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Heavy Genealogy: mapping the currents, contraflows and conflicts of the emergent field of metal studies, 1978-2010

Introduction

What is metal studies? How can we define and characterize it? How has it emerged as a body of academic enquiry? What are its dominant disciplinary strands, theoretical concepts and preferred methodologies? Which studies have claimed most attention, defined the goals of scholarship, typical research strategies and values? How has the claim for the legitimacy or symbolic value of metal scholarship been achieved (if it has); over time and through gradual acceptance or through conflict and contestation? How can this process of formation or *strategy of legitimation* of metal studies, be mapped, examined and interrogated? What methods of historical, institutional and cultural analysis are best suited to this task? What is the time period to be considered and how do we seek to date its origin, movement and current trajectory?

This critical survey attempts to answer these questions (or at least to make them clearer). It is divided into two parts. In Part One, I identify and discuss the only extant attempt to map the origins, significant scholarship and trajectory of metal studies to date (Guibert and Hein 2006; but see Kahn-Harris 2007). While acknowledging this work as an important attempt to describe the contemporary field of metal studies, I ask why the group of texts that are seen as field-defining by Guibert and Hein do not *in-themselves* propose a coherent view of such a field but rather pursue a strategy of differentiation, defining their work as a “break” from earlier work and thereby suggest a lack of consensus? This leads me to hypothesize that the field of metal studies, if it can be said to exist, is one characterized less by continuity than *conflict*. Thus, the appearance of Deena Weinstein’s *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (1991; 2000) and Robert Walser’s *Running with the Devil: Power, Madness and Gender in Heavy Metal Music* (1993b), rather than initiating a new phase of consensus, arise out of and reflect the scholarly conflict that principally defines the study of heavy metal music and culture, up to the present.

Although the lines of fracture run in many directions, as we will see, some fault lines run deeper and appear to be more fundamental to understanding the conflicted nature of the formation, than others. For example, there are clear lines of conflict between scholars working within the discipline of psychology (including cognitive, behaviorist, clinical, and applied strands), and approaches to be found in social science and humanities disciplines (sociology, youth studies, musicology and cultural studies). At the same time there are lines of conflict within this latter, radically defined scholarship,¹ over how best to contest or provide an alternative account of heavy metal culture. As we will

¹ Defining radicalism in the wake of the impact of post-structuralism and post-modernism is problematic. Prior to the rise of these perspectives, a radical perspective was any approach that was anti-capitalist. In the specific context of the academic study of heavy metal culture, radical scholarship refers to those approaches that challenge the categorization of youth in terms of ‘normative’ frameworks that define heavy metal fandom as deviant or a social problem, arguing that such definitions ignore or legitimate existing unequal power relations, particularly those of class, gender and ethnic relations. Radical approaches seek to expose such inequalities and articulate the perspective of the marginalised.

see, central to such disagreements are differing approaches to: (a) the impacts, influences, “effects” and/or meanings and significance of the lyrical and musical “content” of heavy metal music culture and (b) the characterization of fandom and participation in it as a mode of social, cultural and/or cognitive practice and; (c) the ethical relationship of the researcher to the heavy metal fan or research subject, expressed in research design and choice of methods.

In this respect, the significance of the work of Weinstein and Walser is that it offers a much more explicit politics or ethics of the academic study of heavy metal culture. In Part Two I attempt to clarify what this model of ethical scholarship can be said to be and what species of radicalism it offers towards the academic treatment of its research object. Against this, I emphasize the significance of contextual factors in “making sense” of this *politics* of metal study, not only the academy, via fiscal and disciplinary demands, terms of tenure and the pursuit of academic “careers” but also the constantly shifting cultural, political and policy discourses, that represent heavy metal culture and fandom, in publicly mediated space. Here we should recall that the interventions pursued by Weinstein and Walser, were as much directed at the “discursive terror” articulated by an alliance of interest groups promoting a media-driven “moral panic” against heavy metal culture and its fans in the 1983-87 period in the United States, as it was towards other academic accounts of heavy metal. The fact that this powerful alliance also recruited the support of academic “experts” (Weinstein 2000, p. 257; Walser 1993a) points to the continued significance of publicly mediated discourses in shaping the funding environments in which policy-oriented academic research is compelled to operate.

It maybe that, as critics of the moral panic model assert (McRobbie and Thornton 2000) the current complexity of multi-mediated worlds and the active audiences that they recruit, render moral panic type discourses harder to sustain (Brown forthcoming). But it is also the case that the current, discernible shift in academic interest towards the genre of black and death metal is motivated, in large part, by its transgressive, misogynist and racist themes (for an overview, see Kahn-Harris 2007). To date, the largely underground status of the genre has meant that the sensationalist media coverage that has accompanied it has largely occurred in niche publications, as predicted by Thornton (1995). But its mainstreaming could alter this response dramatically (Kahn-Harris 2007, p. 163). It could also have implications for current conceptions of the ethics and values that characterize the sub-field of scholarship around this genre (Phillipov 2006).

I further explore these matters in a more empirically grounded way, through the analysis of the metal studies bibliography database (hereafter MSBD). This resource is the most complete listing of published scholarship on heavy metal, music and culture to date.² Working with this database I am able to present various graphic representations of the *actual* pattern of production

² The original “metal studies” bibliography, which acknowledged French and German language citations from Fabien Hein and Sebastian Berndt, was posted on-line by Keith Kahn-Harris in 2001-6. A revised version was subsequently published as Hein, F. and Kahn-Harris, K. (2006) “Etudes Metal/Metal Studies: Une Bibliographie”. The version drawn on here has been extensively revised by Brian Hickam, Department of Library Studies, University of Toledo, with some additional items added by myself. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude here to Dr. Hickam for his tireless effort and enthusiasm in making available the latest versions of the bibliography while he was still editing it!

of metal scholarship, from the earliest entries to the most recent; the pattern and volume of production per year, and by type of publication, and so on. Once these patterns have been described and established, it is possible to move to a theoretical analysis, one that can offer an explanation of the institutional, cultural and political contexts and *conflicts*, which inform the pattern of production of metal scholarship. For me, the archaeological “method” developed by Foucault (1972) seems appropriate, in offering a means of understanding the pattern of relations between texts or “discursive events” that exist in a particular knowledge field. Such analysis is able to unearth the rules of formation, regularities and unities that characterize its emergence and consolidation; as well as the breaks, ruptures and discontinuities that mark it. I then explore what Bourdieu’s (1993; 1996) field theory might tell us about the symbolic values that define the relationships that constitute this emergent “academic” field, and in particular, the strategies to claim symbolic capital that have characterized the various phases of its uneven development.

In Part Two, I critically apply these ideas to the pattern of “dispersion” of text indicated by the MSBD, highlighting areas of unity and points of conflict, rupture and contestation to be found in particular periods. I do this through an exploration of the early framing of the terms hard rock and heavy metal to be found in the “sociology of rock” and subcultural studies work. I then go on to contrast this framing with that to be found in the large volume of psychology work that defines heavy metal music and fandom as an indicator of youth risk, deviance and delinquency. I then employ Bourdieu to highlight the symbolic strategies of scholarship to be found within these various contrasting strands of research and via examples of work that seek to challenge such strategies, and how this is achieved within the “rules” of the academic field.

In the final section, I go on to examine the most recent strands of research, particularly those produced within cultural studies and ethnomusicology concerned with the global metal music diaspora, and consider to what extent such work is constitutive of a coherent field of metal studies that can be distinguished from earlier work, in both social science and psychology, and what the implications of this might be.

Part One: Making sense of metal studies

The survey of metal studies by Guibert and Hein (2006) (originally a French-language publication), is notable because it is the first of its kind, but also because it offers a periodization of publications by discipline and theme. Thus, the authors identify a “pioneer” phase of journalistic criticism; then work strongly influenced by religious fundamentalist scares about Satanism; the first “academic” studies, in criminology and psychology, investigating links between heavy metal music preference and crime, delinquency and self-destructive behavior; a “second” sociological phase, concerned with the social conditions of youth, challenging youth “stereotypes” and exploring heavy metal fandom as a subcultural phenomenon. Then, a third phase, that examines the musicology and aesthetics of heavy metal music culture. However, it is the publication of Weinstein’s (1991) book which marks the first fully “scholarly work” on metal, followed by Walser’s musicological study (1993b), Roccor’s ethnology,

conducted in Germany (1998); the work of the Spanish musicologist, Silvia Martinez Garcia (1999) and the ethnomusicology of Harris Berger (1999). It is these core studies, adopting a sociological, ethnological and musicological approach, that provide the “foundation stones” for the mature development of metal studies (2006, p. 4).

The next decade sees the first full-length study published in France (Heine 2003). But this “holistic” approach is then followed by work that has a more “targeted epistemological stance [focusing] on specific musical genres” (op cit, p.5); including Mimi Scheeper’s study of hard rock (2002), Nancy Purcell’s (2003) study of Death Metal and Keith Kahn-Harris’ (2007) study of Extreme Metal. Following this trend are a number of studies focusing on particular bands, Susan Fast’s study of Led Zeppelin (2001), Glen Pillsbury’s study of Metallica (2006), and the William Irwin edited collection (2007) on Metallica and philosophy. For Guibert and Hein, this work represents a discernible shift from macro to micro analysis, perhaps reflecting the growing fragmentation of the heavy metal genre itself.

Certainly this overview has much to commend it, particularly in reflecting an emergent consensus among metal scholars, over “foundational” or “widely influential” work in the field. But there are unexplained absences, such as Jeffrey Arnett’s (1996) social-psychology of *Metalheads*. Also it could be argued that the *Crash Course in Brain Surgery* (Irwin ed. 2007) collection signals a trend towards cultural-philosophical themes to be found in heavy metal music, such as *Great Satan’s Rage* (Wilson 2008), Bogue’s work (2004a; b) on Deleuze and Black metal, and the recent *The Metal Void* collection (Scott and Von Helden eds. 2010). More problematic perhaps is the claim that Weinstein’s (1991) book represents the first “fully scholarly” study of metal, the “evolutionary” result of a set of stages that progress from purely journalistic, to politically biased work, to academic but not sociological, to sociological but not fully scholarly. I am not questioning the importance of Weinstein’s (1991; 2000) or Walser’s (1993b) books, without which the contemporary study of heavy metal seems unthinkable. Or the value of the other studies identified; although an updated list would surely include the Bali scene study by Baulch (2007); the Bayer (ed) (2009) collection, *Heavy Metal in Great Britain*, and the recent books by Moore (2010) and Cope (2010). Finally, the book on *Extreme Metal* by Kahn-Harris (2007) has received a very favourable reception, not only widely-read but also widely-cited, particularly in new work.

