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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THEMATIC SECTION (RE)IMAGINING AUSTRALIA

Gerhard Fischer
Remembering Mudrooroo (1938–2019)
Zuzanna Kruk-Buchowska Slow Food Terra Madre: A Novel Pathway to Achieving
Indigenous Australian Food Sovereignty?
Krzysztof Kosecki
"Mixed identity of circumstances": Bronisław Malinowski in Australia and Melanesia
Ian Willis
"My box of memories": An Australian Country Girl Goes to London 53
Barbara Klonowska
Counterspaces of Resistance: Peter Carey's <i>Bliss</i>

VARIA

Agnieszka Żukowska Rich Ornaments and Delightful Engines: The Poetics of Failed Festivity and Figural Automation in William Shakespeare's <i>Titus Andronicus</i>	79
Robert McParland Identity, Fidelity, and Cross-Cultural Relationships in Joseph Conrad's <i>Almayer's Folly</i>	97
Bartłomiej Błaszkiewicz On the Idea of the Secondary World in Susanna Clarke's <i>Piranesi</i> 1	111

Maria Antonietta Struzziero

A New Voice for an Ancient Story: Speaking from the Margins of Homer's <i>Iliad</i> in Madeline Miller's <i>The Song of Achilles</i>	133
Alireza Farahbakhsh and Peyman Hoseini Living through Precarity: A Butlerian Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's <i>The Lowland</i>	153
Celina Jeray Sex, Dr(a)gs and Rock'n'Roll: Diverse Masculinities of Glam Metal, Sleaze Metal and Hair Metal	171

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Celina Jeray https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2389-1419 University of Wrocław

Sex, Dr(a)gs and Rock'n'Roll: Diverse Masculinities of Glam Metal, Sleaze Metal and Hair Metal

Abstract: The following essay retraces the genre development and correlations of three 1980s hard rock subgenres: glam metal, sleaze metal and hair metal. This issue is considered, primarily, with reference to the theory of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities developed by Raewyn Connell and reviewed against the theory of genre development by Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson. Both theories are employed in order to underline the subtle differences between the subgenres, arguably linked to the masculinities performed by the artists' assumed stage personas. Aside from the scholarly references, the research includes various interviews with the artists and music journalists, an analysis of over a hundred song lyrics and the vast repertoire of visual arts accompanying the music.

Keywords: heavy metal, non-hegemonic masculinity, glam metal, sleaze metal, hair metal, music history, genre theory

1. Introduction

Sex sells, glamour sells, and so does controversy. The artists composing glam metal, sleaze metal and hair metal knew it; thus, these three subgenres have been some of the most prominent ones within the hard rock scene for nearly half a century. Hard rock? Yes, indeed! In terms of the musical technicality, neither glam, nor sleaze, nor hair metal fully belongs to the genre of heavy metal. Each of these three subgenres, however, draws from heavy metal so much that it has the term "metal" in its name. What about the other three notions: glam, sleaze and hair? They have proved confusing since the 1980s. The aim of the present research, then, is to delineate the characteristics distinguishing each of the three subgenres by analyzing the unique, non-hegemonic masculinities performed by the personas

assumed by glam, sleaze and hair metal artists. In addition, the results are to be reviewed against the theory of genre development proposed by Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson. Thus the emphasis will be put not only on the actual music: vocals, instruments, arrangements; but also on its visual, ideological and commercial aspects.

There have appeared various articles and even several dissertations on the topic. However, the genres of glam, sleaze and hair metal often were subjected to unfair and biased readings. The authors of such readings would not hide their often emotional connection to the bands which resulted in their haphazard choice of studied examples and methodology. It is surprising but not inexplicable that very often the young, aspiring scholars researching upon their idols eventually come down to a conclusion that their favorite genre is a hotbed for intolerance, racism and women's objectification. Frequently, these musicians (often mistakenly regarded as one with their assumed stage personas) are accused of their "misogynist" inclinations despite their emphasis on the equal status of all genders (Kurrenaya 8; Simon 60; Floréal 5). Besides, the lyrical content of glam, sleaze and hair masculinities is often mistakenly presented as wholly and exclusively heteronormative, masculine and white-dominated (Johnson 29-30).¹ The aforementioned problems only stress some critics' inability to compromise their love for the bands with the results of their research, including the (often haphazardly selected) methodology. That being said, there is one thing that glam, sleaze and hair metal musicians have in common: they always prescribe and reflect, construe and are formed by some kind of masculinity. The three subgenres have been viewed through various prisms: Freudianism updated with the reading of Lacan and Kristeva. Foucault's study of sexuality and the feminist studies intertwined with the studies of gender. Each of these methods can obviously prove useful, but all of them combined may still be insufficient to highlight the subtle differences between the three subgenres. While still possibly including some of the aforementioned approaches, the framework of men's studies seems nonetheless more applicable. For instance, Niall Scott proposes to refer to the idea of multiple masculinities when examining the genre of heavy metal in general, and notices that the subculture around the genre had indeed suffered from biased stereotyping (121–128).

2. The Commonly Mis-categorized Subgenres of Glam, Sleaze and Hair Metal

As said at the beginning, the idea for the article originates primarily in the problematic nomenclature: the labeling of glam, sleaze and hair metal. Indeed, both the fans and the critics use the terms "glam metal" and "hair metal" interchangeably.² In addition, many struggle to even recognize the subgenre of "sleaze metal." Other names such as "poodle metal" and "cock rock" appear occasionally, and one may end up confused about how to describe their musical preferences or how to locate an album on a mislabeled shelf. Not all music stores have their stock listed alphabetically: flea markets and online stores group their stock (often including rare gems unavailable elsewhere) into genres. Fans themselves have a problem with defining what they experience when listening to, watching or reading about glam, sleaze and hair metal.

