

# ANDROCENTRISM AND MISOGYNY IN LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY ROCK MUSIC

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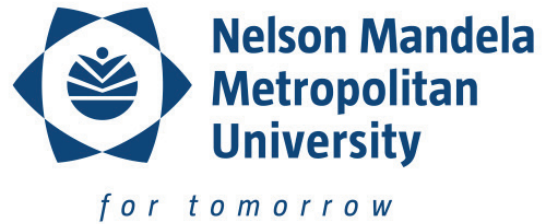
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In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned treatise / dissertation / thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

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## **Abstract**

Judith Butler's writings on gender ostensibly changed the way gender is considered with regard to an individual's subjectivity. Her writings expressed a discursive parameter that changed the theoretical standpoint of gender from that of performance, to that of performativity. In short, the notion of gender became understood as a power mechanism operating within society that compels individuals along the heteronormal binary tracts of male or female, man or woman. Within the strata of popular culture, this binarism is seemingly ritualized and repeated, incessantly. This treatise examines how rock music, as a popular and widespread mode of popular music, exemplifies gender binarism through a notable androcentrism. The research will examine how gender performativity operates within the taxonomy of rock music, and how the message communicated by rock music becomes translated into a listener's subjectivity.

Key words: gender; performativity; rock music; cultural industry; women; subjectivity

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## Introduction

The research contained in this treatise examines how women have been represented in rock music throughout the genre's history. The research's primary thesis is that women have been overtly represented as infantile and waiting beings within the genre's artefacts, and that any agency on their part has been undermined by rock music's patriarchal sentimentality and heteronormative repetition. Rock music, through its lyrical content, music video production, and androcentric motivations has diluted the role of women to that of the subordinate object in waiting to be filled by the fecundity of the virile rock musician's masculinity. As Angela Carter writes of pornography: "man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting." (Carter 2000: 4). In rock music, in certain respects, this sentiment is apparently repeated.

The research follows Judith Butler's assertion that a gender hierarchy, such as that ostensibly contained in rock music, is one of performativity, and that "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which adheres its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a temporal duration" (Butler 2008: 113-124). In other words, gender is not a universal manifestation of identity, but rather a temporary and transitory role performed through a subject. Gender is an act, and this act is naturalised through ritual repetition. The research here shows that rock music is a mechanism through which highly specific and non-negotiable gender acts are displayed and defined.

In this treatise, the research will be explored in the following manner. In Chapter One the history of rock music will be examined and reconnoitered in an attempt to precisely offer a usable topology of the genre. Following this, Chapter Two will establish the discursive parameters of the theoretical standpoint articulated by Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2008), in a manner so as to better understand how it is that performativity operates through cultural performances (such as rock music). Chapter Three will use Butler's articulation of gender as performativity to closely examine a litany of nine rock songs which parade across the genre's history: namely, The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" (1964), The Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb" (1966), Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (1969), Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993), Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996), Blink-182's "Dammit (Growing Up)" (1997),



Brand New's "Jude Law and the Semester Abroad" (2002), Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004), and Fall Out Boy's "Sugar, We're Goin Down" (2006). The selection of songs examined in this chapter offer a comprehensive selection of rock music that demonstrates how rock music's performance of gender has (and oftentimes has not) changed over the genres history. After this, Chapter Four will examine how rock music is received by its audience. It will firstly examine the discursive parameters of the message reception theory of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer presented in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). However, the ostensible pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer will be tempered with the more optimistic reception theory of Stuart Hall who maintains that a viewer's agency still allows for some negotiation with regard to the media message one is receiving. Finally, the research will conclude by considering whether or not rock music's treatment of women has directly influenced a societal discourse of androcentrism and patriarchy, or whether the fluidity of gender performativity along with negotiation on the part of the listener allows for critical engagement with this representation.

Methodologically, the research conducted will be a qualitative content analysis of the songs mentioned above. As cultural artefacts, each song is ensconced and codified within a complex arrangement of media and social history. As David Brackett writes in *Interpreting Popular Music* (2000), each song finds itself caught within a particular "musical code" which packages a songs with "'extra-musical' factors [such] as media image, biographical details, mood, and historical and social associations" (Brackett 2000: 9). This results in each listener's encounter with a song being a unique and oftentimes personal experience. However, the research will be sure to coincide Brackett's idea along with the neo-Marxist's theory of the cultural industry, and will question how such unique and sometimes personal experiences are packaged and commoditised by Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of the cultural industry.

With regard to the analysis of the songs, the research will focus primarily on the lyrics and lyrical structure of each song insofar as "lyrics are not only about artists telling stories but also about communicating discourses about their identity" (Machin, 2010: 77). It will carefully look at examples of metonymy, metaphor and language play in each instance, while also noting which lyrics, motifs, and themes tend to be repeated, or, as is often the case, which of these lyrics, motifs, and themes are notably absent (not only in each song, but over the entire history of rock music). Sonic and aural properties

will also be examined: increases in tempo and volume can be used to emphasise lyrical content, and this will be carefully noted. Also, in understanding gender as performativity, the research will unpack these lyrics and examine whether or not they offer a series of codified cues, instructions, or guidelines, for the listener to interpret, instructing how gender should be performed correctly (according to the dominant, heteronormative, social discourse of the time, that is).

In short, this treatise will not argue whether or not rock music is for or against a particular gender identity, but rather it will attempt to show that rock music is a mechanism through which gender performativity operates. It will then discuss whether the listeners of this particular genre are passive receivers of the genre's codification of gender, or instead if they are capable of negotiating and navigating the performance which rock music perpetually repeats for them.

## **Chapter One: The History and Topology of Rock Music**

Defining the history of rock music as a specific genre is a task that requires particular attention insofar as even its beginnings are often mired in confusion and controversy. While there appears to be a consensus that rock music emerged following the end of World War II (Studwell & Lonergan 1999: xii), there is much argument over what, today, constitutes rock music. From the genre's inception and birth in the 1950s, it has developed and multiplied into a resounding taxonomy of modes and subgenres all falling beneath the blanket-term 'rock', whilst also all standing alone within their own subgenre's particular aesthetic principles.

The chapter will examine rock music's history, paying close attention to its beginnings in post-World War II USA and its international spread across the globe. It will examine crucial moments in the genre's inception and lifespan, and will attempt to plot a comprehensive route from its early emergence to its place in popular music today. Following this, and using this history as a guide-light, the chapter will attempt to define a composite definition of the genre so as to explain how songs which sound entirely different can still be labelled beneath the same generic banner of rock. It will make use of critical genre theory to assist in formulating this definition. Lastly, the chapter will begin illustrating the role of gender and identity in rock music, before examining the discursive parameters of the theoretical standpoint articulated by Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2008), which will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

### **1.1 The History of Rock Music**

An atmosphere of paranoia spread across the world following the end of World War II. The emergence of the 'Cold War' ostensibly divided the world along the ideological and political lines of Communism and Democracy (Pierce 2009). It was during this time, between "1947 and 1953, that the line dividing East from West, Left from Right, was carved deep into... cultural and intellectual life" (Judt 2005: 197), and this divide was exacerbated by the perpetual threat of nuclear war. Russia and the USA were arming themselves with an ordnance of thermonuclear weaponry, and a thermonuclear war seemed be understood as an eventuality (Judt 2005: 247).

While George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973) and television sitcoms such as *Happy Days* (1974-1984) depicted this era as something that was blithely carefree, the USA was going through a phase of intense social anxiety, and this Cold War period became an age of paranoia, anxiety and fear. What resulted from this penetrating and pervasive paranoia was an era of dynamic and creative change within USA youth culture. During the 1950s the West changed as "African Americans quickened the pace of the struggle for equality by challenging segregation in court [while] a new youth culture emerged with its own form of music... [all the while] social critics, poets, and writers - conservatives as well as liberals - authored influential critiques of American society (Digital History 2012). It was during this period of creative impetus that rock music emerged from this flourishing irruption of popular, intellectual culture.

Rock was an exciting new genre of popular music that developed out of a wide amalgamation of musical influences ranging from American modern folk musicians (such as Woody Guthrie, John Lomax and Lead Belly) and rhythm and blues (such as T-Bone Walker, Big Joe Turner and Fats Domino), along with a "musical stew of traditional country, honky-tonk, electric blues, and jump blues" (Miller 2008: 207). There is a tendency amongst some musical historians to attempt to uncover the single song which can be unanimously regarded as the 'first' rock song. Of these songs, three are often brought into contention: namely, Goree Carter's "Rock Awhile" (1949), Jimmy Preston's "Rock the Joint" 1949 and Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats's "Rocket 88" (composed by Ike Turner, 1951). When listened to, one notices certain sonic elements that are common of these three recordings. The popular 12-bars blues chord progression (which are predominantly based upon the tonic (I), sub-dominant (IV), and dominant (V) chords of the key progression) is highlighted in these three songs illustrating the strong blues influence. However, unlike the blues, these three songs are performed up-tempo ('faster'). Also, the call-and-response quality of blues music is lost with this increase in tempo and the songs sound energetic compared to the slower, more considered blues contemporaries of the time.

The up-tempo engagement with blues music became known as "rock 'n roll", and this moniker is arguably derived from the Trixie Smith blues recording, "My Daddy Rocks Me (With One Steady Roll)" (1922): a down-tempo recording comparatively slow compared to the up-tempo recordings mentioned above. The implications of the word

'rock' was also different: Trixie Smith's 'rock and roll' is a slow and pronounced sway, whilst Carter, Preston and Turner rocked with a notable excitement and energy in their sonic landscape. It was that new energy in the music of the time that became the basis for rock music.

Along with this energy, another element of this style of music was found with the birth of 'distortion'. Distortion (a term used interchangeably with 'fuzz' and 'overdrive') is an important aspect of the birth of the rock 'n roll sound, however it is interesting how little attention the sound receives in the literature regarding rock music's origins (Miller, 2008; Wicke, 1990; Studwell & Lonergan, 1999). The sound of distortion is not unique to the genre and other popular musical genres of today (such as pop, hip hop, and rhythm and blues) have found uses for distortion as a character of their musical sound. However it was almost certainly an element that began in rock music, and rose through rock music's history. Even when listening to the early rock recordings, such as the abovementioned Goree Carter's "Rock Awhile" (1949), one can hear elements of a distorted sound emerging into this new style of music. The article, "Accidents and Screwdrivers: The Origin of Distortion" (2009), reveals, in detail, how it became inexplicably linked to the history of rock music. As the author of the paper writes:

One of the earliest uses of distortion was on the song "Rocket 88", performed by The Kings of Rhythm and written by Ike Turner. Although written as a rhythm and blues song, it became one of the earliest rock and roll songs, if not the first, and was later a minor hit for a more familiar band, Bill Haley and the Comets. In any case, the distorted tone came about when rhythm guitarist Willie Kizart arrived at the studio with a damaged amplifier. Producer Sam Phillips later claimed that the amp had fallen off the top of Kizart's car, while Turner claimed that the amp had been left in the trunk and rain leaked in, causing the damage. In either case the band and Phillips loved the sound, and created what is regarded (though often disputed) as the first recording of distortion. (LazarusOnGrave 2009)

Distortion emerged from this damaged amplifier, and the sound continued to grow with the genre. To understand the sound in its simplest terms, it is a result of electrical guitar equipment exceeding the limits of its inputs and 'clipping' the sound that is produced. Distortion has a buzzing, often noisy, "not-quite-of-this-world timbre. It sounded kind of synthetic, and far from warm or earthy" (Weir 2011). Rock musicians have sought unique methods through which to create distortion, and the distortion sound is often achieved through various means. While Willie Kizart was able to achieve distortion through the

accidental fall of his guitar amplifier from the roof of his car (LazarusOnGrave 2009), other musicians have gone through various lengths to achieve the distorted sound. Dave Davies of The Kinks, for example, achieved a gritty distortion sound from using a “razor blade to slice the speaker cone of [his amplifier] — affectionately referred to as his “fart box” — and puncturing it with knitting needles so that the fabric contributed to the sound as it vibrated” (Buskin 2009: 26). Today’s distorted sounds are achieved, by and large, from a guitar’s effects (“stomp”) boxes, or simply added digitally onto a song, post-production, by a music engineer. Whether the distortion sound is manually achieved or added via a post-production process, it is still central to the rock music sound. A primary example of the effect distortion can have on a song can be heard on Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (1991). The song begins with four chords (E-A-G-C) strummed in a syncopated sixteenth note rhythm. This guitar part (referred to as a ‘riff’) is repeated twice until the same guitar part becomes heavily distorted at the ten second mark. The distortion in this song is introduced to the listener with a small drum fill two bars earlier. A change in attack by guitarist Kurt Cobain, along with the additional distortion sound, results in a noise that is noticeably heavier, grittier and determined. It sounds almost as if the guitarist will lose control of his instrument at any moment (seemingly, Kurt Cobain has a history of losing control of his instruments. His band, Nirvana, would often finish their live concerts by destroying their musical equipment (Azerrad 1993: 140)).

Why distortion becomes so fundamental in understanding the history of rock music is because distortion seemingly came to represent a rock music ‘attitude’. Like distortion, the music seemed to represent a frustration and expression of pent-up social anxiety that could only be expressed through louder-than-loud guitars and pounding drum beats. Rock music became associated with the ideas of ‘rock’ as *praxis*. To ‘rock’ seemed to be an embellishment of two things on the part of the listener. Firstly, to ‘rock’ was an act of rebellion fuelled by the birth of a culture of popular music. While contemporary pop music was inoffensive, and almost saccharine in its execution, the call by musicians to ‘rock’ was a call to rebel and be dissatisfied with one’s current socio-political standing. The impetus to ‘rock’ still pervades the genre and its history. In 1975, American rock group KISS declared that they wished to “rock and roll all nite [*sic*] and party every day” (Stanley & Simmons 1975). Australian group AC/DC announced that would “salute... those about to rock” in the early 1980s (Young, et al. 1982). Furthermore, British group

Queen assured that “[they would] rock [their listeners]” (May 1977). It became a shared - ostensibly communal - phrase which was transferred from the music’s roots in the 1940’s and 1950’s into the various groups and bands that grew with the genre.

Along with this desire to ‘rock’, rock music was also very much about identity for many fans of the genre. This topic is discussed in great detail in Theodore Gracyk’s book *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (2001). Rock music, achieved many things for its listeners, and, as Gracyk writes, paraphrasing musician Tom Petty, rock music “gave us an identity” (Gracyk 2001: 1). The ‘us’ here, however, refers to a very particular identity as oftentimes rock music “is white music, rock performers are male, and rock songs express men’s feelings, especially men’s feelings about women. These generalizations are stereotypes, of course, but such stereotypes usually find their way into the official record” (Gracyk 2001: 16). Although rock music emerged from the African American experience of blues, and although those early rock songs mentioned above are all written and performed by African American artists, today rock music is pervaded by an identity that is generally both white and male. The genre is in no way exclusively white, however it is still ostensibly a genre of music that emerged from an appropriation of African American culture. While it is important to give mention to this here, the details of these identity politics will be discussed further later in this chapter, and in greater detail in the analysis presented in Chapter Three.

Sometime in the late 1960s, rock music diverged along two primary paths which became the central branches of its increasingly complicated taxonomy. Rock and roll developed into heavy metal and punk (and, these themselves branched into a variety of subgenres). Both of these genres produced the same rebellious attitude, search for identity, and distorted sound that rock exemplifies.

While rock and roll was developing in the United States, in Handsworth, England heavy metal begun as a rock subgenre: and the genre’s particular sound was arguably the result of an accident involving a metal press in a factory. A young guitarist named Tony Iommi was working in a sheet metal factory when he caught the tips of his ring- and middle fingers of his right hand in a metal press machine, severing his digits. As Iommi writes about the incident:

It was a big guillotine press with a wobbly foot peddle. You'd pull a sheet of metal in... and, bang, a giant industrial press would slam down and bend the metal. I'd never used the thing before, but things went all right until I lost concentration for a moment, maybe dreaming about being on stage in Europe and, bang, the press slammed straight down on my right hand. I pulled my hand back as a reflex and the bloody press pulled the ends off my two fingers. (Iommi 2013: 4-5)

As a right handed guitarist, this accident directly influenced the manner in which Iommi played guitar, and would later influence the sound of his band, Black Sabbath. He used a variety of techniques to supplement the limitations of his injury. Iommi would down-tune his guitar resulting in looser strings which made fingering notes easier. Also, the style he developed was more down-tempo than the rock and roll that was populating the American music scene. Black Sabbath's eponymously titled "Black Sabbath" (1970) epitomise this sound. It is a sound that is dark, brooding and ominous: the foundation of heavy metal.

Heavy metal, as it grew, became increasingly technical in its execution and musicianship. Groups such as Metallica would write pieces of music that would run for close to ten minutes, and would explore a variety of sonic landscapes: borrowing elements of acoustic flamenco guitar, and blues based lead guitar breaks; all tied together with the down-tuned drone and edifice of Iommi's slower, deeper style. As the guitar sound got deeper and darker, an increasingly guttural and aggressive vocal style was also developing. Today, heavy metal groups (such as Sunbather or SUNN O))) [*sic*] have taken Iommi's stylistic influence to its impossible conclusion. The heavy metal of today is so distorted, down-tuned and aggressive that the experience – for some – is increasingly unpleasant. This more unpleasant tonality coupled with heavy metal's preoccupation with imagery of blasphemy, the occult, and darkness make for a subgenre of rock that is not often associated with pleasantness.

As heavy metal developed, a second subgenre of rock music was also developing: punk. Like heavy metal, punk is also not a very accessible genre of rock music, although it has very different sonic qualities. While heavy metal has a wide variety of artifice and consideration in its composition and song construction, punk is more about being as simple as possible: punk is simplistic to the point of laziness.

Punk grew from a nostalgia that was growing in Britain in the late 1970s. During this period, a disenfranchised British youth were influenced by the portrait of the United States painted in films such as Lucas's already mentioned *American Graffiti* (1973), a



film which was advertised as “one of those great old movies about romance, racing and rock ‘n roll” (Lucas 1973). The up-tempo excitement of this rock and roll era generation, which was emblazoned with the driving distortion of artist such as Ike Turner and Jimmy Preston, caused the rise of ‘graffiti music’ in Britain exemplified by rock bands such as “Dr. Feelgood, The Stranglers, Roogalator, Eddie and the Hot Rods, Kilburn and the High Roads, and Joe Strummer’s 101ers” (Savage 1991: 107). In the documentary *Punk Britannia* (2012), Peter Capaldi examines the origins of punk rock and its birth in Britain. Capaldi states:

The evolutionary... birth of British punk, the underground London scene that came before the ground-zero of the Sex Pistol’s “Anarchy in the UK”. Overtime punk has been mythologised and reduced to a barrage of swearing, spitting, and safety pins. The foundations of punk were actually forged by a gateway generation, sandwiched between the sixties hippies and the seventies punks. They were the big brothers of punk, already themselves on a mission to take rock back from the jet-set. (Capaldi 2012)

The rock and roll influence of these groups was fundamental in the development of a punk rock sound. Groups such as Sex Pistols and The Clash, however, took the distorted guitar blues and up-tempo rhythm of ‘graffiti music’ to an aggressively logical conclusion. Punk music was not about the slower, darker songs of heavy metal: punk was bellicose, urgent and immediate. While heavy metal groups were writing sprawling and intricate pieces lasting near ten minutes long, punk music were creating simple, four chord arrangements at incredible tempos lasting around three minutes: while being soaked in an ideology of anarchy and vandalism, undermining any form of socially accepted identity. An example can be found in the Dead Kennedy’s satirical attack on then Californian Governor, Jerry Brown. Their song “California Über Alles” (1979) exemplifies the punk mode in its brevity, aggression and glibly politicised declarations.

