. Simple judgments like “Church ladies want to rise higher in the church community” or “the preacher acts to show his leadership to the community” may be true but only half the truth. The dialectic of the Satanic panic must be true to the rhetorical form, and sacrifice through differentiation exists as the logical action in a situation that threatens the hierarchical order.

Construction of Metal and Satanism as a Social Problem

The Satanic panic placed good and evil at the core of cultural narratives framing metal’s symbols. Sociologist Randy Lippert’s study shows that the panic grew in the U.S. and Canada, but it never became reached the stage where the government put a plan in place for its control. Lippert studied the Satanic problem from the emergence of the problem through claims makers, the legitimization of the problem in public perception, the mobilization of action, call for an official plan, and implementation of the plan. The final steps did not occur at the national level, but in communities based in a shared hierarchy like Lexington, Alabama, the claims of the experts did not need to be questioned as they would for those outside of shared understanding. In the cases like Lexington, the shared protestant hierarchy would allow the identification of a metal scapegoat as evil if an evil act occurred. Lippert’s study demonstrated the snowball effect where mediation of a Satanic problem spawned periods of increased mediation that produced a perception of the problem without evidence the problem existed outside of discourse.

In the rural south, the national mediation combined with the rhetoric of the hierarchy, pairing the rhetoric of the metal fan as criminal in the protestant hierarchy. Weinstein documented this convergence of the rhetoric of fear in a nationally publicized example that began with Ozzy Osbourne's "Suicide Solution" as it moved from the secular rhetoric of teen suicide in the 1985 PMRC hearings to being pronounced devil worship in *Time* five years later (250-52). In 1990, a New York archbishop criticized "Suicide Solution" by name, stated the theme of the song was suicide, and said that it promoted devil worship. As Weinstein notes, the priest had learned this information from his only source of reference, Tipper Gore's 1987 book, an extension of the PMRC agenda and its mediation of misinterpretation, fallacious pronouncements of causality, and the unquestioned acceptance of its statements. Weinstein remarks that "the misinterpretation of 'Suicide Solution' became conventional wisdom" (251). Both Weinstein and Walser devote time to documenting skewed academic, medical, and judicial cases that promoted the perception that specific types of deviance had been caused by metal.

Lippert's study shows that mediation created more mediation and an expanding belief that a Satanic problem existed, but because of its scope, it cannot see the social construction operating at the local level. As with Weinstein's example, the mediation of key ideas became taken as fact, but unlike her example, these ideas became the basis for actions by those who believed in the social problem. This chapter specifically analyzes rhetorical constructions in situations where a "problem" existed and the community took action outside of legislative parameters.

The Fallacy of the Obvious: The West Memphis Three

In a southern protestant hierarchy, the ability to speak the part of the community and to carry the symbols valued by the community meet expectations of behavior and facilitate interaction. This ability or an inability establish an identity on the hierarchical scale. A few hundred miles from Lexington, a similar town experienced a tragedy with circumstances so extreme, only evil incarnate could have perpetrated the crime. In 1993, three seven year old boys were murdered in the town of West Memphis, Arkansas. The bodies of the boys were found in a shallow creek near the interstate. They were naked, tied up with shoelaces, and showed signs of violence. The scene offered no evidence of how the murder had been committed, why the murder had occurred, or who committed the murder. No one could point to a motive that the community could understand, but the nature of the crime and the lack of an obvious act or purpose allowed the “evil” of child murder to be focused on the supernatural evil in the religious rhetoric. Within a month, three local teens had been charged with the murder.

Events in the investigation and trial demonstrate how deviance, by community standards, can be combined with a secondary rhetoric of fear to accuse, arrest, and convict someone with no evidence or motive. As a starting point for this analysis, a few points of evidence were replayed in the documentary *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky for Home Box Office/ America Undercover. The documentary presents the town, families of the murder victims and of the accused, the media, the parents, the police, the lawyers, the judge, and witnesses. Of

particular importance, the documentary crew filmed the trial and also participated in the proceedings and paid parties involved for access to interviews and behind the scenes activities. An advocacy site for the teens who were convicted of the crimes also led me to local news sources not available through database archives, and it acts a repository for copies of papers related to the investigation.

The following summarizes the first stages of the investigation as presented by the documentary. Early during the investigation, accusations and media announcements linked Satanic cult involvement as a motive for the murder. A little over a month after the crime, seventeen year-old Jessie Misskelley confessed to being part of a Satanic ritual murder after a twelve hour interrogation. Misskelley has an I.Q. around 71, and he did not have a parent or lawyer with him. The interrogation was not recorded until the confession. He, Damien Echols and Jason Baldwin had become public suspects in the murder.

Misskelley had become a suspect after a probation officer told investigators that Damien Echols would be the type to commit the crime. Damien and his friends became part of a pool of suspects that include a black man who went into the women's bathroom at a local restaurant to wash blood off of his body. This took place before DNA evidence had become a solid forensic tool, but the police did not intercept the suspect and lost a blood sample taken from the bathroom before it could be tested. In this case, the perceived knowledge of the probation officer superseded the scientific testing, and following Lippert's pattern, the probation officer becomes a local expert on teens and the occult. This could be a case of bad police work, or it could be a symptom of a law enforcement officer looking for evil.

The day of Misskelley's confession, the local news broadcast demonstrates the Satanic problem has become legitimate. Combining the symbols of metal with symbols of social deviance, the media constructed a pattern of fear that combined social problems with metal to produce an image of contemporary evil. Several months before Echols and Baldwin went on trial in the city, Jonesboro, Arkansas television station KAIT 8 broadcast the following story on June 7, 1993. It was the night's top story and followed the greetings from the anchors. This is as it appears in *Paradise Lost*.

Anchor Tony Brooks: In a statement given to police and obtained by a Memphis newspaper, seventeen year old Jessie Misskelley allegedly confesses to watching two other suspects choke, rape, and sexually mutilate three West Memphis second graders. Jenna Newton reports. (The news report begins with a photograph of Jessie Lloyd Misskelley, cropped in an unusually narrow column, framed at his ears, neckline, and what appears to be a punk-like point of hair on the top of his head.)

Newton: According to the published report, Misskelley told police he watched (The scene cuts to show Misskelley's picture along with Echols and Baldwin. The middle photograph appears to be a cropped candid shot of Damien Echols with a stern expression, wearing shoulder length hair, and wearing a black t-shirt. The third photograph shows Jason Baldwin wearing

long hair, a black Metallica t-shirt with the image of spiked clubs in the graphic not cut away by the crop.)

eighteen year old Damien Echols and 16 year old Jason Baldwin brutalized the children with a club and a knife. The report says, Misskelley told police Echols and Baldwin raped one of the boys and sexually mutilated another as part of a cult ritual. Misskelley is quoted as saying he did not take part in the rape and mutilation but that he helped subdue one of the victims that tried to escape.

At a press conference Inspector Gary Gitchell said the case against the accused teens is very strong.

Unidentified voice: On a scale from one to ten, how solid to you feel your case is?

(The scene changes on “children” to show the child victims in smiling posed school and family photographs.)

(the scene cuts back to his lone photograph)

(The scene cuts back to the victims’ photographs)

(The scene cuts away to a video press conference with Chief Inspector Gary Gitchell, West Memphis Police)

(The press conference audio begins playing.)

(Gitchell nods and smiles as clapping is heard in the background.)

Gitchell, deadpan: Eleven.

Female voice: “Yeah.”

(The scene cuts to an unidentifiable structure of concrete columns in an overgrown landscape. The beams are covered in spray painted graffiti.)

Newton: It appears Satanic worship

(the scene cuts to a closeup of a graffiti pentagram)

may have played a role in the murders.

(the scene cuts to “satan” painted on one of the poles).

Since the very beginning of the investigation,

(the scene cuts to a house with yellow tape around the yard then to a group of people standing in front of a building wearing dress clothes and chatting)

people all around West Memphis have come forward with stories of Satanic cults.

(the scene cuts to the reporter standing in front of a Baptist Church)

Reverend Tommy Stacy’s church is down

(cut away to Echols photograph)

the streets from where the bodies were

found. One year ago, Damien Echols

told the church’s youth minister he had a

(cut away to a cross-shaped steeple then to

pact with the devil and he was going to

Rev. Tommy Stacy Second Baptist Church)

hell.