Often, even otherwise valuable research suffers from mis-categorization and such is the case with Anna Kurennaya's determining glam metal as emerging in the mid-1980's (while such glam bands as Hanoi Rocks or Mötley Crüe existed already in 1979 and 1981, respectively) and being prominent on the music market thanks to MTV (while it was predominantly hair metal that enjoyed such popularity) (2-3). Brett Stevens excludes more than a whole decade of music history, when he claims already at the beginning of his article that the "new music" (the genres of glam, sleaze and hair) emerged "in the early 1990s" (n.p.). Stevens then enlists the bands he claims as an example, including even those that had experienced their prime time by the end the 1990 (e.g. Winger) (n.p.). Lilyana Sharlandzhieva terms all tree genres as "glam rock," which, in turn, denotes a wholly different genre (think Bowie, Bolan and T-Rex) (n.p.). Talking of glam rock, Floréal mistakenly labels such bands as the Pretty Boy Floyd (glam metal) or Tigertailz (bubble-gum metal)³ as glam rock, placing them on the same shelf as the New York Dolls (18). Johnson assigns the category of "glam metal" to notable sleaze bands such as W.A.S.P. (whose style also included shock rock and classic heavy metal) and L.A. Guns (who are known for their Gothic rock influences) (31). Brigitte Simon sees the hair-glam disparity to be only a matter of national difference (Simon claims "hair" to be a European name for what the Americans view as "glam") (61). Deena Weinstein hints at subtle differences between various hard rock bands of the 1980s (many of which are also analysed in the present study), yet she also uses the "hair" and "glam" as mere aspects of the same subgenre (13–14). However, the multinational fan-base of glam, sleaze and hair interacting online does not employ these terms interchangeably, and it is the online discourse which substantially contributes to the delineation and separation of the subgenres into glam, sleaze and hair metal. To give a few examples, Alice Patillo enumerates the subgenres of "hair," "glam" and "sleaze" as independent of each other (n.p.). The Italian-language version of Wikipedia also recognizes the distinctness of sleaze metal,⁴ and so does the Urban Dictionary.5

This bottom-up process of separating some of the 1980's hard rock into the subgenres of glam, hair and sleaze shows that this distinction is a serious issue and that fans and music journalists themselves experience the delineation of each genre as necessary, even if some scholars find it too challenging to include it in their studies and the artists themselves consider the labeling stereotyping or even offensive (Bach). Indeed, some bands whose music can easily fit into one of the three subgenres, find such categorization uncomfortable, mainly due to negative

Celina Jeray

connotations attached to it. Glam, sleaze and hair metal are often viewed as a kitschy relict of the past that should be buried under a thick layer of disposed animal print-clothes and fake-hair extensions soaking in hairspray. It is not surprising that the scholarly interest in this type of music is a relatively recent phenomenon, considering the patronizing attitude of the general public alone toward these controversial genres (Slavković 2018a, 2018b).

Glam, sleaze and hair metal musicians are controversial due to their multi-fold non-conformism; be it their obscene lyrics, their substance-dependence or their gender ambiguity, all of which are still merely some aspects of their complex expressions of masculinity. It must be noted, therefore, that the term *hegemonic masculinity* embraces the ideal (or, often, numerous ideals) of masculinity which merely contextualizes rather than directly involves the masculinities performed by the glam, sleaze or hair metal musicians. The usage of the term *hegemonic masculinity* is not in the focus (nor an object of dispute) of this article. Rather, the aim of the following research is to challenge the thus-far prevalent, biased and unjust criticism of the masculinities of glam, sleaze and hair metal musicians. Indeed, the way these musicians construe, maintain and define their masculinities breaks the limits of the hegemonic masculinities prevalent from the late 1970s to the early 1990s in the Western hemisphere.

Meanwhile, it is important to remember that, in case of the majority of the artists, the ideals of masculinities presented in their music and image are merely their assumed personas. Notable for a visible disparity between the stage persona and the private lifestyle were, for example, the members of the recently retired Twisted Sister (a glam metal pastiche), who, according to their guitarist, were a very *straight edge* band, who would fire any members abusing alcohol, doing drugs or otherwise living a self-sabotaging lifestyle ("Jay Jay French…" n.p.).

As Raewyn Connell asserts, the masculinities (both the hegemonic one and its subordinates) vary in accordance with the place and epoch (503). In addition, a shift in perceiving and self-perceiving of males also occurs in the course of a person's life. Connell claims that "both chronological age and life-stage require different enactments of gender" (503). At the same time, there are constant changes not only within the genre of hard rock but also within glam, sleaze and hair metal themselves that require analysis. It all leads to the conclusion that the rockers' performed masculinities definitely affect their musical artisanship and, thus, explain various transformations leading to the emergence of each of the three subgenres.

The three subgenres are related to one another in that glam metal fathered sleaze metal (which, in turn, also drew inspiration from country, Goth rock and shock rock) and both glam and sleaze gave way to their more polished and commercialized descendant, hair metal. All these transformations occurred in the 1980s. Glam metal inherited its name from glam rock (prominent in the 1970s), and, after a brief existence (technically) as glam punk around 1979–1981, it fully flourished by the mid 1980s. The scope of the present research does not allow for a detailed

analysis of each of the three subgenres of glam, sleaze and hair metal. Thus, in order to delineate the characteristic differences of each of these subgenres, the emphasis should be put solely on the expressions of masculinity reflected in the musical and visual style as well as the general ideology of glam, sleaze and hair metal.

3. The Counter-cultural Flamboyance of the Glam Metal Masculinity

The roots of glam metal, whose popularity peaked in the mid-1980s, come from several sources. The raw, proto-punk sound and theatrically effeminate style of the famous glam rock band called New York Dolls was one of them (Genzlinger n.p.). Then, bands such as the Sex Pistols or Blondie contributed to the emergence of a new genre of glam punk (Genzlinger n.p.). Japan, a notable glam punk band formed in the late 1970s had its two band mates, David Sylvian and Steve Jansen, named so after the members of the New York Dolls.⁶ Sylvian's characteristic image is a vital link to another group of European descent – Hanoi Rocks. Dubbed as Sylvian's lookalike, the band's leader Michael Monroe had everything he needed to export it overseas: youthful rebellion matched with eclecticism and musical craftsmanship in the footsteps of artists such as Little Richard or Black Sabbath (Power ch. 2; Fortnam n.p.). Indeed, Hanoi Rocks influenced such notable bands as Guns'n'Roses, Mötley Crüe, Poison and Skid Row (Huey n.p.).