My point is that this *periodization* assumes a consensus on scholarship and research values that the work prior to Weinstein lacks and that such work is now wholly superseded by metal studies 2.0! Quite simply, as the MSBD will show, psychology-oriented research into heavy metal, from a variety of perspectives, has not gone away. More importantly, the consensus that coheres the metal field is more apparent than real. For example, the books by Weinstein, Walser and Kahn-Harris, despite their favorable reception by scholars, do not offer a mutually consistent overview of the field of metal studies. Rather they are marked by respective *strategies of differentiation*; seeking to define their work as a “break” within the existing field. Thus, Weinstein’s (2000; 1991) cultural sociology approach mounts an “objective” defence of heavy metal culture against powerful detractors of the music, from both left and right of the political spectrum, who fail to appreciate the genre “for what it is” (2000, p. 239); a complex and long-lived subculture that

celebrates the *vitality* of a blue-collar masculinity. Walser (1993b), on the other hand, seeks to differentiate his approach from Weinstein's (p. 23) but also negative academic critics, by seeking to combine a popular musicology and cultural criticism that is able to re-situate the study of heavy metal within a "politicized context of cultural struggles over values, power and legitimacy" (p. xiii), embodied in the cultural contradictions of heavy metal's performance of masculine power and control. Whereas, Kahn-Harris seeks to differentiate the study of the extreme metal underground, emergent in the 1990s, from the study of the mainstream heavy metal of the 1980s, identified with the work of Weinstein and Walser (2007; Harris 2000, p. 14), by exploring the transgressive cultural politics and practices of the global scene and its participants.

So, if there is a critical consensus to be found in recent scholarship, we need to identify what it can be said to be. My suggestion is that Weinstein and Walser's work represents a watershed in the study of heavy metal culture because it offers a research perspective that is sympathetic to the values and/or experience of heavy metal fans themselves, and it is this element that is "new". Here we can point to the emergence, from the early 1990s onwards, of academic-fans (established scholars who have "come out" as fans of certain forms of popular culture) and fan-academics (ex-fans who have successfully parleyed their insider knowledge into an academic career) (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002). While the position of the *aca-fan* and fan-academic as a "critical insider" raises a challenging range of issues (Bennett 2002), particularly challenging to established academic disciplines, it could perhaps account for the range and diversity of recent metal research identified by Guibert and Hein? An alternative explanation might be that the academic study of metal culture has become of interest to a wider range of disciplines (cultural-philosophy and literary studies, for example) that emphasize different aspects of its significance. Which may, in turn, indicate a change in the cultural status and aesthetic interest of metal culture - signaled in the distinction drawn between heavy metal and extreme metal - from a disreputable mainstream, blue-collar-identified genre to a minority-interest, avant-garde culture?

The metal studies bibliography database

The MSBD spans the period 1978 to 2010; it includes monographs or book-length single author studies, edited themed collections, peer reviewed articles published in academic journals; and chapters in peer reviewed edited collections. The criterion for inclusion was that the terms "heavy metal" or "metal" were to be found in the title or abstract of the publication or within the main body of the text. A small number of additional items were included that did not meet the selection criterion, where such items were either referenced in a significant number of publications that did; or they contained reference to or articulated an emergent discourse of heavy metal categorization, such as "hard rock" and/or mentioned formative metal artists or bands (e.g. *Led Zeppelin*, *Thin Lizzy*, etc).

The data that I present here are the result of detailed analysis of the most up to date version of the bibliography available (see Figures, 1- 5), and they have been produced to highlight different dimensions of the accumulated

data.³ For example, Figure 1 records the total volume of publications, per year, sub-divided by “type of publication” i.e. whether book, article or chapter; whereas, Figure 2 represents the total aggregated publications per year of all types, over the time frame. Figure 3 represents the number of publications, per year, of peer reviewed articles, sub-divided by academic discipline, identified by type of journal, author affiliation or by type of publication;⁴ whereas Figure 4 represents the total pattern of such publications over the given time frame. Finally, Figure 5 records the frequency of usage of categorization of study, by title, e.g. heavy metal, death metal, thrash, extreme metal, metal and heavy metal, over the period.

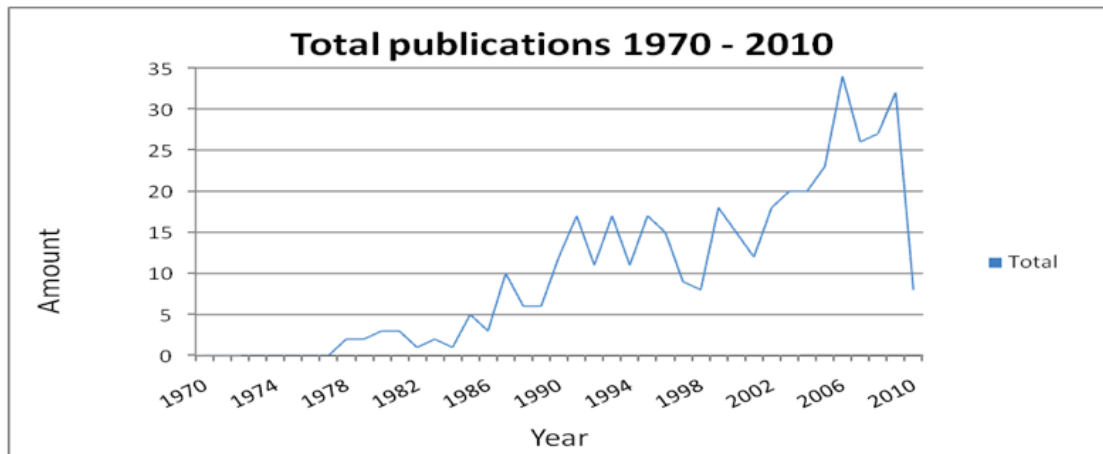


Figure 1. *Total publications 1970-2010*

So what are the patterns revealed by the data sets? The most obvious thing to say, looking at Figure 2 (Total publications 1970-2010) and Figure 4 (Total articles 1970-2010) is that there has been, over the time frame, an overall dramatic increase in academic research, as evidenced by peer reviewed publications. The data sets from which the Figures are drawn indicate that, since 1978, there have been approximately 414 pieces of academic research published; of which 261(63%) are articles, 83(20%) are chapters and 70 (16.9%) are books.⁵ Tracking the pattern by decade and year-on-year, we can see a very dramatic rise in the volume of publication, from the 2000 period onwards, where total numbers appear double that of the previous decade, suggesting likely further growth, based on this momentum of upward velocity! The underlying data confirms this impression, showing that 235(56.7%) of total publications have been produced in the last decade! Of this, the amount of

³ I wish to record here my thanks to Bath Spa University, Media Communications BA (2010) graduate, Juliette “Jet” Winyard for inputting much of the MSDB and for producing the series of graphs in this section.

⁴ This category of data was the most problematic to define since the destination journal was not necessarily a reliable guide of the type of research as, for example, many items of psychology research were published in popular music and communications journals. The most reliable means of categorization was found to be the institutional identity of the contributors and the type of article submitted.

⁵ Of the three categories examined this figure is likely to be the most unreliable since it is made up of entries that could not all be checked and is therefore likely to contain, along with academic monographs and themed edited collections, popular types of journalism (such as Donna Gaines’ (1991) well-respected study) as well as pseudo-academic exposes, such as Raschke (1990).

published articles, since 2000, is 140 (53.6%). Moving back through the time span, we can see that, despite a low to negligible amount of publications in the late 1970s and early 1980s (i.e. below 5), from the late 80s to the late 90s (i.e. over a decade time span) there is an equivalent, though not as dramatic increase to that observed from 2000. But this increase is sustained through the 1990s, forming a fairly consistent plateau over the period (Figure 2 and Figure 4).

Looking more closely at the data, it is possible to strongly suggest that this macro pattern is led most persistently by the pattern of publication of journal articles (Figure 4) and that this dominant pattern is shadowed by single authored monographs and themed collections on metal (Figure 2), with chapter publications irregularly following this pattern but sometimes exceeding it (Figure 1). The pattern of publication of articles, observed separately (Figure 4), suggests an even more dramatic increase in publication activity, particularly from the mid-2000 point onwards, but also a high point occurring in the late 80s early 90s, which demands explanation. Overall the pattern is extremely dynamic and suggests a quantitatively dramatic increase in activity surrounding journal publication, which seems set to continue.

