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‘A cockroach preserved in amber’: The significance of class in critics’ representations of heavy metal music and its’ fans

Abstract

In this paper we engage with new cultural theories of class that have identified media representations of ‘excessive’ white heterosexual working class femininity as a ‘constitutive limit’ of incorporation into dominant (middle class) modes of neo-liberal subjectivity *and* Bourdieu’s thesis that classification is a form of symbolic violence that constitutes both the classifier and the classified. However, what we explore are the implications of such arguments for those modes of white heterosexual working class masculinity that continue to reproduce themselves in forms of overtly-*masculinist* popular culture. We do so through a critical examination of the symbolic representation of the genre of heavy metal music within contemporary music journalism. Employing a version of critical discourse analysis, we offer an analysis of representative reviews, derived from a qualitative sample of the UK music magazine, *New Musical Express* (1999-2008). This weekly title, historically associated with the ideals of the ‘counter culture’, now offers leadership of musical tastes in an increasingly segmented, niche-oriented marketplace. Deploying a refined model of the inscription process outlined by Skeggs, our analysis demonstrates how contemporary music criticism symbolically attaches negative attributes and forms of personhood to the working class male bodies identified with heavy metal culture and its audience, allowing dominant middle class modes of cultural authority to be inscribed within matters of musical taste and distinction.

Keywords: neo-liberal subject, classification, symbolic violence, inscription, constitutive limit, heavy metal, masculine excess

This paper sets out to show how the review and criticism of a particular popular music genre in a leading UK music magazine can tell us something about the discursive constitution of classed and gendered identities in contemporary Britain.ⁱ The genre in question is heavy metal, which has historically been identified with a white, masculine, working class heterosexual youth culture, first emergent in the Midlands and the North of the UK and in the American mid-west, in formerly industrialised heartlands (Weinstein, 2000) but now a complex, global cultural phenomenon (Wallach et al, 2011).ⁱⁱ Our analysis focuses on the *New Musical Express* (NME), once a champion of a ‘critical rock journalism’ that cohered a national music press with its ideological roots in the politics of the ‘counter culture’. Now the sole survivor of this cultural moment, the NME was the last to move to a tabloid-magazine

format. It retains a wide circulation and a self-proclaimed role as the leading guide to the 'cutting-edge' in youth music and style (NME.com). A number of recent studies have pointed to Reality TV, tabloid, mid-market and broadsheet media, as key sites in which received ideas of class culture(s) are being reconstituted in various problematic ways (Lawler 2002; Skeggs 2004; Wood and Skeggs 2007), often via a process of 'causality transference' (Bromley, 2000: 51). However, relatively little attention has been paid to the cultural codification of class in popular music magazines, particularly the role of the critical review in the formation of hierarchies of taste. In such contexts, stylistic judgments can operate as markers of distinction in a youth consumer culture that is seemingly at odds with those of 'class' (cf. Toynbee 1993; Thornton 1995).

Theories of 'late modernity' and 'risk society' appear to announce the 'end of class' by pointing to a decline in the types of work and social relations around which class identities were once organised, particularly those of the working class. Some sociologists have dissented from this view, arguing instead that the processes variously identified as postmodernism, post-Fordism and globalization involve a 're-working rather than eradication of class' (Savage 2003: 535; Skeggs 1997; Savage, 2000). This 'new' cultural class analysis, in the manner of Bourdieu's work, suggests instead a radical reconfiguration of the symbolic relations between the middle and working classes, made possible by the virtual 'evisceration' of the traditional working class against which the middle class defined itself, resulting in the colonization of 'the resulting empty social and cultural space' (Savage 2003: 535). Savage, in particular, has argued that the decline of the working class as a central reference point in British cultural life has allowed the middle class to assume a role as the 'particular-universal' class, around which 'an increasing range of practices' that constitute the neo-liberal individualized form of subjectivity 'are regarded as universally "normal", "good" and "appropriate"' (op cit).

This profound shift in the cultural discourse of class has been linked to evidence of the growth of the 'new' professional middle classes, whose institutional power base lies in the media and cultural industries. This group signify their ascendancy through the deployment of cultural capital that emphasises the importance of appearance, display and visible cultural practices in the constitution of healthy, productive and discerning consumers (Savage et al., 1992). Lawler has characterised an apparent shift from representations of the working class to representations of an underclass as 'a feminising move' (Lawler, 2005: 436). Skeggs, Lawler and McRobbie have all identified examples of 'post-feminist symbolic violence' to be found in the professional discourse of lifestyle experts that organise the framing of Reality TV and tabloid media (McRobbie, 2004). Such representations construct white working class heterosexual women, in particular, as lifestyle failures and as objects of pity and disgust, or as what Skeggs has termed the 'constitutive limit' of life-style excess (Skeggs, 2005: 970). This is important work, but we want to explore the implications of this reconfiguration of classed-selves for the constitution of white working class heterosexual masculinity in the context of a neo-liberal social order.

Our analysis operationalises an account of the inscription process delineated by Skeggs, derived from Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence and the idea that acts of classification 'classify the classifier' (Skeggs, 1997; 2004; Bourdieu 1984). Inscription refers to the way in which value is transferred onto bodies and read off them, and the mechanisms by which value is retained, accumulated, lost or appropriated within a process of unequal symbolic exchange. Such a model, we argue, is especially useful in offering a framework for understanding the 'symbolic economy' of popular music criticism, because:

classifications are forms of inscription that are performative; they bring the perspective of the classifier into effect in two ways: first, to confirm the

perspective of the classifier, and, second, to capture the classified within discourse (Skeggs, 2004: 15).

Our analysis acts on several levels: firstly, to refine Skeggs' model of the inscription process and the mechanism of unequal exchange; secondly, to develop an application of the model that can generate qualitative data from a representative sample of music reviews and criticism; and finally, to interrogate the value of the inscription model as a means of exploring the constitution of the sovereign 'particular-universal' middle class subject, made possible via the symbolic practice of popular music criticism. Thus, we show how heavy metal music and its fans are presented as cartoon like, comic and inauthentic to the 'male' readers of the NME *to the extent to which* both bands and fans are seen to retain or preserve an allegiance to the values and practices of an un-reconstructed 'white' working class heterosexual masculinity, marking the 'constitutive limit' of heterosexist excess.

Reconfiguring class: the new cultural class analysis

Drawing notably on the work of Bourdieu (2002) and a substantial body of empirical evidence, Savage and colleagues have demonstrated the emergence and growth to dominance of the 'new' professional middle classes (Savage et al., 1992; Savage, 2000; 2003). The culture industries, including popular music journalism, have been (and remain) crucial agents in this process. Theorists such as Rose (1989) and Bauman (1996) associated such social and economic changes with a new form of governance linked to the growth of a neo-liberal social order that operates in part through the ubiquitous hegemonic form of neo-liberal subjectivity (Walkerdine 2003).