Another way glam rock influenced its 1980s offspring was also through a now-forgotten band called Circus Circus. One of their members, Blackie Lawless, who later became one of best-know sleaze/shock rockers, had previously played with the New York Dolls (Kern n.p.). Another, Nikki Sixx, later established the legendary Mötley Crüe. Meanwhile, other artists who collaborated with Lawless and Sixx at the time later formed their own bands, all of which were just as influential during the 1980s. Among these artists were Tracii Guns and Steve Riley, later the founding members of a typically sleaze metal band, L.A. Guns. While Lawless hired Riley as the W.A.S.P.'s drummer, Sixx collaborated with Guns on his side project ("Steve Riley..." n.p.). Likewise, the majority of glam, sleaze and hair metal bands are interrelated.

Moreover, as far as Circus Circus is concerned, its eponymous theme inspired not only the band's name, but also the glam metal aesthetics in general. Such circus-based aesthetic was reflected in the band's arena-like staging, heavy makeup and glittering, slim-fitting outfits. Another band often characterized at some point of their career as glam metal, KISS is also a good example of this phenomenon: their use of pyrotechnics during various shows over the years was often an act of rebellion (Wilkening). Furthermore, when self-referencing in one of their songs, Mötley Crüe described their adventurous lifestyle as "White Trash Circus" (Mötley Crüe n.p.). Indeed, the typical appearance of glam metal musicians is glittering, shiny and commands attention. And yet something about this spectacular *glamour* feels *out of place*. Indeed, this circus-themed rebellion reveals one crucial aspect of glam metal: a grotesque mix of feminine features with masculinity. Tight-fitting, spandex attire and huge platforms worn by male musicians of bands such as Wrathchild, Mötley or KISS are, on the one hand, likening these artists with the female models with whom they would often pose. On the other hand, this image sets a contrast to these female models, who are portrayed as more delicate, vulnerable and underlining the rockers' masculinity. The rockers, in turn, often mingling glam metal with shock rock⁷ aim at appearing scary, shocking and boasting. Yet, essentially, it is always a staged, self-consciously pretentious show. In short, the circuit theme points to the musicians' awareness of their grotesque aesthetics: their image is pleasing and attractive yet somewhat uncanny and even repellent.

The example of the glam attire alone proves the musicians' rebellious nature. Yet their songs' lyrics and interviews also reveal their hedonistic and anarchic tendencies. Glam metal tends to violate various social conventions, from hegemonic masculinity to conservative politics, censorship and armed conflicts. While the political engagement is more prominent in sleaze metal, the glam subculture still offered a brilliant outlet for a rebellion against socially construed, then-hegemonic masculinities. Robert Walser asserts that their "rebellion [is] against what men are supposed to be like" (qtd. in Simon 68). The contemporary socio-political situation of the western hemisphere significantly influenced the content of glam metal. Doug Rossinow notices a clear link between the social implications of the political strategies of Reagan Era and the response toward it in the form of a "less restrained, sometimes crass, culture of the 1980s, featuring casual vulgarity and aggressive displays of sexuality" (3). The glam metal artists shared the social anxiety and their lyrics or assumed personas often served as a commentary to the injustices brought along with the political change. The prime culprit for them was the government, which, at the time, shifted its focus toward the military dominance and enabled the financial success of the elites, even to the point of abuse and misconduct (Rossinow 3, 6).

The glam metal masculinity also opposed the hegemonic one insofar as it opposed the general social restraint in the form of, for example, the often racial-ly-biased police force and rapidly increasing rate of imprisoned minorities (Rossinow 5–7). What is more, glam metal lyricists often show their objection to certain values that specifically accompanied the hegemonic masculinity of the 1980s, such as the idea of long-term relationships, fatherhood and the responsibility entailed with them: breadwinning, corporate work environment, a strict dress code and gentlemanly practices. In the year when glam was already flourishing, 1984, Hanoi Rocks voiced their discontent with the social pressure exerted on men and the incongruity of the social expectations which, on the one hand, draw a picture of a man as a docile and passive (a father, a husband, a careful driver, etc.) and, on the other hand, expect of him to live a glamorous, dominating and successful life of a stud.⁸ Also dissatisfied with the socially construed views on masculinity,

Bret Michaels of Poison expresses his attitude clearly, when he sings: "Some days I just wanna be [a] menace to society [and the c]onformity they try to sell" (n.p.). In their song "City Boy Blues," Mötley Crüe objected to the Western, metropolitan life rooted apparently in the post-puritan values: the songs' speaker endorses the sentiment about the American frontier and paints the image of freedom with the emblems of the Wild West: whiskey, snakeskin boots and saddle.⁹

Apart from the lyrics, the visual content of their artistry also shows the musicians' rebellion against the imposed ideals of hegemonic masculinity. For example, on the cover of their Stakkattakktwo album, Wrathchild used a letter "W" stylized so as to resemble the common image of "A" in a circle - a symbol of anarchy. Likewise, the members of another glam band, Lethal Lipstick look like glamorous punks or even criminals, as they are pictured on their Bad Boys album. Wrapped in a yellow band with printed "caution" signs (similar to those used on crime scenes), the musicians surround a car that is seemingly too good for them to afford. Besides, aside from taking their band's name from a gangster famous for his anti-bourgeois inclinations, Arthur Charles, the founders of the band called Pretty Boy Floyd employed the Gotham-like aesthetic of the city: dark, gloomy and filled with crime, as can be seen on the covers of their Public Enemies or Leather Boyz with Electric Toyz albums. Also named in a dubious manner, Mötley Crüe pose as ultimate rock'n'roll outlaws on many of their album covers, from the 1987 Girls, Girls, Girls, where they rather resemble a motorcycle gang than musicians, to Too Fast For Love, where the pictured bodily part (lower torso, groin and thighs) is clothed in leather trousers, studded belts and handcuffs, to Generation Swine, where (supposedly) the band members are pictured as pig-headed, suit-and-tie males against the Stars and Stripes, thus mocking the US Government.