Punk and heavy metal branched out from their origins in rock and roll, and each of these branches developed their own incredibly complicated taxonomy of subgenres. Heavy metal irrupted into smaller subgenres such as ‘thrash metal’, ‘power metal’, ‘black metal’, ‘doom metal’ and today’s ‘nu metal’ and ‘metalcore’. Punk also developed into the reggae influenced ska, the increasingly aggressive hardcore, ‘pop punk’, ‘so-cal’, ‘crust punk’ and ‘anti-folk’. The plethora of subgenres broke away and multiplied, while still sharing a variety of sonic commonalties and shared influences. Metal bands such

as Metallica developed their aggressive, thrash sound through a notable punk influence, while punk bands of today (such as My Chemical Romance) will pay homage to groups such as Metallica and Megadeth: the history of the genre is not a linear one, but rather a complicated taxonomy that moves forward, while constantly speaking back to the influences which came before it.

It was in the early 1990's when the two primary rock branches of punk and heavy metal diverged into a new subgenre labelled 'grunge'. This new subgenre was typified by groups such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Alice in Chains: who all tended to display elements of punk's urgency and anarchism, while appreciating the technicality of heavy metal. Alice in Chain's "Them Bones" (1992), for example, is punctual and urgent (like punk), while still showing metal technicality in vocalist Layne Staley's singing, and guitarist Jerry Cantrell's tendency for pentatonic based lead guitar breaks (Cantrell 1992).

Following grunge, the mid-nineties lead way to emo, and this genre then lead way to the rise of indie music with is relatively prevalent today. The history of rock, as this skeleton shows, has been a long and convoluted one. It ultimately begs the question of whether these bands are still considered rock music. Is rock music in fact a genre, or rather a useful moniker that can blanket a collection of musical acts that have little to no relationship? The following section of this chapter will consider the skeletal history illustrated here in an attempt to define a usable 'genre' of rock music.

## **1.2 Rock Music as a Single Genre**

The cursory history presented above tracks rock's beginnings in the 1950s to its establishment in the mid-1990s. It is a vast, sprawling collection of names, bands, groups, artists, events, albums, deaths and moments. To attempt to surmise the entirety of rock as a single genre may seem to be a fool's errand. For example, listening to the Jimi Hendrix Experience's "Purple Haze" (1967), and then listening to The Dead Milkmen's "Bitchin' Camaro" (1985) immediately afterwards will result in two very different sonic experiences: yet both songs can ostensibly be defined as rock music. Within the taxonomy of rock music, there seems to be as many different genres of rock music as there are groups who perform rock music.

Perhaps then when opting to define a genre of rock music, it would be more beneficial to explore beyond the aural and sonic properties of this collection of musical groups. The blues influence, rhythmic properties, and the like are not exclusive to rock music, and rock music is often guilty of appropriating elements from other popular musical genres such as hip hop, rhythm and blues, and pop music. Rock music is arguably not so much about the sound of the songs, but also the attitude and performance that is associated with it. Furthermore, rock music is often historized, and the signifiers of the genre will always exist within this history. A brief introduction to some genre theory will be rather beneficial when exploring this section of the research.

British visual semiotician, Daniel Chandler, has written at length on genre theory, and his document titled “An Introduction to Genre Theory” (1997) extrapolates on the difficulties in developing a usable genre in mediums such as film and literature. Furthermore, Chandler also highlights a fundamental problem with defining genres. Citing Christine Gledhill (1985), Chandler quotes:

To take a genre such as the ‘western’, analyse it, and list its principal characteristics, is to beg the question that we must first isolate the body of films which are ‘westerns’. But they can only be isolated on the basis of the ‘principal characteristics’ which can only be discovered from the films themselves after they have been isolated. (Chandler 1997 p. 2)

In effect, what is being argued here is that if this research is to define rock music as a genre, “analyse it, and list its principal characteristics” (Chandler 1997: 2), the research will first need to isolate a series of rock musicians beneath the same list of isolated principles and characteristics it wishes to define! It is apparently an impossible task worthy of one of Zeno’s paradoxes.

Contemporary genre theory, Chandler continues, tends to rather describe genres in the Wittgensteinian terms of ‘family resemblances’ (see Swales 1990) rather than definitionally. This essentially means that although commonalities and characteristics will be found within a genre such as rock music, these characteristics and commonalities will not always be common in all examples of the genre. The primary problem here, then, is that “no choice of text for illustrative purposes is innocent” (Swales 1990: 50), and the family resemblance theory can therefore be used to inexplicably make *any* text (or song, in this case) seem to resemble any other one. For example, if it is decided that a rock song

is characterised as containing drums and distorted guitar, than a song such as Run the Jewels' "Blockbuster Night Part 1" (El-P 2014) would, by definition, fall beneath the same moniker; although such a song is almost certainly a hip hop arrangement.

Ultimately, for the purpose of the research contained here, how we "define a genre depends on our purposes; the adequacy of our definition, in terms of social science at least, must surely be related to the light that the exploration sheds on the phenomenon" (Chandler 1997: 3). Therefore, within this research and its consideration regarding rock music and how woman are portrayed throughout its history, our definition should seemingly coincide with songs that feature women in some way. Doing so is important, as it allows for the research to extrapolate its findings beyond the focus of the sample of songs analysed. In other words, by defining rock as a genre, and then examining instances within that genre for the purpose of the research, one can safely assume – within reason – that these findings will apply to other rock songs featuring woman as subject as well. Of course, then, this says little about the genre and more about the songs themselves, and this could result in a falsely syllogistic logic when defining the genre. One cannot argue that this research is about women in rock, and the songs featured are rock songs, then all rock songs therefore are inevitably about women. Such an argument will have about as much credence as Sir Bedevere (Terry Jones) of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) arguing that witches are made of wood as they float like ducks.

Perhaps, then, the most reasonable method of defining the genre of rock, for the purposes of this essay, will be to first examine some existing definitions of the genre, and extrapolate upon those definitions so as to better generate a usable definition. Music historian and composer, Michael Miller, writes in his book *The Complete Idiots Guide to Music History* (2008) that "rock is defined by its energy, its simple melodies and catchy hooks, and, above all else, its attitude. From Brill Building pop to heavy metal, from punk to grunge, rock is about youth and rebellion. For all the music has changed, this much has remained constant" (Miller 2008: 206). Immediately, we can see the difficulty with a sonic definition of the genre. Miller expands upon this and illustrates why it has become so difficult to define the genre by the way it sounds. He continues: "The term *rock* has become somewhat generic, referring to a wide range of popular music in the second half of the twentieth century. Everything from Chuck Berry's pounding three-chord rockers to the sweet harmonies of the Beatles to the angry white noise of Sonic Youth has been categorized as rock – and correctly so" (Miller 2008: 206, author's italics).

Rock then, is not a genre based upon the method of which the sound is presented (as already stated). However, even though this is the case, it should be argued that distortion is almost certainly a key feature of the genre: insofar as a song without distortion, cannot be considered a rock song. Distortion itself is less an aural property of the genre as more a reflection of the youthful “attitude of rebellion” (Mille, 2008: 206) that is infused into the genre’s many subgenres. Distortion does not always sound the same. The early rock and roll musicians had a mild overdrive that crackled slightly at the edge of their guitar sound. The 1990s grunge groups had a stronger ‘fuzz’ to their distorted tones, whilst heavy metal bands have favoured an incredible amount of distortion which favours the high-end and low-end frequencies of their guitars. For example, the distortion of Cream’s “Sunshine of your Love” (1967) offers a warmer, ‘rounder’ sound to guitarist Eric Clapton’s guitar gymnastics, whilst the crass distortion of NOFX’s “It’s My Job to Keep Punk Rock Elite” (1997) is barely contained by guitarists El Hefe (Aaron Abeyta) and Eric Melvin’s disobedient punk guitar playing.

Distortion speaks more of the rock attitude than of the rock sound, as distortion adds a new element of difficulty to the playing of a guitar. A distorted guitar feeds back into the amplifier with a plethora of unwanted buzzes, clicks, and errant noises. Distortion makes guitar sound more wayward and uncontrollable: distortion is a sound that, for all intents and purposes, should not be there. The rock band controls it, and unleashes it when it is necessary.

To complicate matters further, rock musicians often fall to hyperbolic abstractions and universalities when speaking about the genre. More often than not, a rock musician will define the genre as something which is ‘primal’ and steeped within some naturalistic impulses which are manifested through the act of song writing and performance. Aerosmith guitarist, Joe Perry, places rock music in this discourse of primal-ness and impulsiveness during an interview with *Guitar World* magazine. Perry says that rock is “good because steak is good...unless you’re some sort of fucking vegetarian or something! Steak tastes good because it hits some primal, instinctive place in everybody. [It] strikes a note that exists in our subconscious and fulfil [*sic*] a primitive urge when we hear [rock] being played” (Tolinski 2004: 162). U2’s guitarist, David Howell Evans (widely known by his stage name “The Edge”), echoes such a sentiment when he argues about rock’s deep seated primal value. The Edge argues:

Bands that made these ridiculous progressive musical excursions that ultimately took you nowhere. Again, where's the passion, the life? You see, rock and roll isn't a career or a hobby-it's a *life force*. It's something very *essential*. We didn't get into this because we thought it'd be a good way to put our kids through college. Rock and roll is just something that I have to do. It's my *raison d'être* on every level. (Bosso 2005: 110, researcher's italics for emphasis)

A discourse couched in these terms pervade the definitions of the genre, littered with words such as 'primal', 'essential', 'passion', and so on. However, they do not help in understanding the genre insofar as they often tend to be a justification for playing rock music.

Ultimately, to describe a working genre of rock music, the music should display the following three characteristics. Firstly, rock music is a distorted and up-tempo genre of music primarily featuring guitar music. Secondly, rock music is a genre that exists within a complex taxonomy of styles and expressions. Thirdly, rock music is a part of a greater conversation of styles and form of musical expressions that emerged in the 1950s, and evolved until today. By acknowledging this, one can see – even on a very superficial level – which songs can be called rock songs.

### **1.3 Gender and Rock Music**

The proponents of rock music have sung and wrote about women throughout the genre's sixty year history. Although the genre has changed stylistically (as shown above) women stayed present as a perpetually recurring subject. From The Rolling Stones to the Arctic Monkeys, rock music has been besotted, enamoured, and obsessed with the female gender. As a matter of fact, on the first record released by Led Zeppelin, eponymously titled *Led Zeppelin* (1969), there is only one song that is not about women. That song is titled "Black Mountain Side" (1968) and it happens to be an instrumental containing no lyrics whatsoever.

Yet, unlike hip hop (another genre of music often criticised for its mistreatment of woman and androcentric discourse (see Sharpley-Whiting 2007)), rock music has not fallen under the same intellectual and critical analysis of its treatment of the subject. While rock music will stand as the central subject of this research, brief consideration must be given to hip hop as well. Over the years hip hop has fallen under great scrutiny

because of its treatment of women within hip hop culture. Even a cursory glance into the genre's musical body of work will demonstrate some rather violent lyrics aimed towards the feminine gender. Popular rap artist Snoop Dogg, for example, sings that "bitches ain't shit but hoes and tricks" on Dr Dre's album *The Chronic* (1992), while artist Lil' Wayne raps that all "these hoes tryna save a nigga cum stains [*sic*]" (Wayne & Drama 2006). While sometimes possessive and controlling, such examples of misogyny can become exceptionally violent at times. Controversial rap artist Eminem detailed the violent abuse – and eventual act of raping – his own mother on the opening song of this 2001 release *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2001). "Slut, you think I won't choke no whore," he raps, "til the vocal cords don't work in [your] throat no more... Shut up slut, you're causing too much chaos / Just bend over and take it like a slut, okay Ma?" (Mathers et al. 2001). The song, titled "Kill You" (2001), is a terrifying indictment of both women and motherhood. These few examples of misogyny and violence toward women are not isolated incidents within the genre of hip hop. Instead, they are signposts of a greater trend that has polluted the genre. Hip hop has arguably become a genre defined not only by its artistry, but also its blatant and flagrant disavowment and hatred of women. This treatment of women has been given considerable attention by academics, theorists, and thinkers over hip hop's development. Feminist scholar Denean Sharpley-Whiting expounds upon the "male-dominated culture of hip hop" (Sharpley-Whiting 2007: 10) in her book *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women* (2007). She outlines how the genre has had an oppressive effect on the development of young, predominantly, African-American teenagers. Hip hop, Sharpley-Whiting writes, is littered with "overexposed young black female flesh [which is] 'pimpin',' 'playin',' 'sexin',' and 'checkin'" in videos, television, film, rap lyrics, fashion, and on the Internet." (Sharpley-Whiting 2007: 11). For Sharpley-Whiting, this representation of women has become indispensable "to the mass-media-engineered appeal of hip hop culture, which is helping to shape a new black gender politics." (Sharpley-Whiting 2007: 11).

Thinkers such as Sharpley-Whiting have poured critical efforts into hip hop, as rock music remains relatively untouched by academic considerations. While it could easily be supposed that this is simply because rock music does not purport the same focused misogyny and androcentrism so often exhibited by hip hop, this is simply not the case. For instance, rock group Saves the Day sing "Let me take this awkward saw

/ and run it against your thighs / Cut some flesh away / I'll carry this piece of you with me" (Conley, et al. 1999). Later in the song the band continues by singing that if they don't "make [her] mine", they will "take [their] rusty spoons / and dig out [her] blue eyes / [they'll] swallow them down to [their] colon" (Coney, et al. 1999). Such imagery is positively horrific, almost Sadeian, in its description. Of course, descriptions such as these are extreme in their detail, although they arguably indicate a deeper, underlying attitude that is nested within the genre. Ultimately, it appears, examples of misogyny and violent imagery are prevalent in rock music, just as they are in hip hop.

What is remarkable is that women are also an object of absolute affection and desire within the genre. Rock musicians pine over women and write songs committing their undying and unyielding love for them. Within the extended genre of rock music, the love song is just as prolific as songs exhibiting focused violence against woman. Say Anything – a band particularly guilty of this - express an absolute want for an unnamed female subject in the band's eponymous song "Say Anything" (2012). Vocalist Max Bemis sings: "condemn my race to genocide / if it meant that I could lay with you... / I'd throw up every morning / pull my nails out / take a wrench to all my teeth [just so I can] put a ring upon your digit, have you fidget in your bed with me" (Bemis 2012). The violence here is turned back against the band, in other words, they are willing to experience the worst afflictions for the affections of the songs unnamed female love-interest.

Ultimately, when one traverses the long history of rock music, one notices a peculiar positioning of women. They are objects upon which violence, or at least violent actions, are wished upon, while at the same time women are the object of the musician's desire: the one thing that they want more than anything in the world, and sits just beyond their grasp. Again, we see this with rock group, Brand New, who typify this tension in their song "Jude Law and a Semester Abroad" (2003) in which vocalist Jesse Lacey sings that he is both "the American boy back in the states / The American boy [she] used to date / Who would do anything [she said]" (Lacey, et al. 2003). However he also wishes that the unnamed woman of the song kisses something "terribly contagious" and experiences a plane crash (in which she'll disappoint the vocalist by not "burning in the wreckage, or drowning at the bottom of the sea" (Lacey, et al. 2003)). The woman in these songs are extremely passive and infantile beings. They have no agency when it comes to any decision whatsoever, they are voiceless and impotent in their social and political standings. The



unnamed and faceless woman, which rock music perpetually sing about, have no active position or agency whatsoever. Furthermore, in her book *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* (2013), Emma L. E. Rees, furthers this peculiar positioning of women in rock music when discussing Colorado-based electro-pop rock band 3OH!3. Speaking about the song “Don’t Trust Me” (2008), Rees describes a popular and recurrent image of women that pervades such music. She writes that the “women in the video... all conform to [a] troubling misogynist... ‘ideal’ – they gyrate in their underwear... [with] the explicit message that a woman’s ‘lips’ should be closed; that her ‘hips’ should be open” (Rees 2013: 75). The lyrics of the song are sung as such: “Shush girl, shut your lips / Do the Helen Keller and talk with your hips” (Foreman, et al. 2008). Rees compares the group to other popular acts such as Blink-182 and The Bloodhound Gang, Admittedly, groups such as these often douse their music with (rather adolescent) attempts at humour, however this humour tends to be at the expense of a gendered female subject (Blink-182 and Brand New will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three of this research).

In their book, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion, and Rock ‘n Roll* (1996), authors Simon Reynolds and Joy Press write that “when it comes to ‘women in rock’ nothing is very clear... [as] confusion breeds confusion” (Reynolds & Press 1996: 24). The peculiar positioning between the object of desire and the object of affliction, is confused further when rock music’s politics with regard to a gender hierarchy seem to emerge. Rock music has a preoccupation with dressing and performing in ways that are surprisingly effete and feminine. For Reynolds and Press, rock music is often performed from a space of male privilege. They write of David Bowie’s anthem “Boys Keep Swinging” (1979) and show that rock music often holds a rather convoluted relationship with femininity. The video for the song depicts Bowie – dressed conservatively in a suit and tie – dancing and singing, while undercut with shots of men cross-dressing as women. The lyrics of the song decree: “When you’re a boy / you can wear a uniform / when you’re a boy / other boys check you out / you get a girl / these are your favourite things / when you’re a boy” (Eno & Bowie 1979). It plays out like a witty subversion of gender roles, however “the song’s subversive wit was undercut by a deeper irony” (Reynolds & Press 1996: 18). The song seems to depict that it is “male privilege to ‘swing’, to experiment with female glamour and adopt ‘optional female subjectivities’” (Reynolds & Press 1996: 18). This is not transgression, argue Reynolds and Press, but rather an indication of the genderless

nature of the male rock performer. Within rock music, the men are not gendered, only the women are. Similar dynamics pervaded heavy metal in the mid-eighties with the rise of a subgenre titled 'hair metal' in which performers "paraded with very long backcombed hair, and [used] make-up, gaudy clothing and accessories (chiefly consisting of tight denim or leather jeans, spandex, and headbands)" (Bukspan 2003: 60). Also, earlier performers such as Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and The Rolling Stones would dress in the hallmarks of Victorian dandyism. As Reynolds and Press argue, such performances weren't "so much an embrace of the underdog position as an aspiration of the overlord status... throughout its history, rock has flitted between the effete narcissism and rugged scruffiness" (Reynolds & Press 1996: 17). In short, the gendered identity's of the musicians were not so much an act of rebelliousness in so much as an act of ownership: men can dress like women because men can do what they want. "Rock's great paradox," Reynolds and Press conclude, "is that it has successively revolted against established notions of manliness while remaining misogynistic" (Reynolds & Press 1996: 18).