The culture industries have played a central role in the process of shaping the contours (and indeed the content) of neo-liberal subjectivity. This sector has provided jobs for the liberal professional middle classes described by Savage and colleagues, but – crucially – they have been formative in shaping the *practices* that delineate the discerning modern subject from the 1960s onwards. Cultural guides such as the NME, we argue, bring neo-liberal subjectivity into being within a pervasive moral order that rests on compulsory individual distinctiveness: as unique subjects we consume ourselves into being through the expression of authenticity and self-control (Walkerdine, 2004). The role of cultural guides in a neo-liberal social order is therefore central to the production (and negotiation) of neo-liberal subjectivity as a gendered, class-ed, racialised and sexualised set of practices. Such guides tell us who and how to be – and who/how *not* to be (McRobbie, 2004, 2009). In classifying what (and what not) to wear/eat/drive/listen to, such texts also offer a window onto the concerns, fears and anxieties of the professional middle classes and the ways in which class relations are reconfigured in such discourses as distinctions organised around 'taste' and its 'lack'. In this arena, consumption should be practised with discernment, and in a way that, above all, marks one out from the *mass*. The other point would simply be that middle class culture requires some form of working class culture, as *difference*, whether this is to project a radical aspiration or fear of engulfment by the mass of the undifferentiated (Lawler 2005: 442; Walkerdine, 2003).

The middle class as cultural intermediaries: the case of Critical Rock Journalism

The media operate, according to Bourdieu, as an institutional site for the display of symbolic capital and the demonstration of that power through symbolic violence directed at the working classes (cited in Skeggs 1997: 11). Historically speaking the professional middle class have subjected the working classes to such metaphorical violence via representations to be found in the popular arts and literature, film and television, newspaper commentary and magazine writing (Bourdieu 1984: 511). This symbolic strategy reveals two broadly contradictory tendencies. First, the constant need to legitimate the middle classes as separate and distinctive, as culturally superior to the working classes, which is symbolically realised through the violence of its metaphors of distinction and difference. Second, the existence of the working classes as a fantasised other, upon which the radical aspirations and classed-based frustrations of the middle class are projected.

Featherstone (1991), drawing on Bourdieu, was one of the earliest writers to note how outsider intellectuals and cultural entrepreneurs seek *legitimable* forms of culture that they can champion and thereby challenge established definitions of taste. During the 1960s such groups focussed their attention on rock music, fashion and cinema, seeking to promote these areas as legitimate forms of artistic expression and simultaneously to promote themselves as legitimate critics, interpreters and popularizers of these cultural forms (Featherstone 1991: 93). Arguably this is the case with the rise of critical rock journalism (CRJ): a radical ‘literary form’ of music writing that was influenced by the youth counter-culture, ‘new journalism’ and jazz and film criticism. CRJ successfully transformed the status of ‘rock’ music (and writing about it) from a debased form of youth commerce, into a serious, socially relevant, cultural and artistic form (Frith 1978; 1983; Lindberg et al 2005). This ‘rather successful legitimation process’ (Gudmundsson et al 2002: 45) was accompanied by the formation of a ‘cannon’ of artists and landmark ‘albums’, taste criteria and a trans-atlantic clergy of predominantly white, male and middle class ‘music scribes’ such as Robert Christgau, Greil Marcus, Ian MacDonald, Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray.

Indeed, it was the recruitment of the young, hip ‘underground’ writers, Kent, MacDonald and Murray, that transformed the ailing ‘pop’ weekly NME, so that by 1973 it had moved ‘up market’, recruiting a new, critically-informed ‘rock’ readership (Frith 1978: 149). The style they helped to forge: zany, irreverent, often personality-driven, involving arguments and opinions and ‘think pieces’ ‘not necessarily hung on any star or record’ (Frith, *op cit*), defined the CRJ style which cohered the national weekly music press in the 1970s and cast a long, influential shadow over the 1980s, before sector wide restructuring in the 1990s killed off the ‘inkies’. The exception was the NME, which was re-launched as magazine-style tabloid in April, 2002.

As Forde argues, the music magazine market by the late 1990s was subject to a process of ‘niche orientation and branding’, identifying segments of the market and adopting a branded identity and direction (achieved through the ‘constriction of review space’ and therefore the ‘personality writer’), and the adoption of the ‘tabloid and info-bite’ approach (2001: 29-34). Other commentators have argued that ‘mainstream rock journalism seems to have returned to the consumer guidance of the early 1960s, while alternative writing increasingly tends toward the opposite pole of academic criticism’ (Gudmundsson et al 2002: 60). While this may be accurate in characterizing the content of many niche oriented titles, where overall review space is *expanded* but capsulized and subject to a rating system, the NME continues to feature a CRJ style in its leader, full page album reviews and live reviews. What has virtually disappeared is the ‘critical interview’ and the ‘think-piece’ (*op cit* p.56).ⁱⁱⁱ

Reconsidering the historical ‘moment’ of CRJ, we suggest that it is an example of the ‘inscription’ process writ-large, valorising an ‘authentic’ radical middle-class sensibility, via symbolic means of appropriation and exclusion. As Gudmundsson et al (2002) suggest, exoticised others were employed to confer authenticity upon rock styles, such as African-

American 'outsider' blues performers, like Robert Johnson and Howling Wolf, who offered sufficiently arcane, non-commercial 'roots' for the development of an 'authentic' white rock style; for example, the Rolling Stones and Cream. It is the ability of the discursive field of rock criticism to assign value according to the development of its own 'internal' criteria, in championing the 'authenticity' of such bands, that marks it as successful. However, Gudmundsson and colleagues fail to note how such a 'cannon' formation and style of critique requires the symbolic exclusion of inferior, illegitimate or inauthentic forms, *within* the field itself. It is not simply that the symbolic economy of the cultural field of rock is defined as authentic because of its artistic/aesthetic difference from the 'pop' or commercial pole but that commercial success must be reconciled with some measure of 'worth'.