Pig-headed or not, the glam metal musicians always were visually very self-conscious and telegenic (Simon 69). This often leads to idealized images of the glam metal masculinity. For instance, when reminiscing the life of Hanoi Rocks before becoming famous, filming their "Don't Ever Leave Me," the band's leader, Michael Monroe, posing as homeless and "curl[ed] up in the corner and cr[ying]," still has impeccable makeup, stylish hairstyle and well-matched accessories (n.p.). In their video to "Smokin' in the Boys Room," heavily made-up and glamorous, the members of Mötley Crüe were additionally provided a visual contrast by the purposefully uglified school staff. In their video to their single "Looks That Kill," Mötley Crüe also self-idealize: despite appearing as a bunch of loud and ravenous cavemen, they still mesmerize the approaching females, who, despite also being made-up, remain incomparably less attractive than the male musicians. A similar subversion of the societal expectations that commonly portray the fair sex coupled with rugged masculinity can be seen among many other glam metal artists. For example, like models in hair shampoo commercials, the members of Faster Pussycat have their hair artificially blown by the wind in their music video for the song "Poison Ivy," where it is the female object of attraction that is lyrically praised.

Celina Jeray

Ironically, no woman appears throughout the video and the focus is solely on the male musicians whose fashions, fitness and general appeal are thus emphasized. Generally, the issue of excessive makeup is an aspect of glam metal about which the musicians are very self-conscious. Interestingly, the artists either adopt a serious approach to it or mock it: Dee Snider, the face and voice of Twisted Sister, makes the prettified masculinity of glam metal assume the form of grotesque monstrosity.

The touch of feminine glamour is a mere aspect of the non-hegemonic masculinity rather than a reason to idolize or objectify the female. Bret Michaels of Poison states that "[t]here's an art to this kind of makeup" and considers glam metal musicians to be "real men" (Hunt n.p.). He notes that "makeup doesn't mean we're like women or we want to be like women" (Hunt n.p.). Eventually he asks provocatively: "Do I look like a woman to you?" at which the interviewer admits the doubtlessly male gender of the artist (Hunt n.p.). Thus, to say that the glam artists were effeminate is a misguided statement. Firstly, these musicians were not crossdressing. Though glamorous and heavily accessorized, their clothes were from the men's department. Secondly, the heavy make-up, sexually provocative attire and behavior that certainly characterized them are not the essence of hegemonic femininity but a variation thereof. In fact, the glam metal image brings to mind the stereotyped appearance of a female sex-worker (De Gallier n.p.). Indeed, such connection seems to best reflect the actual nature of the glamorous and non-hegemonically masculine image of glam metal artists: controversial, liberated and rebellious, yet dolled-up and aesthetically attractive.

The prostitute-like style of dress was adopted, among others, by the members of Poison and Hanoi Rocks.¹⁰ The elements of their attire such as boas, scarves or even fans all point to a courtesan-like image (Sooney). Another common accessory of the glam artists (including the members of Mötley Crüe, Kiss and Wrathchild)¹¹ were the knee-long high-heeled platforms or musketeer boots commonly worn by streetworkers (Boyett n.p.). Besides, the eroticized intimate apparel such as fishnets was also popular with various glam artists. The members of Poison, Hanoi Rocks and Pretty Boy Floyd often wore tights, see-through tank tops and thin leggings. Glam artists were also known for their love of jewelry; they even cooperated with its designers.¹² On top of that, they also wore hair extensions and dyed their hair raven black or platinum blond so as to emphasize their heavy makeup. A red or pink lipstick, mandatory guyliner and even eye shadows prove their image to be like that of only a specific kind of femininity: the one that self-objectifies in order to *self-sell*.

The target customer of glam metal is the heterosexual female, which further underlines the musicians' male gender. This seems confusing, because glam strives to be both "sexy" and "sexist" at the same time – an idea famously ridiculed in the 1984 glam metal mockumentary *Spinal Tap*. However, the film explains that glam metal musicians are sex objects and yet they are confident in it, because they want to be objectified. They know their self-worth and they want to have it recognized even by the means of sexual objectification. The way they present their

prostitute-like approach to sex is still dominant, ravishing and self-governing. They are empowered. Glam metal artists prove to be able to reconcile this paradox: a self-governing man and a prostitute.

This dimension of a self-conscious, dominant yet self-prostituting masculinity is what distinguishes glam metal from sleaze metal. The approach of sleaze to sexuality, excluding the self-prostituting aspect, involves, instead, the element of sadomasochism. Importantly, in sleaze, this element has a political and existential aspect to it. However, the BDSM-themed aesthetic is not the only aspect of the genre that underlines the distinctive, non-hegemonic and unique masculinity performed by the sleaze metal musicians.

4. The Charming Outlaws of Hollywood - the Sleaze Metal Masculinity

The origins of sleaze metal go back to the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, when the wave of post-punk refreshed the music market. Around that time, bands such as Bauhaus, Joy Division or Siouxsie and the Banshees helped to form a new genre: Gothic rock (Petridis n.p.). While it featured many elements of the then well-established genres such as funk, reggae, glam rock and punk rock, it brought about a novel element: the Gothic, understood as the content of horror narratives popular from the 18th century onward (Petridis n.p.). Sleaze metal was particularly inspired by the so called Southern Gothic, which emphasizes the gloomy atmosphere of mysterious, abandoned places; peculiar individuals (such as Faulkner's eponymous Emily) distorted by mental illnesses; and, generally, the imagery implying decay and abuse (such as that characterizing the art of Sally Mann). Or, as Eric Savoy describes it, the aesthetic which "gives voice to the dark nightmare that is the underside of the American dream [...] where the past constantly inhabits the present, where progress generates an almost unbearable anxiety about its costs, and where an insatiable appetite for spectacles of grotesque violence" exists (167). This shift occurred, because various hard rock bands recognized the success of their glam metal predecessors, yet decided to compose music and create an image which would exclude the deliberate tackiness and flashy colors as well as the overly joyful and lively music characterizing glam metal (Simon 68). Besides, many ex-glam metal musicians became disillusioned with the music scene: financial greed of the record companies, forced singles and exhausting tours (Slavković 2018a). Thus, many of the then-glam bands were soon to abandon their style and join the new trend within hard rock: sleaze metal.