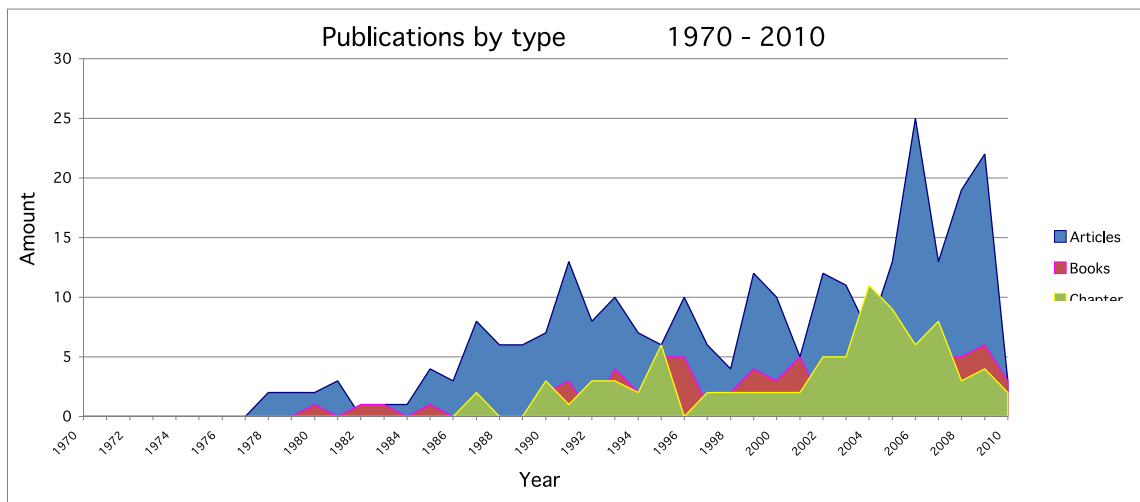


Figure 2. *Publications by type 1970-2010*

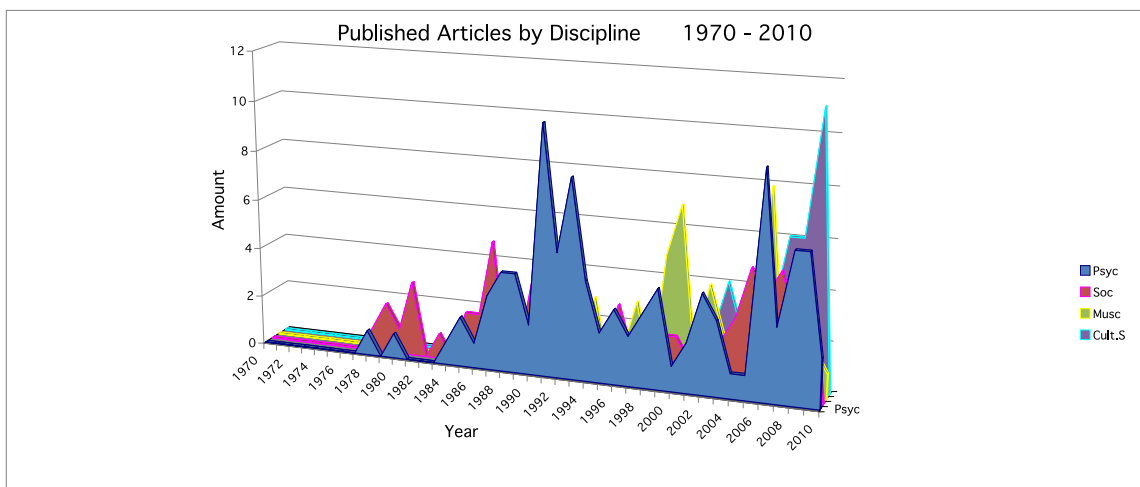


Figure 3. *Published articles by discipline 1970-2010*

But it is the data patterns present in Figure 3 that appear most dramatically to challenge received ideas about the formation and development of metal studies, viewed from the perspective of the present. In particular, the volume and consistency of published research in the disciplinary area of psychology (including applied, social, clinical, behaviourist and cognitive strands) demonstrates that not only was research guided by psychological perspectives one of the earliest types of research into heavy metal but at various points overwhelmingly the dominant strand of enquiry. As the data confirms, 98 (37%) of the 261 articles published in the area of metal studies, are psychology based; as compared to 66 (25%) in sociology, 50 (19%) in musicology and 47 (18%) in cultural studies. The argument, suggested by Guibert and Hein (2006), that psychology approaches were a formative strand in the development of a fully coherent perspective has to be dramatically qualified, since this formative period was followed by a growing volume of research in the late 80s and in the 1990-2000 period, where clearly it was the dominant strand of research enquiry, as measured by volume of published output. Here the data sets indicate that in the 1989-1999 period, of the 87 academic articles published, 47 (54%) were in the area of psychology, as compared to 17 (19.5%) sociology, 17 (19.5%) musicology and 6 (6.8%) cultural studies. Moreover, this research and publication pattern, despite some dramatic dips has continued strongly into the present and looks set to continue. However, what is also of note and demanding of explanation is that the early pattern of research publication in psychology was matched and often surpassed by publications in the discipline of sociology (for example, out of a total of 32 articles published between 1978-88, sociology numbered 17 (53%), as against psychology, 13 (40.6%), in a formative period when musicology output was negligible (6.2%) and cultural studies work, non-existent).

Also noteworthy is the rise in visibility of research in musicology, which in the late 1990s/early 2000 period, is quite dramatic. Equally, if not more dramatic, is the rise to prominence of research publications defined as cultural studies, emerging in the early 2000s but by the end of the decade by far the most prolific contributor to academic journals on the subject of metal studies. Here the data sets indicate that in the 2000-2010 period, of the 142 academic articles published, 41 (28.8%) were in the area of cultural studies, as compared to 38 (26.7%) psychology, 32 (22.5%) sociology and 31 (21.8%) musicology. This dramatic surge, clearly evident in the 2007-2010 period, certainly invites interpretation, as does the persistence of sociological research, shadowing but not surpassing that of psychology studies to date.

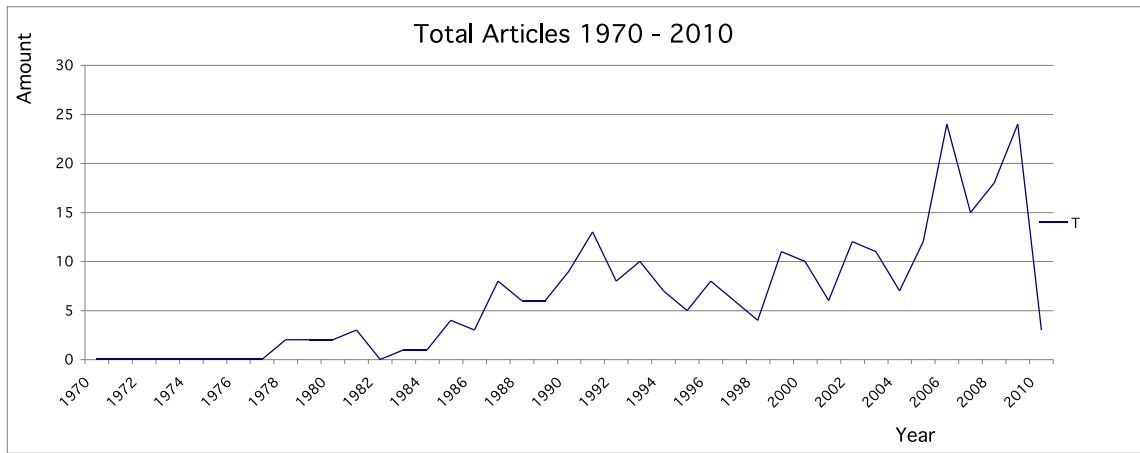


Figure 4. *Total articles 1970-2010*

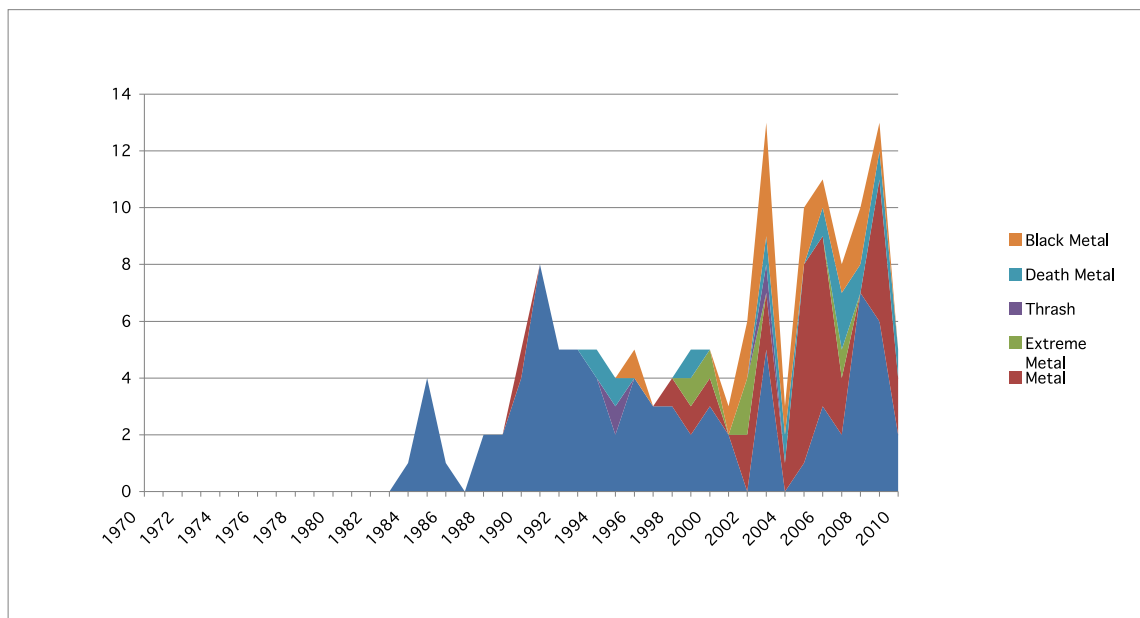


Figure 5. *Pattern of publications by title category 1970-2010*

This graph is of interest because it enables interrogation of some of the observations made in the introduction concerning a shift towards a research interest in what has been defined as extreme metal (Kahn-Harris 2007), that is sub-genres of metal music, such as thrash, death and black metal. But I also searched under the title “metal” to record instances of where this term was used as a stand-alone term (or linked to anything other than death, thrash or black). A sub-theme here was one concerned to test the claim, made by Kahn-Harris (2007: Harris 2000:14), that varieties of extreme metal, emergent from the 1990s onwards, have superseded that of heavy metal and that this would be reflected in title choices. The results, as evidenced in Figure 5, are therefore somewhat surprising in indicating that the term heavy metal is overwhelmingly the preferred research term in 81(55%) of items, as a reflection of the total number of titles (146) published since 1978. The occurrence of the term thrash, at 2(1.3%) was negligible. However the term “metal” at 31(21%) was the next most favoured, with black at 16 (10.9%) and death, with 11

instances (7.5%). These choices of title term were also, seemingly, preferred to that of extreme metal itself, at 5 instances (3.4%). Looking more closely we can see that, while the first use of the term heavy metal in a published title occurs in 1984, the term metal as a stand-alone usage does not occur until 1990, becoming more frequent after that year. Whereas the first work to carry the term death metal occurs in 1994; black metal in 1996 and extreme metal in 1999. All of these terms then become more frequently used in work published since 2000. This pattern therefore suggests some qualified support to the view that there has been a qualitative shift of interest towards black metal and to a lesser extent, death metal, among contemporary researchers. But the preference for the term metal and indeed, heavy metal remain strong.

This hypothesis can be further tested by examining the data for 2000, which seems justified, given that 87 (59%) instances of the use of all title terms (146) are clustered in this time period. Of these, 31 (35.6%) are heavy metal but followed closely by metal, at 28 (32%), which suggest that this term is becoming highly favoured as a generic term for heavy metal studies itself. What is most noticeable thereafter is that the term black metal, at 15 (17%) is by far the next most prevalent, being almost double that of death, at 8 (9%). This does then suggest qualified support for the view that there is a growing interest in the study of black metal among a segment of contemporary scholars which appears to be linked with the dramatic rise in cultural studies work (but this correlation is not proven).

Theoretical interrogations

If we are seeking to trace the emergence of metal studies as a type of academic knowledge or as a field of knowledge production, then Foucault's method of genealogy seems appropriate. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and earlier work, Foucault seeks to comprehend the rise of the human sciences as a process of discursive formation. Challenging existing accounts of the history of ideas, which assume continuity and progress in the development of the human reasoning subject and the emergence of scientific rationality, Foucault asks us to focus our attention on the rules of formation by which groups of statements achieve a unity as a science; or at the level of a theoretical statement or authoritative text. This *highly theoretical* method allows the historian of ideas to identify the points of emergence of discourse, and the rules of formation, which is to say the regularities and modes of organization, which lay beneath the emergent forms of knowledge. By this means Foucault is able to disrupt notions of continuity, development, influence, evolution and tradition and (perhaps mischievously) to focus instead on discontinuities, displacements; points of rupture and transformation. Stripping histories of knowledge of their patina of self-evidence reveals a much more fluid, chaotic or conflictual history of "discursive events" (p. 38). By focusing on examples of the partial or incomplete emergence of a discourse or "statement/event", allows us to examine the emergent forms of regularity of statements, and thereby the relations between statements, so that other unities are revealed and can be described.