As Straw (1990) suggests, the rise of heavy metal and its populist ideology of representing the authentic music of the white working class, presented a challenge to the ideology of rock authenticity, which is resolved by rejecting both the music and the audience of heavy metal as *inauthentic* (pp.113-114). For example, Charles Shaar Murray, a key scribe in the NME cannon, declared heavy metal to be 'the most dishonest music extant' (quoted in Lindberg et al 2005: 203), on the grounds that the claims of the musicians to be legitimate interpreters of a contemporary 'white blues' style was both 'bogus' and 'grotesque' (Murray 1992: 605). This illustrates how popular music criticism is able to recruit the 'ideal' discerning middle-class cultural subject through the mobilisation of symbolic violence against music and performers that are associated with a non-discerning mass. This strategy of signifying 'bad taste' (Weinstein 2005) presents the relationship between such music and its audience as inauthentic, in that both music and performers are deemed to lack artistic integrity. Critical appreciation of authenticity in rock music was initially established by seeking to differentiate it from 'pop music', which was represented as inauthentic by virtue of its mass commercial appeal (especially amongst teenage girls (Frith and McRobbie 2000)). The rise of heavy metal as a form of rock music, which was clearly not 'pop music', but which was widely popular, offered a challenge to this criteria. 'Heavy metal' as Straw (1990) noted, was both 'the most consistently successful form of rock music and the most marginalized within the discourse of institutionalized rock culture' (p.118), because its primary appeal was to suburban, blue-collar white males (Bashe 1986: 8). According to the pop/rock binary, the majority working class were supposed to constitute the main audience for commercial/mainstream music, not rock (Murdock and Phelps 1973; Frith 1978:39-58). While rock's claims to authenticity rested on a rhetoric that the music was a popular 'folk-art' of 'the people', its majority audience was middle class, and new entrants into further and higher education, who aspired to be 'intelligent' and 'discerning' consumers of 'progressive' music. The rapid rise to popularity of heavy metal rock in the early 1970s, recruiting a majority audience made up of the sons of skilled-manual workers and the lower middle class, posed a challenge to the constitution of this symbolic field, which was resolved by excluding both the genre and its majority audience, from it. Or as Simon Frith, academic *and* music critic, commented:

as the decade 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 dismissive response of *Rolling Stone* to hard rock as a genre [...] was symptomatic. 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 (1983: 214-215).

Heavy metal and the cultural signification of working class masculinity

Most critics agree that the genre of heavy metal emerged in Britain during the 1969-71 period, as an unexpected 'mating of the hippie and working-class ethos' (Tucker 1986: 486). UK bands such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest (Birmingham, West Midlands) and Budgie (Cardiff, South Wales) were clearly working class in origin, as were the majority of their audiences. This pattern of emergence from formerly industrialised conurbations also holds good for heavy metal's second wave, the (so called) New Wave of British Heavy metal (NWOBHM), composed of bands such as Def Leppard (Sheffield), Saxon (Barnsley) and Venom (Newcastle). There is also a clear north/south divide to the development of the genre, although some bands formed in and around London, notably Deep Purple, Uriah Heep and Iron Maiden, the stronghold of support for heavy metal lay in the Midlands and the North (Brown 2003: 214).

This pattern was also reflected in heavy metal's proliferation across the United States, emerging in the big cities of the Midwest, medium sized cities and blue-collar suburbs. Later this pattern could be seen in Europe, the genre emerging in Germany and running along the north of the continent, spreading to the Scandinavian countries, and forming smaller enclaves within, Italy, France and Spain. Heavy metal emerged in Poland, first because of more liberal policies on culture, however by the late 1980s the music culture had spread throughout the former Soviet bloc countries (Weinstein 2000: 118-20). This pattern has also occurred in South America, including Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina and, in the 1990s, heavy metal has become increasingly popular across the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East (LeVine 2008). Heavy metal found enthusiastic audiences in Japan, even in the 1970s, but by end of the century the genre has spread throughout the Pacific Rim countries and can now be said to be a truly global phenomenon (Wallach et al, 2011).

Weinstein (2000) argues this global spread is predicated on the development of youth spending power, but also the cultural articulation of youth alienation, expressed through the blue-collar *masculinist* sensibility of heavy metal's music and imagery. That is, heavy metal can be viewed as blue collar either due to the demographics of its primary fan base, or by 'sentimental attachment' (p. 99), enabling it to recruit white-collar youth from class fractions that may be only one generation away from manual work. It is also important to note that, despite its popularity, heavy metal (along with country music and hip-hop/rap) has been one of the most consistently 'disliked' of all categories of popular music, often viewed as exemplary of a 'univore' taste group: a socially narrow, underclass population with limited social mobility (Bryson 1996; 1997). Indeed, as Fox argues, the taste polarization around genres identified as low or bad is equivalent to the category of 'contaminated' culture: 'mere proximity to which entails ideological danger' (2004: 4).

As Kahn-Harris notes (2007:10-11) 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 provides the evidence base for the social class profile of metal fans. Tanner's (1981) study of 733 students from five schools in Edmonton, Canada, conducted in 1974, is notable because it (a) identifies a new category of 'heavy metal rock' as a 'relatively distinct genre in contemporary popular music' (not only in terms of the Top 40 Mainstream but also as against, 'progressive rock') (p. 4), and (b) a 'statistically significant preference' for this category amongst working-class identified students (p. 9). It was in reference to this and other studies that Weinstein (2000) claimed, 'The class composition of the core metal audience is working and [lower] middle class', the latter recruited from those 'members [who] are most insecure in their standing' (p.115).

However, Arnett (1996) argues that she ‘presents no data to support’ this view, suggesting, ‘they are at least as likely to be middle class as working class’ (p.172). But Arnett’s sample is small (six case studies). Also he defines the working class as manual labour (‘truck driver, factory worker’, op cit), thereby excluding skilled-manual workers and the skilled self-employed. Berger (1999) has argued that heavy metal culture arises out of the ‘frustrations of a blue-collar life in a declining economy’ (p.283), suggesting that ‘both qualitative and quantitative scholarship shows that the music’s audience has largely come from a working-class youth’ (ibid). Moore (2010), 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). But 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 reformulated claim 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), 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 & Guilds qualifications, in intermediate and lower supervisory positions’ (p. 170).

What this evidence suggests, we would argue, is that the core of metal fandom is concentrated in skilled manual groups (including the self-employed), with recruitment also coming from the lower-middle class, on the one side, and the lower-working class, on the other. These movements are one’s of taste-identification, of down-market and up-market preferences, but they can be read to suggest a *classed*-identity that is remarkably coherent over time. Indeed, sociological descriptions (often puzzled, sometimes worried) of this ‘community’ of (mainly) men, who gather to celebrate musical prowess, manual dexterity and rhetorical ‘masculine’ performance, are remarkably consistent over time. For Frith & McRobbie, such gatherings are, ‘reminiscent of football matches and other occasions of male camaraderie’ (2000:142) ; or ‘proletarian camaraderie’ (Breen 1991: 200). For Hebdige (1979), they represent ‘a curious blend of hippy aesthetics and football terrace machismo’ (p.155). Chambers (1985) describes ‘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’ (p.123). Cashmore (1984), ‘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’ (p.37). Or Breen’s (1991) description of ‘whole rows of young men [who] nod their heads up and down in the classic head-bangers salute to the beat, their arms carelessly thrown around each other’s shoulders’ (p.200).^{iv}