Even further, the handful of women who have reached any level of success within the genre of rock music have often come under criticism. In 1976, Ellen Willis wrote at length about rock vocalist Janis Joplin, and resurrected some specific cultural ironies within the logic of Joplin's supposed search for liberation. As Willis writes:

The male-dominated counterculture defined freedom for women almost exclusively in sexual terms. As a result, women endowed the idea of sexual liberation with immense symbolic importance; it became charged with all the secret energy of an as yet suppressed larger rebellion. Yet to express one's rebellion in that limited way was a painfully literal form of submission. Whether or not Janis understood that, her dual personalisty hedonist and suffering victim – suggested that she felt it. Dope, another term in her metaphorical equation (getting high as singing as fucking as liberation) was, in its more sinister aspect, a pain-killer and finally a killer, Which is not to say that the good times weren't real, as far as they went. Whatever the limitations of hippie/rock star life, it was better than being a provincial matron – or a lonely weirdo. (Willis 1976: 56)

The apparently androcentric positioning of rock as a genre has made it particularly difficult for women to discover any form of freedom of expression within the supposedly male dominated discourse of the genre. As Angela Carter writes, and as quoted above, "man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting" (Carter 2000: 4).

There have been other attempts to utilize rock music in a manner that favours women. The riot girl movement (often stylised as ‘riot grrrl’) of the early to mid-nineties used the distorted tones as one of their methods of addressing issues such as rape, domestic violence, sexuality, racism, patriarchy, and female empowerment. Groups associated with the movement included the likes of Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy, L7, along with queercore groups such as the Pansy Division, Anti-Scrunti Faction, and Team Dresch. A riot girl manifesto was released in 1992 which outlined the impetus of the movement. The manifesto is propelled by a repeating “BECAUSE” (Darms 2014), and elicits a notable anger from the members of the riot girl movement as it reads “BECAUSE we don’t wanna assimilate to someone else’s (boy) standards of what is or isn’t... BECAUSE we see fostering and supporting girl scenes and girl artists of all kinds as integral to this process...BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak” (Darms 2014: 12). The movement’s greater impact was perhaps undermined by the rise of grunge music in the early nineties, and all efforts to promote a more pro-women landscape for rock musicians (and other creatives) was appropriated into a mainstream media that undermined several of their efforts. Also, there was a notable backlash against the movement. In an article published in *Seventeen* magazine in 1993, writer Nina Malkin attempted to pull apart the movement and hinted that a “lot of what they’re doing could be seen as reverse discrimination” (Malkin 1993: 82). A sardonic, and rather patronising, article published in *Newsweek* simply negated the movement, calling it precocious. As they said:

There’s no telling whether this enthusiasm or the Riot Grrrls’ catchy passion for “Revolution Girl Style” will evaporate when it hits the adult real world. Most of the Grrrls are still in the shelters of home or college—a far cry from what they’ll face in the competitive job market or as they start to form their own families. (Newsweek 1992)

The very sentiments riot girl revolted against is ostensibly used against them in this quote. The experience of these – admittedly young – women is clearly not in line with whatever discourse of the ‘real world’ it is that the *Newsweek* staff writer is writing about here.

Sleater-Kinney vocalist, Corin Tucker, commented on this in the documentary series titled *Grrrl Love and Revolution: Riot Grrrl NYC* (2011), in which she stated the following:

I think it was deliberate that we were made to look like we were just ridiculous girls parading around in our underwear. They refused to do serious interviews with us, they misprinted what we had to say, they would take our articles, and our fanzines, and our essays and take them out of context. We wrote a lot about sexual abuse and sexual assault for teenagers and young women. I think those are really important concepts that the media never addressed. (Tucker 2011)

Women's place in rock music, is seemingly just as troubled as the way they are represented, and therefore close analysis of several rock songs warrant intimate analysis.

However, before such an excursion is endeavoured, a close reading of some gender theory is necessary. The following chapter will examine the notion of gender as performativity, particularly looking at the writing of Judith Butler and her concerns with a gendered subjectivity.

## Chapter Two: Judith Butler and Gender Performativity

The first chapter of this research traced a skeletal history of rock music in an attempt to understand rock as a genre. Following this, the chapter explored how women have been placed within the genre, while briefly discussing how gender has been precariously placed within the genre. While women as the subject of rock music was broached at the end of the last chapter, the evidence that women have been situated within the middle of the discourse of rock music only raises a collection of difficult and complex questions, further. Perhaps, most importantly, who are these ‘women’ that rock music has become so enamoured with? Are they representative of a stable feminine identity, or are they simply a nominal category used for something incredibly more complex?

One needs to be staid and cautious when speaking about ‘women’ in rock music. Following the progressive achievements of second-wave feminism “the very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms” (Butler 2008: 347-52). To simply reduce ‘women’ to a single nominal gender definition would be incredibly reckless, and incredibly imprudent. As Lee-Anne van Antwerpen argues in her treatise, “An Investigation of the Continued Relevance of Faludi’s *Backlash*” (1992) for the Negotiation of Gender Identity, in the Wake of the ‘Lara Croft’ Phenomenon” (2010), by advancing a definition of the term ‘women’, one invariably, no matter how broad such a definition, excludes various other women who cannot be accommodated within its conceptual parameters” (van Antwerpen 2010: 20).

Therefore, it is to be supposed, that it would be best to examine writings on the nature of gender and how gender is performed. In doing this, one can be more cautious in their course-plotting of the subject of ‘women’ in rock music. This chapter will attempt to offer a heuristic cue, through the lens of Judith Butler’s writings, so as to better understand how gender as a performance operates.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter will be divided into three sub-sections. To begin, it will examine some of the theoretical parameters of the “sex/gender system” (Sedgwick 1990: 28) which has populated contemporary feminist and gender theory. The second section of this chapter will investigate Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity: a theoretical framework that is often confused with ‘gender as performance’. Butler’s key writings, notably the essay “Performative Acts and Gender

Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” (1988), and her text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2002), will be read. To assist in understanding the complexities of Butler’s writings, her work will be read in conjunction with Michel Foucault’s formulation of power, as outlined in *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality vol. 1* (1979). Finally, the chapter will examine how Butler’s conception of performativity can be used to understand gender within popular music, based upon Butler’s own reading of Aretha Franklin’s “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” (1967). However, this section will also discuss the limits of Butler’s reading, and how, by overlooking the sonic properties of the song, she has restricted herself from a more in depth analysis. This will then allow for a more in-depth analysis of rock songs in Chapter Three.

## **2.1 Collapsing the Sex/Gender System**

It would be beneficial to offer a short primer on the distinction between sex and gender before any in-depth discussion on gender performativity is attempted. One of the most succinct and sufficient descriptions of the sex/gender distinction (and its complexity) is offered by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the introduction of her book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Sedgwick warns that the “usage relations and analytical relations [of terms such as sex and gender] are almost irredeemably slippery” (Sedgwick 1990: 27; Sedgwick compounds the discussion with a discussion of sexuality as well, and argues that the three terms are indissolubly linked together. Sedgwick maintains that homosexuality is always gendered, and sexuality can often represent an excessive discursive paradigm beyond the confines of sex and gender. Although the third term of ‘sexuality’ should be noted when discussing sex and gender, such a discussion is simply beyond the scope of this research and will possibly be addressed at a later time).

In its simplest of understandings, sex refers to biology. That is to say it refers to the body and the properties of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ as defined by genitals, reproductive organs and chromosomes. The human species is made visible through sexual dimorphism and oftentimes understood to be divided along the lines of male and female. Gender, on the other hand, is the bank of cultural and social signifiers that allow humans to identify with a sex. Human males wear ties and pants. Human females wear dresses

and make-up. Our gendered selves are the cultural manifestations of our sexed bodies. In short: sex is biology while gender is culture. It is at its most basic a nature versus nurture debate. You were born a male (that is your sex), but you become a man (that is your gender). The tally on the distinction is often exemplified by the infamous line of Simone de Beauvoir (from her text *The Second Sex* (1949)), “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 1949: 32). This distinction between ‘biology’ and ‘culture’ is oftentimes referred to as the sex/gender system (Sedgwick 1990: 28).

However, this distinction is so incredibly neat and tidy that it becomes somewhat glib. If anything, the repeated and maintained distinction between sex and gender (as biology and culture), has become immutable and irrevocable. It is simply too easy and undermines the complexity of the situation. Sedgwick reminds us of that, and shows that the distinction is indeed a “slippery slope” (Sedgwick 1990: 28). “‘Sex’ is... a term that extends indefinitely beyond chromosomal sex [biology],” Sedgwick writes, “its history of usage often overlaps with what might, now, be more properly be called ‘gender’” (Sedgwick 1990: 28). Sex is more often than not gendered, or, to say that another way, culturally inscribed. Throughout history there has been evidence of society using the distinction of ‘gender’ as an argument to control the reproductive rights of women. Also, biological sex is invoked when defining the nature of ‘manhood’ (a gendered term) with phrases such as ‘grow a pair’ (referring to testicles). Sedgwick continues by writing that beyond “chromosomes, however, the association of ‘sex’, precisely through the physical body, with reproduction and with genital activity and sensations keeps offering new challenges to the conceptual clarity or even the possibility of sex/gender differentiation” (Sedgwick 1990: 28). The body – its naturalness, its biology, its corporeality – is not simply an object that stands outside of cultural signification. As Sara Salih writes, “as with gender [one should not] suggest that there is no body prior to cultural inscription... [and] sex as well as gender can be... reinscribed in ways that accentuate its factitiousness (i.e. it’s constructedness) rather than its facticity (i.e. the fact of its existence)” (Salih 2002: 55).

One should be wary, then, of simply discussing sex/gender system as a system of one and the other. Sedgwick writes at length to clarify the distinction. She states:

Indeed, the intimacy of the association between several of the most signal forms of gender oppression and “the facts” of women’s bodies and women’s reproductive activity has led some radical feminists to question, more or less explicitly, the usefulness of insisting on a sex/gender distinction. For these reasons, even usages involving the “sex/gender system” within feminist theory are able to use “sex/gender” only to delineate a problematic space rather than a crisp definition. (Sedgwick 1990: 28-29)

Essentially the terms are simply too intertwined and the tracks of the sex/gender system run too deep to simply be reduced to sex as biology and gender is culture. To discuss them in two separate vacuums would undermine the complexity of the debate.

Judith Butler was one to continually proffer this complexity in her writings. Butler would remind her readers that sex and gender are mutually inscribed against one another. Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* (2008) that ‘science’ and ‘naturalness’ “are discursive constructs, and, although it might seem strange to refute the authority of ‘science’ after quoting apparently ‘scientific’ data, the point Butler is making is clear: the body is not a ‘mute facticity’” (Salih 2002: 56). One of Judith Butler’s primary concerns was that of gender performativity, and this concern was arguably raised after she collapsed the simple distinction between sex and gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginnings of their social existence, and this implies that there is simply no ‘natural body’ that pre-exists its cultural inscription (Salih 2002: 56). In short, from the very moment of birth – when the doctor announces that we are a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ – we are gendered. And gender is tattooed onto us for our entire life.

But gender is not something that we *are*, but gender is something that we *do*. Gender is “a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun” (Salih 2002: 56). Our gender is – for all intents and purposes – an act that we perform. As Butler writes in the opening section of *Gender Trouble* (2008):

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (Butler 2008: 806-11)



But this is somewhat ahead of the current argument. To better understand the intricacies of gender performativity, it is perhaps best to begin with Butler's essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988).

In the essay, Butler encourages a discussion on gender stemming from the argument that "reified and naturalized conceptions of gender might be understood as constituted and, hence, capable of being constituted differently" (Butler 1988: 520), insofar as "gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler 1988: 520). Gender is therefore something we exist through – it is arguably a manner of *being*. It is socially sanctioned and maintained through a variety of social and cultural mechanisms (such as the above mentioned 'sexed female body').

In the essay Butler begins by taking issue with the sex/gender system as "the body [or 'sex'] *is* a historical situation" (Butler 1988: 521, author's italics). Butler shows this by stating that feminist theory is often very critical of naturalistic explanations of the body, and the handfuls of meaning that dictate a women's social existence based upon a supposed fact based physiology. Butler cites the phenomenologist thinker, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who lays claims that the body in "its sexual being... is an historical idea [rather than]... a natural species" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 520). Essentially, the way the body is understood, represented, and defined is a continuous set of possibilities of signification, not some 'true' biological essence that resides within it. The human sex, by this token, is as transitory, and temporal as our 'cultural' gender.

This is simply because the human body, as a sexed body, is always gendered. Gender is a social, cultural, performance of sex, but sex itself is always 'performed' as well. Sara Salih expounds upon the idea of a gendered body and makes reference to how early our body is gendered by medical science. There is the image that pervades our popular culture: the heterosexual husband and (pregnant) wife are having an ultrasound and the doctor asks whether they would like to know the sex of the baby. The response is always the same, either 'it's a girl' or 'it's a boy'. This picture of the educated doctor defining our gender roles has pervaded our popular culture as a popular sitcom trope. Website *TV Tropes* (2012) offers a somewhat flippant, but telling explanation, of this recurring image in popular television sitcoms. The website writes that with "the recent invention of the ultrasound, a lot about the baby can be told prenatally. One of the side effects of this is that the parents can know the gender of the child beforehand. This has

caused a split in expecting parents: some want to know and others don't" (TV Tropes 2012). Television shows that have included this trope, such as *Scrubs* (2001-2010), *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-2014), and *Friends* (1994-2004), will play out the tension between the parent who knows the child's gender and the parent who does not. Such tropes tend to tie themselves up with the resolution of both parents learning the unborn child's gender, and mildly celebrating their discovery between themselves: content in the knowledge that the ultrasound image of the unborn foetus is prenatally assigned its, socially accepted, gender role. The gender of a child is inscribed before the child is born. Ultimately, therefore, "when the doctor or nurse declares 'It's a girl/boy!', they are not simply reporting on what they see... they are actually assigning a sex and a gender to a body that can have no existence outside discourse. In other words, the statement 'It's a girl/boy!' is performative" (Salih 2002: 61).

Evidently, even our biological sex is gendered, and by implication our biological sex is culturally or socially constituted. In her later work, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), Butler expands even further upon the very moment when a doctor decides whether or not a child is either a boy or a girl. Butler writes:

To the extent that the naming of the "girl" is transitive, that is, initiates the process by which a certain "girling" is compelled, the term or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a "girl", however, who is compelled to "cite" the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. (Butler 1993: 232)

"It's a girl" (or "It's a boy") is not a statement of fact. Instead, such statements are manifestations of an institutionalised and restricted gender binary that is enforced through a society that prides itself on its heterosexuality. And while such a statement seems innocuous, it is not completely inclusive, and exclusive to the experience and identity of many other types of people. For example, intersex individuals are borne into a society impelled by the "it's a girl/boy" distinction. Their very existence is in opposition of the binarism of girl/boy as a gendered sex. How are they to be accommodated within such a binary? Often cases, they simply are not, and intersex infants and children, such as those with ambiguous outer genitalia, may be surgically and/or hormonally altered to fit into a perceived, more socially acceptable, sex category of girl or boy.

From this exploration, one can see why it is necessary to collapse the distinction between sex and gender. By collapsing this, one is more readily situated to fully address the notion of gender performativity as described by Butler. The following section will examine her writings more closely in an attempt to better understand the dynamics of gender performativity.

## **2.2 Butler's Gender Performativity**

It is easy to understand how gender performativity has arguably led to some misunderstandings. Butler's thoughts on gender appear to develop between her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988) and her book *Gender Trouble* (2008). In her earlier essay, she uses the word 'performance' in the sense of a "theatrical... discourse" (Butler 2008: 520). To perform is to act, to display, to *put on*. However, gender performativity is not the notion that gender is an act; something that can be feigned or displayed like a costume and removed whenever one wishes, gender is neither "fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary" (Butler 2008: 2461-72).

It is arguable that reading gender as a performance could result in the understanding of gender as a 'costume' which an individual can simply step into. In such an understanding, to be a 'man' and to operate and identify through the gender of 'manhood' would simply mean putting on the trappings of this gender and displaying them to the audience of social others. To elaborate on this, Butler examines the 'performance' (used here in a theatrical sense) and display of 'drag' or cross-dressing. Butler argues that feminist theory contends that "such parodic identities have been... degrading to women" (Butler 2008: 2319-24). Drag, as a performance, is a display of gender tropes. However, drag still operates from within a strict gender dynamism as it "mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of true gender identity" (Butler 2008: 2320-25). For the drag performer, their outside appearance may be feminine, but the performance is only effective if the inner essence 'inside' the effete costume remains masculine. As Butler writes:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. As much as drag creates a unified picture of “women”, it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. (Butler 2008: 2319-30)

What then does drag tell us about gender? Well, essentially, by attempting to perform a particular gender – and failing insofar as drag efficacy is based upon the audience understanding the “woman” they see is actually a “man” – drag shows us that gender cannot simply be understood in terms of performance. In short the performance of drag reveals that there cannot be a performance of gender. In her own words: “*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself*” (Butler 2008: 2324-30, author’s italics).

If gender, then, is not a performance, what is *gender performativity*? In the most simple of terms, performativity is best understood as a set of rules, regulatory acts and power relations through which we act. As mentioned briefly above, gender is not something that we are, but gender is something that we *do*. Gender should rather be understood as something that the body attaches itself to, from the very moment the doctor declares an unborn individual’s boyhood or girlhood. For Butler, performativity manifests itself before our conception; it is something we are born into based upon the sex of our body – as sex is already graffitied and codified by the regulatory practices of gender performativity. Performativity comes before us, and we are obliged to exist through it. Butler further extrapolates on this distinction between gender as ‘performance’ and gender as performativity in a video series for the internet forum “Big Think”. She again attempts to clarify the distinction by explaining the following:

It's one thing to say that gender is performed and that is a little different from saying gender is performative. When we say gender is performed we usually mean that we've taken on a role or we're acting in some way and that our acting or our role playing is crucial to the gender that we are and the gender that we present to the world. To say that gender is performative is a little different because for something to be performative means that it produces a series of effects. We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman... We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, so to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start. (Butler 2011)

In short, performativity is a mechanism through which we act that imparts a gender upon us. If one were to identify as a man, one's actions 'as a man' are predetermined by repetition. Butler's concern with gender is that gender today tends to operate within the binary of man and woman, and is impelled along a heterosexual relationship between the two identities. This is the primary concern of her writings – and queer and feminist theory beyond that: the rules and regulations that partition and maintain the distinction between men and women through the matrix of heterosexuality.

