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A Misfit's Manifesto: The Sociological Memoir of a Rock & Roll Heart

Professor Donna Gaines

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Dubbed the Margaret Mead of heavy metal, Donna Gaines is a walking, talking oxymoron, a turnpike intellectual. *A Misfit's Manifesto* is the story of her wild-in-the-burbs odyssey-from overweight yeshiva girl to savvy street-punk sociologist. Isolated, angry, and depressed through most of her adolescence and early adulthood, she found truth and beauty in the least likely places. Wandering the craggy terrain of Rockaway Beach, Queens, Gaines embarked upon a path to enlightenment involving sex, drugs, rock & roll, sociology, cosmetology, True Love, the occult, tattoos, science fiction, pizza, guns, comic books, and surfing-by Web and by sea.

For Gaines, dignity, joy, and communion came not from family, organized religion, or mandatory schooling, but in the sound of doo-wop, surf music, acid rock, then punk, trash metal, and hardcore. "For most of my life," she writes, "music was the only way to connect that wouldn't eventually kill me."

Through all the ripped nights of binge-drinking, pill-popping, and nightclubbing, Gaines became an acclaimed author, scholar, and expert on teen suicide. In an age of conformity and censorship, she defends popular culture as a powerful spiritual force-a vibrant, valid connection to God. A meditation on alienation and engagement, this memoir is an outcast's journey into the black-hole sun, where Divine love and light are found-even in Ramones songs.

This edition includes a scholarly introduction that considers memoir as a sociological as well as literary genre, as a reflexive means of understanding the self in social context while nurturing a sociological imagination. Social memoir, Gaines argues, illuminates problems like alienation, marginality, addiction, and suicide, while making sociology more user-friendly and public. Now this work of dazzling originality and iconoclasm that has inspired misfits everywhere is an ideal text for classroom use, making complex social theory exciting, timely, and relevant for students.

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