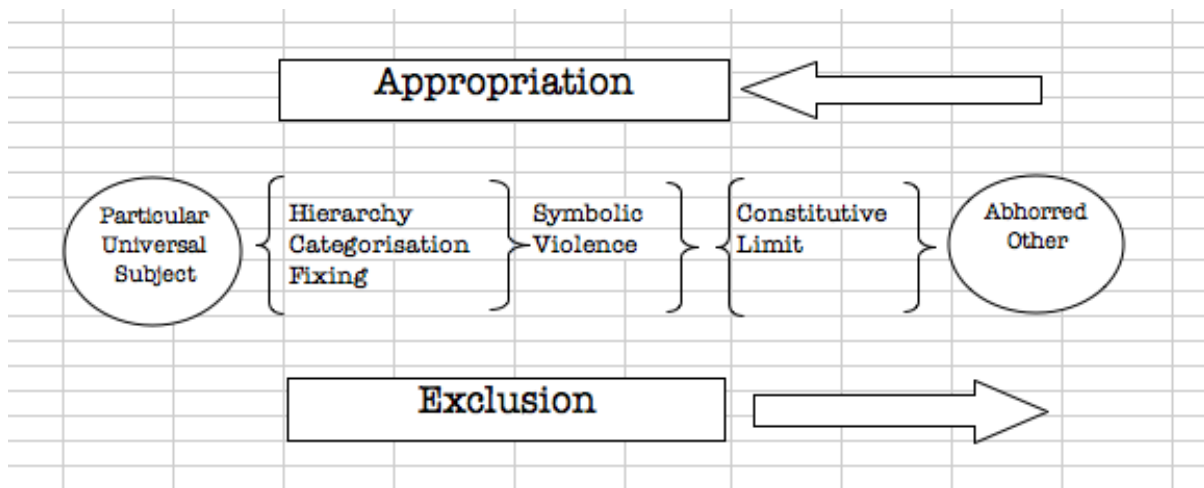


Figure 1. *A Model of the Inscription Process*

Realizing value in symbolic fields of taste: the performance of inscription

Following Foucault, Skeggs (2004: 6) illustrates how classed-selves are brought into being through particular discourses which produce selfhood via strategies of symbolic inscription. This process marks bodies through an unequal process of symbolic exchange that involves both appropriation and exclusion. Acts of classifications confirm the perspective of the classifier by fixing the classified within discourse, thus: ‘how people are valued (by different symbolic systems of inscription) [...] is always a moral categorisation, an assertion of worth, that is not just economic’ (2004: 14). We have developed a model of this inscription process (see fig 1) that can be applied to the analysis of specific media practices. We argue there are a number of predictable routes involved in the discursive practice of inscription: it works in particular ways and results in outcomes that follow from the ways in which it is *performed*. The outcome of this process invariably means that some participants are able to realize more value at the expense of others. The extent to which value is retained, accumulated, appropriated or lost is the outcome of the *performance* of inscription and it is a discursive performance that demonstrates and accumulates cultural power.

Classification is the attempt to establish the value of a critical position and it always involves some kind of criticism of taste. This is not only about fixing the practice or person within discourse but also *fixing a value* to that which is categorised. Categorisation is always hierarchical and the discourse of classification refers to the existence of a classificatory system, a taxonomy or regimen of value, which is reproduced via the performance of criticism. The classification system is therefore the perspective from which the classifier speaks, aspects of which are revealed in the act of criticism, allowing the accumulation of authority and thereby enhancing and legitimating the regime of truth (Skeggs 1997). We argue that the cultural authority to fix the classified within discourse and to realize symbolic value from so doing is the defining characteristic of the cultural critic and the basis of his/her status within a symbolic field.

This act of fixing also allows a process of *appropriation* and re-definition of the classifier, whose relative status is raised by this practice. At the same time the marking of boundaries allows the ‘desired’ properties of the classified to be *appropriated* or abrogated to the classifier; removed to the legitimate sphere of taste and selfhood. This strategy is signalled via the mobilisation of humour, satire and other linguistic or symbolic tropes. But there is a limit to which this act of differentiation can remain at a level of appropriation (see fig. 1 ‘*exclusion*’). The limits of appropriation are signalled by an act of symbolic violence, which

decisively attempts to break the link between the classifier and the classified, since appropriation can draw the other closer and therefore raise the danger of 'proximity', of liminal 'sameness' (see Skeggs, 2005: 970). Symbolic violence therefore involves - at its 'outer edge' - the mobilisation of disgust. Disgust is a moral category that speaks of the need for symbolic and spatial distancing (Lawler 2005: 438) and it is key feature of the representational economy of exclusion, of the representation of the recognisable figure of the 'constitutive moral limit in proximity' (Skeggs 2007, op cit.).

We now turn to a discussion of how the use of a critical discourse analytic method can reveal how the process of inscription 'works' within the NME narrative style of review journalism.

Methodology: towards a narrative framing of the NME style

Our on-line search of the NME.com website found only one example of a lead review of heavy metal album (26th November, 1999).^v Given our point made earlier about the 'niche orientation and branding' of the music magazine market, where the titles, *Kerrang!*, *Metal Hammer* and *Terrorizer* cater for metal music fans (Brown 2007), this was not unexpected. However, our search did identify a significant number of live reviews of well-known metal bands, such as Iron Maiden, Slayer, Slipknot, Black Sabbath, Metallica and Napalm Death, as well as some examples of capsule-sized album and singles' reviews.^{vi} The examples we draw on here are ones that met our search criteria: of being a review of a metal band that (a) contained the highest frequency of typical NME metaphors and adjectives for metal music (brutal, 'evvy meddle, dinosaurs, idiots, noodle wank, brutish, professional, faux matey, testosterone, etc.) and (b) a narrative structure organized around the typical stylistically excessive (rhetorical, alliterative, pun-driven, adjectival: 'matt-black satanic peacocks in front of huge banks of stacked Marshall amps'), elongated sentence patterns, contrasted with dramatically short declamatory, colloquial or enunciated ones: ('And anyway, Slayer sucked') which, following Toynbee (1993: 291), we identify as the CRJ 'performative' style. We found that such reviews were at their most typically 'performative' when reviewing very well-known heavy metal bands, that is bands identified with the history and persistence of (an unreconstructed) "heevy meddle" masculinist culture^{vii} and less so when reviewing bands that, although metal-defined in some way, offered an ironic, humorous or revisionist version of metal-masculinity. This contrast can be seen in the reviews we have selected, where Slayer, Iron Maiden and to a lesser extent, Guns N' Roses, constitute the former, while Napalm Death and Municipal Waste, the latter. This qualitative sample was also selected on the basis of the intertextual reference to this set of bands, found across this cluster of reviews, which was a typical recurring feature.

Our qualitative analysis employs a variant of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which offers a means of identifying the 'narrative organisation' (thematic structure) of the live music review and its 'interpretive thread' (discourse schema) (Deacon et al 2008: 176). Following Deacon et al we examine the 'thematic structure' of each review, and its close 'interfunctional relationship' with an underlying textual or 'discourse schema':

The former isolates for analysis the narrative conventions for combining, ordering and hierarchically assigning the different category units of the text into a structured whole,

while the latter distinguishes the central interpretive thread that makes all the rest relevant and ‘fixes’ their value as evidence or comment (2008: 176).