Rev. Stacy: I do know that my youth director talked to Damien extensively after revival that we had, and he told him that he could not be saved, that he could not give his heart to Jesus, and my youth director then tried to get him to take a Bible. And he made the statement that he couldn't take a Bible, because if he did, the rest of them would get him.

Newton: In West Memphis, Jenna Newton
KAIT 8 Night News.

In the span of a short news story, the expert claims of the police chief and a preacher give witness to Echols as a Satanic murderer. By a construction of the images, the suspects are shown with hair and clothes ripe with symbols of Satan. In describing how Satanism was connected to teen suicides, Lippert states:

The minimum criteria for such a claim by the media and others is, for example, to find Anton LaVey's Satanic Bible at or near the scene, or perhaps for the teenager to have listened to "heavy metal" rock music, especially that of Ozzy Osbourne, prior to the tragedy. Such tangible "evidence" of the existence of Satanists lends persuasion to the claims of church leaders that Satan is everywhere. (433)

The Metallica t-shirt does become evidence in the court proceedings, and in the orientation of the community, it becomes enough to prove a reality for expert claims.

The police chief has a public platform on which to reinforce his importance to the community by having the certainty of 11 (possibly a reference to the metal parody *Spinal Tap*), and the preacher has a much more complex reinforcement for his position. He offers information about the suspect that the general population cannot access. He delivers the information in a coded statement that presents Echols as having an inverted behavior of the Christian hierarchy, trying to be more like Satan, going so far as to reject the Bible, a symbol of Christian perfection. When the preacher focuses on how Echols cannot be saved nor give his heart to Jesus, he shows Echols' unwillingness or inability to strive for Christian perfection. According to Weinstein, fundamentalist link Satanism, suicide, sexual perversion, so metal's use of Christian symbols or these topics in the music or art links metal to an anti-Christ myth (261-62). Rhetorically, Echols does not exist as a member within the community, and his human value, from a Christian perspective, is limited. He becomes a blank slate on which the symbols of long hair and a black t-shirt stand out and combine with the pentagram and decayed structure to parallel the images of the three seven year-old victims.

Even the graffiti covered structure has been charged as symbols of Satanism. In February 1994, Mid-South Hospital of Memphis sponsored "Occult/Cult and Their Effect on Society," an article in a local paper reports that it was a public talk "to help people in the local community, where it is alleged the suspects in the brutal murders of three West Memphis boys last May were dabblers in Satanism, recognize signs and practices of the occult" (Sarles). Of significant importance to the West Memphis case and one of the featured speakers was "Jerry Driver, Crittenden County's chief juvenile intake and probation officer." Mr. Driver was Echols' probation officer, and he helped point the

investigation toward him. Following Lippert's definition of the satanic problem expert, Driver created his expert position without any verification of expertise and without having to prove his claims.

At the talk, Driver offered his knowledge to the crowd. Driver reported that six out of 10 schoolchildren know somebody involved in the occult. Drugs, alcohol and sex are part of the occult activities attracting more and more young people, who are products of societal problems such as the disintegration of the family and the growth of the influence of eastern religions.

About two years ago, Driver said he started noticing signs of dabblers in the area, especially graffiti on deserted structures and bridges and the remains of animal sacrifices. He took photographs and compiled records, which he sent off to experts around the country. Driver said black gangs are now picking up the traits of cult activity, which had been generally the province of white youths, and he's seeing similarities between the way cults and gangs operate.

While this public talk was sponsored by a hospital and included audience members who critically questioned the speakers, this was the standard assortment of speakers who regularly spoke at churches, schools, to the media, and to law enforcement officers persuading the audiences that Satanism was a legitimate problem. Outside of the panic environment, many of the claims sound like paranoid delusions but within the scene, the claims could be taken as serious threats. Media accounts like this one and Cummings *New York Times* article are very similar. In these accounts generalized statements and

unwitnessed claims create a world where violence, sex, gangs, drugs, and the occult combine to form a secret teen subculture. By taking the fear associated with gang activity and combining it with the occult, the rhetorics of fear converge and bolster one another.

Once the trial got started, the connection to the occult or a cult became a point of focus. Echols and Baldwin were tried together, and one of the expert witnesses for the prosecution was Dr. Dale W. Griffis, a retired police captain and expert on the occult. In cross examination seen on the *Paradise Lost* DVD, the defense questioned his credentials that included a masters degree and a Ph.D. from a mail order school that offered no education on the occult or even required him to take a class. Griffis had already been busy establishing himself as an expert and perpetuating claims about Satanism. Four years before the trial Lippert cited a 1987 article in the *Calgary Herald* as an example of how a claims maker is not questioned by the media when he or she has been labeled expert.

Retired Captain Dale Griffis from “thousands of kilometres away” somewhere in the US tells us: “In an area like Alberta, where you have a blighted economy, Satanism does well, because people are searching for answers.” Whether Griffis ever visited Alberta, how he came to decide that it has a depressed economy, or how a depressed economy leads to Satanism is left unclear. What is made clear is that he is an expert and, therefore, such questions need not be raised.

Griffis wrote “A Law Enforcement Primer on Cults: With a Guide to the Deceptive Recruitment into Cults,” which according to Amazon.com was self-published in 1985.

His answers to the prosecutor's questions build on the symbolic capital of the Christian hierarchy cataloging negative symbols. In the first question, Griffis builds on black as an inverse of purity, a pattern of evil. The evidence is based on his observation and his reputation.

Prosecutor: In looking at young people involved in the occult, do you see any particular type of dress?

Griffis: I have personally observed people wearing black fingernails, having their hair painted black, wearing black t-shirts, sometimes they will tattoo themselves.

In Griffis' testimony, there is no connection to a specific occult practice or an identified cult. The symbols operate independent of any factual account, but they did appear consistently in heavy metal culture. In answering the second question, Griffis lists holidays in a foreign language and comes back to symbols of popular culture, the full moon and sacrificial blood.

Prosecutor: Do you have an opinion as to whether or not there are occult overtones or evidence of occult involvement in these particular murders?

Griffis: Well, the date being close to Beltane, (prosecuter: whats that) a holiday, May 1st, also the day before that is Walpurgisnacht. Then you go into the fact that some groups, occult/ cult groups will use a full moon. In several occult books, they will talk about the life force of the blood. Usually the younger the individual the more pure it is. The more power or the force it has. A lot of times they will take blood and store it for other services and other use, as well as consume it... or bathe in it.

This statement inverts the rituals of Christianity and mortification in the hierarchical order. Man sacrificed an innocent for the betterment of his self, and he did it on a holiday

devoted to his sin. Satanism as an inversion of Christianity is the rhetoric of fear because it invokes the binaries to the pure state of God/ Satan. Whether or not the defendants are guilty, expert testimony deliberately invokes and creates inverted Christian symbols that take away the personality and imbue in them divine evil in the perception of the community. According to Burke,

When a figure becomes the personification of some impersonal motive, the result is a *depersonalization*. The person becomes the charismatic vessel of some “absolute” substance. And when thus magically endowed, the person transcends his nature as an individual, becoming instead the image of the idea he stands for. [...] In this respect he becomes “divine” (and his distinctive marks, such as his clothing, embody the same spirit).

(Rhetoric 277)

The media and the expert have created a perfect perpetrator for the murders: a devil-worshiper, child murderer, molester, and monster. This construction fits an anti-Christ motive, and this allows symbols like black cloth and hair to become charged with demonic intent, a motive understood as pure evil. The scapegoat has been rhetorically dressed and can be applied to anyone with the “distinctive marks” of the Satanic, the charged symbols of metal.

Conclusion

As of this writing, sixteen years have passed and Damien Echols remains on death row while Baldwin and Misskelley serve life sentences. In the years following the original trial, several attempts have been made to reopen or overturn the convictions, and

outside of the legal system, people have organized to publicize the case and the elements that allowed a conviction to take place. The Free the West Memphis 3 website exists as a grassroots attempt to keep the case in the public eye, act as a repository for trial information, and a location to connect celebrity endorsements to their cause. The original filmmakers of the HBO documentary created a second documentary, *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations*, that follows up their original and presents new perspectives of potential guilt. These outlets have created a system of reconstruction of the story. Parents' of the victims have been publicly connected to drug offenses with one father outed as a convicted sex offender. The police have been shown as incompetent, and missing evidence and leads have refocused the case as a story of police corruption. The prosecutor has been accused of feeding information to a jury foreman in one of the original trials, and the judge has been manufactured as a buffoon who has put off retirement in an effort to prevent reexamination of the evidence.