For Butler, the matrix of heterosexuality is a power relationship: but 'power' used in a strictly Foucauldian sense. It is safe to assume that Butler's writings are heavily influenced by the writings of the French philosopher – and she dedicates an entire section of her text to his thought. In *Gender Trouble* (2008), an underpinning of Foucauldian thought runs through the text, and the relationship between power and gender are almost analogous.

In his text *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), Foucault outlines the discursive parameters of his theory of power. Foucault's discussion of power begins on the remark that "the word *power* is apt to lead to a number of misunderstandings," (Foucault 1976: 92-96, author's italics) as generally power is understood as the possession of a controlling influence with a definite agency. However, Foucault is quite clear in his denouement of 'common' understandings of the term, and that by power he does not mean "either, a mode of subjugation which in contrast to violence, has the form of rule... [or] a general system of domination exerted by one group over another" (Foucault 1976: 92), but rather, power, for Foucault, must be understood, in the first instance, "as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own

organization” (Foucault 1976: 92). In other words, within a society, for instance, power is the creative or destructive relationships between everything. In a reading put forward by Allan Megill in his text *Prophets of Extremities* (1985), Megill illustrates that power, for Foucault “resembles in its ubiquity the God of theism. Unlike God, however, it has no ‘predominant direction, no predominant point of departure, no predominant point of terminus... it resembles some Eastern metaphysical force that ensnares us all” (Megill 1985: 240).

Gender performativity, for Butler, arguably operates in the sense that Foucault’s power operates. All our acts – our rituals and repetitions – are operating through the ubiquitous nature of performativity. There is nothing beyond it: it does not influence our subjectivity, because it *is* our subjectivity. We are gendered because performativity is all we have. As Butler suggests the “self is not only irretrievably ‘outside’, constituted in social discourse, but that the ascription of interiority is itself a publically regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication. Genders, then, can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent” (Butler 1988: 528).

Foucault speaks further about the ubiquitous nature of his conception of power, and he maintains that power “is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1976: 62). Foucault states that:

Power?, insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these motilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt; power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault 1976: 62)

Foucault here defines power to be ‘permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing’ while Butler defines gender performativity to be “not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body” (Butler 1993: 118-24). Here we can see the parallels between Foucauldian power and gender performativity. For Foucault, power is a mechanism that defines our subjectivity through a variety of mechanisms. For Butler, gender performativity operates along the same tracts. We fall into gender and it impels us through a variety of acts. This is why, it should be suggested, that gender performativity is not an outfit to be removed and changed: it is

not a 'performance' or a role. Performativity, instead, is a network of societal functions that impel our identity into a particular order. Ultimately, in most cases, these orders are forced along the lines of 'man' and 'women'.

To understand gender not in terms of performance but in terms of power (performativity) one can think of it in the following manner. When one is born, the doctor will often assign them a gender based upon their physiology. For example, a baby born with male genitalia will be assigned the gender "man" or "boy", as those are the societal norms that pervade our society. To be a "man" or a "boy", the child's gender will need to be enacted correctly: perhaps he will wear pants instead of dresses, get given gifts from the "boy" section of the toy store, and be lathered with the masculine signifiers of the time. If we are to follow Butler's conception of performativity it is not these signifiers – the pants, the sports, the pronouns – that are gender. Instead, it are the various power relations through which the boy's subject are defined that are his gender. In short: gender is not wearing a dress, gender is the mechanism in society that impels certain individuals to wear one. It is a slight difference, but an important one to acknowledge.

Of course, with power there is always resistance to power (and by implication, resistance to gender performativity). Resistance, for Foucault, is intrinsic to every power relationship. Foucault writes that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 1976: 95). Foucault illustrates resistances as a series of "points" (Foucault 1976: 95-96) in every power relation. However, one is not to understand these points of resistance as uniform or consistent, but rather, for all intents and purposes, as eclectic and random. In other words, resistances in power do not always emerge as revolutionary modulation, but rather as a "plurality of [points], each of them a special case: resistances... are possible, necessary, improbable; others... are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concentrated, rampant or violent" (Foucault 1976: 96).

To better understand this relationship between power and gender performativity we can look at 'woman' not as a subject, but as a gender. The concept of 'woman' is such a problematic one, and this problematic notion is central to the principles of a lot of feminist theory. If feminism is to be understood as involving "various movements, theories, and philosophies, all concerned with issues of gender difference, that advocate equality for women, and that campaign for women's rights and interests" (Humm 1990: 278) they would

be rallied under the assumption that a 'woman' "is some existing identity, understood through the category of women" (Butler 2008: 2876). Judith Butler's conception of gender asks the question of what is the intrinsic 'women-ness' that feminism is fighting for"? Butler finally reminds us how this is problematic and contends that a feminist critique "ought also to understand how the category of "women," the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (Butler 2008: 363-68). This in itself problematizes the scope of the very research contained within this treatise. However, Butler is not so glib in her assumptions of gender and the place of women in society. Her readings do not simply negate the existence of genders, instead they wish to bring gender dynamics into conspicuousness. Many people have been subjugated under the gender banner of 'women', and to simply say that there is no intrinsic value to their identity could easily undermine their struggles and life experiences that are parcelled with this gender. It was a dynamic that several people critical of Butler struggled to come to terms with and contention has lain "in the debates it has generated amongst philosophers, feminists, sociologists and theorists of gender, sex and identity, who continue to worry over the meaning of "performativity," whether it enables or forecloses agency, and whether Butler does indeed sound the death knell of the subject" (Salih 2002: 59). Political philosopher Seyla Benhabib, for one, worried about this during a written exchange shared with Butler in 1991. Benhabib worried that this assumption of gender performativity could "only lead to incoherence" (Salih 2002: 59). As Benhabib wrote:

"We are now asked to believe that there is no self behind the mask. Given how fragile and tenuous women's sense of selfhood is in many cases, how much of a hit and miss affair their struggles for autonomy are, this reduction of female agency to "a doing without the doer" at best appears to me to be making a virtue out of necessity." (Benhabib, et al. 1995: 22)

For many feminist thinkers, there needs to be a subject to simply forward their cause, regardless if this subject is fictional or not (Salih 2002: 59). Butler's lack of subject is a troublesome one for many.

Within the mantle of gender performativity – as understood in the Foucauldian sense of power – women as a gender are both a part of the power relationship, while also being a point of resistance *within* this power relationship. For Butler, our objective is not



to escape gender – as that would be impossible – but rather to use resistance within the gender performativity to rearrange it so the power relationships are less androcentric and patriarchal. In Butler’s outline of gender performativity, gender is not necessarily something that can be overcome (or escaped from), rather what she describes is a series of relationships that are inherently open to transformation. Butler ultimately wishes that gender should be produced less violently; made differently. She states that:

[She continues] to hope for a coalition of sexual minorities that will transcend the simple categories of identity, that will refuse the erasure of bisexuality, that will counter and dissipate the violence imposed on restrictive bodily norms. [She] would hope that such a coalition would be based on the irreducible complexity of sexuality and its implication in various dynamics of discursive and institutional power, and that no one will be too quick to reduce power to hierarchy and to refuse its productive political dimension. (Butler 2008: 260-66)

Ultimately, it is still incredibly valuable to understand gender as a performative mechanism that impels individuals to identify themselves, and represent themselves in a particular way. It can offer a valuable heuristic for coming to terms with gender dynamics and how gender is displayed within society. Through this lens of gender performativity, an exegesis of cultural artefacts can be performed so as to better understand how such objects (such as rock songs) promote, repeat and ritualise gender. The final section of this chapter will examine how this can be achieved, before the in-depth analysis is performed in Chapter Three.

### **2.3 Reading Gender in Popular Music**

Within the strata of gender performativity, the power relations impel the subject into the binary of heteronormativity. Therefore, it should be argued, that to attempt to understand gender’s operations within culture, one needs to examine how gender is manipulated into enforcing, naturalising, and acclimatising societal gender norms along the binary of “man” and “woman”. Gender performativity tends to operate through a system of “compulsory heterosexuality [which is] reproduced and concealed... through the cultivation of bodies into discrete sexes with ‘natural’ appearances and ‘natural’ heterosexual dispositions” (Butler 1993: 524), and this dimension of performativity is simply a historical fact, and not a universal one (for Butler). To attempt to battle with gender in a cultural landscape

is a task which is necessitated with the delicate unpacking of both masculine signifiers and feminine ones. In doing so, the matrix of heteronormativity can be examined and dissected in an attempt to understand its failures and temporality. As Salih writes:

Gender is a “corporeal style,” an act (or a sequence of acts), a “strategy” which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not “do” their gender correctly are punished by society; it is a repetition, a copy of a copy and, crucially, the gender parody Butler describes does not presuppose the existence of an original, since it is the very notion of an original that is being parodied. Gender performatives that do not try to conceal their genealogy, indeed, that go out of their way to accentuate it, displace heterocentric assumptions by revealing that heterosexual identities are as constructed and “unoriginal” as the imitations of them. (Salih 2002: 58)

Perhaps, then, the best method of analysing gender within culture is to see how gender is done correctly: that is to say, how gender is displayed in accordance with heteronormativity. For example, in *Gender Trouble* (2008), Butler speaks about Aretha Franklin, and expounds upon these thoughts in a later paper titled “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (1993) contained in the collection, *The Lesbian and Gay Study Reader* (1993). Butler discusses how “troublesome identifications [are] apparent in cultural practices” (Butler 1993: 317), and that many cultural artefacts naturalise “heterosexuality... itself through setting up certain illusions of continuity between sex, gender, and desire” (Butler 1993: 317).

In the analysis of Aretha Franklin, Butler examines the line “you make me feel like a natural woman” (Goffin, et al.: 1967) from Franklin’s 1967 soul song “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” (1967). Butler contends that the lyric, at first, appears to propose that some semblance of “natural potential of her biological sex is actualized by her participation in the cultural position of “woman” as object of heterosexual recognition” (Butler 1993: 317). For Butler, the song suggests that there is no space between the biology of sex nor the artifice of gender and sexuality, there is no breakage or discontinuity suggesting that they are one and the same. However, Butler assures that this is not the case, and the song itself subverts such assumptions. As Butler writes:

Although Aretha appears to be all too glad to have her naturalness confirmed, she also seems fully and paradoxically mindful that that confirmation is never guaranteed, that the effect of naturalness is only achieved as a consequence if that moment of heterosexual recognition. After all, Aretha sings, you make me *feel* like a natural woman, suggesting that this is a kind of metaphorical substitution, an act of imposture, a kind of sublime and momentary participation in an ontological illusion produced by the mundane operation of heterosexual drag. (Butler 1993: 317)

Butler, then, asks a rather telling set of questions: what if Aretha was singing to a lesbian, or perhaps to an individual in drag? It can be seen here how Butler uses Aretha's song to exemplify some of the problematic dimensions of cultural artefacts. Evidently, Butler uses the song to problematize the power relations in supposedly 'natural' genders: and by doing so she is demonstrating the nature of gender performativity. Butler did come under some criticism for this reading, not in so much as she was incorrect in her assumptions regarding gender performativity, but rather that she was a bit shallow in her analysis. Judith Ann Peraino writes in her essay, "Listening to Gender: A response to Judith Halberstam" (2007), that "Butler does not ask us to hear any meaning in the register or timbre of Aretha's voice or to think about the performance of the words or the interaction of Franklin with the female back-up vocalists" (Peraino 2007: 61). She argues that by ignoring these aspects of the song, Butler has essentially sold herself short in her message: that we must "essentially to retrain ourselves to recognize a "natural woman" as a type of drag queen" (Peraino 2007: 61).

However, this does not undermine Butler's project in any way. For example, Phillip Brian Harper writes in his book, *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (1996), that Butler makes note of the "problematization of "natural" gender in Aretha Franklin's recording" (Harper 1996: 185), however Harper furthers the analysis of the song by looking at other aspects of the music. Harper makes reference to the fuller, chest-originating vocalization used by Franklin. He also mentions the role of the backing vocals and their "emphasizing function served by the... voiced "uh-oohs" that follow each lead verse line" (Harper 1996: 186). Furthermore, Harper comments that the "increasingly round and resonant: "you-make-me-feel-like-a-na-tu-ral woman"... timbre of Franklin's delivery suggests that she autonomously produces herself as a "natural woman"" (Harper 1996: 186). Later Harper connects the backing vocals role to the role of Franklin and argues that the "staggered, or imperfect, unison singing characterizes the final repetitions of the refrain... suggestion the complex relation that obtains between this newly articulated collective feminine subject and the individual woman through which consciousness it is articulated" (Harper 1996: 186). By not only looking at the lyrics, as Butler did, Harper can add an even deeper dimension to his critical analysis of Aretha Franklin's vocal performance.

One must, ultimately, be sure to take note of both the lyrical content of music and its sonic qualities when examining how gender performativity operates within such cultural artefacts. The theoretical framework presented in this chapter, along with the history of rock music presented in Chapter One, has given us sufficient tools to closely examine how gender performativity operates in rock music, and how, by implication, rock music has come to represent woman (an admittedly problematic category, following Butler). The following chapter will closely examine nine pieces of rock music. Namely, The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" (1964), The Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb" (1966), Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (1969), Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993), Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996), Blink-182's "Dammit (Growing Up)" (1997), Brand New's "Jude Law and the Semester Abroad" (2002), Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004), and Fall Out Boy's "Sugar, We're Goin Down" (2006). In doing so, it will be able to better establish how it is that gender performativity has influenced women's position within the genre of rock music.

### **Chapter Three: Rock Music and Gender Performativity**

The objective of this chapter is to offer a close reading of nine rock songs. Namely, The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" (1964), The Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb" (1966), Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (1969), Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993), Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996), Blink-182's "Dammit (Growing Up)" (1997), Brand New's "Jude Law and the Semester Abroad" (2002), Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004), and Fall Out Boy's "Sugar, We're Goin Down" (2006). Each of these songs, assumedly, feature a relationship between a man and a woman, and the songs themselves can demonstrate how gender performativity operates.

By unpacking the nature of these gender relationships (as conducted by the dynamics of performativity) one can supposedly see how gender operates within the larger genre of rock music. The research's goal, here, is not to assume that women are inferior to men in the genre; the objective is to uncover any androcentric and patriarchal sentiments that pervade the genre. It would be tenuous to suggest that women are simply 'receivers' before a proper analysis is conducted. The goal here is to be more thorough, to reveal how complex the nature of gender performativity – and the place of women – is within the genre.

It should be mentioned that all the songs examined here have been successful within the larger music industry. Songs that have reached the heights of success were selected to show that these tracks are not obscure nor hidden away from the public consciousness; not forgettable footnotes within the greater genre. The levels of success of each song, however, is still unique to each song.

The lyrics content of the songs will be analysed as well as how the lyrics are presented through a variety of sonic techniques and popular rock music embellishments. As shown in the final section of the previous chapter, examining lyrics exclusively (as Butler did with Aretha Franklin's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" (1967)) does not always offer a comprehensive reading. Phillip Brian Harper's example, of examining the lyrics in accordance with their sonic properties, will be followed when approaching the nine songs.

For the sake of both clarity and efficiency, each song within the reading contained within this chapter will be presented in its own subsection. However, as mentioned in

Chapter One, rock music is a part of a larger taxonomy of artefacts, and this will result in several dissonances and resonances between the various songs examined. Some cross over between the sections will thus occur. (Also, the complete lyrics of each song are presented in their entirety in the “Annexures of Song Lyrics” section of this research (pg. 77-89)).

Ultimately, this chapter should provide a considered reading of the select songs, while also emphasising a shared history that is tracked between them. By examining these songs as objects within the complex power arrangement of gender performativity, one can arguably conclude with a thorough positioning of ‘women’ in rock music.

### **3.1 The Kinks’ “You Really Got Me” (1964)**

Recorded in 1964, The Kink’s “You Really Got Me” was voted the 82nd greatest song of all time by *Rolling Stone* magazine. The magazine also declared the song to be the 4th greatest guitar song of all time (Rolling Stone 2008: 41). Similar accolades have been hoisted upon the song by institutions such as *Q* magazine, and music channel VH1. In 2005, over forty years after the song was released, the BBC announced that the song was the best British song released between 1955 and 1966 (Ultimate Guitar 2005; VH1 2009). Evidently, it is a song that is incredibly renowned; so renowned that the song has been covered and re-recorded by a plethora of other artists (the most notable, and well known, of these covers was released by Van Halen in 1978).

The structure of the song is rather simple, as it is built around a very basic verse-chorus framework, with the primary timbre of the track pronounced with a simple – albeit heavy distorted – guitar riff. This guitar riff is punctual and *staccato* (“detached”), and repeats incessantly throughout the song while slowly being transposed higher and higher. The vocals themselves mirror this increase, and what begins as a restrained and maintained vocal performance descends into a more and more uncompromising elation, to the point where vocalist Ray Davies is practically screaming into the microphone. The pattern repeats as the vocal shifts from controlled to uncontrolled alongside the repeating and building guitar riff. Eventually, at about one minute and sixteen seconds into the song, the entire composition breaks down as the vocalist yells unintelligibly and the guitar begins a few bars of expressive, solo improvisation.

Along with the repeating guitar riff, the primary lyric of the song is “girl, you really got me goin’” (Davies 1964). While the stipulation of what ‘going’ truly entails is not defined, it has affected the song’s narrator to the point that he “don’t know what [he] doin’”, and “can’t sleep at night” (Davies 1964). The vocalist is clearly obsessed with the unnamed ‘girl’ that the song is about. The remaining members of the band sing in agreement as the backing vocals insist with an extended ‘yeah’ to reinforce the vocalist’s infatuation with this girl. Interestingly, after the guitar solo, the narrator once again softens his vocal performance and vows that he wants her to never “set him free [as he] always wanna be at [her] side” (Davies 1964).