The reviews we examined reveal a consistent thematic structure that is organised around the following categories. *History*. The story of the past is always one that speaks about and is subordinate to that of the present, (the ‘now’). The past is constituted through a narrative of bands, fans and styles that are constantly reconfigured for their bearing on the importance of what is happening ‘now’, such that bands, fans and genres constantly move in and out of favour and significance. *Taxonomy*. This involves the classification of genre and sub-genre, the ordering of styles and their relationship within an overall system of difference and distinction. It is subject to reconfiguration according to the changing narratives of history. *Style*. This concerns the identification of attributes that can be attached to bands, fans and styles or movements: attributes concerned with attitude, appearance and address. It is about identifying valued or characteristic features, which signify difference and distinction, in terms of how the style, sound or movement articulates a sense of creativity, artistry and ‘nowness’; defining and re-defining the present times in a manner that is both urgent and relevant to youth. *Credibility*. Asks and answers the rhetorical question why a band or style of music should matter to NME readers; why it stands out as credible, truthful, authentic, important. Conversely, other bands or musical styles may be represented as inauthentic, dishonest, pretentious, overblown, trivial and irrelevant. *Audience*. This constitutes the quality and character of the relationship between the band, music phenomenon and its supporters and participants. It revolves around a constant differentiation between ‘art’ and ‘commerce’, in which the former is identified as advancing, style, youth and music culture, politics or consciousness of time and place and the latter as trivial and even reactionary; against the times and perhaps against *change*. *Judgement*. This element is a calculus of the sum of the parts and how they bear upon the question of acceptance or rejection and therefore, ultimately, inclusion or exclusion on the basis of taste.

This set of narrative elements constitutes the developmental structure and, in most instances, the narrative sequence of the NME reviews we examined. What differs between the reviews, as we shall show, is the relative contribution each element makes to the review structure and this is ultimately determined by how this thematic apparatus is drawn upon to aid the formation of opinion, attitude and judgement. While the underlying ‘narrative’ sense that organises the meaning of the piece may be hidden, it is revealed by what is included, emphasised or ignored. Unlike news narratives, the interpretive thread of the review is more marked because the persuasive quality of the CRJ discursive style resides in its excessive, hyperbolic character. This is most evident in the stylistically excessive sentences employed to ‘fix’ the character of the band, the audience and the ‘character’ of their relationship. As Weinstein argues, ‘critics seem to grasp the [heavy metal] genre through its fans and they definitely don’t identify with these folk’ (Weinstein 2005: 301).

In our analysis of the sample we were guided by the following questions. What sorts of concepts of subjectivity are spoken in music critics’ representations of heavy metal music, heavy metal bands and heavy metal fans? What attributes and attitudes are fixed to the bodies of heavy metal fans and heavy metal bands? How does this process constitute the classifier, and how does it produce class and masculinity?

Analysis of the sample: reviewing the reviewers

‘A cockroach preserved in amber’: Slayer/Iron Maiden, London Earls Court Arena, June 2000.

‘Oh no here comes the old skool meddle noodlewank guitar bit YAAAAAAAAAAWN!

It’s that bit at the end of *Jurassic Park* where the lean, mean killing-machine velociraptors (Slayer) rip the fat n’ lumbering bloated ole Tyrannosaurus Rex (the Maiden 87) noo assholes, dude. Except that’s not what happened – T Rex mashed up the ‘raptors big time, remember? And anyway, Slayer sucked’.

‘Once upon a time...’ (NME, June 27th 2000)

Like many NME reviews, the narrative framing of this review is organised around the trope of the historical time-line, familiar within the endlessly repeating cycles of musical fashions: what was once new and ‘cutting edge’ will, in time, become ‘fat, ‘lumbering’, ‘bloated’ and ‘stupid’. Hence the allusion to the fairy story (‘Once upon a time...’) and the pop culture reference ‘that bit at the end of *Jurassic Park*’. In this scenario, Maiden are likened to the ‘fat’ and ‘lumbering’ old guard, while Slayer are the new ‘lean, mean killing-machine’ raptors. But the expected outcome is overturned because ‘T. Rex mashed up the ‘raptors big time, remember?’ Thus the reader is invited to recall the blockbuster film about dinosaurs run rampant, but with Slayer slain. This is justified, because, ‘Slayer sucked’. The story is then re-run, this time with Slayer at the ‘cutting edge’, only to be rendered ‘fat, old and stupid’ by the next band claiming bragging rights: Napalm Death. This lineage hails a readership of non-metal fans, since the bands it references are from different sub-genres of metal (NWOBHM, thrash and grindcore; only Slayer were/are thrash).^{viii} Napalm Death are valorised as ‘radical’ metal for the NME readership, because they are seen to offer something beyond ‘brute power’.

In another pervasive move, the review seeks to ‘fix’ the character of Slayer in a series of strikingly alliterative metaphors: (‘matt black satanic peacocks in front of huge banks of stacked Marshall amps’); and their music (‘grindy bit, jerky bit, oh no here comes the old skool meddle noodlewank guitar bit YAAAAAAAAAAWN’). In this framing, the band are constituted as (too) masculine (‘testosterone, arrogance’) and, in another familiar move, as fake (‘faux-mateyness’) as well as ‘pseudo-radical’– not the *real* thing. More than this, Slayer are viewed as dishonest and insincere, despising their fans (‘please like us, please buy our records, you unmitigated scum’). This review therefore clearly displays the ‘hyperbolic language of excess’ we identified as the NME style but strikingly here as a *faux working class discourse* (‘frash meddle’, ‘no-fackin’-abart-hevvy-meddle-bastards’, ‘geezzer wif geetar’, etc), characterising metal as cartoon like, defined essentially by a masculine stupidity that appeals to a particular type of fan who is irredeemably lumpen, a member of a working class ‘mass’. The reference to the ‘old skool meddle noodlewank guitar bit’ is a familiar trope linking metal guitar playing with ‘fretboard wanking’ or ‘noodling’, constituting metal musical skill as a form of ‘empty virtuosity’, hence *inauthentic*. Here the review distances the ‘reviewer’ and NME readers from the Slayer ‘crowd’, whose collective identity is conveyed via a rhetorical stream-of-consciousness-style language-play, which fixes the crowd within a classed and gendered constituency: ‘farsands and farsands of hairy, lairy, spandex-assed testosterone-overdosed mucho-macho wannabe alpha-male full-on no-fackin’-abart’, hevvy meddle bastards’. Their collective lack of taste and discernment is evidenced by the fact that they loved the hugely *inauthentic* Slayer. Such fans are fixed as working class and masculine, but as both excessively and *inauthentically* so (i.e. as both ‘wannabe alpha-male’ and ‘testosterone-overdosed’). ‘As ‘a cockroach preserved in amber’, Slayer are located as a static, dead species whose endless repetition of their once ‘cutting edge style’ points to a genre of dinosaur proportions – that the *Jurassic Park* trope satirises - that is firmly in the past. Like their fans, they are fixed, literally frozen ‘in time’ and trapped there.