In practice, the inclusion of Gothic aesthetic into sleaze metal meant the increased popularity of themes relating to occult, death and destruction. Sleaze re-introduced the theme of spirit possession, particularly focusing on the female victim suffering from excessive depression (L.A. Guns' "Lucy") or from schiz-ophrenic tendencies (Skid Row's "Eileen"). Cheap and Nasty's "Silent Scream"

(the title itself being an oxymoron) points to neurosis as a haunting kind of mental illness. The primary reality distorted by the sleaze worldview is the Judeo-Christian one; thus, the lyrics which challenge it usually include satanic references (as in L.A. Gun's "Black Sabbath") or self-identification as demons (as in W.A.S.P.'s "Damnation Angels"). Various apocalyptic or hellish visions are also popular: W.A.S.P.'s "Babylon's Burning" references the *Book of Revelation*, while the band's "Lake of Fools" is a musical reimagining of hell. As far as the theme of afterlife is concerned, L.A. Guns' "Requiem" is sang from the point of view of a self-conscious and deceased speaker, reminding his visiting friends about the fragility of life.

Indeed, the artists (or their stage personas) promoted a lifestyle worthy of a too-fast-to-live outcast: a rugged, rebellious, Marlboro-smoking and Harley-Davidson-riding stud. For example, sleaze often praised the rebellion against formal education (consider W.A.S.P.'s "School Daze," Skid Row's "Riot Act" or the Roxx Gang's thinking of themselves as literally "Too Cool For School"). The sleaze artists often referred to gun- and, generally, weapon-related imagery as in Roxx Gang's "Fastest Gun in Town" or W.A.S.P.'s "Shoot from the Hip," or even in the band name: L.A. Guns. Besides, the cultural archetypes typical of sleaze include those of a cowboy and a gypsy man. While W.A.S.P.'s "Cocaine Cowboys" uses the cowboy archetype as a metaphor for the freedom achieved through substance intoxication, Roxx Gang's "Daddy's Farm" relates the cowboy lifestyle to youth and carelessness. The gypsy archetype in L.A. Guns' "Electric Gypsy" and W.A.S.P.'s "Restless Gypsy," in turn, emphasizes the emancipating aspect of travelling by a motorcycle. In fact, a Harley-Davidson seems indispensable for a true sleaze man, as shown in W.A.S.P.'s video to "Wild Child" or implied in L.A. Guns' "Crazy Motorcycle" and "Venus Bomb." The imagery related to substance abuse completes the impression of a carefree outlaw. While "Cold Gin" by L.A. Guns celebrates the titular beverage, the band's lyrics to "Over the Edge" reveal the self-damaging nature of substance dependence. W.A.S.P.s "Can't Die Tonight" explores the themes of alcoholism, lost hope and resignation. Criminal activities are also often presented as inherent to the sleaze metal lifestyle. Skid Row's "18 and Life" links pathological childhood experiences with possible criminal inclinations, yet the band's "Youth Gone Wild" serves as an anthem celebrating such a lifestyle. Often, sleaze metal band names also indicate the outlaw status of the artists' assumed personas: 'Cheap and Nasty' and 'Skid Row' are but two examples. The above themes have their reflection in the appearance of sleaze metal artists: hair naturally - or dark-colored yet rebelliously long, classic cowboy boots and hats, rugged denims, belts with heavy buckles or bandanas such as those pointing to gang affiliation. Generally, sleaze musicians favored accessories underlining their outcast status.

The above themes paint a picture of a sleaze metal masculinity as an updated, modern-time variation of the Byronic hero. For example, the speaker of Skid Row's "Subhuman Race" describes himself as wretched and abused, while in the band's "Firesign," he admits to have been "beaten, burned, [ready to] take the fall / And get up in [the obstacle's] face" (n.p.). Embracing his condemned status, the speaker of L.A Guns' "Big House," describes himself as "psychotic," "neurotic," and "rejected" (L.A. Guns n.p.). Unlike the sex-loving glam metal personas, the ones assumed by sleaze metal musicians at times admit their inability to perform as a part of their nature. W.A.S.P.'s "I can't" and L.A. Guns' "Frequency" present the problem of emotional indifference, also in terms of sexual affection. Often, sleaze lyrics discuss mental disability as a result of parental rejection as in W.A.S.P's "Titanic Overture" and "The Idol" or in Roxx Gang's "I Walk Alone." Rejected, resigned and emotionally exhausted, the personas assumed by a sleaze metal musician often exceed the threshold of death, thus the vampire archetype is also popular (consider L.A. Guns' *Hollywood Vampires* album, and the songs entitled "Why Ain't I Bleeding" and "Vampire").

Self-described as rejected by the society, the typical sleaze metal masculinity is still politically engaged. Multinational in terms of the members' ancestry, Cheap and Nasty tackle the issues of immigration and national identity in their "Electric Flag" and "Break for the Border," Skid Row often gives voice to the oppressed lower classes as in their "Mudkicker" criticizing the ego-driven tycoons, in the songs "The Threat" and "Slave to the Grind" both discussing the contemporary economic slavery of the working class, or in their "Living on a Chain" tackling the issue of general social injustice. W.A.S.P.'s "Charisma" highlights the demoralizing nature of political propaganda, "Goodbye America" explores the ever-lasting corruption of the government that lead to slavery and killing of the Native Americans, and the band's "Long, Long Way to Go" and "Unholy Terror" criticize the damaging influence of the political polarization. L.A. Guns' "Death in America" points to the disparity between facts and the official media narrative, and the band's "OK, Let's Roll" commemorates the tragedy of 9/11. The cover of L.A. Guns' *American Hardcore* album criticizes the strong communistic inclinations of the government.