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault is concerned with mapping the "relations between statements" or determining the emergent

criteria by which a group of statements are able to constitute themselves as a unity, in that they: (i) make reference to a common object of analysis (ii) employ a certain manner of reference or mode of statement (iii) deploy a system of permanent and coherent concepts (iv) reveal evidence of an identity and persistence of theoretical theme (see Smart 1985, p. 39). What Foucault claims is revealed by this analytic framework, is a “system of dispersion” that speaks of the relations between statements; that what underlies the unity of knowledge fields is a system of rules and relations that govern the formation of a discourse and its elements (“objects, statements, concepts and theoretical options”) (1972, p. 37). An obvious criticism of this method of analysis is that it may ignore the self-evident continuities by which a field is governed, in favour of the discontinuities, points of rupture, displacement, etc., and thereby privilege the study of the peripheral, the marginal or contradictory, as the key elements that can most clearly reveal the processes at work in knowledge field formation. But given the complex and, at times, apparently contradictory patterns revealed by the MSBD, Foucault’s method of analysis seems to offer the most compelling means of explaining and understanding the *particular characteristics* of the formation of the field of metal studies. It does so because it gives us a compelling theoretical vocabulary and a set of questions we can pose: what is the object of metal studies; where are the points of emergence of partial or formative statements/discursive events?; how do groups of statements in the emergent field constitute themselves as a unity?; where is there evidence of a continuity of scholarly identity and theoretical or methodological theme?; where are the discontinuities, points of rupture and/or transformation, in the emergent field?

Posing these questions against the data patterns derived from the MSBD and by reference to examples of particular publications that make up the history of that bibliography, will enable us to see that the emergent field of metal studies is characterized as much by conflict as continuity; that unities within the field are to be found within particular sets of knowledge production; there is a greater continuity of theoretical and methodological theme to some groups of work than others; the most prolific and most unified sub-groups within the field do not carry acceptance among all groups; that the current claims for unity and coherence, emanating from some strands of metal research are the result of rupture and discontinuity, of what we might term sub-field claims within the knowledge field, and that this pattern has characterized most of the last twenty years, clearly evident in the 90s and even more so in the last decade, and looks set to continue (indeed the pattern seems to be accelerating).

The second theoretical apparatus that I want to bring to bear upon the task of making sense of metal studies, is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the cultural field, because I believe it offers a particularly appropriate means of understanding the field of metal studies as a field of production of academic knowledge. As is well known, Bourdieu (1993; 1997) developed the theory of the cultural field to explain the claims to aesthetic value or symbolic capital that emerged in the formation of the fields of 19th century art and literature. This work was itself an extension of Bourdieu’s development of the concept of cultural capital, most notably identified with his account of the French education system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and the process whereby some non-economic forms of production are able to acquire symbolic power and

advantage within a system dominated by the logic of economic power, accruing from ownership and control of the production system in capitalist social formations.

Bourdieu's account of the functioning of the education system to disproportionately reward the possession of class-approved types of knowledge and to exercise symbolic violence against "inferior" kinds, via the functioning of an apparatus of accreditation of such symbolic forms of capital and their further acquisition, is appropriate as a general theory of the symbolic practices that underpin the production and valuation of academic knowledge. But it is the theory of the cultural field itself that is germane to understanding the process whereby forms of low or illegitimate types of culture begin to acquire *legitimable* status through the activities of accredited cultural agents or new "outsider" cultural entrepreneurs, pursuing unorthodox strategies of symbolic capital accumulation (Featherstone 1991; Laermans 1992).

In essence, Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field is concerned with the practices whereby cultural producers attempt to acquire symbolic value for non-economic types of production; the level of such symbolic value (its exchange value) is determined by its relative distance from or aesthetic *differentiation* from economic or commercial types of production (i.e. "art-for-arts-sake") and crucially, the accreditation of established agents already operating within the cultural field. The established agents (or "high priests") who are dominant within the field, possess high levels of symbolic capital which is manifest in their ability to exercise *consecratory power*, to confer legitimate value on objects and agents. Given that the accumulation of symbolic capital operates inversely to the logic of commercial (or mass) production, i.e. via restricted or small-scale production, entry into the field and progress within it is limited. New agents therefore seek to gain value through the patronage or accreditation of the dominant agents of the field; or by seeking to acquire recognition through the development and possession of *symbolically-specific* capitals, which in the art world model would apply to the claims of the *avant-garde*.

The relevance of Bourdieu's model of the cultural field in providing an explanation of the observed characteristics of the metal studies field of academic knowledge production, is twofold. First, it provides some purchase on understanding how the subject of heavy metal, originally a sub-genre of rock music with low-cultural status which reflected its popularity among low social status, white male, working class youth (Bryson 1996), has become the object of academic enquiry. Second, it provides an explanatory calculus in mapping the symbolic strategies of academics in their framing and treatment of this enquiry, in particular by identifying types of knowledge production that seek accreditation from established disciplinary frameworks within the academic field, and those that seek to acquire symbolic value on the basis of possession of symbolically specific knowledge of metal music and culture, particularly specialist knowledge of sub-genre varieties, increasingly apparent from 2000 onwards. In addition to these variants, we also need to identify a third, emergent from the mid-90s onwards but most prevalent in the last decade, of a species of legitimation strategy that seeks to gain recognition via the specialist treatment of an aspect of metal culture which is *legitimable* in high or avant-garde cultural terms.

Part Two: Analysis

In this section, guided by Foucault's method of analysis of discursive formation, I trace the emergence of heavy metal as an object of study in two areas. The first is that of sociology (deviance, youth studies and subcultural theory) and early variants of musicology ("the sociology of rock"); the second, that of psychology based studies (clinical, applied, social, cognitive, behaviourist, etc). My overriding purpose is to demonstrate how this method of enquiry can reveal the epistemic origins of the major disciplinary fault lines that define the contestation at the heart of metal studies, which continues into the present, that between psychology-based studies and an alliance of social science and humanities based approaches, that form the principle opposition to it.

As is well known, psychology-based approaches view the music and culture of heavy metal as a self-evident problem, one that needs to be carefully and scientifically studied, in order to identify the causal or contributory factors that correlate a "measure" of the "effect" or influence of the music culture, with the anti-social, delinquent and/or deviant, destructive and/or self-harming, types of behavior exhibited by its youth demographic fan base. It is also, as evidenced by its disciplinary history, pro-actively social policy oriented, due in no small measure to its long established links with professional bodies, such as teacher organizations, youth and social work, clinicians, doctors and health professionals, police and judiciary, and community and parental pressure groups. It is this pro-active role, often earning psychology research findings a disproportionate amount of coverage in media reporting of social problems, that has identified the discipline as the opponent of "radical" types of social science, who see it as an apologist for a system of structural inequality that *produces* the "effects" that become the narrow object of social policy initiatives (Barker and Petley 1997; Feilitzen 1998; Gauntlett 1998). Another factor maybe that academic psychologists have demonstrated a record of rapid response to the emergence of social problem-oriented issues given media coverage, often bidding more successfully for public monies to investigate such problems and advise on solutions, than social scientists who seek funding for work that questions the ideological basis of such constructions.

However, what the analysis will reveal is that the emergent framing of heavy metal as a social and cultural problem in psychology research is subject to internal contestation by cognitive perspectives, in particular, which challenge the methodological validity of the test of "effect", "impact" and "influence" of heavy metal music. This minority critique within psychology itself finds an ally in social scientific oriented youth and deviance research, within the radical field, which values the objectivity to be found in quantitative research design and its critique. But the possibility of an alliance are disabled by a disciplinary and ideological divide over the theoretical model of capitalism, as a system based on the reproduction of structural inequality, but also the institutional role of the "radical" or critical researcher in the academy. It is this issue, of the role of the academic as a critic of the system of structural inequality and the judgment of forms of cultural response to it that undermines the coherence of the radical account of heavy metal culture. More specifically, it is the contestation over the primacy of gender or class, as the key mechanism of structural inequality and the stance of academic

researchers to this issue, which divides the radical field's response to the rise of heavy metal music and youth culture.

Emergent framing: From “hard rock” to heavy metal

Friesen and Helfrich identify Will Straw's (1984) article, published in the *Canadian University Music Review*, as the “first known academic discussion” of heavy metal (1998, p. 263). This impression may have been gained from the fact that a revised version of the article was printed in the widely circulated Frith and Goodwin (1990) edited collection and again in Doring's (1993) *Cultural studies'* reader. But the MSBD indicates the first emergence of an academic framing occurs in the 1977-78 period, in an article by Frith and McRobbie (1978). This article, on Rock and Sexuality, identifies the “masculine style” of singer Robert Plant and the band *Thin Lizzy*, as “cock-rock”, arguing that “cock rock shows are explicitly about male sexual performance” (Frith & McRobbie 2000, p. 140) and the collective experience of such shows “are reminiscent of football matches and other occasions of male camaraderie” (op cit, p.142). This account is reprised in Frith (1981), where cock-rock performance is explicitly identified with the “hard rock” style of Led Zeppelin:

Cock-rock performers are aggressive, boastful, constantly drawing audience attention to their prowess and control. Their bodies are on display (plunging shirts and tight trousers, chest hair and genitals), mike and guitars are phallic symbols (or else caressed like female bodies), the music is loud, rhythmically insistent. Built around techniques of arousal and release. Lyrics are assertive and arrogant, but the exact words are less significant than the vocal styles involved, the shrill shouting and screaming. What's going on at such “hard rock” shows is a masturbatory celebration of penis power [from which] girls are structurally excluded (p. 227).

Elements of McRobbie and Frith's characterization are reproduced in a footnote to Hebdige's *Subculture: the meaning of style* book, but here the term hard-rock has become “heavy metal”:

a heavily amplified, basic form of rock which relies on the constant repetition of standard guitar riffs. Aficionados can be distinguished by their long hair, denim and “idiot” dancing [...] Heavy metal has fans amongst the student population, but [also] a large working class following [and] seems to represent a curious blend of hippy aesthetics and football terrace machismo (1979, p. 155, n. 12).