That is the primary dynamic of the song. The narrator is besotted with this girl to the degree that he is suffering (he cannot sleep, and doesn’t know what he is doing). However, he never wants the girl – the object of his affections – to set him free by leaving his side. It is a slight and interesting dynamic: he is no longer free as he has become obsessed with this girl, and his lack of freedom is still ostensibly prized. The oft repeat “you really got me” (Davies 1964) signifies two things: he is ‘got’ in the sense of ‘obsession’ as the girl is what he really wants, but he is also ‘got’ in the sense that he is captured: ensnared in this relationship. Such a dynamic speaks of incredible implications within this pairing, and the listener feels that the singer is trapped in a relationship that he does not want, while at the same time being obligated to maintain it. The heterosexual nature of this pairing is further maintained by the sung signifier of ‘girl’ – a diminutising hypocoristic (a nickname, usually signifying endearment) for an individual that is not defined beyond the construct of her gender. This in itself is a notable and recurring theme throughout rock music, as the women of rock music are referred to incessantly as ‘girl’ or ‘babe’: both the terms infantilising the women, and removing their agency completely.

### **3.2 The Rolling Stones’ “Under My Thumb” (1966)**

The ubiquitous ‘girl’ of rock music is resurrected in The Rolling Stones’ 1966 song “Under My Thumb”. This time the ensnarement of the narrator, that was sung of in The Kinks’ “You Really Got Me” (1964), is overcome as the ‘girl’ in the Rolling Stones’ song has been placed “under [their] thumb” (Jagger & Richards 1966). To be ‘under a thumb’ is an idiomatic phrase that implies that the narrator of the song has complete control over the

subject ('girl') of the track, as the "phrase was always used to refer to a powerful person, like a king or lord, exercising control over a subject" (Martin 1996).

The lyrics seemingly lack any subtlety, and it is doubtful that the group had any secondary meaning when writing the lyrics contained in the song. The hypocoristic pet name is further emphasised as the song refers to "the girl" (Jagger & Richards 1966) using slathers of pet imagery. She is both "the squirming dog who's just had her day... [and the] Siamese cat of a girl... the sweetest, hmmm, pet in the world" (Jagger & Richards 1966). This girl – this 'pet' of the band – has no agency as the song describes how the clothes she wears, and the way she talks when spoken to, are in complete control over the song's (ostensibly, male) protagonist.

The song begins with the narrator claiming that the girl "once had [him] down" (Jagger & Richards 1966), but he has now overcome her as she is now in his complete control. The song, in many ways, is a rather smug celebration of this. While the narration of The Kinks' song would begin moderately restrained, while increasing in volume and aggression through the verse, "Under My Thumb" (1966) maintains a steady and reserved level of volume, tempo and control throughout. The narrator here is not losing control as the Kinks' narrator did, instead he is maintained in a managed and celebratory swagger. Even the guitar solo break is reserved and casual in its execution as it lacks the energy seen in the Kinks' solo. This lack of energy and aggression demonstrates the band's lack of frustration, and this is telling: the 'girl' is controlled so the band can relax. She is not the master of the boy as in the Kinks' song.

As mentioned in Chapter One of this research, distortion is a central element of rock music, and it reflects how the musicians of the genre always operate on the limits of control. In this Rolling Stones' song, the distortion is incredible slight and understated revealing that the band are in control: the girl is 'under their thumb', and all gender roles are being performed correctly (as per the heteronormative standards of society).

As is to be expected, the song was met with controversy on release, and the band supposedly "invited charges of misogyny during a time of increasing feminist consciousness" (Janovitz 2013). Of course, this would not be the last time that the Rolling Stones would need to fight off such accusations, as they have also released songs such as "Stupid Girl" (1966), "Bitch" (1971), and "Some Girls" (1978). In an interview, singer and song writer, Mick Jagger, maintains that the songs were "'adolescent' and 'about



adolescent experiences” (Janovitz 2013). Later guitarist Keith Richards would blame the Rolling Stones’ attitude towards women as being a “product of [their] environment... [because of] too many progressive groupies and “dumb chicks”” (Janovitz 2013). In, what was perhaps a rather short-sighted attempt to apologise for their misogyny, during later performances of “Under my Thumb” (1966) the group would replace the diminutive ‘girl’ with the more adult term word ‘women’. Whether this was to quell the controversy or attempt to undo some of the damage the song had allegedly caused is uncertain, however, what can be noted is that in these performances the distortion is louder and the lead guitar is more aggressive and expressive. In short, the song have become more frustrated. Furthermore, although the song is today sung about a ‘woman’, she is still just a pet and little else.

### **3.3 Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love” (1969)**

While The Kinks’ and the Rolling Stones’ songs spoke about being trapped by a relationship, or trapping someone in a relationship (respectively), the hyper-sexualised “Whole Lotta Love” (1969) by Led Zeppelin seemed to describe a subjugation via sexuality. The song itself – in some ways – is a cover, and it is mired in a triptych of controversy between itself, Muddy Waters’ “You Need Love” (1962), and the Small Faces’ “You Need Loving” (1966). The controversy pertains to who wrote the lyrics and melody (and who deserves credit). Regardless, the Led Zeppelin version of the song does exhibit uniqueness, and features a driving, heavily distorted guitar riff that was voted the ‘best’ guitar riff in 2014 in a BBC poll (BBC 2014). The heavily distorted guitar is emphasised with Robert Plant’s characteristically excessive vocal style.

The songs narrative involves a ‘baby’ (another diminutising hypocoristic) that needs “coolin” and also needs to be brought “back [for some] schoolin” (Bonham, et al. 1969). To achieve this, the song’s narrator recommends that the woman receives “every inch of his love... way down inside” herself (Bonham, et al. 1969). It is not difficult to see the sexualised implications of these lyrics. The term love here does not refer to any abstract emotional precept of interpersonal affection: the love in this song is arguably the narrator’s penis. This is evidenced by the physicality given to it, as he is not going to give her love, but every *inch* of his love. It is rather phallocentric, and the song concerns itself

with the phallus (or 'penis') as a symbol of male dominance. The narrator of the song has all the agency in the matter as he has both the right and the ability to 'give' the phallus to the girl subject. He sings that he "will give [her] every inch of [his] love" (Bonham, et al. 1969). The penis here will cure this woman as it will make her 'cool'.

This dynamic of the phallus-as-cure is incredibly heteronormative: the woman of this song is incomplete until she can be made fecund by a gendered male sexuality. At its most innocuous, the song is a simple heteronormative ballad about the 'naturalness' of a man and a woman being together. However, at its worst, the song could imply ideas of corrective rape in which females can be 'fixed' or corrected via application of the phallus (further details can be found in Bartle, 2000 and Hawthorne, 2005). The woman in this song has no role or voice, she is simply waiting.

The song itself does demonstrate a loss of control at various points. Guitarist Jimmy Page makes use of a violin bow in the chorus to make his guitar produce an otherworldly shriek. Also, the song itself dissolves into a space of discomfort between 1:16 and 3:05. During this time all melody, rhythm and structure (besides a quiet metronomic drum beat) are lost. The song descends into an aural expression of noises and yelps from the band. Sections are recorded backwards, while the guitar is scratched and grated to elicit squeaks, clicks and peculiar moans. The narrator yells "love" (Bonham, et al. 1969) at various intervals during this portion of the song and (as mentioned above) the implications of the word love here are more physical than emotional. The entire section is inexplicable and ethereal. However, the song regains its composure and structure after this section is completed as a pounding drum fill reintroduces Jimmy Page's now heavily distorted guitar for a brief solo which drags the song back to its repetitive structure. If only briefly, however, as the song itself breaks down again during its final moments as the narrator sings that the girl must "shake for [him], so he can be her backdoor man" (Bonham, et al. 1969). It closes with the phrase "keep it coolin'..." as the unnamed and in-descript woman finds her place.

The song itself, it seems, is structured like a sex act: containing ebbs and sexualised vocal moans. However this sex act is only experienced from the position of the narrator. It is his sex act, and it is under his recommendation that the woman be "schooled" through the heteronormalising power of his phallus. The 'girl' of the song is voiceless and her gender here has no chance to say either yes or no to the song's masculine advances.

As these three abovementioned songs suggest, these early moments in rock music's history (between 1950s and the 1960s) comprehensively drew heteronormative lines in the sand. Following the success of the songs discussed above, it indeed became commonplace for rock music to be music about woman, and it often stayed in step with the power lines of gender normativity at the time. As one can garner from listening to tracks such as the ones above – and many more released and written at the same time – there was little by way of subversion as well. The men of this time were hyper-sexualised beings and would earnestly demand the affections of their baying female crowds.

Subversive voices did enter the genre, particularly with regard to punk. However, it was during the rise of grunge (and the concomitant riot grrl movement) that questions regarding gender were being posed more directly (even though the lyrics of the time were often caught up in abstractions and vague lyricisms).

### **3.4 Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993)**

Nirvana's Kurt Cobain seemingly had a fascination with rape as a subject, and oftentimes the topic would emerge within Nirvana's music as a result of this. For example, the song "Polly" (1991) described the abduction, torture and rape of a 14-year-old girl in 1987 (Anon 1987). Allegedly, during the incident the young girl would fake enjoyment of the act in a bid to earn the trust and sympathy of her attacker (Rocco 1998: 243). The song itself seems to jump between the perspective of both the young girl and her assailant. As Cobain sings: "Polly says her back hurts / She's just as bored as me / She caught me off my guard / Amazes me the will of instinct" (Cobain 1991). The song itself is rather quiet and haunting, and this in itself shows how the narrator is attempting to understand the complexity of this impossibly difficult situation.

Following the release of Nirvana's breakthrough album, *Nevermind* (1991) (which contained "Polly" (1991)), Nirvana released the follow up album entitled *In Utero* (1993) which contained the song "Rape Me" (1993). The song itself has lent itself to multiple readings. For one, Nirvana biographer Michael Azerrad, in his book *Come as You Are: The Story of Nirvana* (1993), opined that the song expressed Cobain's distaste for the media's expression of his public life following the success brought on with the release of *Nevermind* (1999) (Azerrad 1993: 322-323). According to Azerrad's reading, Cobain is

being ‘raped’ by the media and his personal life is being put on display constantly. However, and somewhat ironically, Cobain himself stipulated through the media that the song is literally about rape, and it was his attempt to express an anti-rape sentiment. Speaking to Darcey Steinke of *Spin* magazine, Cobain affronted that it was a life-affirming anti-rape song in which “she [, the victim, is] saying ‘Rape me, go ahead, rape me, beat me. You’ll never kill me. I’ll survive this and I’m gonna fucking rape you one of these days and you won’t even know it.’” (Steinke 1993: 52). Cobain did say that the song could be interpreted in the manner that Azerrad argued, however, he did intend for the meaning to be blunter to avoid misreadings (Azerrad 1993: 322-323). It could be argued that the song was intended to be written for his new-born daughter, as an empowering sentiment. This is evidenced insofar as during the recording of the demo version of the song, Cobain recorded his vocal lines while holding his daughter in his arms, singing to her. The infant child’s crying can be heard throughout the unreleased demo recording (Gaar 2006: 19-20; Cobain 1992).

Structurally, the song reflects Cobain’s strong punk influence in its simple structure and lesser production values. It is typical of Nirvana with its four chord structure and verse-chorus arrangement. The distortion used (predominantly during the louder choruses) is also typical of the Nirvana/grunge style. Lyrically, it is not very complicated, the phrase “rape me” is repeated through the song (26 times), and interspersed with a collection of other non-specific lyrics. Interestingly, the more-emphasised chorus is the section that does not contain the ‘rape me’ *leitmotif*. The repeated phrases here is “I’m not the only one” (Cobain 1993). The rapist of the song is a repeat offender, and Cobain is seemingly impelling people to accept his attack and turn it back on him.

The song itself, when read in context of the early music by bands such as Led Zeppelin, is an interesting subversion of the ‘phallus-as-cure’ androcentrism. It is not the group offering the phallus, instead the song is from the perspective of the victim who is calling upon the act over and over again. A feminist reading of the song could suggest that the victim is not going to be destroyed through the act, but simply accept its inevitability and not let it beat her.

The theme of inevitability is a key aspect of the song, and it in many ways problematises any possible feminist reading. The song claims that the rapist will “do it and do it again” (Cobain 1993), and she would never be “the only one” (Cobain 1993). This

certainly illustrates a societal strata that rape itself is almost an inevitability: a universal. In some regards, the song is proclaiming that women should simply make the best of a bad situation. The song does not appear to contend rape and ask for a method of eradicating it, but rather it expresses that people will be raped and that's the end of it. It is emphasised in the songs final moments. Cobain yells "rape me" and the phrase is echoed back to him several times (Cobain 1993).

For Cobain, this cynicism suggests that gender still performs within the gendered binary of man above woman, it seems. While it may seem justifiable to promote an attitude that subverts the power of the act of rape, perhaps it would be more subversive to call for an end to rape entirely. Admittedly, such an attempt would be drenched in (probably misguided) idealism, however it would be a method to step outside of the constant victim blaming and naturalness that is often associated with rape acts. Perhaps, in this song, Cobain is illustrating the limits of his own feminist agenda (Broderick 2011): he is calling for defiance within a strict set of cultural norms, while seemingly demonstrating an unwillingness to break beyond those norms.

### **3.5 Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996)**

During the middle of the 1990s, rock music seemingly went through a change that in many ways transformed the very nature of the genre. Rock music, the once proud place of masculine bombast and pomp, became injected with a new undercurrent of insecurity, anxiety and uncertainty. The confidence was lost, and replaced by intense social awkwardness. At the centre of this shift stood Weezer.

Weezer was fronted by Rivers Cuomo, a bespectacled liberal arts student that was born with one leg forty-four millimetres shorter than the other. As Andy Greenwald writes in his book *Nothing Feels Good: Punk Rock, Teenagers, and Emo* (2003), in "the same year that Kurt Cobain was screaming "rape me" before pointing a shotgun at his own head, a mop-top bespectacled dork named Rivers Cuomo was climbing the charts with a song about his favourite sweater" (Greenwald 2003: 49; Cuomo 1994).

In 1996 Weezer released the album *Pinkerton* (1996), and the album was met with vaunted criticism. An *Entertainment Weekly* music journalist, Jeff Gordinier, wrote that "academic life [had] turned Cuomo into even more of a hermit [and] *Pinkerton* sounds like

a collection of get-down party anthems for agoraphobics” (Gordinier 1996: 78). *Rolling Stone* magazine called the album the third worst album of 1996 (Luerssen 2004: 228), and the album was defined by the magazine’s reviewer, Rob O’Connor, as “juvenile... [and] aimless” (O’Connor 1998: 66). However, years later, there was a drastic shift in opinion, not just by *Rolling Stone* magazine, but by almost everyone. In 2002 *Rolling Stone* voted it the 16th greatest album of all time (Edwards 2004: 185), and several other sources reconsidered their opinion of the record. Cuomo himself changed his opinion of the album as well. During the initial release period he stated that “*Pinkerton* [was not] worth a shit... It was a fluke. It was the video. [And he is] a shitty songwriter” (Cuomo 2011: 232), however, years later he redacted his claim and somewhat immodestly asserted that “*Pinkerton’s* great. It’s super-deep, brave, and authentic. Listening to it, I can tell that I was really going for it when I wrote and recorded a lot of those songs.” (Crock 2008).

At the centre of the album sits the song “El Scorcho” (1996), and the positioning of gender roles within the song is radically different to the rock songs that came before it. Predominantly with the subversion of the hierarchy of voice. When groups such as the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin were casually instructing ‘girls’ on what they needed, in “El Scorcho” (1996) the narrator has no power, and a complete lack of agency. Although the girl is unnamed and nondescript in the song – and referred to by the usual list of diminutising hypocoristics such as ‘girl’ – she is the one that is positioned in a role of power. However, one must not mistake this dynamic with the entrapment of The Kink’s “You Really Got Me” (1964). While The Kinks’ narrator is subjugated by the rigidity of gender performativity, the narrator in the Weezer song is describing a more complicated relationship. In short, it is not so much ‘boy-meets-girl’, but rather ‘person-meets-person’, with gender rescinded to a secondary position.

Of course, this is not to say that gender signifiers are not a central aspect of the song. The very first line is sung as such: “God damn you half-Japanese girls / you do it too me every time / the red-head says you shred the cello / And I’m jello / Baby” (Cuomo 1996). The hypocoristics are present, but placed within a unique positioning that is loaded with cultural references. The ‘half-Japanese girl’ is a sly reference to Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Madama Butterfly* (1989). This girl is said to ‘shred’ the cello, which implies a comprehensive proficiency with the instrument. In fact, the term shred is often related to guitar proficiency, and, as a guitarist, the songs narrator is placing *his* power elsewhere.

The narrator, even in these opening lines, has no power whatsoever. He is ‘jello’, implying that he is jealous of her talents, while also being soft, trembling and timorous: like Jell-O (a branded gelatine dessert sold in the United States).

The song follows the trope of the poor-uncultured man in love with the cultured woman of his affections (a trope that is played out with a lot less delicacy in Avril Lavigne’s pop song “Sk8er Boi” (2002)). In “El Scorcho” (1996), the narrator asks the woman to “go to the Green Day concert”, to which she replies that she has “never heard of them” (Cuomo 1996): further illustrating the narrator’s social tactlessness, and insecurity. These insecurities come to a point during the songs final moments when the relaxed tempo is doubled and the guitar playing gets a lot more aggressive. The narrator proclaims: “how stupid is it? I can’t talk about it / I gotta sing about it” (Cuomo 1996) and his frustration is more and more pronounced.

The most crucial dynamic is the dismantlement of the gendered hierarchy of boy-and-girl. The song reminds the listener “[he] think[s] [he]’d be good for [her] and [she]’d be good for [him]” (Cuomo 1996). This is very different from Led Zeppelin simply claiming that the woman can be fixed with the masculine phallus. Furthermore, in the final moments of the song, the popular idiom “bring home the bacon” (a colloquialism for keeping a house stocked with groceries) is subverted when the narrator claims that “[he] will bring home the turkey if [she] brings home the bacon” (Cuomo 1996). The song attempts to illustrate a gendered partnership, not a gendered hierarchy.

Of course, Cuomo does not move beyond the signifiers of gender, but the song is making valuable steps in subverting popular gender roles that have been inscribed by power through rock music. However, these insecurities promoted by the insecurity of Cuomo, and the songs narrator, was appropriated by groups and rock bands that came after Weezer and it appeared to result in a new dimension of rock music androcentrism.

### **3.6 Blink-182’s “Dammit (Growing Up) (1997)”**

Blink-182 emerged onto what was deemed the ‘pop-punk’ scene in the mid-to-late 1990s. Pop punk was a branch of punk music that took the voracity, immediacy and attitude of early punk-rock, but replaced the political sensibilities with the insecurity and awkwardness of bands such as Weezer. Unlike groups such as the Sex Pistol who were deriding the “fascist

regime” (Jones, et al. 1977) of the stifling rule of the old-fashioned royal monarchy, pop-punk bands in the mid-nineties were pining over lost loves, exploring heartbreak, coming to terms with the teenage angst of adolescence, and, incessantly, singing about ‘girls’.