When Tipper Gore asked for the public to make popular music an issue, she intended to create a state of being that followed the Panopticon existence where everyone policed the issue of metal and other music cultures that entered the ideas that she found so offensive. In establishing the music and its art as causal to these problems, she helped establish the frame under which a Metallica t-shirt and song lyrics could be the only evidence need to prove the boys guilt beyond the shadow of a doubt. The trial mirrored the structure of the Satanic panic, a story came into existence, hearsay and biased testimony reworked the story until a large segment of the public considered the story a real problem that needed to be handled.

For the sake of this analysis, the truth of what happened is not at issue. The concern is the rhetorical repositioning of the story and the creation of scapegoats to resolve the crisis. In *Grammar of Motives*, Burke theorized that as in fiction, behavior could be explained through the ratios that create an act. In one level, an act has a circumference in which all elements take place. In the case of the murders in West Memphis, the act was not just the murder of three boys, nor was it a mass murder. It was a ritual murder, and the act was both mediated and tried according to that scope. In Burke's concept of understanding motives, the act had to be in ratio with the scene. This means that the murders took place in a world where devil-worshippers existed. The murder of three children went beyond any secular understanding of the community by the community, but the murder fit the idea of evil for the sake of evil. The motive requires that the person who committed the murder be capable, and a reason has to exist that makes the murder purposeful. For residents of Christian fundamentalist communities in Arkansas and Alabama, the metal symbols made the convicted teens agents of the devil working toward the perfection of evil. The media, experts, and the prosecutors used symbols of youth culture, the preexisting rhetorics of fear, and orientation of the community to construct a scapegoat.

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt" is a concept that can only work when the story fits a person's orientation to the world. What is at stake is the motive as understood by the jurors in 1993, and their orientation demonstrates that hegemonic belief in the community and the isolation of the separation from the diversity of other U. S. cultures. Within that southern, protestant orientation, the mediation from outside slips in and the rhetorics merge. Experts without expertise combined elements from preexisting

problems (gangs, violence, drugs, etc.) with elements from the southern protestant hierarchy and created a story to construct a purpose and motive to cleanse the community with the scapegoating of those wearing metal symbols.

From the mid 1980s through the early 1990s, metal fans who wore the symbols fit the symbolic profile of supernaturally “evil” and institutionally “deviant.” In Kenneth Burkes theory, man aspires to create hierarchy, and in doing so, he is always in search of the perfection of the hierarchical formula. In terms of a Christian orientation, all hierarchy is graphed on a plane between God, the perfection of good, and Satan, a perfection of evil. In Foucault’s examination of disciplinary hierarchies, he marks this as a two part system that rewards and punishes through the formation. Institutional hierarchies reward and punish, and in doing so, produce a disciplined system, the institutional normative (*Discipline* 177-184). In the rhetoric of the institutional, the language establishes the normative pattern where hierarchies establish positive and negative positions, rewards for aspiring to a higher level of being and punishments for acting in a way that lowers one in the hierarchy.

A rhetoric of fear predicts a motive with a purpose that inverts the hierarchal perfection of the culture. As I did not exhibit the symbols to be more Godly and, instead, wore symbols that had been associated with devil-worship, the protestant orientation perceives the striving for perfection of humans as Satan. The Satanic panic rhetoric grew from a convergence rhetorics of fear: classifications of deviance created in the disciplinary institutions, mediated to the public, and reformed in the rhetorical mold of religious hierarchy as antichrist motives. For 1993 West Memphis, Arkansas and 1990

Lexington, Alabama, the symbols of metal transformed those who wore them into devils with motive—perfect scapegoats.

Chapter Five

The Gargoyles of Mayhem: Revolutionary Critique of Norwegian Culture

In Norway of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of musicians and fans created a subgenre of music that inverted the qualities of popular metal and taken-for-granted social symbols based in Christian discourse. This group, primarily teens and young adults, created, performed, marketed, and distributed a style of metal that became known as Norwegian black metal (NBM).

At the heart of the community, Euronymous (born Øystein Aarseth) acted as a catalyst for the appropriation of various symbols from international metal sources. In his record shop Helevete, he combined the theatrics of America's Alice Cooper, the Viking symbols of Sweden's Bathory, Satanic symbols of England's Venom, and the appearance of Brazil's Sarcófago. But the origins of the community and the phenomenon of NBM grew from the discourse that began not through the symbols of the scene but through mediation of criminal acts. While NBM has become an international phenomenon, it became known outside of the local scene through a newspaper report and arrest tied to Helevete and church burnings, as well as the suicide of Dead, the lead singer of the NBM group Mayhem. This is followed by an escalation of violence including Euronymous' murder by another performer, Varg Vikernes, and by other unrelated murders by those present in the spreading scene.

Unlike the U. S. panics where problems were media constructions, in Norway, acts drove the discourse. In Norway, bands associated themselves with Satanism and Nazism. Keith Kahn-Harris notes that while appropriation of Nazi symbols has been a part of metal, “in black metal these appropriations have been accompanied by discourses that are highly conducive to the incorporation of Nazi ideologies” (41).

The key figure at the heart of the discourse and criminal acts in Norway is Varg Vikernes, aka Count Grishnackh. In an early interview with a local reporter, he connects both himself and the black metal scene to arsons that targeted historic churches. Later, he murders Euronymous, and in doing so, makes himself a prominent figure in the discourse of the scene built on the criminal stories. From prison, he moves from the Satanist identity and expounds a Nazi philosophy through communication on internet sites. In the years since the creation of the subgenre and the media’s attention to the crimes, NBM has become a definable subgenre with worldwide presence.

Chapter Preview

This chapter follows the symbol development in NBM. “The Classical Age of Norway and Revolutionary Black Metal” establishes the cultural context that gave birth to NBM. This is followed by an analysis of the construction of the NBM performance using Kenneth Burke’s concept of gargoyles, combinations of preexisting symbols, as a means of creating new orientations. “Media, Performers, and Crime: Co-production of a Rhetoric of Fear” explores how the public discourse surrounding criminal acts became a space where NBM artists performed deviance through appropriating preexisting rhetorics of fear. The final section explores the change in symbols and rhetorics that evolved to a

Nazi rhetoric and criminal lifestyle. This chapter argues that Norwegian artists set in motion an evolution of symbol meanings and rhetorical frames that produced a template that mirrored Nazi philosophy and produced a new rhetoric for Nazi political objectives.

The primary source of material for this chapter is journalist Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind's coauthored *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of Satanic Metal Underground*, a comprehensive account of the Norwegian scene with interviews, artifacts, and research of the black metal community. The book collects new interviews with NBM's primary figures and other Norwegians who have firsthand knowledge of the events and the culture. It also acts as a repository of ephemera that includes photographs of Helevete referenced in this chapter. Lyrics were transcribed from the albums or copied from liner notes. Notes from Varg Vikernes came from his web publications.

The Classical Age of Norway and Revolutionary Black Metal

Norway exists in a state that Burke called a classical age, a time where cultural productions have become standardized and celebrated only within the standardization. This contemporary Norse classical age is marked as one in which education reinforces the idea of cooperation for the good while diminishing the value of individual thought and confrontation. According to Moynihan, 88% of Norway's population associate themselves to the state church, and only two to three percent of the population are active within the church, yet the government must always be staffed by at least 50% associated with the church (40). Within the culture, only one horror film has been produced in the over 70 years of having a film industry, and most imported films are heavily censored for violence or face an outright ban. Even with a protestant sensibility invoked by the

presence of the church, a social democracy attempts to hold a status quo supported by an economy enriched by offshore oil. The style of NBM music stands in opposition to the primary Norwegian culture that does not support extremes. Classical behavior operates on the basic idea that if one acts properly, by the rules prescribed and tested by the culture, one may have a good life.