Primarily, it was the BDSM-themed aesthetic which served the sleaze imagery as a metaphor for the complex political and societal power relations. The theme of domination and submission expressed with imagery pointing to all kinds of physical constraint and pain infliction is indeed popular with many sleaze lyricists. To give an example, the speaker of Skid Row's "Psycholove" presents the male as "chain[ing the female] down" (1991 n.p.). L.A. Guns' lyrics to "Face Down," in turn, presents a dominant female who "scrath[es the male's] wounds" as "[s]he likes'em young and bloody" (1994 n.p.). In Roxx Gang's "Time Bomb," the speaker admits to have "[driven the] girl to tears," having previously imprisoned, frightened, abused and treated her as a "tart" (n.p.). Admittedly most influenced by the BDSM subculture among all sleaze bands, W.A.S.P. used such imagery in their lyrics to many songs, including "On Your Knees" (where the "misused and confused, bound and tied" lover likes intercourse involving pain), "Tormentor" (where the speaker admits to being "a sadist that whips the flesh"), "Mean Man"

and "Hate to Love Me" (where the speakers self-reference as Marquis de Sade), and "Don't Cry" (with a description of forced oral penetration) (1984 n.p.). Though often merely metaphorical, the BDSM-themed content matches the visual décor of sleaze album artwork, staging and attire. The members of Roxx Gang favored tight, latex, corset-laced overalls; the members of L.A. Guns decided to include an image of girl dressed in such a costume on the cover of their Man in the Moon album. The L.A. Guns' vocalist Phil Lewis has been sporting choker-like scarves, black leather outfits such as overcoats, trousers held on suspenders and gloves, which all emphasize his dominant stage persona. Finally, W.A.S.P., aside from wearing costumes pointing to sadomasochism, included proper stage decorations: a rack with a nun or a nude female model inside – both of whom the band's leader, Blackie Lawless pretended to somehow injure or disfigure ("Antics..." n.p.). In short, the more serious Southern Gothic aesthetic, just like the BDSM-themed imagery was to emphasize the sleaze metal musicians' increased engagement with various phenomena such national identity, distorted mass-media, corrupted politicians, dysfunctional families, substance dependence and other issues causing the general societal anxiety of the 1980s. Such themes, very prominent in the lyrical and visual content of sleaze metal required suitable musical arrangements.

Departing from the softer version of hard rock present in glam metal, the sleaze musicians strived for a less melodic and more aggressive sound which would liken them to the classic heavy metal bands (Simon 67). To give an example of a 'softer,' glam vocal line one may listen to Hanoi Rock's soft chorus of "Don't You Ever Leave Me," Poison's sentimental "Something to Believe In" or Mötley Crüe's smooth-sounding "Home Sweet Home" – all three songs being typical glam metal ballads. In contrast, sleaze vocalists, striving at conveying anger and domination, could reach lower notes more comfortably. For instance, even in ballads such as "The Idol" by W.A.S.P., "The Ballad" by L.A. Guns or "Wasted Time" by Skid Row, one can observe a phenomenon less prominent in glam: growling. Accordingly, the instruments were also adjusted. While glam metal consists of a significantly larger number of pop rock or soft rock songs (for instance, "I Wanna Be with You" by Pretty Boy Floyd or "Glitter" by Mötley Crüe), sleaze metal has a lot more of 'metal' in itself. Songs such as "Slave to the Grind" by Skid Row, "The Horror" by W.A.S.P. or "Time Bomb" by Roxx Gang are in no way softer than many other heavy metal classics of the time. What is more, the instrumental parts in sleaze metal such as solos or codas tend to be longer in relation to the sung parts than in glam metal, which seems to draw more influence from fastpaced and shorter, punk rock-like pieces. The type of instruments is also different in both glam and sleaze. Acoustic guitar, though not absent, is less popular with sleaze musicians. Likewise are the keyboards, harmonica and saxophone and many other instruments typical of softer genres such as blues or country. Instead, sleaze metal usually focuses on heavier instruments such as additional electric guitars, percussion and special sound effects (e.g. W.A.S.P. includes chainsaws both in their sound and their image). Apart from that, while glam metal artists regard their music as subordinate to their unique image, in sleaze, it is the craftsmanship of the sound that dominates the image. As a result, many bands such as Mötley Crüe or W.A.S.P., when switching to sleaze, abandoned the flashy, glamorous image in favor of sober attire.

5. Looks That Kill, Now Priced to Sell: The Hair Metal Masculinity

By the mid-1980s, the general public had not only accepted but begun to admire the image of long-haired rockers with makeup. Record companies noticed that the big hair brings big money and, thus, the subgenre of hair metal emerged. In order to sell, it had to attract enough publicity and, in order to do so in the first place, it had to be politically correct, customer-friendly and, at most, merely PG-rated. Thus, the inclusion of lyrical or visual engagement with politics, gender-based controversy or explicit sexual imagery was out of question. As a result, the new subgenre of hard rock had to find other ways to become and remain prominent in the music industry.