Blink-182 established themselves as one of the stalwarts of pop-punk although their earlier music was more occupied with ridiculous parody, farcical humour, and apparently offensive subject matter. For example, an early Blink-182 song, “Ben Wah Balls” (1995), borders on the ridiculous as it tells the story of a young girl who mistakenly has sex with her father, but only realises that fact due to the sound of the older man’s flatulence. The song is incredibly juvenile and callow in its subject, and this type of subject was indicative of earlier Blink-182. However, they still managed to gain some wide-spread recognition, and over the years following songs such as “Ben Wah Balls” (1995), Blink-182 focused their writing more on ‘girls’. Their 1997 song “Dammit (Growing Up) (1997)” exemplified this new focus of the group.

“Dammit” (1997), simply, is a song about the end of a young relationship and the journey into adulthood that accompanies the heartbreak felt by the song’s narrator. The protagonist declares that he “know[s] that [she is] leaving [and that she] must have [her] reasons” (Hoppus 1997), however, he also understands that “this is growing up” (Hoppus 1997). A cursory glance at the song appears to reveal that the same insecurity Weezer introduced is displayed in the song, and, like Weezer, this insecurity on the part of the song’s male narrator results in a mode of equality between him and the song’s (yet again) unnamed female figure. However, the positioning of the song’s female antagonist is far more malicious than that. During the song’s second verse, the narrator encounters the girl “on the arm of [another] guy” (Hoppus 1997). His response is bitter and acrimonious towards her. He sings that they will “smile... and wave... [and] pretend it is okay” (Hoppus 1997), but assures that when her new partner is gone, he “won’t come back” (Hoppus 1997).

The girl in this song is simply defined by her male counterparts: she is either with the narrator, or with her new partner. She cannot be alone and this implies that she has no agency whatsoever. The song’s female subject is told that if she attempts to exist without a man, she is simply nothing. The burden of guilt for the narrator’s heartbreak rests on her shoulders alone.



There is an attempt on the part of the narrator to place both the girl and himself on equal standings. The song's first chorus is sung as such: "And it's happened once again / I'll turn to a friend / someone that understands / sees through the master plan / but everybody's gone / and I've been here for too long / to face this on my own / well I guess this is growing up" (Hoppus 1997). Later, when the chorus is repeated, the lyrics change and are sung as such: "And it'll happen once again / *you'll* turn to a friend / someone that understands / and sees through the master plan / but everybody's gone / and *you've* been there for too long / to face this on *your* own / well I guess this is growing up" (Hoppus, 1997, researcher's italics for emphasis). The shift in focus from the narrator to the girl shows how power is operating in the song. The narrator has the power to define his own emotionality, but he also possesses the power to define *her* emotionality. Her future, her possibility for happiness and contentment are not of her own accord: they are the property of the song's narrator – a man.

This exemplifies a new dimension on androcentric attitudes that emerged in rock music in the mid-nineties following the music of groups such as Nirvana and Weezer. While there were certain limitations to the new discursive fundament between woman and men, groups such as Blink-182 ostensibly misread this new, and open, space of gender engagement and replaced it with pre-adolescent moaning and whining. In some ways, even the ridiculous figures of their earlier music such as "Ben Wah Balls" (1995) had some agency; although the song flippantly dealt with subjects such as incest and flatulence, at least the female character had the ability to make up her own mind and was in control of her own subjectivity. The anonymous and vapid figment of a female in "Dammit" (1997) is not afforded such a privilege, she is simply a cipher through which the song's narrator can express his desire to define her emotionality and subjectivity.

Finally, the song seemingly naturalises this dynamic using the phrase "this is growing up" (Hoppus 1997), which is repeated throughout the song's entirety. What this plausibly suggests is that, on the one hand, heartbreak is part of growing up. However, it also seems to suggest that the heartbreak is the song's narrator's property. In the heterosexual binary of Blink-182, men are the ones who get heartbroken and have to suffer through it, women are simply catalysts that cause them this emotional sorrow: not individuals that can feel the same emotion themselves.

As we can see, while the 1990s began with opening a new discourse between men and women within the heteronormative binary, pop-punk groups such as Blink-182 resolved this insecurity into a new dynamic of androcentrism. It borders on the pitiful, as the countless faceless woman in these songs are not agents of subjectivity, but casualties in a new form of heartbroken masculinity. Worse even, this dynamic became more and more misogynistic with the rise of subgenre such as 'emo' and 'indie' that emerged in the early 2000s.

### **3.7 Brand New “Jude Law and a Semester Abroad” (2003)**

After the nineties' influence of jaded insecurity, a new androcentrism began to manifest throughout rock music. Greenwald writes in the chapter, “Sad Girl Stories”, of his book *Nothing Feels Good: Punk Rock, Teenagers, and Emo* (2003), that “[rock music]... [had] always been a typically male province, [and] the monotony of the... gender perspective [became] overwhelming” (Greenwald 2003: 133). Greenwald describes a new form of misogyny that was developing following the influence of groups such as Nirvana, Weezer, and Blink-182. He writes:

[Early 2000 rock music] acts are a long way from the naked misogyny of hair-metal or some hip-hop, there is something equally disturbing in their one-sided fury at all the females who did them wrong. The way typical... bands sung about woman was a volatile mixture of... strident puritanism... and self-obsessed sexist solipsism... songwriters were one-sided victims of heartbreak and ready to sing about it, with women having no chance to respond. (Greenwald 2003: 133)

In his book, Greenwald interviews music and cultural critic Jessica Hopper who also noted the sudden shift towards an almost subversive misogyny during this period. Hopper argued that the music of the time “was more misogynist and macho than rap-metal or hip-hop... [and it keeps] women on a pedestal or on their backs. [Woman became] relegated to the role of muse or heartbreaker, an object of either misery or desire... [the music] just builds a cathedral of man pain and celebrates its validation” (Greenwald 2003: 133-134).

Arguably, within the midst of the birth of this new misogyny, Long Island, New York, based rock band, Brand New, began to grow in popularity. Their debut album, *Your Favourite Weapon* (2001), appeared to exemplify this new misogyny as described by

Greenwald and Hopper, particularly the song “Jude Law and a Semester Abroad” (2002). As with most songs of the time, the song dealt with heartbreak. In this case, because the object of a young man’s affection (an unnamed, nondescript girl) moves away to study in England, leaving him in the United States, alone.

The woman in the song is given instructions by the narrator, during the song’s chorus, to “tell all the English boys she meets / about the American boy back in the States / the American boy she used to date / who would do anything she said” (Lacey, et al. 2003). There is a notable bitterness here on the part of the narrator, not mention his further desire to have an absolutely controlling influence over the woman in the song. The song’s heartbroken narrator is suicidal and irrational with the thought of this woman leaving him. He begins the song drinking poison, and later decides to drink “for forty days and forty nights / a sip for every second-hand tick” (Lacey, et al. 2003) that she is away from him. Not only does the woman in the song have agency of any kind, but she has her agency removed by the songs narrator. As the narrator says, even if she claims to miss him, then she is simply lying (Lacey, et al. 2003).

The narrator’s bitterness towards her is further fuelled by several wishes for some form of grievous bodily harm to befall her. He wishes that she kisses someone contagious, experiences a plane crash on her travels, and/or drowns at the bottom of the sea. However, in the narrator’s mind, her death would do nothing but “create an empty space” (Lacey, et al. 2003). The entire group rallies behind the narrator during the songs final moments and repeats “no more songs about her / after this one he is done / she is, she is, she’s gone” (Lacey, et al. 2003). The violence towards this woman is palpable, and it is only used to threaten her because she has made a conscious decision to seemingly improve herself by seeing the world and studying abroad. For the narrator, this decision on her part is a selfish act as it flies in the face of their relationship. For some infantile reason, his claim that he would do “anything she said” is reason enough for her to not explore the world. Evidently, what the narrator is saying is that he would do anything she said, as long as what she said complies with him.

### 3.8 Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004)

While Brand New's music operated in a microcosm of two people, groups such as Say Anything situated there misogynistic undercurrents within the streams of Western History. Say Anything gained notable notoriety with the release of the aptly titled *...Is a Real Boy* (2004) in 2004. The single of the album was "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004), a song that is described by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (2006) as an "intense and oddly uplifting rocker about a relationship torn by the Holocaust" (Mervis 2006). The song itself sounds massive, it builds with heavily distorted guitars and rolling drums overlaid with a cacophonous harmony of vocal 'ahhs'. The introduction builds until a sudden stop as the narrator sings "When I" (Bemis 2006), with the 'I' *sostenuto* ('sustained') to remind the listener that this is the narrator's story. The song continues from this point on with less distortion, as it becomes more upbeat with 'jangly' guitar and major chord phrasing. The pounding drums are replaced with a tambourine (temporarily) to further uphold the songs more positive and upbeat tone.

However, in direct contention to this upbeat and cheerful disposition, the song's lyrics are rather dark and miserable. It deals with Nazi occupation and how a couple is split apart in wartime Europe. As the narrator sings "the whole ghetto... the boot stomped meadows... [are] ignore[d]" (Bemis 2006), insofar as the narrators "baby" (another hypocoristic) is "lovely" and he wants to "do her right where [she's] standing" (Bemis 2006): 'do' being a colloquialism for sexual intercourse. The horrors of war are incessantly laid concomitantly alongside the sexual desire of the song's narrator. As he sings late "when our city, vast and shitty, falls to the Axis... you'd look finer with each day of hiding... beneath the wormwood... love me so good... [the Nazis] won't hear us screw away the day" (Bemis 2006). The song itself, songwriter Max Bemis claims, is autobiographical as it is about his grandparents (Mervis 2006). One wonders whether Bemis's preoccupation with his grandparents having sex while secreted away from the Nazi occupiers is life-affirming, on the one hand, or rather unsettling, on the other.

To argue that this dynamic is a form of Freudian *eros* and *thanatos* would be rather glib, as the imagery in the song is taken to extremes. The song's narrator refers to their relationship as their "Treblinka", which in itself is incredibly uneasy. The heterosexual relationship of these two people – which is constantly validated through

a plethora of sexual references – is cited as being a Nazi extermination camp. Between 700 000 and 900 000 Jewish nationals were killed at the Treblinka camp in less than two years (Roca 2010: 204), and it seems impudent and callous to compare this atrocity to an interpersonal relationship. But it also reflects a frightening heteronormativity on the part of *Say Anything*, insofar as this is how important the love of these two people is: it is worth the lives of those held in Treblinka.

And, furthermore, Hopper is justified in her statement that the women of songs such as this are “relegated to the role of muse or heartbreaker, an object of either misery or desire... [the music] just builds a cathedral of man pain and celebrates its validation” (Greenwald 2003: 133-134). As the narrator of the song claims: “should they kill [him], / [her] love will fill [him], as warm as the bullets... This war was worth this” (Bemis 2006). His love for her, evidently, is bigger than Nazi occupation, bigger than the Holocaust, and, ultimately, bigger than the woman in the song. Her agency is lost, and he “won’t let them take her” (Bemis 2006). What perhaps begun as an earnest love song, became horrific, and somewhat uncomfortable, in its execution. The woman is not the man’s partner, she is simply a damsel for him to save by overcoming the horrors of war through his heterosexuality.

### **3.9 Fall Out Boy “Sugar, We’re Goin Down” (2006)**

Of course, within the taxonomy of rock music, there are moments of subversion that tend to stifle misogynistic attitudes through the very expectations of the listener. Fall Out Boy have on occasions done this through subtly playing with rock music expectations (with regard to gender). “Sugar, We’re Goin Down” (2006) is an example of the band experimenting with the listeners expectations. The writer of the song, Pete Wentz, commented in an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine that he “wrote the lyrics in Chicago... and [was]... listening to the old music where they’d always say ‘sugar’ and ‘honey’ - stuff like that” (Anon 2005). Wentz’s fascination with these hypocoristic names resulted in him penning the lyrics to “Sugar, We’re Goin Down” (2006).

At first, the song appears to be fairly one-dimensional in its execution. The distorted four-chord guitar introduction follows a fairly commonplace, common time four-over-four drum line. The song is very much in line with the pop-punk songs which preceded

it. Lyrically, at first glance as well, the song appears to feature the standard tropes of such songs as it is burdened with the clichés of the genre: it seems very much to play into the heartbreak and loneliness that fuelled so much of the misogyny that Greenwald attempted to critically engage with.

However, it is notably more complicated than that. Besides a single usage of the word “him”, the lyrical composition of the song is almost completely gender neutral. In many ways, the song is reminiscent of Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body* (1992). In her novel, Winterson’s narrative is told from the perspective of a ‘genderless-I’ narrator. In other words, the reader cannot tell (or know) if the protagonist is a man or a woman. By doing this, what Winterson accomplishes is that the “gender-freed narrator offers a new approach towards identity” (Sonneberg 2003: 3).

This technique forces a listener (or in Winterson’s case, a reader) into a position in which issues of gender need to be contended and critically engaged with. Fall Out Boy mimic this genderless dynamic with careful word-play that compels the listener to critically engage with the song. The phrases “drop a heart / break a name / we’re always sleeping in, and sleeping for the wrong team” (Wentz & Stump 2004). The play on ‘heartbreak’ and ‘name-dropping’, along with saying that they are ‘sleeping for the wrong team’ implies a confusion on the part of the narrator, opening up to further investigation.

The opening line of the song, “Am I more than you bargained for” (Wentz & Stump 2004) introduces the narrator exclaiming that they question whether or not the ‘you’ of the song has expected their identity. The identity is evidenced as fluid, as the ‘I’ is “dying to [say]... anything you want to hear” because that is just who the ‘I’ is “this week” (Wentz & Stump 2004). Gendered signifiers are ripe within the lyrics, but never directly attached to anything. The narrator is simply a “notch on a bedpost” (a colloquialism for a sexual conquest; Wentz & Stump, 2004), but is also watching “from the closet / wishing to be the friction in [his/her] jeans” (Wentz & Stump 2004). The reference to the closet implies a homosexual subtext (Sedgwick 1990), also, sleeping for a ‘team’ is another label within vernacular implying heterosexuality.

The narrator is caught between these various gender signifiers and forced to ask questions. Is the song about a boy who falls in love with a boy who is in love with another boy? Is it about a girl who has fallen in love with a boy who is homosexual, and her love is to remain unrequited? Perhaps it is just a typical love song that conforms to standardised

gender roles. Ultimately, however, the song is arguably not asking these questions at all, rather it is simply asking: “why does it matter?”

However, this being said, the song lacks the sensitivity and tact of Winterson’s novel. Its brevity combined with the stolid and one-dimensional execution results in a piece of music that does not afford the listener time to comprehend the song’s complex gender dynamics, critically. While Winterson’s text arguably presents the narrator as “the transformation of modern queer theory into a fictitious character... [which] mirrors Judith Butler’s assumptions about gender and identity” (Sonneberg 2003: 3), Fall Out Boy’s chart-topping single is less likely to garner any critical engagement. While questions regarding gender are certainly raised in the song, it begs the question whether the song in its presentation does not allow for engagement with these questions.

Nevertheless, Wentz’s fascination with words such as ‘sugar’ and ‘honey’ have resulted in a song that plays upon the listeners expectations, and these expectations are built across almost 60 years of rock history. What begun 40 years ago with a girl who “really got [the Kinks’] goin” (Davies 1964), has, interestingly, come full circle. It begs the question, what new gender dynamic is rock music aiming to go down to?

### **3.10 Considering The Influence on Subjectivity**

To summarise, the nine songs featured above in no way illustrate rock music in its entirety, however they certainly offer a glimpse at how rock music has contended with gender throughout its history. Butler offers us a theoretical framework to engage with gender. By using her assumptions, we can attempt to find the areas in the genre where the heteronormative binaries of gender are operating, and attempt to find the discursive limits of performativity. The representation of women in rock music, then, warrants some investigation. Especially when one considers the size and scope of rock music as both a culture and a business. Rock music, and popular music beyond that, acts as a cultural discourse that arguably has a direct influence on both the social and political subjectivity of a listener. Tim Wall suggests in his book *Studying Popular Music Culture* (2003) that a listener should consider popular “music cultural discourses” as “music sounds are part of the wider cultural practices, which collectively constitute our knowledge” (Wall, 2003, p. 21). Rock music, then, “may not be ignored or resisted” (Wicke, 1990, p. ix). Rock

music is a “mass medium through which social experiences are passed on which reach far beyond the material nature of the music” (Wicke, 1990, p. ix). Seemingly, rock music continuously bombards listeners with their ambiguous, androcentric, and oftentimes violent images which reinforce patriarchal sensibilities. This bombardment would surely have some impact on the subjectivity of the millions of people that listen to it.

However, the degree to which the listener’s subjectivity is influenced needs examination. To simply state that because some rock songs have some violent imagery then listeners exposed to the music will unwittingly reinforce these sensibilities is incredibly glib. Surely the listener has some stroke of agency within the constant bombardment hoisted upon them in the face of the gigantic rock industry. The following chapter will examine how the listener engages with the music they receive. By examining the discursive parameters of the critical framework offered by cultural theorists such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Stuart Hall, one can grapple with the question of whether we are simply passive receivers or active engagers within this musical landscape.



## Chapter Four: The Negotiation of Subjectivity

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, rock music's depiction of women is a somewhat complicated one, but still one that more often than not relegates their role to a position subservient to the predominantly male rock genre. Like hip hop (as discussed in Chapter One), the representations can be one that is notably misogynistic, and in some spaces, quite reprehensible. The women of the songs discussed are not named, identified, or agents of their own subjectivity, but rather receivers that are under the onus to simply accept the music that is given to them.

This chapter will examine whether or not the individuals who encounter rock music are simply passive receivers of these oftentimes misogynistic messages, or whether they have any form of agency. In other words, the chapter will ask if we can negotiate and critically unpack the music we listen to, or if the music we listen to affects our subjectivity directly which results in the latent misogyny of rock music burrowing tracts of misogynistic thoughts and ideas into our subjectivity.

The first section of this chapter will examine the cultural theory affronted by critics Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of the 'cultural industry' was an image of a factory that directly influences the public's collective subjectivity. They were ultimately pessimistic, and believed that popular culture (such as rock music) lulled its audience into a sense of political apathy and inactivity. Furthermore, Adorno was particularly disapproving of popular music which he deemed as something which was 'standardised', and therefore had little value whatsoever (unlike, for example, the dissonant atonality of composers such as Arnold Schoenberg who compelled their listeners to engage critically with their music (Adorno 2002)). The individual, for Adorno and Horkheimer, did not display the faculties necessary to negotiate the landscape of popular culture, and were thus slaves to its whims and directions. In short, if Adorno and Horkheimer are correct in their theoretical parameters, if rock music is unsavoury towards woman, people who listen to rock music would have no choice but to be unsavoury to women as well.