In looking at how culture is challenged in drama, Burke establishes that "humor tends to be conservative, the grotesque tends to be revolutionary" (*Permanence* 112). NBM operated in a state of transgression to those cultural principles and questions the values associated with those principles. Kahn-Harris marks the black metal reliance on Christian symbols as a means of creating a context for transgression, and he believes that creating Christianity as enemy allowed for a pre-Christian heritage to be remembered in a way that contextualizes the scene with a heritage of pagan belief and a colonized rhetoric of Christian oppression (40). In its *dramatis personae*, the revolutionary aspects of black metal operated to reorient the players and audience in a position where the culture could be critiqued through its institutional controls. In a side effect, the church became an enemy raping the populace for its continued existence and the socialized government became the oppressor of people through its deployment of normalcy.

In the newspaper interview that first entered the NBM scene in the public discourse, Varg Vikernes claimed a connection to a string of arsons of historic churches, allowing the public to pronounce the black metal *dramatis personae* as Satanists at war with them. As the theatrical metaphor disintegrated under the public scrutiny and Vikernes' claims, a heuristic Babel erupted, decontextualizing elements of the music and staged image and recontextualizing them in the North American rhetoric of fear from the

Satanic panic. Both Vikernes and the media made use of the rhetoric of fear to contextualize cultural crimes ranging from the church burnings to violent crimes of murder, torture, and rape.

When the public first encountered the decontextualized scene, the revolutionary aspects became distinct threats, reframing the participants in the scene as literal villains. The *dramatis personae* ceased to exist and was replaced by a gargoyle of antisocial deviance constructed in the Satanic panic rhetoric as Satanic rituals in the earthly battle between the legions of Satan and the meek followers of God. In parts of the country, fundamentalism fed on the press, encouraging the idea of threat motives related to the direct connection between the welfare of the public and that of the church. In a sense, the Babel of interpretations allowed for black metal to be directly opposed by the church, the government, law enforcement, evangelicals, and those who adhered to a view that the status quo was good. “Meaning or symbolism becomes a central concern precisely at that stage when a given system of meaning is falling into decay” (*Permanence* 162). From Burke's perspective, the symbol system around heritage, religion and identity for a Norwegian had entered a period of devaluation.

As seen in chapters two and three, in the U.S. fundamentalist discourse, Satan exists as a piety, a symbol that is part of the hierarchy of Christianity that allows a definition of behavior through the negative. For a Norwegian to invoke Satan, it is an impiety in a culture that has marginalized the symbol in its orientation. The original audience and bands knew that the violence for violence sake and the symbolic nature of church/God as enemy acted not as a literal ideology but as an inversion of the existing ideology, demonstrating a different understanding of normal social structures. Burke

says, “One sees perspectives beyond the structure of a given vocabulary when that structure is no longer firm” (117). In this period, grotesque demonstrations began to develop to offer insight into the fallacies of the normative structures of cultural production.

As the nation and its primary identity marker, the church, lost its meaning, black metal came into the picture with metaphors that powerfully invoked the presence of the absence, the quality of life when there is no struggle, and resurrected the fossils of the mythological past to act in the absence of a contemporary way of being. To do this, the black metal groups gave the church power that it had lost long ago, and in return, it gave the youth a symbol to attack in defense of their own identity construction. Gargoyles of evil/resistance, power/compassion, future destiny/mythic glory brought to a head the laissez faire attitude that allowed cultural production to sit stalled and rusting away in the Norwegian winter.

Creating a Grotesque Performance of Norway through Metal Symbols

The birth of Norwegian black metal (NBM) took place in the discourse of a group of performers led by Euronymous, a founding member of the group Mayhem and the owner of a small recording label and Oslo music store. In 2005, Chris Campion wrote for the UK paper *Observer*, “as far as the Norwegian media are concerned, when it comes to Black Metal all roads lead to Mayhem, whose terrible and bloody history eclipses the debauchery of even the most hardened rock bands” (Campion). Euronymous’ record store called Helevete (hell) became the focal point for bands and fans to engage in conversations about music and the creative direction which would lead to the formation

of Black Metal. Euronymous wanted to specifically move toward a darker theatrical presence in both sound and staged performance. As will be seen in the analysis of comments that he made after the suicide of his band mate, Dead, the first purpose behind this was to recharge death metal that he saw removed into technical music bereft of its roots in the performance of morbidity. He built the concepts of performance on early Florida death metal, Swedish Viking metal, English black metal, and Brazilian blasphemous metal. Albums and artwork from these bands can be seen in photographs of prominently displayed albums on the walls of Helevete and t-shirts worn during performances (Moynihan 49, 55, 64, 68, 70). This international mix brought together gore, blasphemy, and heathenism, and the combination created a new symbol system for black metal charged in other cultural contexts and easily exploited by the metal community and through the media.

Early death metal focused on both the knowledge of mortality, violence, and the physical conditions of life and death. Death's first album, 1987's *Scream Bloody Gore*, referenced zombies, necrophilia, cannibalism, and violence using symbolic taboos without a narrative framing them. Death was one of the original death metal groups and formed a foundation with Tampa, Florida's Morbid Angel in the establishment of the genre. The opening verse from the title track demonstrates the lyrical expression outweighs the absent narrative frame.

Decapitated head licking your cunt

Sucking all the blood from your stump

Intestinal guts taking their hold

Leaving you dead, stiff and cold

The language crossed cultures, but when comparing Death's lyrics to Mayhem's "Necrolust" from their first album *Live in Leipzig*, there is one primary difference—the attribution of a type of authenticity through the rhetorical positioning of the fake.

Her guts were boiling out of her butt
Eating the flesh of a thousand corpses
Bloodsucking cuntless nuns
Eating her slimey cunt as I hold her tits
Come posercorpse and die again

In both versions, sex is a violent act in which a woman's body, reduced of humanity, is left as an assemblage of parts. In Mayhem's version, posercorpse combines bodily remains with a term signifying one who pretends. The NBM artists created their style from the international influences and incorporated the changes into a product specifically geared for their culture. Berger marks the evolution of musical forms as a confluence of interactions among adherents to various styles and traditions.

While the new styles, as the linear narrative suggest, the development of new styles may sometimes bring about the wholesale abandonment of a older style by its adherents, eclipsed styles may also be preserved or incrementally altered by a core of listeners who reject the changes. (60)

Before gaining notoriety, Mayhem and similar bands' demos and bootlegged concerts were being traded worldwide among fans and artists. Berger states,

On both the national and international level, death metal is bound together through amateur publications called "fanzines" and that the network of

readers and editors produced an exchange of both recorded music and information about the performers in the genre. (62)

In Helevete, a group of likeminded performers in the Norwegian scene began to critique what death metal was and what it had become.

Moynihan marks the death metal scene as one that eschewed the theatrics of earlier metal and “the performers wore ripped jeans or sweatpants, high-top sneakers and plain leather jackets” that made them look like “no different than a thousand other sallow-faced urban hoods” (28). Moynihan quotes Jon “Metalion” Kristiansen as an expert who experienced the scene and as the publisher of the fanzine *Slayer*. Kristiansen linked Euronymous’ development of the black metal costume to Brazilian metal band Sarcófago. “Euronymous was totally obsessed by them because they wore lots of spikes and corpsepaint. He said he wanted every band to be like this, because he was so against the Death Metal trend from the USA and Sweden” (Moynihan 36).

For Euronymous, the scene was filled with posers of a negative type. In a correspondence after Dead’s suicide that was later printed on the cover of a bootlegged Mayhem album, Euronymous exclaimed that Dead had shot himself “because he lived for the true old black metal scene and lifestyle” (Moynihan 60). He goes on to identify the costume of the black metal as the costume, “black clothes, spikes, crosses.” He describes death metal lifestyle as trying to “look as normal as possible” in jogging suits with skateboards. “Death to false black metal or death metal!! Also to the trendy hardcore people.” True black metal became the antithesis of commercial death metal. Contrived by Euronymous as a point of heritage where real music could be created and a true lifestyle lived, he and others in the Norwegian scene began fashioning a form of black

metal that would go beyond the mass produced death metal genre, replete with a costume that equated to lifestyle.

The visual identification of NBM artists exists in the makeup style known as corpse paint. The object of corpse paint is to create a monstrous character that has neither the glam finish of KISS' kabuki make-up or the romantic elements of vampire or goth style. Corpse paint more closely resembles early Alice Cooper with darkened eye sockets with the addition of a paleness mimicking dead skin. Sarcophago exhibited similar styles in their 1987 album *I.N.R.I.* The cover shows the group in a cemetery, standing in front of a grave monument with a sculpted crucified Christ. They all have black hair, black around their eye sockets, and black lips. They are wearing leather jackets with studs and loops of ammunition, and several inverted crosses appear on their clothes. One inverted cross is held by a band member.