To begin with, the hair metal artists limited the amount of explicitly sex-related content. Instead, because of the very pop-oriented nature of the subgenre, the majority of lyrics were about some variation of love: romanticized and emotional or sensuous but with vague, non-graphic metaphors. Just as in typical pop lyrics, those of hair metal included many "oh yes's," "oh baby's" and variations of that type of *fillers* (particularly prominent in the lyrics of Def Leppard, followed by those of Warrant, Mr. Big and Bon Jovi). The speakers of the majority of love-related lyrics present the companion of a female as the ultimate goal of their life, not a means (one among many) to a happy life in general. Thus, many hair metal songs are about breakups and general love disappointment: Bon Jovi's "Love is War," "Love Hurts," "Only Lonely"; Warrant's "Ultraphobic," "Sum of One," "The Bitter Pill"; White Lion's "No Second Time"; Mr. Big's "Temperamental," "Mr. Gone," and "Addicted to that Rush" are just a small sample of all the hair songs revealing unfortunate infatuation. Often, however, it is not the fate but the female's character that stands in the way. The female ideal of hair metal is that of femme fatale (and she is literally named so in, e.g., Mr. Big's "Voodoo Kiss"). This type of woman leaves her victims literally crying (consider White Lion's "It's Over" and Bon Jovi's "Shot Through the Heart") often forced to "hide these tears [they're] crying" (from Warrant's "Let it Rain"), affected to the point that even their "piano wants to cry" and, eventually, even willing to commit a suicide (as in Bon Jovi's "Love Lies") (Warrant 1992 n.p.; Bon Jovi 1984 n.p.). It can be clearly seen that in hair metal, the sleaze self-image involving the Byronic hero has been replaced with a Werther-like one. The women are highly emancipated, manipulative and even toxic, but the male victims often assume a very passive approach to the problem. They are not the scarily undead vampires of sleaze metal for whom a woman is just as addition. The hair metal personas are often clingy and needy toward their psychopathic partner: they are *emotional* vampires with a severe dependent personality disorder.

The relationships based on carnal attraction are presented by hair metal in a very non-explicit way. The obscenity of glam and sleaze metal directly leading to the founding of Parents Music Resource Centre in 1985 was largely erased from hair metal (Grow n.p.). What is more, the vague metaphors of hair metal lyrics often bear the marks of moralizing. In their song "Women," Def Leppard imposes their heteronormative approach on its listeners by presenting both sexes as *created* for each other and, in the band's "Make Love Like a Man," the speaker explains that *true* masculinity lies in a man's ability to perform sexually. Besides, typical hair metal personas such as those of Bon Jovi's "Wild in the Streets" and "Get Ready" appear moralizing toward women. The female as viewed by Def Leppard is literally referred to as a "Personal Property." In sum, the speakers present themselves as women's saviors from sexual oppression, which, in fact, to them means female promiscuity and unwillingness to settle. Unlike the ones of glam and sleaze, the values characterizing hair metal masculinity are immensely patriarchic.

Hair metal personas are just as mentally chaste about themselves. Their rebellion lasts as long as their weekend and only within the city limits. Graveyards, Wild West or parties with the overabundance of drugs and alcohol characterizing the glam and sleaze lifestyles, in hair metal, are replaced with weekend gatherings of the "good" white, middle-class boys driving their fathers' cars. Even though self-proclaimed as ultimate rock'n'roll rebels, hair metal personas are uninterested in vandalism, drug abuse, fights or encouraging insurgency. Songs such as White Lion's "Out with the Boys" and Bon Jovi's "Always Run to You" could serve as prime examples. Still, the masculinity of hair metal assigns to itself the image of a tough guy. However, the numerous dangers awaiting them are usually unspecified (consider Mr. Big's "Long Way Down" or Def Leppard's "Gods of War" and "Run Riot"). The hair metal personas are not like glam prostitutes and junkies, nor are they like the sleaze vampires, bikers and cowboys. Hair metal masculinity is only as rebellious as are the charming footballers from teen-oriented movies. As a result, their self-proclaimed rock'n'roll nature needs to be constantly highlighted. Still, Bon Jovi's "Blame it on the Life of Rock and Roll" considers the rocker lifestyle as characterized by skipping school in order to play the guitar. Warrant criticizes the artificiality of human relationships and the abusive influence of a musician's lifestyle in their "All My Bridges Are Burning." If so different, why is, then, hair metal so often confused with glam and sleaze?

The core aspect linking hair metal with the two associated subgenres is the well-marketed *image*. Primarily, the popularity with the young, often teenage and, largely, female audience is guaranteed by retaining some degree of feminine attire and accessories. For example, the test shots for Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*

album cover presented a distorted cowboy image: though situated in a setting that brings to mind the Wild West, the band's leader wore flashy clothes with studs and animal print.¹³ The cover of Mr. Big's single To Be with You presents their only blond member wearing snake-print leggings, beads and fingerless gloves similar to those worn then by Madonna or Michael Jackson. Enuff Z'nuff's cover of the Animals with Human Intelligence presents three band members wearing makeup and army-like dog tags complementing their shiny, gaping shirts. Warrant's artwork for the single Heaven shows the band wearing costumes resembling a mix of those worn by Presley and Abba. The back of Warrant's Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinking Rich presents the members wearing pin-up versions of typical glam and sleaze outfits. The circus and cowboy image is distorted by the band members' bare chests and polished, glamorous, pop-like appearance. White Lion's cover for their single Goin' Home Tonight has the members still wearing biker shoes and long hair; however, aside from that, their clothes are rather ordinary. The band's Essentials album cover shows the members wearing flashy colors and shiny accessories. The band's cover of the single Cry for Freedom shows the band members wearing colorful, gaped shirts. In short, the hair metal artists aimed at a typical, slightly New Romantic-like boy band look, such as that of Wham! or Duran Duran. Often, the musicians themselves admit that the aim of such image was merely to improve the record sales (Padro n.p.).

The scope of this article does not allow for a detailed analysis, yet my aim is not to criticize the subgenre of hair metal as inferior. On the contrary, the marketing abilities of the hair metal artists, combined with their technical skills, allowed for their greater influence on the music industry in general. To give an example, both Bon Jovi and Def Leppard have been inducted into the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*.¹⁴ Besides, though in a less rebellious tone, some of hair metal bands still engaged in social and political issues. For instance, White Lion balanced its commercialized image with profound and socially engaged themes in many of their songs: "I Will" and "Broken Home" refer to domestic violence and stress the importance of a healthy parent-child relationship; the band's "Cheerokee" and "Battle a Little Big Horn" discuss the tragic fate of the Native Americans; "Lady of the Valley" and "All the Fallen Men" reflect on the suffering of war victims.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the three subgenres of the 1980s hard rock shows that genre is an evolving phenomenon. Arguably, the evolution of glam metal into sleaze metal followed by the popularity of their offspring, hair metal, accords with the theory of genre development proposed by Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson (697–714). Many of the glam, sleaze and hair metal bands have experienced various shifts in terms of the performed genre (and often, also in terms of the performed