However, such pessimism on the part of Adorno and Horkheimer seems incredibly fatalistic, and at its extremes their model of the cultural industry becomes an Orwellian-esque brainwashing machine. When reading Adorno and Horkheimer, their thought is

best tempered by the writing of cultural theorist Stuart Hall who is less pessimistic in the face of messages (as those put forward by popular culture). In his essay *Encoding/Decoding* (2006) Hall describes a communications model that implies some agency on the part of the listener: predominantly due to their differing socio-cultural backgrounds. In contrast to the media theories that disempowers the audience (such as the Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)), Hall advances that an audience member can play an active role in negotiating mass cultural artefacts. As Lee-Anne van Antwerpen writes, for Hall "although messages are produced by the encoder based on the experiences of everyday life, they need to be decoded by the audience, with the result that what the encoder intended is not always what is communicated" (van Antwerpen 2010: 68). The second section of this chapter will examine Hall's model of communication to offer a more rounded theoretical set of parameters than those offered by Adorno and Horkheimer.

Lastly, to complete the chapter, the research will look at how some woman have used rock music (a genre ostensibly soaked in anti-women sentiments), to their advantage. It will reveal that although rock music appears to be androcentric, women (such as Ingrid Hu Dahl) have made conscious use of the genre and its modes not just to empower themselves, but also as a tool to empower future generations of young girls who are having difficulties negotiating the complicated identity politics of a more globalised and open world.

#### **4.1 Adorno and Horkheimer**

In an article for *The New Yorker* (2014), writer Alex Ross reminds his reader's that "Adorno and Horkheimer... viewed pop culture as an instrument of economic and political control, enforcing conformity behind a permissive screen. The "culture industry," as they called it, offered the "freedom to choose what is always the same.'" (Ross 2014). However, it must be said that for many, the theoretical framework offered by Adorno and Horkheimer "had become constructed as obsolete" (van Antwerpen 2010: 67) following the end of the 1960's and the dissolution of the 'Frankfurt School'. This being said, Ross argues that in

light of recent events... it may be time to [read Adorno and Horkheimer] again [as we face a barrage of] economic and environmental crisis, terrorism and counterterrorism, deepening inequality, unchecked tech and media monopolies, a withering away of intellectual institutions, [and] an ostensibly liberating Internet culture in which we are constantly checking to see if we are being watched: none of this would have surprised the prophets of Frankfurt, who, upon reaching America, failed to experience the sensation of entering Paradise. (Ross 2014)

It is perhaps more responsible to examine Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of the cultural industry more closely, than simply deeming it obsolete.

Adorno writes in his book *Culture Industry* (1991), that the term 'culture industry' was "perhaps used for the first time in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which Horkheimer and [himself] published in 1947" (Adorno 1991: 98). The culture industry is perhaps best understood as a mechanism that operates in society that produces 'culture' for the public. Adorno wrote that in the drafts of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), the term 'culture industry' was not used. Instead, they simply referred to 'mass culture' (Adorno 1991: 98), but replaced the expression with cultural industry insofar as they did not wish for 'mass culture' to be understood as "something like a culture that arises spontaneously for the masses themselves" (Adorno 1991: 98). Instead, Adorno and Horkheimer cut a definite distinction between 'mass culture' and the 'cultural' industry' as it need to be understood that popular culture – the product produced by the cultural industry – is not organic but something produced to purposefully control the subjectivity of the receiver. As Adorno writes:

From the latter the culture industry must be distinguished in the extreme. The culture industry fuses the old and familiar into a new quality. In all its branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan. The individual branches are similar in structure or at least fit into each other, ordering themselves into a system almost without a gap. This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration. The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above. (Adorno 1991: 98)

For Adorno and Horkheimer, "the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry [and is reflected in] the familiar experience of the movie goer, who perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left" (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002: 99). What this means that we define the industry, not out of our own accord, but because

the cultural industry has defined us. As van Antwerpen explains “the culture industry literally mediates between individuals and the reality of their existence; justifying injustices and mystifying oppression” (van Antwerpen 2010: 57).

For Adorno and Horkheimer it was incredibly inclusive. Even ‘high’ art loses its plausible efficacy in the unrelenting face of the culture industry as the “seriousness of high art is destroyed in speculation” (Adorno 1991: 98). Ultimately

although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object. (Adorno 1991: 99)

We are governed by the culture industry. It becomes an exceedingly controlling mechanism insofar as it does not simply control our ‘taste’ in artefacts such as music, art, and film, but the cultural industry’s ubiquity also defines our political and social beliefs.

A cursory reading of the culture industry (as defined by Adorno and Horkheimer) can possibly draw in comparisons to *Nineteen Eighty-Four’s* “enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete”, The Ministry of Truth (Orwell 1949: 6). The Ministry of Truth is an organisation that controls the thoughts, desires and history of the novel’s characters. In contemporary terms, the culture industry is in many ways an organisation that appears to be developing cultural ‘Newspeak’ that instructs our subjectivity and hinders any attempt at ‘Thoughtcrime’ (to put it into such obvious Orwellian terms). However, to make these Orwellian comparisons is simply too flippant. The culture industry is more pervasive than a single structure that exerts influence: it is uniform rather than monolithic and the culture industry controls everything because it is a part of everything. This industry produces culture that produces individuals that reproduce said culture. Insofar as

no independent thinking must be expected from the audience: the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure (which collapses under reflection), but by signals... The stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers’ needs, producing them, controlling them, disciplining them.  
(Adorno 2002: 48)

The culture industry seems to track in a manner quite similar to the Foucauldian conception of power illustrated in Chapter Two. That is to say that the culture industry “is a multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate... [not a] general system of domination exerted by one group over another” (Foucault 1976: 92).

Rock music, as a genre, would ostensibly fit within Adorno and Horkheimer’s parameters of the cultural industry, and therefore, they would argue, rock music is a mechanism that promotes the predominant ideological fundament of the time. Of course, Adorno and Horkheimer were writing some time before the birth of rock music in the early 1950’s, but the genre still corresponds to the theoretical framework and discursive parameters outlined in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002) and other similar writings. Adorno specifically was interested in popular music, and often decreed it to be vapid and repetitive: nothing more than a commodity which is sold and disrupted through the culture industry. In times of protest and civil unrest, popular music, for Adorno, is “unbearable”. He comments:

I believe, in fact, that attempts to bring political protest together with ‘popular music’ – that is, with entertainment music – are for the following reasons doomed from the start. The entire sphere of popular music, even there where it dresses itself up in modernist guise is to such a degree inseparable from past temperament, from consumption, from the cross-eyed transfixion with amusement that attempts to outfit it with a new function remain entirely superficial... And I have to say that when somebody sets himself up, and for whatever reason sings maudlin music about Vietnam being unbearable, I find that really it is this song that is in face unbearable in that by taking the horrendous and making it somehow consumable, it ends up wringing something like consumption-qualities out of it. (Adorno 2010)

For Adorno, there were two aspects that made popular music reprehensible. Namely standardisation and pseudo-individualization (Adorno 2002). The combination of these two aspects removed all political valence from the medium. By standardised, Adorno does not insist that all popular music sound the same, rather that the “inherent nature of this music itself, [is a part of] a system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society” (Adorno 2002: 442). What he means here is that because the music is made for us – standardised for the consumer’s desires – it cannot operate on any level outside of our subjectivity. We accept it not because we like it, but because it is created by the culture industry that creates our tastes. The music we digest and enjoy is standardised to accomplish two things: Firstly, it should “provoke [our]

attention. [Secondly]... the material [should] fall within the category of what the musically untrained listener would call “natural” music” (Adorno 2002: 445). By accomplishing this, the listener is completely accepting of popular music.

But what of our individual tastes? Surely one could argue by stating that different people enjoy different music? Adorno is quick to counter such an assumption by reminding us that popular music offers pseudo-individualization. As Adorno states “in... popular music... no necessities of life are immediately involved, while, at the same time, the residues of individualism are most alive there in the form of ideological categories such as taste and free choice, it is imperative to hide standardization” (Adorno 2002: 447). Our supposedly personal taste is in itself generated by the culture industry as our individual choices are endowed by a “cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardization itself” (Adorno 2002: 448). As a listener we are kept in line by our taste because our taste is not our own. Instead, our ‘personal’ taste is a “pre-digested” product that makes us forget that the music we listen to is already listened to for us (Adorno 2002: 448).

Of course, the theories of standardisation and pseudo-individualism seem a bit myopic, and by today’s standards, with the increasingly open spaces of production (such as the internet), surely we can escape the confines of the cultural industry. Adorno and Horkheimer would say no. The impetus of the cultural industry is to not only create culture, but also create the way in which we produce culture. As they said, the audience has “the freedom to choose what is always the same” (Ross 2014), and this can further be elaborated by arguing that the public has the freedom to create what is always the same. We are so enraptured by the vice-grip like hold of the perpetuating cultural industry that we simply cannot see beyond its borders, and we can only choose and create within the borders we have ourselves – sadly – created. As one can see, the theory put forth by Adorno and Horkheimer was incredibly pessimistic: a cultural chokehold that limited our very subjectivity. Within such parameters, the misogyny and androcentric dimensions of rock music are inescapable and so intrinsically linked to the genre they cannot be overcome.

Of course, it should be remembered that Adorno and Horkheimer were thinking within a particular historical context marred by the stain of Nazi-era fascism and the unyielding rise of post-depression capitalism, and this background had a notable stamp on

their thought. They could arguably not see beyond the limitations and understanding of the “fictitious character of the ‘individual’ in the bourgeois era” (Cook 1996: 47). However, the pessimism of their thought was tempered by critics who followed them and their pessimism “was attributed to the difficult historical context in which they were writing, and their perspectives were marginalised in favour of more optimistic appraisals of the capacity of the individual to engage with the products of the mass media” (van Antwerpen 2010: 66).

## 4.2 Stuart Hall

For Adorno and Horkheimer, there was essentially one moment of meaning production in the structure of the cultural industry. The culture industry would create an artefact (a song, a film, a piece of art) and imbue it with a particular meaning, this meaning was then thrust upon a passive receiver. In other (rather simple) terms the culture industry would produce a film with the message “capitalism is good!”, and the audience would watch the film and accept this meaning. Such a structure of meaning is very hierarchical (as discussed above), and contemporary communications theory expands upon this idea and argues that there is not only *one* moment of meaning production, but *multiple* moments of meaning production.

This is essentially the primary thesis of Stuart Hall’s *Encoding/Decoding* (2006) in which he “offers a densely theoretical account of how messages are produced and disseminated” (During 2006: 90). Unlike the vaunted pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer, Hall maintains that the audience does possess the capacity for agency when receiving media messages. This is not to say that an audience can completely change the meaning imbued on a message by the producer, as messages still “have a ‘complex structure of dominance’ as... they are ‘imprinted’ by institutional power relations” (During 2006: 90). However, although this structure of dominance is present, there is still “space for a message to be used or understood somewhat against the grain” (During 2006: 90). In short, the mass media will still produce messages supporting dominant discourses (such as a capitalist discourse, or a heteronormative discourse), but because meaning is also created when the message is received, the message is never simply accepted verbatim.

Hall would most likely be in agreement with Adorno and Horkheimer that “modern capitalist culture revolves around the mass media and its economic patterning of the individual’s frame of reference” (van Antwerpen 2010). However, importantly, he would reject the pessimism of these theorists who insisted that hegemonic power is exerted upon hapless, passive and lethargic subjects. For Hall, models such as those proposed by Adorno and Horkheimer’s theory operated along “codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse” (Hall 2006: 91). What this essentially means is that these models are based upon excessive “linearity... on the level of message exchange [and do not account for]... a structured conception of the different moments [in] a complex structure of [paradigmatic] relations” (Hall 2006: 91).

This complex structure of paradigmatic relations, for Hall, operates in four phases: namely, production, circulation, use, and reproduction. Meaning is created in each of the phases of this structure, and therefore it cannot be assured that the original meaning intended during a message’s production will reach the audience. In colloquial terms, meaning production is something of a game of ‘broken telephone’. In *Encoding/Decoding* (2006) Hall was primarily investigating how meaning is produced in television broadcasts, but these same four phases of meaning can seemingly be applied to rock songs as well. A song could be ‘produced’ by a band (the initial stage of meaning production), and as it is circulated via radio or internet, meaning can be re-inscribed. Following this, the song will be listened to (used) by an audience and their own social context will impart new meaning upon the song. Lastly, meaning will be changed again when the song is repeated (reproduced). For Hall, there is always the possibility that the initial stages of meaning production will be different from the final stages as “each stage has its own determining limits and possibilities” (During 2006: 90). For Hall, the original message may not fit within the meaning structure of the audience who receives it and it is in this break that autonomy is produced. In his own words:

The lack of fit between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the asymmetry between the codes of ‘source’ and ‘receiver’ at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form. What are called ‘distortions’ or ‘misunderstandings’ arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange. Once again, this defines the ‘relative autonomy’, but ‘determinateness’, of the entry and exit of the message in its discursive moments. (Hall 2006: 96)



In short, since the individuals place in society is never identical to the place of the message producer, meaning can never be identical and will always contain some form of communication breakdown and autonomous reception. The audience is not the passive receiver that Adorno and Horkheimer illustrated, but instead, for Hall, they play a role in the production of meaning itself.

Still, of course, that is not to say that Hall denies the hegemonic powers of mass media. The very space the individual operates in to defy the dominant meaning structures is in itself created by these same structures. Denis McQuail reminds us that

the practice of signification through language [can] establish...maps of cultural meaning which promote the dominance of a ruling class ideology, especially by establishing a hegemony. This involves containing subordinate classes within the structure of meaning which frame all competing definitions of reality with the range of a single hegemonic view of things. (McQuail 2000: 307)

Although meaning is created in various phases, and although personal social backgrounds will affect how a message is received, these messages are still encoded with a collection of dominant discourses. A dominant discourse of rock music, for example, as evidenced in Chapter Three, is that of heteronormativity. Therefore, this message will continue to underpin a large portion of songs produced in this genre. However, an individual's social context will affect how the message of heteronormativity is accepted. Blink-182, for example, as shown above, tend to write somewhat melodramatic boy-meets-girl-girl-leaves-boy love songs. The message of these songs – and the complicated heteronormative discourse aligned with them – will be more readily be accepted by a heterosexual male that has perhaps gone through a breakup. However, the message will be received differently by, perhaps, a gay man, or a lesbian woman, or a transgendered individual. As Judith Butler so frankly put it in her writings regarding Aretha Franklin: “But what if Aretha were singing to me? Or what is she was singing to a drag queen...?” (Butler 1993: 317). The individual receiving the song, then, would impart their own dimension, experience, and subjectivity upon the message. The message, therefore, becomes changed and develops into a new message, a new moment of meaning construction.

A heterosexual man, then, is possibly more likely to fall into step with the heteronormativity of bands such as Blink-182, and therefore, as a result, the ‘naturalness’ of the message heterosexuality would probably be further ingrained within the individual.

The song becomes further evidence of their heterosexual subjective ‘truth’, because in accepting the meaning verbatim they are repeating the message and using it as evidence for the discursive parameters of their subjectivity. Judith Butler argues that “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual” (Butler 2008: 113), and a song such as Blink-182’s – and many others like it – are absolute moments of repetition, which confirm gender binarism by singing about it over and over again.

Hall’s *Encoding/Decoding* (1996), demonstrates that messages are not simply received by a passive audience. At times, it seems, the messages are simply accepted. However, the messages are still subject to change. However, importantly, this is not to say that certain members of the population receive said messages correctly and others receive them incorrectly. Judith Butler’s personal reception of Aretha Franklin’s music is neither correct nor incorrect, but rather the creation of a *new* message. There is no teleology here. There is no final message. Instead messages are constantly changing and developing. So while rock music may repeat a dominant, heteronormative discourse of androcentrism, rock as a medium is capable of producing a surfeit of differing messages. Furthermore, for Hall, a heterosexual male listening to Blink-182, will not always conform to the message the songs entail. They have the option to “detotalize the message in [their] preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternate framework of reference” (Hall 2006: 103). This can be done through the practice of critical engagement and a willingness to actively engage with a message. Such praxis can be one of the “most significant political moments... when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way be given an oppositional reading” (Hall 2006: 103). And in many ways, dominant discourse can be re-negotiated through this process. The voiceless females of the various songs mentioned above need to be given space to produce their own voices and a purposeful roles in the narratives presented by bands such as Blink-182.

### **4.3 Recoding Rock Music**

There have been various moments throughout rock’s history that evidence Hall’s theory, and demonstrate that agency and negotiation is possible when receiving a message. While the “troubling... demographic of... [rock music’s] fan base [is], broadly speaking, young men who... will grow up to be tomorrow’s adult men” (Rees 2013: 75), women have had

a definitive place within the genre beyond that of simply decorative ornaments through which male whims are exercised. In certain cases, women have appropriated rock music to fulfil their own motives and moved the genre beyond the patriarchal shadow of broken songs about angry and broken boys.

Several women that have achieved some success within rock music are often disappointed by how women participate in the genre. Courtney Love of band Hole (and ex-wife of Nirvana vocalist Kurt Cobain) describes how she wished for women to have a better place within rock's history. Love described the dynamic when speaking about 'groupies' (young, often under age, woman who seeks to achieve status by having sex with rock musicians). She said that there "certainly wasn't a line of 16-year-old boys in little bondage outfits waiting for [her]...but interestingly... there was a line of 16-year-old girls in little bondage outfits waiting for [her]. [She] just wanted to spank them and give them all guitars and tell them to start bands" (Carson, et al. 2004: 3). Love understood that there was a feeling of liberation available within the genre of rock, and understood that, in some ways, rock could benefit many individuals struggling with identity.

Ingrid Hu Dahl fully understands how rock music can benefit those struggling with identity and the genre has ostensibly assisted her own troubles with her personal ethnic identity. She comments that "when [she] was a teenager [she] was really angry and frustrated... predominantly because [she] was asked this one question every day. The question was "What are you?" (Dahl 2013). This question motivated her to engage with studies in gender and identity, and following a post-graduate course in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University, Dahl got involved with an all-girl rock camp. To her surprise, when viewing the applications of the girls who were interested in this camp, "a third of them were of mixed-race descent" (Dahl 2013). However, although this was the case, "nothing [at the all-girl rock camp] was talking about race or class or identity" (Dahl 2013). Dahl and an associate decide to expand upon the camp's curriculum and host new workshops dealing with this topic, and Dahl's efforts resulted in "girls from eight to eighteen, all week, in [her] workshop, and [they] really talked about big words like patriarchy and oppression and media literacy" (Dahl 2013): all to the backdrop of rock music. Ultimately, for Dahl, she understands that it is critical for the many young girls to have the power to come up to a microphone and say "this is where I belong!" (Dahl 2013).