Cashmore develops this description, characterizing the white, working class fans of heavy metal as “a mass following of youth, their denim clothes covered in studs and appliqué, their hair long and wild so as to swing freely when they shook their heads in time with the music - what they called head-banging” (1984. P. 37). A year later, Ian Chambers is able to describe heavy metal fans at the annual Reading and Knebworth festivals, as:

contingents of longhaired, denimed males [...] consuming large quantities of beer and playing imaginary guitar runs in sycophant homage to their alter egos performing on the stage. The heavy metal audience [is] composed of a popular

alliance of scruffy students and working-class followers; it appears to represent an unexpected marriage of hippy and rocker culture. Since 1970, this music and its public has come to occupy a prominent and permanent place in the musical tastes of the provinces (1985, p. 123).

For Frith such “provincial” tastes were evidence of an increasing divide between the middle class-identified (“intelligent” or progressive) fans of “rock culture” and a new mass-cultural variety of rock, marketed to working-class fans:

as the [70s] developed it became increasingly difficult to make sense of heavy metal as student music. Bands like Black Sabbath, Uriah Heep, and Deep Purple had their own armies of scruffy working-class fans, and [...] The huge popularity of Grand Funk Railroad, in 1970-71, symbolized the arrival of a rock culture of working-class fans who didn’t even read *Rolling Stone*; and the rise of Kiss later in the decade was an even clearer indication of how rock could be integrated into the traditional marketing modes of teenage *pop*. The result was a music which had no significance for “the intelligent” rock fan at all (1981, pp. 214-5).

Note how the terms hard-rock and heavy metal are now coterminous, and how the previously identified “scruffy students” have become “scruffy working-class fans” who have been integrated into a mass-commercial variant of rock music, equivalent to that of mainstream pop. This theme of the commercialization of rock culture is also present in Chambers’ description, linking heavy metal and teenybopper pop (1985, pp.122-125) to the “fall out” from the failure of the progressive music movement, and with it the ideals of the 1960s counterculture. The reactionary significance of heavy metal is that it exaggerates a particular mode of male romanticism endemic to the hippy and counter-culture life-style, and fashions it into a crude and populist machismo: “it was heavy metal that finally threw away the wraps and chopped down the ambiguities. Since it took “balls” to play this music, as the music papers continually reminded us, the complete celebratory rites of what some observers have bluntly called “cock rock” were [now] fully established” (p. 123).

These extracts appear to exemplify Foucault’s genealogical critique, of the search for origins to be found within a primary text from which all others “descend”. Rather what we find are the first “murmurings”, the partial emergence of terms that can then be traced in an uneven, but discernable pattern of “dispersion” across other texts, which lap and overlap each other (1972: 27-8). Taken as a group of statement/events, these texts and their interrelation constitute a partial unity, identifying the term heavy metal and linking it to a developing, but still not wholly coherent, object: heavy metal performers, their male, working class fans and the collective celebration of a reactionary form of musical misogyny.

The case of Straw’s (1984; 1990; 1993) piece is interesting here because, in one obvious sense, its “dispersion” is an effect of its reprinting, the result of academic practices of circulation and reproduction, which begs explanation. Perhaps though its perceived significance is that it appears to be “fully” an examination of heavy metal culture, announced in its title, rather than the partial asides, contextual commentary and footnotes of the group of texts I have exhumed to view. According to the MSBD it *is* the first academic

publication that bears the term “heavy metal” in its title. But as we have already traced, the emergent terms of an academic framing of heavy metal are already in play, dispersed across a number of prior texts.

Straw’s piece is also interesting because it appears to strike out in an entirely new direction: how to explain the emergence of heavy metal as an audience-performer relationship made possible by changes in the organization of the music industry in the 1970s (although this direction is suggested by Frith, as we have seen). What Straw attempts is a reconciliation of the British CCCS subcultural approach to music culture that emphasizes appropriation and consumption, with a US centered approach that emphasizes the role of institutions in incorporating consumers; a top-down vs. a bottom-up approach. This is achieved by arguing that changes in the music industry, particularly the decline of small venues and the rise of stadium touring, coupled with the reliance of large record companies on the *craft-production* of established producers and performers, allows a type of hard rock music to become popular with a previously disenfranchised audience, suburban white-males, who consume the music as an accompaniment to masculinist, peer group formation and are therefore not a subcultural grouping. Of note, especially in terms of Foucault’s interest in marginalia, is how the rewritten piece evidences a more explicitly critical tone towards the “aggressive staging of masculine sexuality” and the view that heavy metal is “commonly and justifiably perceived as an expression of violent sexuality” (1990, p. 107); formulations not present in the original journal article.⁶

My analysis so far has looked at *only one strand* of the MSBD, a strand that is important because it demonstrates a partial and emergent unity of statements concerning what heavy metal *can be said to be*, a characterization that is not the property of an original or primary text, in the case of Straw, for example, but emergent in the relations between the group of texts we have described. If we move forward through the MSBD we can identify other texts that trace, echo and overlap these elements while developing, partially emergent, newer elements (e.g. Gross 1990; Breen 1991). But we can also see, in the case of the texts of Weinstein (1991) and Walser (1993b), examples of elements of discontinuity, displacement, rupture and transformation, as Foucault’s method would predict. But also, I want to argue, elements of attempted-unity. As, for example, in this striking passage from Walser:

Visually, metal musicians typically appear as swaggering males. Leaping and strutting around the stage, clad in spandex, scarves, leather and other visually noisy clothing, punctuating their performance with phallic thrusts of guitars and microphone stands (1990, p. 153).

It is clearly the case that this description of heavy metal performance echoes that of Frith and McRobbie’s account of “cock-rock”, with which we began. Of course, as is well known, Walser then goes on to explore how such a performance can be understood in terms of a range of ways of dramatizing the patriarchal-capitalist-derived conflicts of performing masculinity to be found in

⁶ It is also of interest that in the 2nd reprinting of the piece Straw (1993: 381) adds a postscript, which argues that from the late 1970s onwards heavy metal rapidly acquired “the accoutrements of fandom” (fanzines and specialty record shops) and by the late 80s had affinities with “post-punk rock culture” allowing it to re-emerge as “one of the coolest, most critically respectable and most diverse of musical forms”.

metal bands, songs and videos: misogyny, exscription, androgyny and romance. But what is striking is Walser's stance as a researcher to this problem: "I intend neither to denounce utterly, nor to try to rescue wholesale, heavy metal's politics of gender" (155). This is clearly an element of discontinuity, but it is achieved via a displacement, not an absolute rupture from what precedes it. This is because it turns on the issue of the politics of the researcher and, a pointed reminder, of the differential positioning (structure, culture and agency) that make gender critique appear classless, when it can never be. The relevance of this to the emergent characterization of heavy metal, to be found in the sociology of rock and youth subcultural theory we have traced, is how the class-implicated masculinity project of metal is denied subcultural credibility, when other forms, such as mods, teds and skins, are not (Brown 2003).

This conflicted positioning within the field of scholarship we have identified, is even more apparent in the strategies of displacement that Weinstein demonstrates, in arguing that heavy metal culture must be understood as a "defensive" subcultural formation that attempts to reclaim and re-imagine a class identity in the face of deindustrialization, by investing in a hippie-biker stylization of romantic-machismo that celebrates the power and vitality of a blue-collar masculinity, re-located to the sphere of leisure (2000, pp. 98-117). In such a way are the elements that cohere the emergent negative account of heavy metal, as sexist, reactionary and masculinist, re-articulated and re-directed towards a preferred unity.

From nihilistic adolescents to suicide ideation: the psychological framing of heavy metal youth culture

The term heavy metal first appears in an article published in the *Journal of the Tennessee Medical Association*, by Dr. Paul King, MD ("Heavy Metal: A New Religion") (1985), a director of a psychiatric facility in Memphis, Tennessee. In actuality it is a copy of the "expert" testimony given to the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, in September 1985 (the so-called PMRC hearings). It is a two-page document that offers no actual research but the clinical judgment of the MD, as well as quotations from heavy metal artists, including the narrated intro to "The Number of the Beast" by Iron Maiden which, of course, is from the Old Testament, Revelations. This is followed by the report of a study, conducted by Trostle (1986), into "groups of nihilistic adolescents who have adopted the sobriquet, "stoners" and who are "reputed to be actively engaged in demonic worship and satanic rituals, which include animal and blood sacrifices as well as cemetery desecrations and grave robbing" (1986, p. 59).

Despite the obvious policy-orientation and ideological-bias of these reports, itself a reflection of the range of journals of applied psychology in the academic field, the majority emergent framing of the "problem" of heavy metal in academic psychology is a continuation of on-going research into the "effects" of sex and violence themes in television (Albert 1978), which eventually becomes linked with heavy metal via the notoriety surrounding the popular success of the video rotation channel, MTV (Baxter et al 1985; Sherman and Dominick 1986; Greeson and Williams 1987). The shift of attention towards

music television, offers an extension of previous research into television violence, which is a well-established research strand concerned with violence “effects”, as well as a strand of research concerned with the impact of music lyrics on anti-social and problem behavior (Sherman and Dominick 1986; Greenfield et al 1987; Hansen and Hansen 1991a). This is probably why, even after the appearance of work that names heavy metal, many piece of research continue to be published which refer to heavy metal via a discussion of “violent”, “destructive” “defiant” or “satanic” rock music or its association with “risk”, “health” and “suicide” (Brown & Hendee 1989; Bleich et al 1991; Clarke et al 1993; Hanson and Hanson 1990a; Klein et al 1993; Litman and Fareberow 1993; Martin et al 1993). For example, one category offered is HSSR: “rock music with lyrics that promote, homicide, suicide or satanic practices” (Wass et al 1989, p. 287). In an earlier piece (1988), it is simply HSS: homicide, suicide and Satanism. Analysis of the MSBD indicates that the most frequent terms employed in psychology-based article *titles*, published between 1978 and 2010, were: adolescents/youth and children (33%); suicide/suicidal/ity (18%); violence/violent; aggression/aggressive; destructive/destruction (15%); sex/uality/ually and sexual (11%); satan/satanic/Satanism/subliminal (6%); risk, risky, risks/self-harm (5%) and drug(s)/substance-use/abuse (4 %). The other factor, of course, is the media exposure given to the PMRC lobby and its alliance with the national Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).⁷ All of the psychology-based articles published between 1985 and 1995 refer to this coverage, issue or alliance.