However, the second part of the review shifts gear in seeking to contrast the ‘heavy meddle’ style of Iron Maiden (and especially lead singer Bruce Dickinson) with Slayer. Once again the discourse of authenticity (or the lack of it) is central, via references to ‘bought-by-the-yard Hammer Horror ersatz-Gregorian ‘devil’ muzak’. Metal music can only ever strive to attain ‘pomposity’, and not even manage this. Dickinson is an author and pilot,^{ix} but these ‘real-world’ skills are constituted as marginal to his :‘running round like a mad gorilla’, singing and being ‘brutishly charismatic’. Indeed, his singing skills are reduced to the epithet: ‘vocal chore-handler’. Such discourse links metal music, (male) metal musicians and (male) metal fans with a particular form of ‘brutish’ masculinity. This move often forms the basis for a double condemnation, in that heavy metal bands are castigated for being ‘brutish’ and macho, but also as not being brutish and macho *enough*. Thus, in the final section, Maiden’s music is condemned both for being ‘thunderingly pompous’ and ‘ridiculously overblown’, but also for being ‘ultimately nice, safe and ever so suburban’ and ‘ever-so slightly effeminate’. Thus Maiden are never able to deliver on what they promise (or threaten). And they are condemned for ultimately producing a theatre of show tunes, that diametrically opposed acoustic balladeers, Belle and Sebastian, would like! The review ends by likening the show to a big ‘wank’, whilst simultaneously praising the ‘chewns: ‘And it was great’. This move trips up the reader, whilst simultaneously affirming NME’s cool credentials as purveyors of irony and humour.

“ ‘I want my mummy!’ whines Tony Blair’: Napalm Death, London Camden Falcon, February 1999.

“‘I want my mummy’ whines Tony Blair as he is pulled into the frenzied moshpit and his Belle and Sebastian T-shirt is ripped from his bruised and bleeding back and rammed down his gaping throat’.

‘ DEATH!’ we growl (in blowtorch falsetto)’ (NME, February 19th, 1999)

The importance of Napalm Death is understood from their role as referent of potentially radical metal in previous reviews (such as the one above). Consequently, they are not represented as cockroaches, nor are they ridiculed in the manner of Slayer and Iron Maiden. This is because they are *truly authentic originators*: ‘the smelly metal band that invented gabba, techno, jungle AND digital hardcore...armed only with...analogue instruments and record collections packed full of Sabbath’. That is, Napalm Death are a variety of metal that can be appropriated into the ‘intelligent’ value hierarchy of the discerning music fan, and that is because they represent (despite themselves): a ‘sickly delicious’ contradiction, manifest in their ‘relentlessly right-on pacifist/anarchist/vegan message’ and their sound, which is equated to ‘a field of shire horses being slaughtered’. This contradiction is ‘delicious’ because the right-on politics of the band are carried by the violent brutality of their music, which for the NME, has no aesthetic or political validity. Belle and Sebastian appear again as a contrasting referent, this time linked to an image of Tony Blair assaulted for his ‘safe’ musical tastes, in the frenzy of the mosh pit. In contrast to the review of Slayer and Iron Maiden, this violence is the ‘real thing’; characteristics of stupidity, animalistic qualities and overblown pomposity are not attributed to the bodies of the band or the fans; and ridicule is not a central thematic thread, except in the case of the Brummie metal-head (see below).

There is no distancing move evident here, as ‘we’ growl ‘DEATH!’ and the reviewer is positioned as a part of the audience, drawing the reader into the crowd experience. The latter appear as *differentiated* individuals, in contrast to the ‘farsands and farsands’ of Slayer fans. A range of character tropes, attached to their bodies, clothes and geographical locations

operate to signify their age and class positions in highly coded ways: ‘the spliffing hippy in the rotting Crass long-sleeve’^x; ‘the West Ham hoodie’ and Millwall fan; the ‘west London wild-child in the Gortex snowboarding shell suit’; and the ‘utterly unreconstructed 40-something baldie Brummie metalhead (who ‘shamelessly shook nonexistent dandruff to Saxon’). The latter *authentic* metallor, is thereby constituted as *inauthentic* by association with ‘old metal’. At the same time, this diverse crowd are something to be scared of and from which to ‘flee in terror’, as they ‘stomp each other in a near-religious frenzy’ in the moshpit. The reviewer (and the reader) are, in the end, distanced from this collective violence, compelled to ‘run screaming to the back to stand among the triffid-necked goth girls’. Finally, Napalm Death’s ‘beautiful blond boy-singer’ is characterised as highly skilled, even as unique: ‘nobody... can sing like Linda Blair from the Exorcist coughing up a rabid polecat with a sore throat quite like Barney can’. This is strikingly different to the dismissal of Bruce Dickinson as a ‘vocal chore-handler’ in the previous review.

‘A pack of metal behemoths pushing 50’: Iron Maiden, Ullevi Stadium, Gothenburg, Sweden, July 2005.

‘The part-time author, swordsman and pilot leads his veteran Brit metal overlords into Sweden for another successful stadium rampage – the perfect warm-up for headlining the Carling Weekend: Reading and Leeds’.
Gothenburg is under siege, etc. (NME, July 27th, 2005)

The review represents the event as a warm-up for the Carling Weekend festival in Reading and Leeds, and is therefore couched in positive terms, because the veteran band are ‘surprising’ headliners at an event NME claims as its own. This sense of a lineage to Brit rock informs the terms of the review treatment. Thus, the mass appeal of metal music, and Iron Maiden, in particular, is acknowledged through references to the huge audience for this event across Sweden. Dickinson’s voice is said to be on ‘top form’ as the ‘veteran Brit metal overlords’ achieve ‘another successful stadium rampage’. Indeed, Gothenburg is represented as ‘under siege’, very much like a World Cup event, where sporting the wrong t-shirt can be the provocation to ‘drunken violence’.

Despite the fact that Maiden are ‘a pack of metal behemoths pushing 50’ they ‘never show their age’, evinced by the fact that Dickinson manages to ‘land a surprising number of wince-free jumps’, during the performance. The review also notes with surprise the number of ‘teens’ in the audience. The review hails a certain type of reader: the Reading /Leeds festival-goer in the UK who is not constituted as a metal fan, but who will have a newly discovered interest in Maiden because they are to headline. This fact is constructed as ‘one of the great festival turnarounds, those glorious acts of rediscovery’. So NME readers are encouraged to ‘break out’ their ‘denim’ in celebration of ‘a simpler music for a simpler time’; albeit one with ‘great purity of vision’. In this way Maiden’s heavy metal identity can be reconciled with an idea of Brit rock, momentarily detaching them from such a lineage and allowing them to be recuperated as ‘heritage’ rock for NME readers.

‘Thrash metal loons from Virginia dressed in shark suits. What’s not to like?’: Municipal Waste, London Underworld, August 2007.