In several images of early NBM artists, the participants are shown wearing t-shirts with the logo of Britain's Venom. Venom used a pentagram and lyrics that evoked witches, Satan, and monsters. Their 1982 album *Black Metal* gave the Norwegian scene a name for their genre. In 1984, Bathory released a self-titled album that also evoked Satanic lyrics and a pentagram framing a goat skull.

Using this montage of international symbols and lyrical traditions, Euronymous influenced the bands Mayhem, Emperor, and Darkthrone, culminating in a style of performance of anti-Christian lyrics, violent stage performances, and a visible display of death as an heroic force. The common symbols for NBM included corpse paint, pentagrams, inverted crosses, decay, anti-production music, guttural screaming vocals, and the presentation of violence. In themselves, the symbols carried meanings for

specific cultures. For example, Sarcófago's imagery and lyrics adopted an anti-Catholic performance for the Catholic orientation of Brazil, and Venom's horror music genre took on the generalized characteristics of movie monsters and occultic symbols. NBM reconstructed the symbols with new meanings specific for Norwegian audiences and the charged meanings of the originals diminished as they were removed from their culture of origin. The first black metal performances were constructions of incongruities where symbols were used only in the context of the performance, but within a short time, the symbols became infused with a charge from the mediation of crimes connected to the NBM performers. In its final stage, the symbols became signifiers of crime and social destruction for both the Norwegian public and the performers.

Burke talks about the creation of new symbols from the merging and evolution of existing symbols. These gargoyles operated within the confines of the producers and intended audience as a *dramatis personae*, specifically as a metaphor of cultural antithesis. Mayhem stabbed and mutilated pig corpses on a stage, impaling the heads on stakes a la Vlad Tepes. The lyrical contents of the songs mirror antitheses of normalcy, for example sex is replaced by violence and the undead monster feeding on humans is more alive than the humans. But all of this inversion was embraced as lamenting the loss of a superstitious past in which people lived through the fears that made their lives meaningful.

Media, Performers, and Crime: Co-production of a Rhetoric of Fear

The NBM scene remained the domain of performers and fans until a series of interviews and events allowed for a public discourse through a purposeful interaction between the performers and the media. First, Mayhem's lead singer Dead committed suicide, creating an opportunity for Euronymous to fashion the concept of NBM as an antithesis to the normalcy of death metal. Next came Varg Vikernes' insinuating a connection to church arsons in an article that was intended to publicize Helevete. Next came Euronymous' murder by Vikernes that removed the center of both public discourse and fan discourse to Vikernes, his crimes, and evolving claims of identity.

Dead's Suicide: Defining NBM for Outsiders

In the beginning, the scene existed in Helevete, the clubs, and fanzines, and it was only the music and the personalities of an underground culture experimenting with a developing genre. The first important moment that redefined the culture, its symbols and purpose came with the suicide of Mayhem's lead singer, Dead, in 1991. Euronymous took photographs of the body and grabbed a few skull fragments to use later for jewelry before calling the police. He freely told these details and then used the death as a statement of band identification in an interview for Bard Eithun's fanzine. "We have declared WAR. Dead died because the trend people have destroyed everything from the old black metal/ death metal scene" (60). In this early mediation, he defines the band as agents in the music scene. The scope of the suicide only had impact among the performers and fans who knew Dead, and this interview in the fanzine used the orientation they understood, a scene where evolving styles threatened a particular type of

performance. Euronymous clearly saw the suicide as a symbol, and stated that he planned to use the photograph as the cover to a future album. The photograph and Euronymous' plans appear on the cover of *Dawn of the Black Hearts: Live in Sarpsborg* a fan-produced bootleg CD. The bootleg appeared in South America and spread internationally, demonstrating the potential voice that Euronymous had among the fan base.

The unplanned suicide of Dead and Euronymous' discourse to the fan community brought an element of reality to the symbols of death and violence in the music. Now the community had to deal with the potential of life imitating art, and the lifestyle becoming more than just a costume for concert performance.

Procreating Satan: Resurrecting the Church as an Agent of Suppression

For the general public, Dead's suicide had no more relevance than any other suicide, and it took mediation of the scene to build a context allowing the event to have social significance. The next step in the evolution of NBM's symbol system again came from a member connected to Mayhem, but this time the symbolic destruction had cultural reverberations. In 1993, the front page of the newspaper *Bergens Tidende* broke the story of an interview with an anonymous youth (later identified as Varg Vikernes) who associated with or was a member of a group that burned the 800-year-old Fantoft church. The historical building, itself a symbol of heritage and culture, lost its museum quality and became a symbol charged with religious meaning and cultural identification through the act of its burning. The symbol of the burned church and the symbolism of burning

the church quickly became relevant in the black metal circles and in the Norwegian discourse.

The article begins with Vikernes stating “We are behind all of the church fires in Norway. It started with Fantoft Stave Church. And we’re not stopping now” (Moynihan 379). Vikernes was a part-time member of Mayhem, and he had a solo project called Burzum that had a distribution deal with Euronymous. His association with those in Helevete and his specific claims of responsibility brought NBM into the national spotlight. The news article constructs that a group of Satanists are responsible for burning down eight churches, and the group are characterized by describing visible symbols in the apartment below Helevete where the interview took place. “It is either just an overgrown kid who finds Nazi paraphernalia, weapons, and Satanic symbols exciting, or BT’s reporters have come into a ‘world’ few people understand” (380). The article does not mention the music scene, but Vikernes is arrested after the paper is published, and the article establishes the primary symbols that will be attached to the metal music scene in all future mediation: Satanic and Nazi symbols.

While those symbols were inadvertently entered in the discourse, in the same article, Vikernes defines the burning church as a symbol. ““A church that had been revered for 800 years was something really big for us, and had more power”” (380). In this simple statement, the symbol of the church had been infused with an action that did not exist in the cultural orientation toward the church. While a symbol of heritage and of greater civic importance in the past, it was a preserved relic without consistent religious purpose. Drawing on the traditional dichotomy of the church versus Satan, the concepts of good and evil returned to the cultural discourse. Jacob Jervel, a theology professor and

minister in the State Church of Norway was asked why black metal can draw the youth of the country. He alludes to the lack of extremes in the Norwegian Church where evil is replaced with a “ghost” version of Satan that offers no explanation of the resonant, destructive forces that black metal produces within them. “The figure of Satan has enormous symbolic power. The word that is used as a substitute for it [in the State Church], ‘destructive,’ has nowhere near the same content” (Moynihan 77).

The face of black metal took on an extreme performance in which evil was conjured by displays of violence, brutality, and reframed symbols of decay and power. The archaic building and moderate religious rhetoric were reframed as the evil and the burned church as the good. The grotesque symbol of the burned church held a revolutionary symbol and a potential act that allowed the audience to reorient their view of the fossil image as a living force that acted to bind the NBM performers as a revolutionary group who not only reconfigured their art but also their world.

Through their symbol system and costume, NBM performers became gargoyles of deviance to the public, with their look and style conveying the crimes and violence of the media reports. Vikernes did not shy away from the charged symbols that the public discourse created, and he used a photograph of the burned church for his album *Askes* (Ashes) and on promotional brochures. A burning church gives a different symbolism from the unaffected church locked outside of time and change. For the community at large, it was a desecration of heritage, community, and spiritual connectivity, but in the metal underground that had swelled with disillusioned youths after the public controversy, the burning church offered the hope of a spiritual connection that had been lost. Expanding Burke’s definition of caricature beyond semi-science and semi-art, one

could argue the cultural crimes acted as a semi-cultural production. Among a certain mindset, specifically those who see the church as an impiety of Norwegian tradition (pagan heritage), the burning church offers a beauty of cleansing the culture of heresies. A similar connection can be made to the desecration of graves in a culture that traditionally destroyed the corporeal existence as a sendoff for a soul who would be reborn in Valhalla. Through the grotesque symbols, the metaphoric actions claimed by Vikernes added to the gargoyle of deviance constructed in the NBM persona. Through the action, claims, and reporting, the meaning of the “church” and of “graves” becomes a cultural question of meaning for “heritage” and “identity.” This period of devaluation of bounces from claims of a oppression and rebellion from Vikernes to the media’s portrayal of deviant identities as established in the U.S. rhetorics of fear.