It is important to emphasize that the vast majority of published psychology studies are ones that exemplify the “scientific” procedures agreed by the discipline, of the use of objective measures to tests cognitive, ideational or behavioral characteristics of sampled subjects, in controlled “experimental” conditions, most often school, college or university department environments (where participants were given a course credit for participating). A representative example of the design and procedure of such research is Wanamaker & Reznikoff (1989), “Effects of aggressive and non-aggressive rock songs on projective and structured tests” which aimed to test “whether heavy metal music and violent lyrics have a direct effect on the expression of hostility” (p. 563). In order to measure this the researchers drew on Hafner and Kaplan’s (1960) TAT hostility score. “This measure is 4-point rating scale that provides descriptions of hostile themes and assigns higher scores to very hostile theme, such as direct, physically hostile acts between people. Lower scores are given for less overt hostility, such as guilt feelings, piercing eyes, and death symbols” (pp. 563-4). Whereas, the Buss-Durkee (1957) scale, “a 75-item, true-false questionnaire, provides a global hostility score and seven subscale scores, representing various aspects of hostility, including: indirect hostility, irritability, negativism, and resentment” (ibid).

The experiment involved the observation of the behavior of groups, subjected to music defined as, Group 1: non-aggressive music and lyrics; Group 2: aggressive music and non-aggressive lyrics; Group 3: aggressive music and

⁷ Although the role of the PTA has been well documented (e.g. Martin & Seagrave 1988) the role of the AAP, less so. For example, in December 1996, its Committee on Communications published a set of recommendations based on their “concerns about the possible negative impact of music lyrics” (1991, p. 1219). More recently (November 2009), its Council on Communications and Media issued a Policy Statement which argued, on the basis of ‘evidence’ from a review of previous studies, that it was “essential for pediatricians and parents to take a stand regarding music lyrics” (2009, p. 1488).

lyrics. (563). Surprisingly, the experiment concluded that, “the present study did not demonstrate that aggressive music, aggressive lyrics, or both, increase hostility, at least as measured by the TAT and the Buss-Durkee Hostility Scale. These results seem to argue against precipitously labeling rock songs as likely to stimulate violent behavior” (Wanamaker and Reznikoff, 1989, p. 569). On the other hand, there are a number of publications, such as those by Hansen and Hansen (1990; 1991a; 1991b) which are seemingly determined to find “effects” that imply negative social consequences. For example, their rationale for the study, “Rock music video and antisocial behavior” (1990b), argues that, “besides sex and violence, rock music videos also contain nonviolent forms of antisocial behavior, such as rebellion against parental and lawful authority, drunkenness, promiscuity, and derogation and devaluation of women, the work ethic, and family values” (p. 357). In addition, they “always portray antisocial behavior in a positive light” (ibid). This particular study attempted to measure levels of arousal, excitement and aggression, each of which had a “trait” analysis or measurement procedure, established within *classic* psychology research.

There are many similar studies, conducted during the period of dominance of psychology in research output, that argue in the face of *inconclusive evidence* that “the efforts of advocacy groups to alert parents to the existence of destructive rock lyrics and to persuade rock musicians and the rock industry to apply self-restraint are commendable” (Wass et al 1989, p. 302). Indeed, this conclusion, that there may be a factor that is important as a trigger or causal contributor that has not been discovered *yet* justifies the need for more research. For example, Sherman and Dominick conclude, “Music videos are violent, male -oriented, and laden with sexual content. A cultivation analysis of heavy viewers of videos would seem a logical next step” (1986, p. 92). Whereas the study of Baxter et al (1985) concludes, “At this time, most persons, from the uninitiated to the MTV fan, have little knowledge about the possible impacts of music videos. Studies like [this] one may do much to replace myth and anecdotal observation and form the basis for future empirical analysis” (Baxter 1985, p. 340). To the obviously speculative, “Does this expansion of the heavy metal niche [on MTV] simply reflect the changing tastes of young consumers? Or, is the increased prevalence of heavy metal music altering the cognitive environment of its consumers?[...] If so, will we see an increase in the incidence of sexism, Machiavellianism, and acceptance of Satanism and drug use? Are youngsters with a low need for cognition being created?” (Hansen and Hansen 1991b, p. 347).⁸

But, as I suggested above, there are also examples within this growing volume of psychology-based research that share a commitment to the methodology of the discipline but contests the validity of “media exposed” theories and/or specific published studies. Two notable examples of this kind are Thorne and Himelstein (1984) and, Vokey and Read (1985), both of whom conducted objective experiments designed to test the claims that “backwards” or “subliminal messaging” in audio recordings could have an impact on

⁸ The phrase “low-levels of cognition” is, as the researchers note, a measure of the “perceived lack of mental exercise” that defines the typical “metalhead” (p. 347). The Machiavellianism scale, on the other hand, is a measure of the “strategy of manipulating others in interpersonal situations” (ibid). Given that such strategizing is likely to require higher levels of cognition, presumably typical ‘metal heads’ would score badly on such tests? The study also employs an “abbreviated machismo scale, using four items directly from the Hypermasculinity Inventory” developed by Mosher and Sirkin!

listeners, concluding that such messaging could only be perceived by listeners if their existence was suggested by the experimenters. Commenting on these findings, Leming argues that they demonstrate that “one can hear pretty much what one wants to in rock “n” roll music” (1987, p. 367). Obviously this research had a particular media relevance at the time it was conducted, given the PMRC hearings, and is evidence that specific researchers within the area of psychology retained a commitment to a professional ethics based on the principles of scientific evaluation of quantitative research design, despite the incentive to go along with dominant media constructions (see Vokey and Read 1985). Also, it should be noted that the published testimony of Dr. King (1985), one of the “expert” witnesses in the PMRC hearings, was publicly contested by another MD in the letters’ page of the journal of Postgraduate Medicine (Proctor 1988). Also notable is the critical review of research into adolescents and music lyric “effects” by Desmond (1987), which concludes, “in the light of the willingness of parents, educators, and legislators to implement policies governing rock music, the need for basic research to inform such policies is vital” (p.283).

In terms of Foucault’s analytic framework, the alacrity with which psychology-based approaches began to identify and produce research findings oriented towards the media-defined “problem” of heavy metal music and culture, is probably best explained within Bourdieu’s account of the cultural field. But the manner in which this research-switch was accomplished, by referencing and extending already established “core” disciplinary theory and method to this new variant of popular culture, underlines the sense of disciplinary coherence that informs it. Quite plainly, what we can observe in this period of academic research production and publication is a clear validation of Foucault’s account of the formation of a “field of knowledge”. One that exhibits a clear “system of dispersion” in the relations between statements and the rules that govern the formation of a discourse of knowledge (“objects, statements, concepts and theoretical options”) (1972, p. 37); all of which speaks of the unity of this particular knowledge field. This can be further exemplified through the ways in which different publications refer and cross-refer to others; share an agreed definition of the research object; the underlying theoretical models that inform the framing of research questions; the definition of methods and their agreed uses; the role of research in relation to contemporary issues, normative societal values and policy environments.

The radical field: from alienation to music as social critique

By comparison, the radical field of social science that attempts to disavow the conclusions concerning the “social problem” of metal youth carried in media coverage and psychology-based research findings, is characterized by a fundamental disagreement over the “framing” and diagnoses of what the “problem” is, how it can best be studied and what a scholarly response to the moral panic about it should be. Early studies, often employing content analysis or structured questionnaires, seek to logically disavow the “constructions” placed upon heavy metal song lyrics and values, viewing the youth culture as no more significant than any other varieties, which have perennially upset the moral majority in times past (Tanner 1981; Bennett and Ferrell 1987; Leming

1987; Rosenbaum and Prinsky 1987; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). Other studies seek to engage with and attempt to contest the negative framing of heavy metal youth culture, by drawing on sociological theories of deviance, arguing that, “the stigmatization of the heavy metal subculture as deviant [...] is a classic example of the labeling process” (Friesen 1990, p. 74; see also, Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1991) likely to confirm the delinquent “careers” of publicly stigmatized youth. Other sociological responses, seek to frame the issue within classic theories of alienation, arguing that musical preferences are not the “trigger” or causes of social dysfunction but are indicative of the “the modes of behavior and kinds of problems associated with adolescence” (Verden at al, 1989, p. 74) in a difficult period of transition to adulthood. Other approaches go further in arguing that so-called *delinquent behavior* “can be understood as an expression of alienation brought about by social forces upon the young [the] result of adolescent’s relative powerlessness towards an external situation of inequality” (Epstein and Pratto 1990, p. 69). In this view, participation in heavy metal youth culture maybe the only source of social empowerment available, while such power is ultimately superficial in term of its actual social clout. These sorts of approaches seek validation in wider theoretical models of youth and social structure, viewing youth cultural forms of anger and resentment as an expression of the structural “contradictions” facing youth who may face social blockage in terms of aspirations or a sense of alienation from a parent culture that seeks conformity but offers little in the way of reward for the demanded compliance (Friesen 1990; Epstein et al 1990).

What is relevant, in retrospect, is how some studies that initially set out to contest media-hyped accounts of the malign influence of the music and lyrics of heavy metal music, by conducting interviews with adolescents in school settings, begin to recognize that the music itself and the cultural response it invokes in its youthful advocates, offers a more coherent mode of criticism of the perspective of youth and *their* relationship to the dominating “hegemonic” culture. For example, Epstein and Pratto, argue that while the content of heavy metal music “can be construed as offensive, or at least in poor taste, the overarching theme is alienation and concern for the world that youth will inherit” (1990, p. 74). For example, they identify the following themes: environmental issues, substance abuse, corruption in government, televangelism and the corruption of organized religion, and alienation from life in general. This leads them, in a further study, to argue that the “political complexity of [the] music is often lost in the rhetoric of fear and misunderstanding on the part of its detractors”, concluding that it is easier for opponents “to address the issue of violence present in [the heavy metal genre] than to address the basis of [that] rage and violence” in the perspective of youth itself (Epstein et al, 1990, p. 391). This re-framing can be seen to lead to a *shift* in research focus towards examining the genre conventions of the music itself (Friesen and Epstein 1994) and to an exploration of its dominant thematics, as understood by its musicians and fans (Friesen and Helfrich 1998). It is surely not coincidental that this shift occurs at a time when there is a distinctive emergence of a musicological approach that begins to apply a popular cultural aesthetic to the understanding of the composition and performance of heavy metal music (Walser 1992; Harrell 1994; Brown 1995; Berger 1997; 1999a,b).