There is a counter agreement to this agency presented by such individuals as Love and Dahl. In their book *Girls Rock! Fifty Years of Women Making Music* (2004), Mina Carson, Tisa Lewis, and Susan M. Shaw describe how the very act of engaging with rock music – from a practical level – is a masculine experience. They write that playing “rock music also demands that women break with a number of other cultural constraints of femininity [as] rock musicians sweat... get calluses... work with equipment and technology [and are] loud” (Carson, et al. 2004: 4). To play rock music, some would argue, is not about forging a new identity, but simply appropriating the identity of another. However, one should be reminded what Hall argued regarding how one’s own background affects a message. Girls playing rock should not be understood as girls playing like boys, but rather as girls playing as girls. Carson, Lewis and Shaw continue and explain that gender

identities are created in the interplay between social expectations and institutions and individual expressions... because of cultural expectations of femininity and rock’s masculinity, women who construct identities as rock musicians must negotiate a resistant identity - one that claims women can sweat, jump, shout and play rock music in ways that do not simply mimic traditional male forms of playing. (Carson, et al. 2004: p. 4)

Dahl continues this same argument and comments that

to see girls practice [drums] is radical. Some of them are told at a very young age that ‘girls don’t drum, that’s not something girls do’. But by doing something radical that is maybe not typical, that’s not the norm, that’s where we should all be focusing. That’s where [girls] should be heard. That’s where [girls] should be investing their efforts. (Dahl 2013)

Rock music can be used to develop a new space for girls to develop a less structured and more forgiving gendered identity that steps away from the rigidity of man/woman binarism. As Helen Reddington argues in *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (2007) there is no perception in the male world of girls being adolescent anyway: ‘adolescence is a “masculine” construct. Male adolescence and deviance are often perceived to go hand-in-hand, whereas young women perhaps fail to conform to a stereotype of deviance” (Reddington 2007).

Hall, seemingly, was correct in his assumption that messages are created not only by the medium, but also by the place of the listeners. The women above have shown that

rock music can be a fundamental tool for young women struggling with their own identity; what is necessary is for them to appropriate the message on their own terms beyond that of groups such as Led Zeppelin and Blind-182 who have ruled over the genre. Instead, new songs need to be written, sung about a gender defined by whomever is grasping the microphone. So while rock music certainly houses various androcentric attitudes, it is possible for a de-centring to occur and new subjectivities to be formulated.

## Conclusion

At the end of 2013 pop-reggae rock group ‘Magic!’ released a song titled “Rude” (2013). The song became increasingly successful over the course of the following year, with it peaking at number one on music charts in Canada, Poland, Scotland, Slovakia, United States, and Venezuela, while also peaking in the top ten of countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden (Anon 2014). It sold an inordinate number of digital copies and was given countless hours of radio play.

The song itself is a primary example of the type of dynamic that has been discussed in this research. The androcentrism of rock music is exemplified as the song’s narrator sings: “Can I have your daughter for the rest of my life?... / ‘Cause I need to know... / the answer is no!... / I’m gonna marry her anyway” (Atweh, et al. 2013). The narrator is going to marry the stubborn father’s daughter whether the father agrees or not. However, what is missing in the song is the daughter’s voice. There is no section of the jaunty little track that gives the female object of desire any space for agency. She is not there as an individual, but as a prop through which the male narrator can justify the rigid confines of his own gender: and by implication define her gender on his behalf.

Interestingly, on July 18th 2014, an independent artist named Nicky Costabile released a song onto YouTube titled “RUDE Cover (The Daughter’s Side of the Story)” (2014). She facilitated a speaking back to Magic!’s popular song and performed the song with her own interpretation of the lyrics. She sings how “tension was high / as [her] dad and [her] man / [were] both claiming possession,” however, she goes on to sing that “no one is gonna own [her] til the day [she] die[s]... / no one asked [her] for [her] say... / [do they] know that she’s a person too” (Costabile 2014). Costabile was speaking back to the song by contributing a personal, woman’s voice to the song.

Costabile’s version seemed to spark a parade of people singing back to Magic!’s popular single. A plethora of other versions of the song were released. Some re-codifying the song so it is the girl who is asking for the narrator’s hand in marriage, some sung from the perspective of the (originally absent) mother; another version is simply about a young boy asking his parents to buy him a puppy. This variety of covers and versions, at the very least, gave those individuals absent from the history of rock music the opportunity to place their own voice into the narrative.

At the very best, however, this host of covers and new versions evidenced Hall's theory on communication regarding how messages were received. Meaning here is being reinscribed by a variety of different individuals that are not willing to accept the message presented by this relatively mainstream rock song. The audience is not comprised of passive receivers, but agents with the ability to negotiate complex gendered messages and relay them according to their own set of standards.

In conclusion then, it is thus necessary to consider how it is best for individuals to respond to the androcentrism and patriarchal sentiments of rock music, given that they have the space – particularly today in the age of the internet, and an increasingly globalised society – to speak back to rock music and the dominant discourse associated with it.

There are, it seems, a variety of options available to individuals misrepresented by rock music. Firstly, as Costabile attempted, there is the ability to speak back to the message and claim a new, individual space within it. If a group such as Brand New wish to present ill wishes to a woman traveling abroad (as discussed in Chapter Three), individuals today can take the time to respond back to such songs; and express in no uncertain terms that the male voices are not the only voices of value. Of course, such an outlet features limitations and is based upon the confines of the songs originally created by men. While Costabile's version of "Rude" (2014) was a refreshing take on the song's narrative, it still resulted in her playing into the heteronormativity of the matter: her voice was still the 'girl' of the 'boy-loves-girl' binary.

A better option, then, is perhaps the one offered by speakers, musicians and authors such as Ingrid Hu Dahl and Courtney Love who argue that women today have the right to express themselves on their own terms using rock music. Arguably, it is not so much a woman's prerogative to speak back to rock music, but instead to make conscious use of the mode to define their own identity and place for existence. The distortion and attitude that underpins the genre is one that can offer unique opportunities to negotiate the precarious strata of self-identity and gender politics, which could result in an examination of a new mode of rock music that belays the androcentrism in favour of a unique, individual voice that is self-defined: not even a voice of 'women', but whatever voice they wish it to be.

However, there is always the risk, as Butler warns, that if this stance is to be taken, and women are to use rock music for their own identity politics, then the act becomes a

performance and not a moment of performativity. As Chapter Two of this research shows, there is an important distinction between the two, and if women are to appropriate rock music, construct their own rituals, and define their own repetitions, they need to do it in a manner that redefines a gender, not simply performs one. That is to say, it should not be rock music played as women, but simply rock music without a ‘gendered teleology’. It is not the role of the research contained here to define any new gender, or attempt to explain how a new performativity should emerge. Rather, the role of this research is to show that although rock music is androcentric, and, at times, misogynistic, there is still an opportunity for victims of this attitude to take it upon themselves to recodify themselves on their own non-binary terms. This, perhaps, was one of the major failings of the ‘riot grrl’ movement of the mid-nineties that held such high possibilities for women in the genre (as discussed in Chapter One). The movement was too concerned with its role as a ‘women’s’ movement and refused to see beyond that scope. It didn’t become rock music; rather, it became women’s rock music. At the very least, it became an act of ‘drag’ and presented a group of female musicians engaging in a male activity, rather than a group of musicians engaging in their own, personal performativity. As Lindsay Zoladz so succinctly wrote in her article “Not Every Girl Is a Riot Grrl” (2011), women struggled with the movement and its possibilities and they “expressed a highly complex relationship with the term-- a reverence for the movement’s origins but also frustrations about the difficulty of escaping the limits of gendered language” (Zoladz 2011). The movement did not proffer a new vocabulary, instead, it restricted the economy of discourse pertaining to women in rock music. In short, it became an unconscious declaration of feminine otherness.

Still, rock music today warrants considered critical engagement if any attempts at recodifying it are to be embarked upon. As van Antwerpen writes, we as individuals “need to make it our mission to learn how to *critically* interpret the messages sent to us on a daily basis by the media” (van Antwerpen 2010: 77, author’s italics). This is not just the role of those who fall victim to dominant discourse, but of everyone: it is ostensibly a democratic responsibility, and it can become a political action that subverts hegemonic expectations. During her commencement address at McGill University, Butler stated that “ideally, we lose ourselves in what we read, only to return to ourselves, transformed and part of a more expansive world — in short, we become more critical and more capacious in our thinking and our acting” (Butler, 2013). Arguably, we need to learn how to read,



not just literature, but rock music in such a way, insofar as it can offer us the opportunity to redefine ourselves through its multiplicitous taxonomy of modes and genres.

In conclusion, rock music may be an act of heteronormativity, but this is not say that it controls our gendered performativity. There is space available to us as individuals to subvert the expectations of the genre and redefine it on our own, unique, democratic terms. While songs such as The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" (1964), The Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb" (1966), Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (1969), Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993), Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996), Blink-182's "Dammit (Growing Up)" (1997), Brand New's "Jude Law and the Semester Abroad" (2002), Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004), and Fall Out Boy's "Sugar, We're Goin Down" (2006) are symptomatic of an androcentric dominant discourse, they are by no means the final word in that discourse.

## **Annexures of Song Lyrics**

### **A.1 The Kinks' "You Really Got Me" (1964)**

Girl, you really got me goin'  
You got me so I don't know what I'm doin'  
Yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

Yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I don't know what I'm doin', now  
Oh yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

You Really Got Me [ x3 ]

See, don't ever set me free  
I always wanna be by your side  
Girl, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

Yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I don't know what I'm doin', now  
Oh yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

You Really Got Me [ x3 ]

Oh no...

See, don't ever set me free  
I always wanna be by your side

Girl, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

Yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I don't know what I'm doin', now  
Oh yeah, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night

You Really Got Me [ x3 ]

## **A.2 The Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb" (1966)**

Under my thumb  
The girl who once had me down  
Under my thumb  
The girl who once pushed me around

It's down to me  
The difference in the clothes she wears  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb

Under my thumb  
The squirmin' dog who's just had her day  
Under my thumb  
A girl who has just changed her ways

It's down to me, yes it is  
The way she does just what she's told  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Ah, ah, say it's alright

Under my thumb  
A Siamese cat of a girl  
Under my thumb  
She's the sweetest, hmm, pet in the world

It's down to me  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Ah, take it easy, babe, yeah

It's down to me, oh, yeah  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Yeah, it feels alright

Under my thumb  
Her eyes are just kept to herself  
Under my thumb, well I  
I can still look at someone else

It's down to me, oh that's what I said  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb

Say, it's alright  
Take it easy, babe  
Take it easy, babe  
Feels alright  
Take it, take it easy, babe

### A.3 Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (1969)

You need coolin', baby, I'm not foolin',  
I'm gonna send you back to schoolin',  
Way down inside honey, you need it,  
I'm gonna give you my love,  
I'm gonna give you my love.

Wanna Whole Lotta Love [ x4 ]

You've been learnin', baby, I've been yearnin',  
All them good times, baby, baby, I've been yearnin',  
Way, way down inside honey, you need it,  
I'm gonna give you my love... I'm gonna give you my love.

Wanna Whole Lotta Love [ x4 ]

You've been coolin', baby, I've been droolin',  
All the good times I've been misusin',  
Way, way down inside, I'm gonna give you my love,  
I'm gonna give you every inch of my love,  
Gonna give you my love.

Wanna Whole Lotta Love [ x4 ]

Way down inside... woman... You need... love.

Shake for me, girl. I wanna be your backdoor man.  
Keep it coolin', baby.

#### **A.4 Nirvana's "Rape Me" (1993)**

Rape me

Rape me my friend

Rape me

Rape me again

I'm not the only one [x4]

Hate me

Do it and do it again

Waste me

Rape me my friend

I'm not the only one [ x4 ]

My favorite inside source

I'll kiss your open sores

Appreciate your concern

You'll always stink and burn

Rape me

Rape me my friend

Rape me

Rape me again

I'm not the only one [ x4 ]

Rape me [ x9 ]

### A.5 Weezer's "El Scorcho" (1996)

Goddamn you half-Japanese girls  
Do it to me every time  
Oh, the redhead said you shred the cello  
And I'm jello, baby  
But you won't talk, won't look, won't think of me  
I'm the epitome of Public Enemy  
Why you want to go and do me like that?  
Come down on the street and dance with me

I'm a lot like you so please Hello, I'm here, I'm waiting  
I think I'd be good for you and you'd be good for me

I asked you to go to the Green Day concert  
You said you never heard of them  
How cool is that?  
So I went to your room and read your diary:  
"watching Grunge leg-drop New-Jack trough presstable..."  
And then my heart stopped:  
"Listening to Cio-Cio San fall in love all over again."

How stupid is it? I can't talk about it  
I gotta sing about it and make a record of my heart  
How stupid is it? won't you gimme a minute  
Just come up to me and say "hello" to my heart  
How stupid is it? For all I know you want me too  
And maybe you just don't know what to do  
Or maybe you're scared to say: "I'm falling for you"

I wish I could get my head out of the sand  
'Cause I think we'd make a good team

And you would keep my fingernails clean  
But that's just a stupid dream that I won't realize  
'Cause I can't even look in your eyes without shakin', and I ain't fakin'  
I'll bring home the turkey if you bring home the bacon

#### **A.6 Blink-182's "Dammit (Growing Up)" (1997)**

It's alright to tell me what you think about me  
I won't try to argue or hold it against you  
I know that you're leaving you must have your reasons  
The season is calling and your pictures are falling down

The steps that I retrace the sad look on your face  
The timing and structure did you hear he fucked her?  
A day late a buck short I'm writing the report  
On losing and failing when I move I'm flailing now

And it's happened once again  
I'll turn to a friend  
Someone that understands  
Sees through the master plan

But everybody's gone  
And I've been here for too long  
To face this on my own  
Well I guess this is growing up  
Well I guess this is growing up

And maybe I'll see you at a movie sneak preview  
You'll show up and walk by on the arm of that guy  
And I'll smile and you'll wave we'll pretend it's okay  
The charade it won't last when he's gone I won't come back



And it'll happen once again  
You'll turn to a friend  
Someone that understands  
And sees through the master plan

But everybody's gone  
And you've been there for too long  
To face this on your own  
Well I guess this is growing up

Well, I guess this is growing up

#### **A.7 Brand New "Jude Law and a Semester Abroad" (2003)**

Whatever poison's in this bottle will leave me broken sore and stiff.  
But it's the genie at the bottom who I'm sucking at. He owes me one last wish.  
So here's a present to let you know I still exist.  
I hope the next boy that you kiss has something terribly contagious on his lips.

But I got a plan (I got a plan)  
Drink (drift) for forty days and forty nights.  
A sip for every second-hand tick.  
And for every time you fed me the line, "you mean so much to me...".  
I'm without you.

So tell all the English boys you meet, about the American boy back in the states.  
The American boy you used to date.  
Who would do anything you say.

And even if her plane crashes tonight she'll find some way to disappoint me,  
by not burning in the wreckage, or drowning at the bottom of the sea.  
"Jess, I still taste you, thus reserve my right to hate you."  
And all this empty space that you create does nothing for my flawless sense of style.

It's 8:45 (it's 8:45). The weather is getting better by the hour.

(Rains all the time) I hope it rains there all the time.

And if you ever said you miss me then don't say you never lied.

I'm without you.

So tell all the English boys you meet, about the American boy back in the states.

The American boy you used to date.

Who would do anything you say.

Who would do anything you say

Never gonna get it right, you're never gonna get it [ x7 ]

No more songs about you

After this one, I am done

You are, you are, you're gone

So tell all the English boys you meet, about the American boy back in the states.

The American boy you used to date.

Who would do anything you say.

### **A.8 Say Anything's "Alive with the Glory of Love" (2004)**

When I watch you, I wanna do you right where you're standing (yeah)

Right on the foyer, on this dark day, right in plain view (oh yeah)

Of the whole ghetto. The boots stomp meadows, but we ignore that (yeah)

You're lovely, baby. This war is crazy. I won't let you down (Oh no no)

No, I won't let them take you, won't let them take you

Hell no no, oh no, I won't let them take you, won't let them take you

Hell no no.

No, oh no no no!

And when our city, vast and shitty, falls to the axis (yeah)

They'll search the buildings, collect gold fillings, wallets and rings (oh yeah)

But Ms. Black Eyeliner, you'd look finer with each day in hiding (oh yeah)

Beneath the wormwood, oooh, love me so good.

They won't hear us screw away the day. I'll make you say:

(Alive! Alive!

Alive with love, alive with love tonight)

No, I won't let them take you, won't let them take you

Hell no no, oh no, I won't let them take you, won't let them take you

Hell no no.

Our Treblinka is alive with the glory of love!

Treblinka, alive, with the glory of love, yeah!

Should they catch us and dispatch us to those separate work camps,

I'll dream about you. I will not doubt you with the passing of time (oh yeah)

Should they kill me, your love will fill me, as warm as the bullets (yeah)

I'll know my purpose. This war was worth this. I won't let you down.

No, I won't

No, I won't

No, I won't

(Alive! Alive!)

(Alive with love, alive with love tonight)

Hell no no, oh no (Alive! Alive!)

I won't let them take you, won't let them take you (Alive with love, alive with love tonight)

Hell no, no

No, no

### A.9 Fall Out Boy “Sugar, We’re Goin Down” (2006)

Am I more than you bargained for yet  
I’ve been dying to tell you anything you want to hear  
Cause that’s just who I am this week  
Lie in the grass, next to the mausoleum  
I’m just a notch in your bedpost  
But you’re just a line in a song  
(A notch in your bedpost, but you’re just a line in a song)

Drop a heart, break a name  
We’re always sleeping in, and sleeping for the wrong team

We’re going down, down in an earlier round  
And Sugar, we’re going down swinging  
I’ll be your number one with a bullet  
A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

We’re going down, down in an earlier round  
And Sugar, we’re going down swinging  
I’ll be your number one with a bullet  
A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

Is this more than you bargained for yet  
Oh don’t mind me I’m watching you two from the closet  
Wishing to be the friction in your jeans  
Isn’t it messed up how I’m just dying to be him  
I’m just a notch in your bedpost  
But you’re just a line in a song  
(Notch in your bedpost, but you’re just a line in a song)

Drop a heart, break a name

We're always sleeping in, and sleeping for the wrong team

We're going down, down in an earlier round

And Sugar, we're going down swinging

I'll be your number one with a bullet

A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

Down, down in an earlier round

And Sugar, we're going down swinging

I'll be your number one with a bullet

A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

We're going down, down in an earlier round

And Sugar, we're going down swinging

I'll be your number one with a bullet

A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

We're going down, down (down, down)

Down, down (down, down)

We're going down, down (down, down)

A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

We're going down, down in an earlier round

And Sugar, we're going down swinging

I'll be your number one with a bullet

A loaded god complex, cock it and pull it

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