‘Remorseless killer digests the deceased!’, cries the drunk idiot onstage. ‘The terror shark!’ chant his drunk idiot bandmates. ‘Humans are helpless to this mighty beast!’ he

continues. ‘The terror shark!’, add his bandmates. Then a man dressed in a shark costume does a backflip off a 12-foot speaker stack and someone stood next to the NME pukes on his feet. Parteeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!’

In credibility terms, you can file, etc. (NME, August 30th, 2007)

Thrash metal, perhaps the most overtly ‘political’ variant of metal, combining metal guitar virtuosity with hard-core speed and punk attitude (Brown, forthcoming) is essentially depoliticised here. The review makes no reference to any other thrash bands, and the sense of lineage that permeates most other NME reviews is entirely absent. Significantly, the terms of credibility in which the NME reader is asked to judge Municipal Waste as a ‘thrash’ revival band, are made explicit: ‘you can file thrash metal right next to Ethiopian Jazz fusion and any records ever made featuring saxophone’. It’s music played by ‘drunk idiots’, dressed by ‘blind idiots’, featuring subject matter such as ‘zombies, nuclear meltdown and, yup, sharks’. But this is essentially why, right now, Municipal Waste are: ‘the best party band in the world’, because they encourage ‘us’ to ‘want to pour beer on our head and do somersaults of speaker stacks’. Municipal Waste are not associated with the white male working class in the same way as Maiden or Slayer, and the usual class (and gender) signifiers are absent. The reviewer is positioned in the audience, having mindless fun with ‘300 drunken idiots’, and there is no distance between the band and their audience: ‘we’ are *in the crowd* having fun and ‘someone’ has ‘puked on our feet’. The reason as to why thrashers Municipal Waste are judged as a ‘celebration of fun and escapism’ rather than pomposity, despite their themes of a world ending in nuclear war, is that they are beloved of rave revivalists the Klaxons and CCCS (new bands praised by the NME), and tonight: ‘the parallels between those bands and these gloriously inane idiots are clear to see’. So ‘Parteeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!’ By satirising the musical and political credibility of thrash metal and distancing its ‘revival’ from any named bands (such as Anthrax, Slayer, Testament, Megadeth, Exodus, Metallica and Nuclear Assault), the NME is able to appropriate the *desired* qualities of the band as consistent with the “new” youth music and attitude.

Guns N Roses – Live Era: ’87-’93

‘Guns N’ Roses, dude! Dirty, low-down, stinking, rotten, sweaty, balls-out, hairy-palmed, chicken-strangling, dog-raping, cranium-crushing, third-cousin-twice-removed fucking shitheel redneck badass swaggering rude tats-plastered king-bastard LA fuck-rock! With mungency!’: (Album review, NME 26th November, 1999)’

This review, significantly the only lead-review of a metal album in our sample, is not a current album but a retrospective Live Album release. This encourages the reviewer to frame the original emergence of the band within a caricatured history of metal, as referenced by the documentary film *The Decline of Western Civilisation, Part II*,^{xi} as a challenge to the glam, ‘poodle-perm’ *inauthenticity* that it had become by the late 80s. This chronology constitutes GNR as hypermasculine (‘butch, brutal, unmistakably male’), macho (‘horribly heterosexual’) and aggressive, responsible for the demise (or murder) of ‘LA Poodle Metal’. This is constructed as a battle that is heavily gendered and sexualised, demonstrating GNR’s hypermasculine heterosexuality, and also their stupidity (‘*And* they couldn’t even spell their own name properly. Fucking cool!’). The representation of such attributes as desirable is, as we shall see, not quite what it seems.

The emergence and triumph of GNR is likened to the second coming of Christ when ‘we’ all thought, ‘Dude, metal is BACK!’ ‘We’ are constituted as welcoming the return of

real metal, it's authenticity evidenced by its brutal masculinity and its stupidity in contrast to the 'fat' feminised 'Hanoi Rocks wannabes' of LA Poodle Metal. But like the case of Slayer, the promise of a *radical* metal is not to be. This is because the role of 'Axl Rose' as the 'RAWK Jesus Christ' is derailed because of his (Southern)^{xii} racism and homophobia, singing about 'faggots and immigrants' and secondly, meglomania: 'literally' 'pissing on his fans'. Thirdly, and 'worst of all', covering a 'Sir Paul Fabmacca' McCartney song and thereby, turning into a 'shit-awful embarrassing cabaret singer'. However, the ultimate worth of GNR is their ability to motivate their fans to form bands like themselves and 'deluge us with a testosterone-driven tidal wave of penile-demented HEVVY MEDDLE!' But this is not likely because, unlike other musical revolutionary 'live' albums, such as the 'Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl' or the Ramones' 'It's Alive', live era GNR lacks any of the 'ruff-edged immediacy' that is essential for a 'great rock 'n' roll live record'. What it offers is an 'obsolescent' but 'very professional rock band'. It is therefore, ultimately 'boring' and dismissed as a great 'Christmas pressie', for 'your gran'!

Discussion

It is significant, we would argue, that the reviews that bookend our qualitative sample – those of Slayer and Gun N' Roses – are the most performative, not only in the ways in which they seek to position and 'fix' the characteristics of the bands and their fans as epitomising "hevvly meddle" but also in terms of the amount of symbolic work that needs to be done in order to both appropriate their desired qualities, while ultimately excluding them from the regime of value. What is being negotiated here are the terms of an unequal symbolic exchange, one that allows an appropriation of the attributes of a "cool" masculinity, whilst excluding its cultural location within a value-framework that celebrates proletarian hetero-sexist excess. And yet the persistent sense that this is a classed-critique *displaced* onto gender recurs throughout the reviews and in our wider sample. For example, Metallica's headliner performance at the annual Carling Weekend festival, is described thus:

Today is by all accounts the day of the doom. The day the rock will come to Leeds and secrete it's filthy black slime across West Yorkshire pastures, thrilling the legions of denim and leather clad youths with the primal thrills of skull crunching powerchords and metal posturing [...] Its the redneck rock 'n' roll travelling road show. Heavier than hell and as honest as coal, the brutes perform their steam-roller-metal with aplomb, as subtle as oxygen and as glamorous as a rainy Sunday, Metallica complete the job with workmanlike panache. A job well done (August 26th 2003).