In terms of Foucault's analysis, what I have defined as the sub-field of radical social science and humanities perspectives, such as youth studies, the sociology of rock music and early variants of popular music and cultural studies, do not demonstrate the same measure of unity, over an agreed object of research, set of core theories and methodological procedures, etc., as psychology research in this period is able to do. This is hardly surprising given that the research "problem" that such approaches are compelled to address, has been defined externally; indeed, this is exactly their "problem"! What this means, in terms of the kinds of research responses we can see, is that approaches that seek to contest the social problem framing of heavy metal and youth by means of content analysis or questionnaire methods, continue to validate the "empirical" accumulation of evidence that drives the psychology research agenda. It becomes, in effect, one more set of research findings that can be referenced or ignored. Those approaches that seek to offer an alternative explanation of the problem and how it should be defined and judged really have their work cut out for them! Since they must begin with an acknowledgement of why they seek to address the issue, thereby providing some validity of recognition to the status of the issue as a problem, only then can they seek to re-position it. Such a strategy inevitably requires offering an alternative theoretical framing of the issue and this, as many social scientists are clearly aware, can have the effect of politicizing the issue further. It also means they risk parting company with any allies they may have within the psychology field itself, who will reject research that is *overly* theoretical and therefore "value" laden.

A good example of this problem is the definition of the situation of heavy metal youth as one of alienation. Classical sociological theories of this condition, from Durkheim to Marx, suggest it is an indicator of cultural disjuncture between aspiration and opportunity (e.g. Merton) or an objective indicator of a deeper structural condition, such as a societal lack of cultural integration or the predictable outcome of unequal class relations. To the extent that psychological approaches invoke this condition they do so in order to indicate a risk or condition that needs "solving" either through the work of professionals or at the level of government intervention. The manifest character of this implicit "theory" is the need to identify risks to the life and well being of adolescents in school and work, as well as their impact on others. Underlying such an approach is a normative conception of personality, behavior and role within institutions and relationships, such that any an identifiable variation in these is interpreted as an indicator of role conflict, alienation or faulty socialization.

It is telling perhaps that the terms of this theorization are articulated by sociological approaches wishing to contest it:

The very stability and existence of any society depends in large measure on the degree to which that society is able to instill in youth the shared norms and values of the existing adult society. In areas where adult society is not effective in transmitting its culture to youth, and as a result youth manifest values and behaviours at variance from adult norms, societal concern is expressed (Leming 1987: 363).

The problem with this *functionalist* argument is that it does not recognize the possibility of the unequal experience of participants (via class, ethnicity, gender and age); or that there could be a divergence from or even challenge to

such values generated by the experience of inequality; or via the contemplation of it from an ethical position. Which is why any evidence of dysfunction must be attributable to factors that lie outside of the process, such as new forms of media and popular culture. The identifiable shift within the radical field towards examining heavy metal culture as an alternative, oppositional or culture of critique in its own right or as identifiable expression of a generational youth culture, is therefore a significant development. Although it should also be noted that this shift towards exploring the culture of heavy metal music and fandom in its own terms, is also marked by the argument that the popularity of the genre means that it is no longer entirely understandable as “the musical province of undereducated and alienated working class youth” (Friesen and Epstein 1994, p. 1). This suggests that a rise in the cultural credibility of heavy metal must also be accompanied by a rise in its social status and validity as a cultural form.

According to Bourdieu, value is acquired within particular cultural fields by the acknowledgement and recognition of peers, i.e. in terms of the values that have come to acquire credibility within an existing group of non-economic producers, who monopolise the existing means of consecration. New entrants into the field must seek the validation of existing peers to be accepted as credible. Thus, despite the lack of cultural capital attached to heavy metal as a subject, the ability to demonstrate expert diagnosis of it as a research object gained credibility within the academic field of psychology, especially as this treatment of a novel subject was conducted within the terms of established theoretical and methodological procedures. To a certain extent this was true of the social science based interventions, to the extent to which they were conducted within established theoretical frameworks, especially in being able to demonstrate the application of such frameworks against prevailing dominant definitions, attempting to exert influence from outside the academic field.

The discernable shift in the cultural status of heavy metal music as an indicator of greater complexity or cultural value, can be said to reflect or make possible new strategies of acquisition of cultural value within the academic field, through the demonstration of possession of “new” kinds of symbolic knowledge-capital or symbolically specific types. Here we can theorize two types of claims or strategies of legitimation of such value. The first is to seek to re-present heavy metal culture as containing hitherto unrecognized elements of high cultural qualities, which once skillfully extrapolated, raise its cultural status. An example might be “The poetics of destruction: death metal rock”, where Harrell argues that “the politics [and] philosophy of death metal [are] a response to and reflection of modern culture” (1994, p. 91). Another might be Walser’s (1992) exploration of the baroque-classical influences on heavy metal guitarist’s pursuit of the art of virtuosity; a piece that has the added value of demonstrating a virtuoso cultural-musicological critique in its exposition. But perhaps the most irrefutable example would have to be the group of papers, produced by academic philosophers, exploring the themes to be found in the lyrics of *Metallica* songs (Irwin ed. 2007)?

A third strategy is to demonstrate possession of symbolically specific types of knowledge of less-well-known, extreme or avant-garde forms of metal music culture. Perhaps the pre-eminent example here is Kahn-Harris’ “critical-insider” study of the *transgressive* cultural politics of extreme metal (2007). For example, Kahn-Harris argues that death metal and grind-core bands,

“demonstrate [how] extreme metal discourse has systematically transgressed the boundaries of “the acceptable” in art” (p. 36).

The trouble with metal studies

In this final section I want to return to the claim that a coherent (“mature”) field of metal studies has emerged that is qualitatively different in character to that which preceded it. Drawing on the pattern of data indicated by the MSBD and of existing divisions and conflicts revealed by Foucault’s method of genealogy, what possibilities are there? The first possibility, suggested by Guibert and Hein, is that there has been a qualitative shift in the research status of the subject, from that of social problem or indicator of psychological risk, to a social and cultural object worthy of study in its own right. This finds support (see Figure 5) via evidence of the growing usage of the term heavy metal in article, chapter and book titles, from the 1990s onwards. But such usage does not clearly differentiate this new strand from psychology titles; however the use of the term metal (from 1990 onwards), death (1994), black metal (1995) and extreme metal (1999), clearly does signal this *differentiation*.

The second possibility is that this increased frequency of subject-specific usage coincides with the dramatic increase (see Figure 3) in specifically musicology-based studies, particularly ethnomusicology, in the 1990s *and* the even more dramatic rise, most recently, in studies of black and death metal, in cultural philosophy and literary theory. Both of these developments were signaled by tendencies identified within the social science approach, calling for a sociology of genre analysis (Friesen and Epstein 1994) and the cultural analysis of lyrical themes in heavy metal songs (Friesen and Helfrich 1998; Kotarba 1994). But the new work has made less and less reference to a sociological account of heavy metal or in some cases, particularly in work defined as cultural theory, none at all.

All of which suggests a third possibility. That these developments within the academic field indicate (in Bourdieu’s terms) a successful *legitimation* strategy, based on the claim of possession of symbolically specific capitals, i.e. the knowledge and research skills appropriate to the increasingly complex academic understanding of the cultural practices and meanings of, as we will see, a globalised and hybridized contemporary metal music scene. The outcome of such a strategy, to the extent that it is successful, is the formation of a specific sub-field of academic production that is distinguished by the *degree* of its separation from dominant existing academic domains. A measure of this relative autonomy can be judged by the extent to which these “new” academic producers refer to other producers within the sub-field rather than producers within more established fields. The relevance of this for comprehending the formation of a sub-field of metal studies is the measure of its symbolic difference from the psychological and sociological framing of heavy metal. A related issue is the extent to which this symbolic differentiation is achieved by an appeal to other disciplinary domains, particularly high-cultural ones and on what terms (Laermans 1992; Regev 1994). A further issue is the “cost” of re-defining the study of metal music and culture as “beyond” the concerns of psychology and sociology. If this is the case, what issues are now

rendered “out of court” or simply irrelevant to the new work? Finally, what is the relationship of the work of Weinstein and Walser, seen as foundational by Guibert and Hein, to this new work?

Drawing further on the MSBD results, particularly data referring to the 2000-2010 period, it is possible to more specifically explore what sorts of studies make up the largest category of cultural studies (28.8%), as compared with psychology (26.7%), sociology (22.5%) and musicology (21.8%). Putting to one side the continued significance of the volume of psychology research, what patterns are evident in article publications and what might this suggest? Perhaps the most striking aspect of the volume of articles produced within the category of cultural studies is the growing focus on metal music and religion, most notably pro- and anti-Christian themes, as an aspect of a post-traditional or “new age” identity politics, most often explored through global and/or *glocal* practices of “symbolic” community construction, particularly via the internet (Glanzer 2003; Luhr 2005; Moberg 2008). Not surprisingly, perhaps, the studies of anti-Christian themes, take as their starting point the ethnic-heathenism and Nordic mythologies to be found in black metal music (Beckwith 2002; Barron 2004; Cordero 2009; Benard 2004; 2009; D’Amico 2009; Van der Velden 2007; Dyrendal 2008). This work is also notable for its reference to debates and theories to be found in comparative literary studies, art, post-modernist and/or post-structuralist philosophy. The exploration of contemporary metal culture as *analogous* to a religious formation is also to be found in sociological work, particularly work produced by French sociologists (e.g. Bobineau 2005; Martin 2005; Mombelet 2005 a, b and c; Walzer 2005; Mombelet & Walzer (eds) 2005). There is certainly evidence, within musicology publications, of a concern with sub-genre classification and distinctions within contemporary metal music, as suggested by Guibert and Hein (e.g. Guibert 2002; Hein 2002; Waksman 2004; Brizard 2006; Martinez 2006). However, perhaps the most consistent strand of work to be found is that reporting ethnographic or ethnomusicological research, investigating the global spread of metal music culture and its localization, conducted with participants in Brazil, Bali, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesia, Israel, Morocco, the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia and China (Harris 1999; Greene 2001; Kahn-Harris 2002; Wallach 2002; Alvelar 2003; 2009; Baulch 2003; Chu 2006; Hama 2006; Liew and Fu 2006; Levine 2008a,b ; 2009).