Mystical Orientation, Role Play Rules, and the Gargoyle of Nazi Vikings

Most of the artists in the NBM scene were teenagers or young adults who composed, played, recorded, produced, and distributed their music, albums, and concerts. They did not fit the profile of rock stars nor did they have the oversight of the music industry. They produced highly personalized music using the symbols and traditions of metal from other cultures, but they formed their own symbolic language through their own cultural understanding.

After being charged with burning churches, Vikernes was arrested and convicted for murdering Euronymous. The motives of the murder have never been directly answered, but the result of the murder was to remove Euronymous’ influence from the NBM scene. Over the course of the next few years, Vikernes used the media and the

internet to attach new identities and motives for his actions. With Euronymous dead and Helevete closed, the core of the NBM scene had been removed. Bands tried to appear more evil than the next, or they changed their performance to distance themselves from the negative cultural perceptions.

Beginning with his murder trial, Vikernes became the face of NBM most reported. As the original member of the performance community to tie that community to cultural crimes, he also broadcast a set of motives for both his musical performance and his crimes. Vikernes drew inspiration for his spiritual reference from unlikely popular culture artifacts, drawing his performance names and spiritual beliefs from role playing games and the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien. Vikernes states:

Like I said, when the Christians called the gods of my forefathers “demons,” “trolls,” “goblins” and not least “evil,” I naturally felt attracted to everything that was seen as “evil” by the Christians. This is a slightly immature reaction, perhaps, but I was only a teenager, so I have no problems with that. I still had this attitude in 1991, and Uruk-Hai was an excellent name, but I felt that I was starting all over again, so I needed a new name too. As most Tolkien fans should know “burzum” is one of the words that are written in Black Speech on the One Ring of Sauron. As far as I remember the last sentence is “ash nazg durbabatuluk agh burzum ishi krimpatul,” meaning “one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.” The “darkness” of the Christians was of course my “light.” So all in all it was natural for me to use the name Burzum. (par. 11)

The creation of the band persona spawns from a combination of a rhetoric of antagonism and Vikernes' view that those termed evil were his heritage, creating a new unit of measuring the social organization around him through a self-consciously produced philosophy of rhetorical inversions.

One may note that this mystical philosophy emerged from the participation in a role playing game which removed the norms of Norway and implemented a set of rules that governed the behavior and advancement of the character. If Vikernes felt that capitalism was the great enemy, he had no way to fight it, but by overlaying the rules of a fantasy world on the real world, he could imagine possibilities for a different form of existence.

My hope would be that Burzum could inspire people to wish for a new and better reality in the real world, and hopefully do something about it.

Maybe revolt against the modern world, by refusing to participate in the rape of Mother Earth, by refusing to participate in the murder of our European race, by refusing to become a part of any of these artificial media-created "rock'n'roll" subcultures, and by building new and healthy communities, where the Pagan culture - and magic if You like - can be cultivated. (Vikernes par. 32)

Vikernes was the fulcrum in the shift of black metal as generalized darkness and evil into a genre that supported political messages. During his imprisonment for Euronymous' murder, he shifted from claiming to be a Satanist to being a Nazi to being Pagan Socialist. His imprisonment entered black metal into a spotlight of notoriety

which allowed anyone to latch onto the pseudo-terrorist persona of the criminal black metal performer.

The discourse of the performer and the media created a gargoyle of black metal identity that includes citational elements that personified a strong distancing from society and social power elements including government, church, capitalism, and modernity. The gargoyle was positively linked to heritage, nature, and individual initiative. These combinations were then appropriated by Nazi groups who wanted to expand beyond the skinhead followers. Black metal audiences had a set of pieties that allowed for their mystical philosophy to be impregnated with the symbols and philosophies of Nazi dogma, a connotation that had been made in the first newspaper article about the church arsonists.

Gargoyles of Nazism and Fairytales as Communism Collapsed

For Absurd, a German underground band, black metal identity became a marker of protest that from the beginning was rife with political elements. At around the same time Vikernes was arrested in Norway, the members of Absurd were convicted of the murder of a German youth. The German press followed with allegations of Satanic ritual, but the band states that the crime came from a domestic dispute with the youth regarding the youth's attempt to blackmail the band members (Moynihan 289). Regardless of the real motives behind the crime, the story became one where black metalers, obsessed with satanic rituals, sacrificed the teenager. In Germany, the black metal underground did not progress as rapidly or appear to latch on to the identity that the media had produced, but it did form close ties with neo-Nazi groups and ideologies. The

recent history of a divided Germany holds some clues as to the orientation of that black metal audience.

Hendrik Mobus, a member of Absurd, talked about his view of metal and black metal after his initial incarceration (Moynihan 279-281). He describes growing up in East Berlin in the 1980s under a system that promised a fall of capitalism and the growth of the Soviet state while experiencing poverty and bearing witness to the crumbling government and disconnect from his German heritage. He talks about reading fairy tales and folk tales and coming to understand that his heritage was that which must outlive the Soviet occupation for him to have an identity after the collapse. He states that listening to metal at that time equaled a political protest against the “Big Brother” Moscow, and that most of his music came from West German radio and from bootlegs and pirated music produced in Poland.

Similar to Norwegian youth, Mobus saw his homogenous culture lacking, but unlike the Norwegians, he saw a cultural shift that would occur at the end of a period of government disintegration. Instead of a stagnant social order, he was facing the void of neither a socialist system nor a capitalist control, and he with the other band members began looking at the folk ideologies which were reflected in the Nazi mythos as a resource to produce identity for his people. Black metal music offered a template on which he could build that identity. Mobus says:

We cannot come to terms with the fact that this anti-spirit, Christianity, which is so diametrically opposed to our true nature, still holds hostage the sacred shrines of our ancestors and that it should determine our history—not just in terms of the individual. From this reason we support every idea

or concept that is subversive to the status quo, and which swings the pendulum to our side. Personally I'm rather fond of the "political heathendom" concept developed by Varg Vikernes. He discovered the way for combining *Realpolitick* and heathenism. Therefore Absurd also supports the "Pan-Germanic Heathen Front" program! (Moynihan 287).

With Vikernes' quick change from Satanist to Nazi, the black metal identity became available to bands who functioned to promote a political agenda, and the gargoyles of Norway had their meaning shifted to a fascist qualification. Christianity became synonymous with capitalism, and when approached from the perspective that Christianity came from Judaism, the inverted cross now functioned in the same manner as the Hitler era's Jew as rat metaphor.

The antagonism expressed by the original black metalers against commercialized death metal, extended to be an antagonism against all popular culture under Jewish control. The mythos of Norwegian history was incorporated into Germanic myth, allowing a new belief system to emerge that allowed a Nazi perception distanced from the criminal view of Nazis in history. For the black metal genre, as a whole, the concept of history is a fabrication and suppressive narrative imposed by the dominant cultural myth deployers whether they be the church or the government.

To destabilize the official myth, black metalers have appropriated and reassigned meaning to dominant narratives of historical powers and victims. Burke writes about the use of victimage as a means of creating a norm in which a group can find solidarity, remarking that Hitler's use of the perfect victim, the Jew, was a cruel example, and likewise, the black metalers from both Norway and Germany have constructed their

gargoyles with a principle of introducing a previously unseen victimage to their respective cultures (*Permanence* 285). The Norwegians set up heritage versus the church, so church buildings, church burials, and, at least in the rhetoric, Christians as a whole become the needed sacrifice to allow the Norwegian community to return to a solidarity in identity. The Germans approach the victimage from the Nazi roots, lumping in the Jews with the Christians as the hierarchical dominators of German heritage and place. The black metalers begin forming their gargoyles in a response to the stagnant or declining cultures in which they sense a hierarchical weight oppressing, suppressing, and willing to sacrifice them for the social structures' own survival. They sense the idea of the original sin, "the uneasiness or categorical 'guilts' implicit in the social order," and then the symbolic becomes active "so that the crime is in effect the translating of a vague, unreal, and even mysterious sentiment into the conditions of something really here and now" (*Permanence* 290). Within these cultures, a shift from the categorical to personal motive marked a new stage of gargoyle evolution followed by criminal acts. On his website, Vikernes posted:

As people involved with magic already know, magic is all about imagination, symbolism, visualization and willpower. If You imagine a thing happening in Your head, You will make it happen - that is if Your willpower is strong enough, or if You possess enough "spiritual power." If an object symbolizes a certain power, it becomes that power. That is why our forefathers carved runes into rocks and pieces of wood, because the runes symbolized certain powers. (par. 16)

In the U.S., the hierarchies constructing the rhetoric of fear allowed motives based on the institutional orientations, but in Norway, the institutional discourse fit within the cultural hegemony where a grammar of moderation controlled all discourse. Murder and arson became symbols of antimoderation, and Satan, in song titles, in album art and concert props, and in the Satanist discourse of NBM performers, became the most pious symbol in NBM. Unlike the American and British bands that appropriated symbols from living discourses, the NBM scene charged symbols from fossil concepts, in the process creating the polarization that had not existed in the homogenous moderation.