Despite the hyperbolic language of satire and humour operating in these reviews, the central interpretative thread - organised around matters of history, taxonomy, credibility, audience and judgment – is one where culture/ classed relations are constituted as relations of taste, so that taste relations can appear to be *outside* of class and yet a discourse of classed (and gendered) language is consistently employed to legitimate an apparatus of criticism that routinely mobilises symbolic violence to constitute itself as superior. Yet, such an apparatus of judgment requires an 'abhorred other' against which, and through symbolic battle with, it can define that which is deemed: authentic, 'truthful', genuine, artful and therefore 'relevant', as against that which is: in-authentic, dishonest, pretentious, overblown, trivial and therefore *irrelevant*. That is, classed attributes and gendered-tropes operate in the constitution of the out group as a taste-underclass (as a group defined by their *lack* of taste) and thereby a *de*

facto mainstream (which is always a majority that lack style or a stylish mode of consumption: that is they are *consumed* by their consumption and therefore cannot have a critical relationship to it). But also by a selective appropriation of classed and gendered signifiers (unhinged from any necessary class belonging) that create authenticity or modes of distinction vital in a cultural dominant which is *polyhierarchical*, so although cultural power is still 'centred' around educationally derived capital, strategies of distinction around music and style must also incorporate various forms of *subcultural legitimation* (Laermans cited in Gudmundsson et al, 2002: 61).

In this respect, metal music and metal culture are located at the centre of a conundrum: if metal bands (appear to) take themselves seriously, e.g. Slayer, they cannot be represented as having credibility because they are forever identified with a white working class heterosexual masculinity, which cannot be accepted in its own terms. Only if they appear not to take themselves seriously, e.g. Municipal Waste, can they be praised, but only to the extent that they represent 'escapist fun' or the youthful pleasures of a 'simpler age' of rock. The one band that has credibility, Napalm Death, manage to offer a radical address, despite their definite location in a metal heritage and sonic sensibility, because their music anticipates styles and audiences beyond metal. One of the obvious critical functions of such reviews is to render invalid the *perspective* of metal culture (as a set of classed and gendered relations), as able to constitute an authenticity project, indeed to render such a perspective *unthinkable*. This is made utterly irrefutable in the judgment made on Guns N Roses who, despite their cool deployment of the extremities of white, heterosexual, working class masculinity, are betrayed by the absolute excessiveness of such a masculinity, which renders it ultimately abhorrent to the NME and its readers.

Conclusion

Despite this, the ways in which we have shown how the strategy of 'symbolic violence' operates via metaphors of distaste directed towards excessive metal bodies, collective behaviour and assertions of group taste, also points to the possibility of what we call 'symbolic leakage' in the process of symbolic exchange, because of the very need to assert boundaries. This raises the important discussion of the constitutive limit by Skeggs (2005) that, paradoxically, the drawing up of symbolic boundaries of taste invites the possibility of forms of resistance, in the *refusal* to accept inscription and to be bound by the values of the symbolic field. But the cost of this is to be excluded from any potential value and to be seen to be a group, which cannot gain or retain value. We would argue that the persistence of heavy metal culture and its collective identity practices embody precisely this contradiction. Or as NME's review of the *Dublin SFX* live event, put it:

It's a lost world we enter tonight, one where grown men can openly play air guitar and bum-fluff-faced nerds can rub shoulders with beefcake psychopaths. Inched out of modern cultural context by the all-consuming wave of coffee-table rock and mobile phone accommodating club-wear, the metal aesthetic is an alienated old-skool, only relived by the condescending post-modernism of girly rocker chic. Not that tonight's throng could give a flying-v for the outside world though (July 5th 2000).

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ⁱⁱ Indeed, it could be argued that the genre is one of the most enduring and influential popular music styles to have emerged within the history of postwar popular music, in that it has literally spawned more sub-genre varieties than any other, such as doom, speed, thrash, glam, power, grindcore, metalcore, death, symphonic, sludge, stoner, nu, progressive and black metal. However, exploring this diversity is beyond the scope of our focus here (but see Brown 2014).

ⁱⁱⁱ Although this latter aspect could be argued to be incorporated within the lead review feature.

^{iv} This analogy to the 'football terrace' was strikingly brought home to us when we attended, as part of our fieldwork research, Iron Maiden's 'Somewhere Back In Time World Tour', held at the 55,000 capacity Twickenham Stadium, 5th July, 2008. Before the performance and throughout the day, hundreds of men of different ages (some with their families in tow) and proudly sporting a wide variety of Maiden t-shirts, milled around the ground or stood about in clumps, drinking beer, laughing and calling out to each other. Inside the stadium we noted that the score board read 'Iron 0 : 0 Maiden' (See Brown and Griffin 2009).

^v This finding in itself aptly illustrates the argument of Forde that, from the 90s onwards, niche branding strategies have produced a segmented music press. Even when rival titles cover the same event, such as the Reading and Leeds festival, they will tend to do so by their preferred genre. Thus, the NME will typically review only the 'indie' bands and the headliners; whereas the 'metal' titles, such as Kerrang!, will typically review the rock/metal/alt and pop/punk bands.

^{vi} The singles reviews were disproportionately those of Metallica and Slipknot; two bands viewed by the NME as representative of a 'modern' strain of metal that can sometimes be 'intelligent', even artful. The other significant coverage was nu-metal, another modernist strain of metal (mixing hip-hop and rap influences into its sound). But one viewed less favourably, despite the fact that this 'young usurper nu-metal' challenged 'ye olde heavy metal' (May 27th, 2001). For example, this capsule review of a Slipknot single: 'there's just no excuse for such odious music. This is plain ugly. It's not even good bad metal, which is often permissible. Like the Bloodhound Gang, Blink 182, Korn, Limp Bizkit *et al*, it's simply stupid music for stupid people. I don't get it, and neither should you' (Sept 26th 2000). The logic behind NME's coverage of these bands – hardly representative of the diversity of metal sub-genre styles – was their chart popularity.

^{vii} Indeed, the phrase 'heevy meddle', first found in a Slayer review, proved to be very productive as a search term in identifying other 'performative' reviews for similarly characterised 'heavy metal' bands.

^{viii} The New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM), was a creative and influential period of resurgence of metal which occurred in the 1979-1984 period in the UK (Macmillan 2001); for an account of the San Francisco

Bay Area thrash style, a mix of hardcore punk and metal, and grindcore, a mix of anarcho-punk and metal, see Brown (in press).

^{ix} Paul Bruce Dickinson is a commercial airline captain, champion fencer, broadcaster and author. Described as a genuine British ‘polymath’, he was awarded an honorary Doctorate by Queen Mary College, University of London, in 2011: <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/items/52659.html>. For Iron Maiden’s ‘Somewhere Back in Time World Tour’, 2008-9, Dickinson piloted a customised Boeing 757 (‘Ed Force One’), flying the band and its equipment to concert venues. See the documentary, ‘Iron Maiden: Flight 666’ (2009).

^x This referent is most likely incorrect, since Crass, the Anarcho-punk band do not have such a t-shirt slogan. It is more likely that this logo refers to the Greek black metal band, Rotting Christ.

^{xi} The film, by Penelope Spheeris (1988), documents the controversial (‘decadent’) glam or ‘big hair’ metal scene of Los Angeles in the mid to late 1980s.

^{xii} It is not clear if the NME are claiming that Axl Rose –actually born in Lafayette, Indiana - is from the Southern states or the Southern states of mind.