This work would seem to fit the claim of Kahn-Harris (Harris 2000) of the emergence of a global underground metal scene with no privileged regional and institutional centre, unlike that of heavy metal itself, which Laing (1997) has termed the “platinum-triangle” (i.e. the United States, Britain and Australia). However, the concept of music scene (much debated in musicology, see Straw 1991; Shank 1994; Hesmondhalgh 2005) and its global-interconnectedness, has been questioned by Bennett and Peterson (2004, p. 4), who offer instead: the local, the translocal and the virtual. Translocal scenes are the “most self-conscious local music scenes that focus on a particular kind of music [while being] in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places [with whom] they interact [...] through the exchange of recordings, bands, fans and fanzines” (p. 8). Translocal scenes, as Emma Baulch (2003) puts it, “gesture elsewhere”. Baulch’s study of the Balinese thrash-death metal scene also suggests that “inter-national equality is a myth, for national fandoms engage with discursive contexts that are unique to each locale” (p. 201). This point

would seem to be applicable to many of the studies of global-local metal music scenes identified in this research strand. In particular the “blue collar” identity, viewed as central to the cultural coherence of the original heavy metal subculture by Weinstein, plays out differently in a globalised context. Although many of the studies identify metal fandom with a working class identity, the class alliance made possible by heavy metal fandom in particular translocal scenes, is directed towards a cultural politics of distinction and exclusivity based on the “authenticity” to be gained from a knowledge and circulation of western metal styles, embodied in the repertoires of “cover” bands, for example, as against the mainstream commercial music cultures encouraged by tourism *and* an aesthetic distance from local traditional music cultures. This cultural dialectic that locates “authenticity” not with local music but a global music culture located *elsewhere*, also offers an interesting connection to the religious themes to be found in much of the cultural studies work identified previously. But these scene studies suggest that black metal fandom can be quite compatible with Muslim and Islamic religious beliefs in one context, since its pro-Satanist or anti-Christian themes are less important than its currency as an indicator of “individualism” in a context of traditional identities. At the same time such individualism, expressed through a taste for Western styles of metal music, can be a basis for activism and protest against juridical-political systems of censorship in a context of state sponsored monotheism (Levine 2008a, b; 2009).

Conclusions

It is clearly the case that recent work examining the post-traditional identity politics and philosophy of metal culture has not only raised the academic status of the study of the subject but also redefined it beyond the social problem framing within which it was previously understood. Not that this framing has gone away. Psychology oriented publications continue to link a preference for metal music with various measures of vulnerability, from teen depression, greater propensity to self-harm or suicide ideation, to measures of aggression and anti-social attitudes (Miranda and Claes 2009; Selfhout et al 2008; Becknell et al 2008; Baker and Bar 2008; Mulder et al 2007; Young et al 2006; Martino et al 2006; Weisskirch and Murphy 2004; Smith and Boyson 2002; Reddick and Beresin 2002; Burge et al 2002; Scheel and Westfield 1999).⁹ But these strands are no longer talking to each other or at least not in the same language! So it is not just that the symbolic status of the study of metal culture has been raised within the academy but also that the object of such research has been redefined by new work. Another way to express this is in terms of the discernible shift away from the identification of the music culture with a core white, male, working and lower middle class fan-base, to be found in areas of post-industrial decline, such as Britain, the American mid-west, central and

⁹ I list here only studies published within the last decade.

Northern Europe (Weinstein 2000: 117-121).¹⁰ It is the implications of this shift and what it might indicate about the current concerns of metal studies, that I want to briefly highlight in my closing observations.

One of the key tensions to be found in the work of Weinstein and Walser was the implications to be drawn from the process whereby “heavy metal was transformed [in the 1980s] from the moribund music of a fading subculture into the dominant genre of American music” (Walser 1993, p.11). For Weinstein, the “mainstreaming” of metal music sets in motion a process of fundamentalist division between rhythm (speed, thrash and hardcore) and melody (lite or “big-hair” metal) accelerating the sub-genre fragmentation of the music culture over the ownership rights of the subculture that identifies with it. For Weinstein, the emergence of speed and thrash metal, and later, death metal, mark out the defensive boundaries of masculinist youth culture that resists commercial dilution or “mainstreaming”. For Walser, the mainstreaming of metal not only allows its core masculinist ideologies to be articulated in a popular form, thereby highlighting the contradictions of the patriarchal capitalist gender order which it dramatically reflects, but also articulating a range of alternative repertoires of gender performance, such as androgyny and romance, which attracts an increasing number of female fans to the genre.

In the end, the precipitate commercial decline of heavy metal in the US billboard charts (Harrison 2007) is neither the outcome of its internal subcultural antagonisms or its gender politics but its displacement by the dramatic rise in popularity of grunge and alternative rock in the 1990s. It is the global underground proliferation and cross-fertilisation of death and black metal scenes in this period, which becomes the focus of the “new” scholarship on metal music identified by Guibert and Heine and characterized by Kahn-Harris as “extreme metal”. As we have seen, the central focus of this research is neither class nor gender but rather ethnicity, regional identity, and religiosity. Although the negotiation of “white” working class identities by death metal musicians and fans located in the mid-western rust-belt regions of the US is the focus of some studies (Harrell 1990; Berger 2001), the exploration

¹⁰ The apparently changed demographics of metal fandom is a debate which appears pivotal to current scholarship but has received little if any attention. Arnett, one of the few psychology academics to address social science work, contests Weinstein’s claim that heavy metal is blue collar, arguing she ‘presents no data to support’ the claim (1996: 172). Weinstein’s argument that heavy metal is ‘blue collar, either in fact or by sentimental attachment’ (2000: 99), does not seem inconsistent with Arnett’s assertion that that ‘they are at least as likely to be middle class as working class’ (1996: 172). But this is because Arnett wants to define the working class as manual labour (‘truck driver, factory worker’, op cit). Berger has argued that heavy metal culture arises out of the ‘frustrations of a blue-collar life in declining economy’ (1990: 283), suggesting that ‘both qualitative and quantitative scholarship shows that the music’s audience has largely come from a working-class youth’ (ibid). Recent studies have identified heavy metal’s working class cultural origins (Cope 2010; Moore 2010). Moore, cites ethnographic evidence (Gaines 1990: 145-73), arguing, ‘not all metal heads are working class, but they are much more commonplace as one descends down the socioeconomic hierarchy into white society’s uneducated and unskilled’ (p. 79). Brown asserts that the heavy metal audience is made up of a majority working class and minority of the lower-middle class (2003: 214); Kahn-Harris argues, ‘in Europe, at least, the more affluent working classes and lower middle classes tend to dominate’ (2007: 70). This class-border recruitment appears to be reflected in Weinstein further argument that ‘metal’s fanbase, since its inception, tends to come from the working class and its post-industrial version, the para-professional and service-sector lower-middle class’ (2004: 301). Such a view finds qualified support in the recent Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion national survey, conducted in the UK (Savage 2006: 170), which argues that heavy metal is ‘not exactly the music of the socially marginal. It is certainly young men who are attracted to it, but these tend to be those in middle-income brackets, with city and guilds qualifications, in intermediate and lower supervisory positions’.

of the “white” ethnicities to be found in black metal music and culture, excludes class entirely. Social class does feature in the global “scene” studies, as we have seen, but as a dependent variable rather than a principal category of explanation. Indeed, although many underground genres are identified with a working class or “underclass”, often the key participants in scene activity are, as Baulch has argued in reference to the Bali scene, “distinctly bourgeois”:

Most of them were university students whose parents had helped them to buy guitars and approved of their music-related “hobby”. But neither was metal exclusively the property of a bourgeois or “new rich” class in Indonesia. It frequently served as a site of class struggle, and death and thrash metal enjoyed popularity among workers and bourgeoisie alike (2003, p. 199).

As Kahn-Harris observes (2007, pp. 10-11) it was the quantitative techniques (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews) employed by social scientists investigating heavy metal fandom as a “social problem” in the mid 1980s, that were able to provide evidence of the social class profile of metal fans. The global picture, made up of scene-specific studies, in particular locations, often based on ethnographic fieldwork, is uneven in what it can tell us. If class is important in the global metal cultural diaspora, then it is not as an expression of a working class identity in any simple sense. It maybe that heavy metal fandom, in particularly polarized societies, where there is a huge gulf between rich and poor, articulates the critical but also aspirational identity of the children of newly skilled groups? In other contexts, the preference for metal among rich youth in culturally traditional or monotheist societies may be an act of radical differentiation or individuality. In the context of relatively affluent, socially progressive countries, such as Norway and Sweden, the rise of a radical, anti-social, anti-Christian youth culture, such as Black metal, certainly does not represent an identification with working class values although it may represent an antagonism towards an overly-rationalist, socially conservative middle class culture?

I began this survey by arguing that the field-defining texts of Weinstein and Walser do not offer a coherent view of the field of metal studies. This is because they do not agree with each other.¹¹ But it is also because the work that follows them does not significantly develop their major themes, of class and gender, respectively. If there is a point of intersection between these writers it is the characterization of masculinity. It could be argued that the further development of this concept could provide a point of intersection across the current diverse field of metal scholarship. The mode of masculinity I have in mind is that which Connell refers to as “protest masculinity” (1995, pp. 109-119; see also Sarelin 2010) and Grant (1996; 2007) hypermasculinity. This concept, freed from its origins in work and gender studies, can inform the modes of misogyny, exscription and androgyny or the Dionysian “bad boy” mainstream metal of the 1980s (Denski & Sholle 1992); as well as the explorations of ethnic heathenism, ancient cults of the warrior and the anti-

¹¹ Despite Walser’s criticisms of Weinstein’s approach (1993: 23-24), in actuality both theorists agree on many aspects, not least the need to defend the music and its fandom against powerful critics. The specific area of disagreement between them is the role that masculinity plays in the heavy metal subculture (see Walser p. 195, n.5), and the extent to which the malleability of such a cultural construct is to be welcomed. It would be welcomed if this area were to be further debated between them. But to date this has not occurred.

humanism, corporeal mortification and abjection of extreme metal styles. At the same time, it is also possible to see the emergence of work that explores the gender dynamics of female participation in metal scenes and the exploration of alternative modes of femininity and masculinity to be found in current metal music performance and fandom (Krenske and McKay 2000; Rafolovich 2006; Brown 2009; Cope 2010).

Finally, it should be noted that the current field of scholarship, although it has successfully differentiated itself from the study of the musical allegiances of mass, white male “problem” groups that continue to attract the attention of psychologists, it has also shown a marked lack of interest in those cross-over or hybrid styles, such as nu-metal (but see Halnon 2004; 2005; 2006; Wilson 2008), that brought a version of metal into the popular mainstream once more. More recently we have seen the divisive-success of another variant, the hardcore-pop-punk hybrid, emo or emotional-hardcore style. The last decade has also witnessed the emergence of the New Wave of American Heavy Metal, the thrash revival, stimulated by a plethora of new bands, the return of classic thrash, classic NWOBHM and classic metal bands, all releasing globally successful new material and touring widely.¹² All of which begs the question, whither now metal studies?

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¹² For example, AC/DCs *Black Ice* album, the first release for five years, was the 2nd highest selling album globally in 2009 (RIAA 2010). Iron Maiden, on the back of a global touring since the return of lead singer Bruce Dickinson in 2000 (the most recent world tour, taking in India, Australia, Japan, USA, Mexico, Cost Rica, Columbia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Puerto Rico and Canada, documented in the film, *Iron Maiden: Flight 666* (2009), achieved a no.1 chart placing for their latest album, in 21 countries worldwide (Kerrang! Sept 24th 2010: 08).

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