Conclusion

The NBM movement began with symbols from other cultures introduced in a performance of extremes. Euronymous and Vikernes employed action and character as a function for the identity of both the performance and the scene. Vikernes' actions acted out the rhetorical claims of the PMRC and the fundamentalists in the borrowed panic rhetorics. NBM creates a performance of dystopia and forces the culture to place identity on those who purposefully become deviant in behavior and in performance. In the end, the performativity of earnestness in a hierarchy of extremes establishes the rhetoric of fear in a culture that exists through an institutional rhetoric of homogenous culture, procreating Satan in an evaluation of Norwegian order that causes new categories to be created and a potential for the diversities of other institutional rhetorics. In particular, the piousness to anti-Christianity led to a rhetoric of the colonized that resurrected the concept of an artificial heritage and a nonexistent enemy. In this rhetorical frame, the

Nazi ideal of purity and myth reawaken, and the NBM rhetoric is appropriated for a new Nazi orientation.

Chapter Six

Metal—Fear, Identity, and Deviance

This analysis focused on how the public rhetorics deploy identity on listener populations through both the mediation and legislation of identities. These rhetorical movements produce and deploy deviant identities, depend on the construction of cultural crisis, and generate counter rhetorics of agency for individuals and subcultures. The study moved 1) topically through metal history, 2) geographically from the United States to Norway, and 3) contextually through media events that produce the public discourses of identity, crisis, and counter rhetorics. This study charts the rhetorical movements that have created fear within communities, leading to threats of legislation or the criminalization of segments of the population.

Chapter two was an analysis of the construction of metal identity through early texts and stories. The texts “Looks that Kill,” *Shout at the Devil*, and *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II* demonstrated the mediated identity of metal through the 1980s. The U. S. media spawned Satanic panic and its connection with metal through Fundamentalist Christian literature center this chapter’s rhetoric of fear argument. Using Joshua Gunn’s theories about the capital of occult rhetoric, I established the primary cultural motivation behind the rhetoric of metal detraction and the use of culture’s negative symbols for self identity. Metal culture and music used symbols and language

that fit within institutional rhetorics of fear where binaries frame meanings and apply identities through the institutional orientations.

When metal artists rework institutional symbols, they risk placing themselves in the negative aspect of the institutional binary: criminal, evil, or mentally ill. When the artists remove the institutional meanings from symbols, they embody the reality understood in the institutional orientation and its rhetoric of fear structured on negative hierarchies and binaries.

Chapter three focused on the convergence of institutional rhetorics of fear that constructed a blanket of negative identities for metal fans. During this period, media events centered on parental groups and fundamentalist organizations' attributions of criminal purpose to the performers while establishing the youth as controlled agents. Their public rhetoric formulated metal decadence versus home, God, and community. As exemplified by the PMRC testimony, this conservative rhetoric of fear is based on a rhetorical construction of culture at risk for disintegration. When the experts addressed metal as a problem, they gave it the properties of a mental illness or a drug addiction, a deviant cause with deviance as an effect. The fear centered on parental failures to guide the teens from the immoral choices or parental blindness to the "reality" of the metal youth. The conservative argument repositioned family as separate from culture and children as a property that needed protection from the vandalizing influences of metal. While this rhetorical stance originally applied to all popular music and their listeners, shows like *20/20* presented heavy metal music and its fans as a subculture deviants.

Chapter four examined the media's creation of scapegoats using the metal community to address sudden tragedies in which explanations are either absent or self-

incriminating. The focus of the chapter was the investigation, arrest, trial, and conviction in a triple murder case. Lacking evidence or clear motives, the symbols of metal culture were entered in a trial as evidence of supernatural purposes. In the orientation of the community, the symbols of metal turned the bearers into scapegoats.

A rhetoric of fear predicts a motive with a purpose that inverts the hierarchal perfection of the culture. The protestant orientation perceived the metal symbols as a purpose of the bearers to strive for perfection of humans as Satan. The Satanic panic rhetoric grew from a convergence rhetorics of fear: classifications of deviance created in the disciplinary institutions, mediated to the public, and reformed in the rhetorical mold of religious hierarchy as antichrist motives. For 1993 West Memphis, Arkansas, the symbols of metal transformed those who wore them into devils with motive, scapegoats that bore the crisis.

Chapter five examined the limited context in which Northern European metal developed and in which the Satanic panic rhetoric spread from the U. S. to Norway. The chapter focused on the development of the Black Metal genre through an escalating appropriation and transformation of symbols. Through the mediation of crimes committed by artists from the scene, the rhetoric escalated. Symbols of the Church of Norway that had lost their presence in everyday lives were infused with binary meanings that become objects of action (church burnings, grave desecrations), ushering in a rhetorical battle for culture. The performativity of earnestness in a hierarchy of extremes establishes the rhetoric of fear in a culture that exists through an institutional rhetoric of homogeneity, procreating Satan in an evaluation of Norwegian order that caused the potential for the diversity in other institutional rhetorics. The piousness to anti-

Christianity led to a rhetoric of the colonized that resurrected the concept of an artificial heritage and a nonexistent enemy. In this rhetorical frame, the Nazi ideal of purity and myth reawaken, and the NBM rhetoric is appropriated for a new Nazi orientation.

Implications for Studying the Rhetoric of Fear

As metal continues to be a thriving international music genre, the problems of identity construction persist. First, metal continues to evoke responses from rhetorics of fear because its symbol system has inverted hierarchical readings to different institutional orientations. The first example below demonstrates how the performance of symbols from the NBM scene supported a rhetoric of fear native to Krakow, Poland. Secondly, the institutional rhetorics of fear persist and they continue to create identities for listeners. In 2004, the Norwegian black metal band Gorgoroth became the center of a scandal while performing for Polish state television and recording a concert video. An article from *Aftenposten English Web Desk* frames the original report. A quote from TVP director Andrzej Jeziorek frames the scene.

On stage there was blood everywhere. About ten decapitated sheep heads and naked people, alive, on large crosses. Everyone was painted with 100 liters of sheep blood. Also there were Satanist symbols everywhere. One of the hanging female models fainted and an ambulance had to be called.

(Tisdall)

Removed of the press coverage of NBM and its crimes, Gorgoroth's performance created a sensation in Krakow. Crucifixions, nudity, and symbolic violence play on the symbols of deviancies in a Christian orientation. The article both mentions the

connection of the city to the Pope, and it closes by stating that “recent troubles with sects and Satanist groups have made the issue especially sensitive in Poland.”

I watched the DVD produced from the performance, and I found it boring. Gorgoroth’s earnestness and humorless performance shades a serious intent. The concert stage had crosses with nude men and women hanging, but they were not part of any interaction with the performers or the audience. Deconstructing the Christian crucifixion mythos, the hung bodies had neither personality or identity, only a shared corporal humanity. Along the stage, spikes held the heads of sheep. While this animal has analogical charges to Christ as the “lamb of God” and to Christians as members of a flock, there is no overt construction of meaning given them other than parts of corpses on display. At no point in the performance does the lead singer acknowledge the crowd or attempt to provoke a reaction. The performance, in all of its gore and symbolism, proceeds with workmanlike sincerity, yet the performance of the symbols is left to the viewer’s orientation.