masculinity) due to their increasing technical experience, their willingness to experiment, the change of members and the demands of the music industry. Even though some musicians consider it somewhat insulting, many of these artists regard neutrally or even embrace the genre-based labels used to describe their music (Bach n.p.). Indeed, in terms of their genre development, a clear disparity is observable. Following the nomenclature and categories of genre assessment employed by Lena and Peterson, one can easily notice that the earliest of the three genres - glam metal - bears the marks of an avant-garde genre: it is local and highly experimental (consider the proto-glam metal projects such as Circus Circus and Phil Lewis's and Phil Collen's band Girl) and eccentric: unlike the long-established glam rock, the personas assumed by glam metal artists proved even more controversial as they mingled their feminine-like flamboyance with explicit heterosexuality (Lena and Peterson 702). Sleaze metal, in turn, embraced the "scene-based" phase of the hard rock genre. Sleaze bands such as W.A.S.P. and Skid Row enjoyed more recognition than many of the short-lived glam bands (consider Hanoi Rocks and Wrathchild, in particular). Their image and stage décor attract more publicity, including its negative kind: W.A.S.P.'s lyrics were among other "Filthy Fifteen" that led to the emergence of the PMRC (Grow n.p.). Not as avant-garde as their glam predecessor, sleaze metal already allowed for a clearer label: a mix of blues, Goth rock and heavy metal. The influence of the other bands was more easily traceable, thus, helpful in contextualizing the novel subgenre. Finally, hair metal included bands often regarded as arena rock and attracting the attention of worldwide audience.¹⁵ Their emergence and continued success were linked with thoroughly-planned marketing: the bands both sold their own merchandise and were "used to sell products" (Lena and Peterson 702). The music was far from experimental; rather, it was characterized by standardized sound and, often, composed with the demands of the record company in mind (consider Warrant's 'forced' single Cherry Pie) (Slavković 2018a n.p.).

Although rapidly evolving, the three subgenres of glam, sleaze and hair metal experienced their demise along with the increasing popularity of the 1990s grunge, Britpop and Nu-Metal, none of which desired to continue the aestheticized image of the 1980s hard rock. Eventually, the 2000s witnessed the renewed interest in music more glamorous than that of the 1990s. Bands such as the Swedish Crashdïet, the French Blackrain, the American Black Veil Brides (all influenced by glam and sleaze) and, also American, Steel Panther (a marvelous pastiche of these subgenres) have emerged. Nowadays, although not prominent in contemporary music and sometimes regarded with contempt and surrounded by stereotypes, the 1980s hard rock bands performing glam, sleaze and hair metal all alike have assumed the legendary status. Even though sometimes unlikely to be played live anymore, the three subgenres remain influential, also in terms of their very specific, still somewhat controversial and often unique expressions of masculinity.

Notes

- 1 Contrarily, there are many notable female musicians within the genre, such as Lita Ford or the all-girl lineup of Vixxen; transsexual musicians like Marcie Free as well as openly bi- or homosexual artists such as Ace Frehley, Phil Varone or Dug Punnick. Notably, Dug Punnick is African-American, which makes him – along with, for instance, Jake E. Lee, Slash, Steven Tyler, Oz Fox and Blackie Lawless – one of many glam/sleaze/hair metal musicians who are of multiracial ancestry.
- 2 Sebastian Bach notices that there is a disparity when discussing his own music (n.p.)
- 3 The subgenre characterizes a more pop-oriented pastiche of glam metal.
- 4 The Italian-language Wikipedia entry can be found at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleaze_metal
- 5 The Urban Dictionary entry: https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=sleaze%20metal
- 6 Simon Napier-Bell described them as a "charming [...] rip-off of the New York Dolls" (Napier-Ball; qtd. in Power ch. 2). Japan produced their first two albums *Adolescent Sex* and *Obscure Alternatives* in 1978.
- 7 Consider Alice Cooper's *Poison* period or W.A.S.P.'s video to *Wild Child*.
- 8 The song in discussion is Hanoi Rock's "I Don't Get It" from their 1984 *Two Steps from the Move* album
- 9 From now on, every single song lyrics unless directly quoted in the article shall be mentioned unreferenced, because both the album booklets and the online sources providing song lyrics are easily accessible. Impossible in the scope of this article, their referencing would require more space than their actual analysis. However, the websites which contain the majority (if not all) lyrics of the mentioned songs include AZLyrics.com and genius.com.
- 10 Consider the Hanoi Rocks' album covers: *Dim Sum, Million Miles Away* or Poison's promo pictures.
- 11 Consider Wrathchild's 1983 single *Do Ya Want My Love* or KISS's albums: *Love Gun* and *Destroyer*
- 12 Michael Monroe of Hanoi collaborated on the Kalevala Koru "A Star All Heart" piece available at the store's website: https://www.keskisenkello.fi/ kalevala-koru-star-all-heart-riipus-68881-p-9014.html
- 13 The controversy surrounding the cover is described at: https://www.songfacts.com/blog/writing/cover-story-slippery-when-wet-bybon-jovi
- 14 A full list of all inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame can be found at: https://www.rockhall.com/inductees/a-z
- 15 The term *arena rock* is described at: https://www.thoughtco.com/top-arena-rock-artists-of-the-80s-10697

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CELINA JERAY is a graduate of the University of Wrocław, now a doctoral student at the Faculty of Philology, University of Wrocław. Her B.A. and M.A. theses explored the themes of friendship and monstrosity with reference to Gothic literature. Her current dissertation examines the angel motif in fantasy literature with reference to the notion of the sublime. Her main areas of interest include the fiction of the 19th and the 20th centuries, the philosophical discourse of friendship, monstrosity and the sublime, as well as the gender politics within the hard rock subculture. In the future, she would like to study the history of collectible art dolls and the psychology of minimalism.