Gorgoroth, using the NBM symbol system, performed for an audience where the orientation had a forthright Christian concern. A culture already *troubled* by sects and Satanists found the exemplar of the troubles in the performance. The article paraphrases the station director as having wanted to stop the performance “but feared a riot from enthusiastic, bloodied fans who had paid for tickets.” The DVD does not show a frenzied crowd or a violent performance, but the orientation of Krakow allows the director’s perception to be validated and for the media to carry it without question. The symbols of NBM have encountered a new orientation, and without the crimes of the early 1990s, the performance gave birth to anti-Pope, anti-community, and antichrist action. The

audience became a group of blood soaked deviants prepared to unleash violence if the performance had been stopped. The symbols of metal had again been wrapped in a local rhetoric of fear, and the performers and fans had an identity placed on them through those expectations.

In places like the U.S. the rhetorics of fear were not exposed and exorcised, and many of the problem myths from the 1980s continue. In a *New York Times* blog on October 6, 2009, freelance journalist and musician Josh Max wrote about how he began listening to metal after a succession of jobs that folded in the bad economy left him depressed and losing his savings. He marked the intensity of metal as contributing factor to his managing the downtime and rebounding. The editors posted responses to the piece, including one that brings Stuessy's hypodermic model of music into the 21st century.

Warning Label

As a hired gun who has hit more than one rough patch, I can relate to the story but I choose life over death. It is, no doubt, the harder road but it's the only thing that will work long term. Anger, violence and hate all expressed in the music will eventually eat away at the soul. I am a little frightened when I think of, not the author of our story, who is obviously educated, hard working and well intentioned, but the truly ignorant and hopeless who also turn to this music and feed on it eventually acting out in rage the themes they've been chanting. I believe that music is one of the most powerful movers in popular culture and should be used wisely as a mood altering drug. (MMN)

Who are the truly ignorant and hopeless? Are they the uneducated as is inferred by the respondent? The rhetoric of fear may have moved from the pervasive conservative base of 1985, but the effects of the rhetoric persist in creating identities constructed in classist discourse that privileges the educated, the hallmark of the institutional norm. Even among educated fans, there appears to be a need for absolution. In a discussion forum opened after the posting of the emails to the editors, a fan defends her fandom by stating that she does not fit the profile nor does metal.

I don't fit the usual profile of a "Metalhead." I've read *War and Peace* and have a Masters from Columbia in Dramaturgy and Script Development. If you saw me on the street you would think I was a nice young twenty-something girl who listens to Coldplay or Lady Gaga, but most likely I have Opeth playing on my ipod. Metal is my music of choice because it taps into raw emotions and provides a cathartic release from the pressures of daily life. Good metal can be as powerful as Wagner or as intricate as jazz, but it rarely gets the respect afforded other genres of music.

The "profile" is the identity constructed through a rhetoric of fear. It has been produced out of inversions of institutional norms, and as long as institutions influence the rhetoric, it will continue to have a potential to categorize segments of the population who listen or perform metal.

A Communication Problem

This dissertation explored how symbols, meaning, and reality are constructed through the mass consumption of art and the public discourse critiquing or criticizing the art. James Carey defined communication as the ritual construction, maintenance, repair, and transform reality through the creation of symbols systems (Carey 24). The symbols of metal and the public discourse surrounding metal constructed and maintained identities taken as reality by those who, as Kenneth Burke described, are pious to the symbols that construct their orientation in and to the world. Both rhetorics of fear and issues of identity construction operated in the social construction of the Satanic problem and of the heavy metal problem.

In each culture that has created a problem around metal cultures, rhetorics of fear take the place of analysis and critical understanding of the metal cultures. These rhetorics create reality through the dramatistic framing of the social interactions, reconfiguring and applying old symbols to reframe the public understanding of situations that lack other explicit purpose. The rhetorics are built on the binaries and inverted hierarchies present in institutional discourse. In the protestant southeastern U.S., symbols of metal became confused with what the community perceived as Satan and criminal, marking the wearers of the symbols as deviants in both Christian and criminal justice rhetorical hierarchies. If Satan becomes the focus, the inverted hierarchy to be more like Satan becomes a cornerstone in the rhetoric of fear.

In transforming one's perception of reality, symbols of Christianity have been reconfigured to impart an understanding of deviance in a concise good versus evil paradigm, and other institutions also produce this pattern. In the criminal justice system,

citizen versus criminal operates as a binary, and a rhetoric that inverts the hierarchy to show the potential for developed criminality produces an identity of deviance. When Stuessy presented his hypodermic model of music to the Senate, he transformed the symbolism of music to be the cause of social, religious, and criminal deviance. This reality is maintained through the repetition of the claims in public discourse.

The rhetoric of fear presents problems of deviance and issues identities of deviants through the rhetorics pattern of inverted hierarchies based on the culturally negative identification of institutional binaries. This pattern frames the norms of the culture at risk and identifies the deviance and deviants creating the risk. A rhetoric of fear predicts a motive with a purpose that inverts the hierarchal perfection of the culture. When a crisis occurs in the culture, the deviants identified in the pattern become perfect scapegoats because they carry the symbols identified as deviance and understood as an identity of the deviant.

The rhetoric of fear also generates counter rhetorics, and metal cultures are complicit in the conflagration of the symbols equated as deviant. From Mötley Crüe's use of the pentagram to Vikernes' appropriation of Nazi discourse, the use of deviant symbols creates opportunity for reframing the institutional rhetorics by the artists, and the symbol use creates an escalation of deviant identity through the institutional rhetorics.

In the study of the rhetorics of fear and the discourse, I have outlined the movement from conservative calls for protecting the vulnerable youth to youth calls for a heathen nationalist state. The reality of the heathen Nazi, at least the orientation of the heathen Nazi, can be seen in the reconstruction of the conservative rhetoric of fear translated into the language of a colonized people. Both Tipper Gore and Varg Vikernes

addressed the public with a rhetoric of fear that promised deviance and cultural decay, the former framed it as the destruction of utopia and the later as the destruction of a dystopia. Both employed a discourse of fear to strengthen a rhetorical attempt at the construction of reality through their use of symbols.

The continued use and reconstruction of the symbols of metal and of metal music promises a continuation of discourse othering the music and presenting its listeners with negative identities. Understanding this use allows a new lens on the process of public discourse in the construction of problems, individual and group identities, and in the rhetorical segregation of shifting demographic categories like class.

Gender has a significant history in the public discourse around metal. From Alice Cooper performing in lace and Poison gracing their album covers with make-up comparable to *Vogue* to academic claims of a dominant, misogynistic heterosexuality, symbols of gender have been performed and exaggerated through the history and discourse of metal. A survey of discussion forums, personal blogs, and responses to publications on news and entertainment websites show a fan base that includes many female listeners and homosexual fans. As the rhetorics of fear operate through the inversions of hierarchies, gender also falls on that level. From the conservative rhetoric of the PMRC, the deviant claims of perversion were unmarried sex, masturbation, and sexual violence. From the academic side, one can find claims of homophobia and misogyny. In looking at deviance in metal, one may unpack the institutional rhetorics of fear concerning gender and deviance.

This dissertation adds to the study of rhetorics of fear that have plagued American culture: McCarthyism, the cold war, post-911 terrorism, comic book menace,

reconstruction, the war on drugs, and others dating back to the colonial witch hunts and presentation of native populations. This study moves beyond these political movements to target products of popular culture and the consumers of these products. Specifically, it lays a groundwork for the analysis of media stories that “profile” fans of a musical style or of a music subculture in the wake of tragedies like school shootings, murders, and suicides where teens are involved. Beyond music, video games, television, social networking, and downloadable content have the ability to create areas where symbols may operate in the same rhetorical space as metal music. Because the national socialist music scene persists, the continued study of the rhetorics of fear will allow an understanding of how they construct internal and external identities through evolved rhetorics borrowed and configured from external cultural sources.

Metal is the style of deviancy, a set of symbols that operate as an antithesis to the institutions through which contemporary rhetoric finds its reality construction. Metal has been defined by public discourse, and through the discourse, deviant identities have been created for performers, fans and the music. In both the social construction of crises and in the perception of reality through symbols, rhetorics of fear have converged and charged the gestalt symbol “metal” with the deviances of institutional symbols both used by and attributed to metal performers and fans. Through these same rhetorics of fear and sets of symbols, metal artists and fans have constructed realities that transfer the power of cultural symbols into the incongruous fossils of both objectivist individuality and Nazi culture. Metal is a genre of deviance, and rhetorics of fear maintain that reality.

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